



## Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Christie's Education Ltd, November 2016

### Section 1: Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that Christie's Education Ltd (CE) has made commendable progress with implementing the action plan from the November 2015 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

### Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 CE has 108 full-time students on its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, an increase of five since the QAA review in November 2015. This total includes 47 Tier 4 sponsored overseas students. The number of academic staff has risen from 15 to 17 over the same 12-month period. An agreement has been reached for The Open University to replace the University of Glasgow as the degree-awarding body for the provision from September 2017. The undergraduate programme will not be offered after 2016. Postgraduate programmes have already been validated by The Open University to commence from September 2017. All students recruited to University of Glasgow awards will be able to complete their programmes. CE will relocate into the premises of its parent company, Christie's, in summer 2018, following the expiry of the lease on its current premises.

### Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The overall outcome of the monitoring visit, that CE has made commendable progress, has been informed by the following findings. Progress on the action plan arising from the 2015 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) has ensured enhancement across each area of good practice and the single recommendation. Further development has taken place in the professionally focused approach to learning and assessment, and the support for student employability has been strengthened. The vocational focus of assessments has been refined, while formal enhancement plans are now included in all annual monitoring reports. There are comprehensive arrangements for the recruitment, selection and admission of students. The well-established procedures for the annual monitoring of programmes have been strengthened. Student data indicates high levels of retention and achievement. CE has built on the positive position reported from the 2015 review by its continued use of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) in the management of its higher education provision.

4 The commendable progress on all of the actions arising from the 2015 review has resulted in significant enhancement to the provision. All actions have been completed or are on target for completion by the published date. Evaluation is also proceeding in line with the published timetable.

5 The actions taken have ensured that the three areas of good practice identified in the 2015 review have been sustained and enhanced. The approaches to learning and assessment continue to reflect professional practice. Development opportunities have been expanded to allow staff to maintain professional currency and increase their knowledge of

the global art market. A new programme of professional placements has been introduced for staff, while a monthly newsletter has been introduced to facilitate the sharing of staff experiences. Students confirm that the professional profiles of staff positively inform learning and assessment. There is a concerted strategy to encourage and support staff membership of the Higher Education Academy.

6 The support for student employability has been strengthened with the establishment of a professional advisory panel to engage in curriculum design and development. An agreement has been reached with Christie's, the parent company, for accelerated progression of CE students onto the Graduate Recruitment Programme. Other initiatives include the recruitment of a specialist careers officer and formal accreditation for the work placement element of the programmes.

7 The vocational focus of assessments has been refined following the 2016 revalidation with the University of Glasgow and new validation with The Open University. Assessments continue to reflect workplace requirements with the use of professional activities such as specialist cataloguing and presentations.

8 There is clear progress on the recommendation to take a more systematic approach to action planning, with the inclusion of formal enhancement plans in all annual monitoring reports for 2015-16. There is some variability in this first year of implementing the plans, for example, the wording of some success indicators and impact statements lacks the precision to ensure the rigorous measurement of the proposed actions. This has been recognised by Christie's and will be addressed as part of the evaluation taking place in 2016-17.

9 The recruitment, selection and admission of students operate within the context of an explicit policy and a rigorously applied set of procedures. The comprehensive arrangements fully meet the Expectation and indicators of the Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education* as well as the Schwartz Principles of Fair Admissions. The recent approval of new procedures for appeals and complaints has further strengthened the admission process. The Strategic Planning Committee and the Student Services and Business Director oversee the implementation and review of the policy and procedures. The recruitment and admissions staff produce detailed annual monitoring reports on their activities, which are formally considered as part of CE's annual quality assurance procedures. The retention and achievement data offers evidence for the success of the recruitment and admissions process.

10 Effective arrangements are in place to confirm the academic qualifications and English language competency of applicants. Individual admission files record the evidence, including relevant certificates. English language competence is carefully monitored through checks on previous studies, a sample of writing, and the communication skills displayed by students at each stage of the application process. Tier 4 applicants undertake a specific compliance interview, which provides a further check on English language skills and ensures that the applicant has a genuine intention to study.

11 The recently enhanced procedures for the annual monitoring of academic programmes are well established and meet the expectation of the Quality Code, *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review*. A comprehensive annual monitoring report is produced for each programme. Each report is produced to a standard template and draws on a wide range of evidence, including staff and student feedback, external examiner reports and statistical data. Following the 2015 review, action planning has been improved by the inclusion of a formal enhancement plan. A scrutiny of the annual monitoring reports for 2015-16 confirms that they offer a valuable reflection on the provision, helped by a clear structure and diligent completion by programme teams. There is some variability in the quality of the content, within and between reports, which is evident in the level and precision

of evaluative commentary and the analysis of data. However, this is acknowledged by senior staff, while the updated action plan confirms that further refinements to the reports will be considered at the end of the 2016-17 reporting period.

12 Revised arrangements have been introduced for the consideration and approval of annual monitoring reports within the new committee structure, and are still being embedded. The reports are discussed in detail at the Annual General Meeting, before being considered by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and formally signed off by the Strategic Planning Committee.

13 The student data provided for the visit indicates high levels of retention and achievement across all 10 academic awards. Statistics for the three completing years up to 2015 show that the retention rate has been maintained at 100 per cent except in a small number of cases. In the academic year 2014-15 the combined data for all programmes shows a 100 per cent completion rate, with an 88 per cent (86 of 98) final pass rate. Over the three-year period there are only two instances of the retention rate falling below 90 per cent. The achievement data indicates that of the 2015 completing cohorts, all but two awards had a pass rate above 75 per cent, including two at 100 per cent. Two awards, Arts of China and Style and Design, had a lower success rate than in previous years, at 67 per cent (12 of 16) and 72 per cent (13 of 17) respectively. In the previous two completing years, 2013 and 2014, all awards achieved a pass rate above 75 per cent.

14 Student statistical data is considered formally as part of the internal quality assurance arrangements, including in annual programme monitoring reports. CE is aware of the need to strengthen this valuable area of programme reporting, which will be helped by a new student management information system to be introduced for April 2017.

#### **Section 4: Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education**

15 CE has built on the positive position reported from the 2015 review by its continued use of the Quality Code in the management of its higher education provision. Comprehensive mapping tables are used to provide an overview of how policy, procedures and regulations meet the expectations of the Quality Code. During 2016 CE has undergone the revalidation of programmes by the University of Glasgow and the validation of replacement programmes by The Open University. This has offered the opportunity for a thorough review and updating of all policies and procedures, ensuring alignment with the Quality Code, as well as the regulations of both universities. CE is now embedding its own sets of policies and procedures, rather than being dependent on those of its awarding body. The validation processes have also engaged staff in the consideration of specific statements from the Quality Code, Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards. CE has a clear strategy for engaging with the Higher Education Academy. Staff also make extensive use of professional links to inform the provision and its delivery. These links include the international art operations of its parent company, Christie's.

#### **Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit**

16 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

17 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mrs Amanda Greason, Reviewer, and Mr David Lewis, Coordinator, on 3 November 2016.

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