



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of the College of IT & E-Commerce Ltd, May 2015

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 the College of IT & E-Commerce Ltd (the College) is not making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the previous [monitoring visit](#) in May 2014.

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The College began recruiting students again in autumn 2014. At the time of the submission of its annual return form, the College had enrolled five students to a Pearson level 5 Higher National Diploma in Business, four students to an ATHE Ltd level 6 Diploma in Strategic Management, seven students to an ATHE level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management, and 20 students to an ATHE level 7 Diploma in Healthcare Management. By the time of the monitoring visit, the total student enrolment stood at 61: seven for the Pearson programme and 54 for the three ATHE programmes. The College employs six full-time and seven part-time permanent members of staff. The Director of Studies role, which has oversight for the quality assurance of academic standards, is currently vacant.

3 The College underwent an ISO (International Organisation for Standardisation) 9001 surveillance visit in November 2014. Its Tier 4 sponsor licence was suspended in March 2015.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The College is not maintaining its own institutional action plan to ensure continual monitoring, review and enhancement of its higher education provision on an ongoing basis. Some action points arise in Academic Board minutes, but they are vague and do not contain completion dates: for instance, 'ongoing' occurs regularly.

5 The management of academic standards is not secure. The review of and reporting on modules by College staff is not embedded, although a module review form has recently been created for future use. There does not appear to be a checklist of responsibilities with any of the College's awarding organisations.

6 The College has a student representative system, which is partially effective. Student representatives are drawn from each programme and are members of the College's Academic Board, although they are excluded from part of the Board's business. No student representatives attended Academic Board meetings in 2014. External standards verifier reports from Pearson are not discussed directly with the student body.

7 Data management, particularly the reporting of student progression, is not effective. The review team was unable to reconcile figures for the two ATHE level 7 programmes either from the documentation supplied before the visit or the explanations offered during the visit, although the College attributes the discrepancy to visa delays. The College considers information on the number of submissions and student achievement within a module in

quarterly reports, but this data does not acknowledge the different entry cohorts. The College does not provide annual programme monitoring to review data across a cohort.

8 The College recognises the value of review, but does not effectively maintain some of its key documents or record decisions carefully. The draft Quality Manual has not been updated since February 2014. The Learning and Teaching Strategy will be reviewed in September 2015, but has not been updated since 2012, even though the Strategy states that the objectives 'will be developed systematically over the three year period (2012-15)'. The review team was presented with three different 'current' versions of the same Pearson Higher National Diploma in Business programme specification at the visit.

9 The information provided to students is not complete. Students confirm that the virtual learning environment is a key resource for holding module learning resources, but individual programme specifications are not provided, although there is an incomplete generic programme specification in the Quality Manual. Students also confirm that they had not seen any programme information in hard copy, although there are student programme handbooks.

10 The College's Director has oversight of all admissions, with assistance from two other members of staff. The College interviews all students, and the interviewer completes a personal assessment sheet as a record, including assessments of previous qualifications and English language ability; however, the dates of previous awards are not recorded and sometimes awarding bodies are not recorded.

11 The College usually checks all academic and English language qualifications by examining original documents. Staff were required to complete a Pro Forma Request for Verification of Academic Documents, and a Pro Forma Request for Verification of English Language Qualifications, and send them to the 'relevant awarding body, professional body, university, previous sponsor and the SELT provider'. Staff admit that this practice had proved ineffective and had since been abandoned. The College now relies on email exchanges, with PDF file copies and British Council IELTS (International English Language Testing System) certification attached. For those students who have previously completed an award at another UK institution, the College relies upon that institution's English language checks. The review team was unable to confirm either uniformity or consistency of the verification procedures.

12 Standards verifier feedback for the Pearson Higher National Diploma in Business raised fundamental issues with assessment. Assessment had been issued without being approved first by the standards verifier. The feedback forms from February 2015 indicated that internal verification processes and assessment design were not reliable and required the College to take immediate remedial steps. Assessment briefs had been dated as issued to students before being internally verified, and as such were unapproved. These were required to be amended for re-issue across the majority of units covered in the report to ensure that tasks aligned with the full set of assessment criteria. The College's reliance on its awarding organisations to ensure valid and reliable assessment practice remains significant.

13 The College is extending the processing of student work through software that provides similarity indices, using internal and ATHE systems. Students and staff confirm confusion regarding College approaches to the interpretation and use of these systems for developing academic practice. The College acknowledges that the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy does not specifically define 'plagiarism', although students are briefed on it at induction.

14 Students confirm that staff are supportive and helpful, providing, for example, extra case study contexts and an external visit to enhance programme study.

Student representatives have also requested improvements to student facilities, which have been provided.

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

15 The College has produced an action plan to map many of its handbooks, policies, practices and procedures to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Entries to map the latest Expectations, particularly in Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, and Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision, are incomplete. Staff acknowledge that mapping has highlighted the need for a substantial amount of rewriting of documents, which has not yet begun, although the target completion date is the end of May 2015.

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 Professor Edward Esche, Coordinator, and Ms Deborah Trayhurn, Reviewer, on 11 May 2015.

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