



## Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of David Game College Ltd, November 2018

### 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 David Game College Ltd (the College) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the November 2017 [Educational Oversight monitoring visit](#).

### 2 Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 The College delivers Pearson Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes in Business; Health and Social Care; Healthcare Practice in England; Public and Emergency Services; Public Services; and Art and Design. It now has a collaborative agreement with Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) for the franchise of level 6 top-up degrees in Business Management and Integrated Health and Social Care to be launched in February 2019, adding to the sub-contracting agreement the College holds with New College Swindon enabling students to access student loans.

3 College numbers have continued to grow and there are now 627 students, compared to 288 in November 2017. The increase is attributed to several factors including interest in new programmes offered; flexible learning opportunities including evening and Saturday delivery; the learning environment provided by the College's new premises; and the relationships established with recruitment agents. New senior management, academic and administrative staff have been appointed to manage and accommodate the growth in student numbers.

4 As a result of the College recruiting significantly greater student numbers in the past year, the monitoring visit was extended to allow for further exploration of evidence than would be possible in a standard monitoring visit.

### 3 Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The monitoring visit confirmed that the College has continued to develop the good practice previously identified and has made acceptable progress in addressing the three review recommendations. The College has continued to refine systems to support and enable students to become independent learners (paragraph 7). It has also further developed the comprehensive and consistent use of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) (paragraph 8). Oversight of work placements has been significantly enhanced through the appointment of key staff and the development of procedural documentation, although some aspects have yet to be fully implemented (paragraph 9). Membership of the internal approval panel for new programme design and development has been clarified and is operating effectively (paragraph 10). The approach to enhancement is formally documented and effectively managed through the deliberative structure (paragraph 11).

6 College procedures for annual quality monitoring provide an explicit cycle of evidence gathering and reporting, although this could be further developed (paragraph 12). Student admission arrangements are thorough and supportive (paragraph 13). Assessment practice is robust and assured through internal and external moderation for the HNDs (paragraph 14). Retention and achievement rates are improving (paragraph 15). The use of relevant external reference points is being maintained through the regular updating of policies and procedures (paragraph 16).

7 Students attest to the continued high level and quality of support, induction and mentoring available to them. Workshops and seminars have been embedded within study skills classes providing one-to-one support for students and additional drop-in sessions offer more tailored student support. Field trips, careers weeks and guest lecturers provide opportunities for students to consider their academic and career development.

8 The ILP forms have been further developed to customise them to specific programme requirements and include career planning, an end-of-year performance review for each module, and progression to higher level academic studies, if appropriate. The process is comprehensive and enables student progression and development to be monitored and evaluated. ILP forms are now accessed and completed online and the new system has been well received by staff and students.

9 Significant changes have been made to systems and procedures for managing work placements. A full cycle of assessment and follow-up satisfaction surveys are planned to take place after January 2019 with the process being evaluated through annual monitoring on completion of the academic year. The management of placements has been strengthened through the appointment of a Head of School for Health and Social Care and two dedicated Work Placement assessors who liaise with the Placement Coordinator and respective module leaders. Procedural documents fully support the delivery of the work placement in the HND Healthcare Practice. The College has developed an integrated assessment workbook that meets the Practical Learning, Assessment and Development (PLAD) requirements for year one of the HND Healthcare Practice qualification approved in 2018. Work on the integrated assessment document for year two is currently work in progress. Documentation provided to students meets awarding partner requirements and has been informed by external feedback. Students found placement information provided by the College to be helpful.

10 The Design, Development and Approval of New Programmes Policy now clarifies the internal validation panel membership to ensure independent oversight of the approval process. Operational procedures within the Policy set out the internal validation process, student engagement and external participation. The Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) is responsible for the internal approval of new programmes before submission for awarding body approval. The programme development and design stages of the Committee's remit are clear and robust. New programmes have been validated since the 2017 annual monitoring review. Supporting documentation is thorough and demonstrates that the process is applied consistently. Student representatives are involved in programme management committee meetings and students confirmed that student representatives are effective in ensuring two-way information flows about programmes.

11 The Quality and Enhancement Policy articulates the provider-level approach to enhancement and links to the College strategic plan. The higher education management team is responsible for providing a more proactive approach to enhancement in a systematic and planned manner at provider level. Actions taken since the 2016 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) strengthen the mechanisms at all levels to support a strategically driven approach to enhancement, although it is too early to assess the impact on the learning environment and student performance.

12 There are appropriate procedures and reporting arrangements for annual quality monitoring at module and programme level. The Programme Management Committee (PMC) oversees and evaluates programme monitoring review activity. PMC considers module reports, student feedback, external examiner reports, actions identified and reports from the Staff-Student Liaison Committee. Action plans detail responsibilities and dates for completion. They also include comments on progress and impact on the student learning experience. QSC formally approves annual reviews. There is currently no provider-level action plan which systematically captures the actions in a single document, but analysis of quantitative and qualitative data enables enhancement opportunities to be identified. Action planning is effectively conducted through the deliberative structure and engagement with external bodies.

13 The procedure for managing admission to the HN programmes is detailed in the Admissions Policy. The College uses recruitment agents and operates a stringent vetting and evaluation process in selecting agents. Prospective students complete a written application form and provide supporting documentation. Applicants whose first language is not English, with no formal or recognised qualification, take the College internal English test. Formal qualifications are checked for authenticity and suitability with overseas qualifications being evaluated using UK NARIC. Suitability for the programme is determined through scrutiny of application documentation and a rigorous interview process. Clear information is available to applicants on the College website and in programme documentation. Appropriate admissions process records are maintained and students the team met commented positively on the process and the information provided by the College. BNU sets entry requirements for the top-up degree programmes and formally approves all admissions.

14 The College is responsible for the overall assessment process including the setting, marking and moderation of assessments and has a comprehensive Assessment and Verification Policy to inform assessment of its BTEC provision. External examiners review students' work and provide detailed comments on overall achievement at module and programme level. The College's academic staff participate in assessment boards and have opportunities to meet external examiners. The Assessment Strategy is defined in programme specifications, individual schemes of work and module descriptors. Standardisation meetings ensure consistency of practice and assure academic standards. Assessments for the top-up degree programmes delivered on behalf of BNU remain to be implemented but first marking will be conducted by College staff and moderated by BNU. The College's Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy has been revised to ensure that all forms of assessment are conducted with rigour and integrity. Improvements include the incident reporting process for examination invigilators; the Programme Assessment Board having a more proactive role in sanctioning penalties for proven academic misconduct; and the identification of measures for dealing with alleged academic malpractice.

15 Retention and achievement levels have improved over the past three years, alongside significant new student enrolment increases over this period. The College systematically monitors completion and pass rates and has implemented initiatives to improve student achievement, including assessment workshops, a variety of assessment methods and an extended programme of study. Retention for the last three completing cohorts has risen from 59 per cent (54 of 91) in 2015-16, 70 per cent (87 of 125) in 2016-17, to 92 per cent (316 of 345) in 2017-18. Of those Business students who were expected to complete by September 2018, 65 per cent of students (five out of eight) and 48 per cent of students in Health and Social Care (10 out of 21) gained their target qualification. Retention has improved for the 2017-18 cohort, and currently stands at 92 per cent for the Business programme (172 of 188); 90 per cent for the Health programmes (94 of 105) and 96 per cent for the Public and Emergency Services programme (50 of 52). The increasing retention rates demonstrate the effectiveness of the College's student support systems and enhancement initiatives.

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

16 The College has continued to engage with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) through regular checking and updating of its policies and procedures. Additional operating procedures have been introduced to support policies where gaps have been identified. For example, it has developed an Examinations Policy and Guidelines setting out the preparation, security, management and conduct of examinations. It has also introduced standardisation meetings to ensure consistency and fairness of marking as part of its Assessment and Internal Verification Policy.

17 Use is made of the Quality Code in admissions; assessment; annual monitoring and associated action planning, student engagement, and student support and guidance. Reference is also made to the Qualifications and Credit Framework and the Regulated Qualifications Framework in assuring academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The College adheres to external awarding partner quality management processes and compliance is monitored through external examining and annual monitoring system. It is an accredited member of the matrix Standard, having been assessed and measured against the information, advice and guidance provided to students. Following accreditation, the College has undergone a Continuous Improvement Check which informs continuous quality improvement and engagement with the Quality Code.

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

18 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.

19 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Colin Fryer, Reviewer, and Dr Irene Ainsworth, QAA Officer, on 22 and 23 November 2018.

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