



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Edge Hotel School Limited, March 2017

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 Edge Hotel School Limited (the School) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the March 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 As of February 2017 the School has 108 students registered. Of these, 67 enrolled since the 2016 Review. The School continues to offer foundation and bachelor's degrees validated by The University of Essex (the University) as the awarding body. During the periodic review of November 2016, the University additionally validated the BA (Hons) Events Management with Hospitality degree programme together with two level 6 direct entry routes entitled BA (Hons) Hotel Management (Top-up) and BA (Hons) Events Management with Hospitality (Top-up), to run from September 2017. In conjunction with the Essex Business School at the University, the School gained approval for a shared MSc International Hospitality Management programme, primarily aimed at overseas students. However, when the UK Visa and Immigration Department declined the School's Tier 4 UK License, recruitment to the MSc programme was suspended at least for the next year. One member of academic staff left during the last year and was subsequently replaced.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The School has made acceptable progress in its implementation of the action plan arising out of the 2016 Review. During the course of the monitoring review process, the team scrutinised documentation provided, met the School's management, academic and support staff, together with The University of Essex Partnership Managers. It also met a group of eight current students from all levels of provision. The School was able to demonstrate continuing appropriate action on the five areas of good practice highlighted in the report. There were two recommendations and one affirmation arising from the 2016 Review. Substantial progress has been made but further developments in process are encouraged.

4 There have been no separate minor programme variations since the 2016 Review but relevant staff are reminded to adhere to the approved processes. A periodic review event was held by the University in November 2016, which incorporated all the required minor and major modifications to the programmes, together with validation of new programmes. The outcome of the periodic review concluded that the School must revise course documentation to include a mapping of programme learning outcomes to modules which the School has completed.

5 In response to the recommendation regarding the formalisation of the internal procedure for the authorisation and design of new programmes, the School has developed

an Internal Course Proposal Procedure. This procedure consists of a flowchart which outlines the stages through which a proposal should be considered. The procedure focuses on the business case for a course development but is weak on the consideration of matters relating to academic standards. There is little guidance in the flowchart on the format and content of course proposals for staff involved with the process. The chart also lacks indication of criteria to be considered when making decisions on whether to take a development forward.

6 The School's intention to develop a formal staff development policy, the subject of the affirmation from the 2016 Review, has yet to be completed. The draft of the new staff development policy was considered by the Edge Hotel School Trustees at the February 2017 meeting, but the trustees deferred approval and requested further amendments. Nonetheless, staff development records show a wide range of activities which contribute to the enhancement of teaching and professional practice.

7 To enhance further the good practice on admissions, the School established a focus group in October 2016 for the new intake of students which highlighted some further improvements in the admissions process which have been noted by the School. These include amendments to the online application form to make it easier to use and improvements to email communications to prospective students. Students confirmed the rigour of the admissions process, which ensured they were kept well informed during the admissions process.

8 The collaborative relationship between the School and Wivenhoe House Hotel has been further strengthened by a review of the Service Level Agreement and the additional expectations required of both the School and the Hotel. In pursuance of this relationship the School has undertaken one-to-one half-day sessions for the Hotel staff to explain their involvement with the programme as well as what can be expected from students. This is in addition to the one day 'Train-the-Trainer' programme that all new supervisory staff at the hotel attend and which formed the basis of a QAA Case Study in Employer Engagement published in September 2016.

9 Students confirmed that good opportunities continue to be available for them to network professionally with industry experts and to be exposed to professional practices, including attendance at sector conferences. The School indicated that the new level 6 cohort will be working with an increased number of organisations representing a wider variety of specialisms and will be able to undertake consultancies. Students and staff confirmed that these opportunities have increased in the last year.

10 The positive impact of student views on the provision continues to be developed. Further opportunities have been made available for students to take part in meetings related to their learning experience. Students confirmed that representatives attend all School meetings except for the Edge Hotel School Limited Board of Trustees. Students contributed to the periodic review, including the development of new programmes, and their professionalism was noted by the University.

11 Recruitment, selection and admissions processes adhere to the principles of fair admission. The School has a comprehensive admissions policy and separate Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning process which is in alignment with Expectation B2 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). The policy is available through the School website and includes the admissions appeals process. However, the appeals process states that the final arbiter of an admissions appeal is the Vice Principal Academic and does not mention the right of appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

12 The School uses well-designed admissions forms when interviewing prospective students. These reflect a scripted interview to be followed by admissions staff which ensures that intending students are fully aware of their commitments, including weekend and bank holiday working requirements. Students confirmed that the admissions process worked well for them and most were satisfied that the programme met or exceeded their expectations.

13 The admissions process includes the requirement for IELTS level 6.0 competency in English for prospective students for whom English is not their first language and interviewers are required to complete a section on the admissions form to indicate whether applicants have met this requirement. Prior qualifications are also recorded on the admissions form and students are required to evidence these. Where applicable, admissions staff use UK NARIC to determine qualification equivalency. Certificates are scanned and kept in the student file for future reference.

14 The School operates effective, regular and systematic processes for quality monitoring. It meets the requirements of the monitoring, documentation and review processes of the University and the expectations of the Quality Code. The Vice Principal (Academic) leads the Annual Review of Courses with support from other academics and operational staff. Reviews are based both on internal surveys, and on Partner Performance Indicators provided by the University, benchmarking key areas against comparable higher education hospitality courses. The annual course review requires the recording and analysis of recruitment, retention and National Student Survey data. A summary of module satisfaction results and student destinations are also required.

15 The School develops action plans based on the annual course reviews which are updated and reconsidered within the following annual review ensuring that opportunities for enhancement are realised. The Faculty Board has overall responsibility for the approval of the annual course review. Minutes of the Faculty Board confirm this.

16 The School's first intake was in 2012. Initially there was a significant number of new students who withdrew primarily between the start and middle of level 4. This was investigated and found to reflect the problems faced by students, many of whom were away from home for the first time, and who were on rotation within the hotel over the Christmas and New Year period. A range of actions was implemented which has been successful. These included providing greater support over the holiday periods and improved consideration of applicants through enhanced admission processes. Consequently, over the last four academic years (including 2016-17), 75 students enrolled on the FdA and 143 on the BA programmes. Of these, ten (13 per cent) and sixteen (11 per cent) have left the programme. At the time of the visit, none of the students who started in September 2016 had withdrawn. Of the two graduated cohorts (2013 and 2014), 10 per cent FdA and 14 per cent BA students left with an exit award. It should be noted that the majority of FdA students progress to the BA programme mid-level 5, from whence they are regarded as BA students. Analysis of enrolment, progression and achievement data forms part of the discussions in preparation of annual review of courses required by the University as awarding body.

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

17 The School continues to engage with the Quality Code, Subject Benchmark Statements and *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) through its preparation for reviews and validations and the development of new programmes. The School is assisted in this by the Partnerships Managers of The University of Essex. The School is fully aware of the need for external interaction and reference to its stakeholders, which is evident in its programme aims.

18 The School reviews a range of aspects of its provision such as student satisfaction, the levels of academic achievement and employability against a university benchmark group of similar courses across the UK. Additionally, the School has been accredited by the Institute of Hospitality since 2015. In 2013 it became a member of the Council for Hospitality Management Education and of the European Hotel Schools Federation.

19 The School's Board of Trustees has members from the industry who are available for consultation on changes to the course, as is the external examiner, and both staff and students attend events held by appropriate external agencies. Additionally, consultancy and the establishment of professional networking continue to develop.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

20 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.

21 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Peter Hymans, Reviewer, and Dr Chris Amodio, Coordinator, on 15 March 2017.

QAA1849 - R8243 - Apr 17

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2017
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557050
Web: www.qaa.ac.uk