



## Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of the Global Banking School Ltd, November 2018

### 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 Global Banking School Ltd, (the School) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the November 2017 [monitoring visit](#).

### Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The School currently has 22 full-time and seven part-time staff and there have been no significant staffing changes since the last monitoring visit. There are 579 students studying programmes from Level 4 to Level 7, validated by Pearson, Buckinghamshire New University and a small number with the University of Bedfordshire. The HND Business is in collaboration with Leicester College and they have recently agreed to extend this to an HND in Healthcare Practice for England and an HND in Hospitality Management to be offered both at the London campus of the School and at its new Birmingham campus. All programmes are managed centrally from the London campus.

### Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The School operates a quality cycle for enhancement that it uses to evaluate the learning environment and its impact on the student experience and individual academic outcomes. The School publishes a series of monitoring reports that are linked systematically to action plans and this provides a framework for continuous review of student learning opportunities. The actions taken are appropriate and align with its stated learning and teaching strategic priorities and consequently the School continues to make acceptable progress.

4 The 2016 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) report identified one feature of good practice and made seven recommendations that were addressed in the School's 2016-17 Action Plan. The 2017 Annual Monitoring report concluded that the benefits derived from these actions were yet to be realised and additional time was required before the School could evaluate and understand the impact on student experience and performance. The School has since made good progress with evaluating the impact of actions taken in 2017-18.

5 The School continues to develop the personal and professional potential of its students through engagement with the Global Banking Society and Valuation Olympiad. The School has recently appointed a relationship manager to further expand links with industry and to ensure employer needs are reflected in curriculum design to enhance the employability of the students. Wider careers advice can be accessed via the careers service of one awarding body, Buckinghamshire New University.

6 The School continues to implement a clear strategy for strengthening and reviewing student engagement initiatives. Students participate in a range of meeting forums that review the learning environment. Course representatives co-chair meetings and participate in

interview sessions for new academic staff appointments. The School's student engagement report reviews attendance across meeting forums and response rates to student surveys, and is presented to school staff at the Learning and Teaching Committee. Students enrolled on Buckinghamshire New University programmes are members of the Student's Union and participate in their annual surveys.

7 The School operates a consistent approach to the review and update of student-facing documentation to ensure that information available is fit for purpose. This includes a version control process which systematically lists changes to documents, with policies and procedures reviewed and approved annually at Academic Board. Minutes of meetings follow standardised agenda items, and this ensures that items discussed at committees reflect their terms of reference and that processes are reviewed against the expectations of the Quality Code. The minutes, however, do not always reference documents that are tabled to support the business of the various committees.

8 Good practice and areas for development are standing agenda items at Programme and Student Representative Committee meetings. Annual monitoring processes identify good practice with reports presented and discussed at the School's Learning and Teaching Committee and this facilitates the sharing of information. The School has a peer observation process that encourages all teaching staff to share good classroom practice. Staff development opportunities are provided through formal induction events, a series of standardisation meetings and academic workshops that are delivered by the School and Buckinghamshire New University.

9 The School's Learning and Teaching Strategy provides context and drivers for the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The document lists nine strategic aims with associated performance indicators that link to students as study partners for learning. The Annual Monitoring Report of Enhancement Strategy and the Learning and Teaching Action Plan and Progress Monitoring Report are mechanisms for reviewing progress against the Learning and Teaching strategic aims. The documents provide a framework for supporting enhancement of the student experience and associated outcomes albeit the School confirmed that its strategic approach is designed to lead to incremental improvements in learning outcomes over a period of time.

10 The annual monitoring processes operated by the School are appropriate and systematically applied across all course provision. The process is evidence-based and supported by survey data, student metrics and external examiner reports. Annual reports are submitted to each awarding body and this increases the robustness of the monitoring processes. The School has procedures for developing, monitoring and evaluating actions to enhance student learning opportunities.

12 The School implements cyclical processes to evaluate the impact of actions on student outcomes which, in turn, results in the development of new actions for enhancement. Since the previous monitoring visit, the School has developed an admissions risk register based on an evaluation of admissions and student performance data. Previous performance levels of students on Level 6 top-up programmes resulted in the implementation of intervention strategies that focused on admissions processes and student support mechanisms. The intervention strategies applied did not improve sufficiently the critical thinking and academic writing skills of the students admitted to programme and this reduced completion rates. Through consultation with its awarding body, it has been decided that admission to the programme will be available only to those students that have successfully completed the Level 5 programmes that are delivered by the School. The School's quality cycle and the monitoring required by its awarding bodies, support the continuous review of both its programmes and individual student achievement.

13 The School reviews the marketing materials used to attract student candidates to ensure they accurately reflect what is delivered to students. A series of recruitment channels are used to attract student candidates, including open days, social media, digital marketing, job and community fairs, and agent referrals. Agent input to student recruitment is limited and, following initial referral, the admissions team take full control of sharing information to prospective candidates and the various steps that lead to enrolment at the School.

14 The School is committed to a fair admissions policy that ensures all students are capable of completing the programme to which they are admitted. Adherence to the fair admissions principle can be evidenced by the decision that only students that have previously studied at the School will be admitted to FHEQ Level 6 top-up programmes. Admissions processes operated by the School are differentiated according to the requirements of their awarding bodies. The School has complete authority to admit students to the Pearson HND programme. For Buckinghamshire New University programmes, the University, as the awarding body, approves admission based on recommendations made by the School. Since the last QAA monitoring visit, the School has enhanced the admissions process through a series of step change improvements such as the implementation of mandatory interviews, limiting acceptance of qualifications to Ofqual recognised awards, fraud prevention checks and the development of a register that identifies candidates with increased risk to trigger additional checks to support admission integrity.

15 Admission requirements for assessment of English language competency are not clearly articulated in relevant documentation. For UK nationals the students are required to provide a Level 3 Ofqual accredited qualification, but the School does not state which subjects are acceptable indicators of language competency. The School does require students to write a supervised written personal reflection to demonstrate their ability to write and think critically and all applicants are required to attend an interview during which their spoken English is further assessed.

16 Assessment processes vary according to the awarding body. For Pearson programmes, the assessments are internally verified by School staff prior to further verification and approval from Leicester College, and this process follows a set calendar of events and the completion of standard forms to ensure the process is rigorously applied. Student assessments are both formative and summative to support learning with submission dates scheduled to avoid overlap and overload. Module leads complete assignment briefs that include marking schemes that are subjected to a two-stage internal verification process via the school and by Leicester College. Assessment oversight is further strengthened by the external examiner who is required to verify all assessments. Student assessment outcomes are mapped to the learning outcomes and graded according to set criteria with feedback provided on a form that is well-constructed and easy to understand. The assessment processes that lead to a Pearson's award are robust with overall progression outcomes clearly recorded in Examination Board minutes under the auspices of Leicester College.

17 For Level 6 awards, the School follows the policy, regulations and operational processes defined by Buckinghamshire New University. The University sets all assessments which are approved by appointed external examiners. Assignment briefs are also checked by the Dean and the appointed University link tutor to ensure the process is completed in accordance with agreed protocols. Student work is first marked and moderated by School staff with samples sent to external examiners for review.

18 For all programmes, the students are briefed on how to avoid academic malpractice and all work is submitted through plagiarism software via the virtual learning environment. For Pearson programmes, all cases of alleged academic malpractice are dealt within the School. For Level 6 awards, all such cases are dealt with in accordance with Buckinghamshire New University processes and procedures. The processes for setting,

reviewing and quality assuring assessments are robust and ensure the students' work is genuine and fairly marked against the learning outcomes they are designed to meet.

19 The 26 students who started the September 2016 cohort of the BA Business and Finance programme had a retention rate of six per cent which the School identified as a problem and put measures in place to address. These included the introduction of a foundation year, an increase in the level of academic support, the development of a study skills module, the introduction of formative feedback sessions for students, a revised internal moderation process and strengthened programme monitoring processes. This has resulted in an improvement to a 63 per cent retention rate for the January 2017 cohort and 87 per cent for the BA Business Management with Foundation Year September 2017 cohort. The BA Business Management top-up programme has been very challenging and of the 56 students recruited in 2017, none have as yet achieved. The School has identified that the academic writing skills of students are not sufficiently well developed to achieve the qualification. They have made a decision to only admit students in the future who have a merit grade in HND Business from their own programmes as they believe that their own HND students are more likely to achieve than those coming from another institution who may not have the same standards and expectations as the School.

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

20 The awarding bodies and the UK Quality Code of Higher Education (the Quality Code) are the main external reference points used by the School for academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. The quality assurance cycle is designed in accordance with the Quality Code and each section is mapped to the code. The Quality Code is used in annual monitoring and the quality improvement documents are mapped to the Quality Code and to the nine strategic aims for improvement within the School's Learning and Teaching Strategy. The agendas of the Academic Board and the Learning and Teaching Committee are referenced to the Quality Code. The School follows the awarding body regulations and procedures for all relevant activities, for example, programme development, assessments and responding to external examiners' reports.

## **Background to the monitoring visit**

21 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.

22 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr. Neil Lucas, Reviewer, and Kevin Kendall, QAA Officer, on 13 November 2018.

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