



## Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of Grafton College Ltd, June 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 Grafton College Ltd trading as Grafton College of Management Sciences (the College) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the June 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

### 2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 The College has now moved from its previous location in Shepherd's Bush to new premises in Oxford Street in central London. This move has been very popular with students, who appreciate all the extra space and facilities and the prime location.

3 The College continues to offer the Pearson Higher National Diploma (HND) in Business Studies, with 210 students currently enrolled, and the Pearson HND Human Resource Management, with 90 students currently enrolled. In total, this represents 30 more students enrolled than last year.

4 The College has just successfully completed a validation process with the Open University for a three-year full-time BA (Hons) in Business and Management. From September 2017, the College will offer a level 6 top-up programme for its existing students. The full BA programme will be offered from September 2018.

### 3 Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The College's 2016 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) made one recommendation: to review the student membership of the Academic Board and its subcommittees to align with practice (Expectation B5). It also affirmed that steps were being taken to ensure a thorough analysis of progression rates for programmes and units (Expectation B2). Acceptable progress has been made on the recommendation (paragraphs 6, 7 and 8), while work on the affirmation has continued but further steps can be taken (paragraph 9).

6 Student representation has been strengthened through inclusion on certain College Committees, and it is proposed to include students in Advisory Board meetings soon. However, representatives are not always named in minutes and their participation is rarely recorded. Furthermore, no formal evaluation of their contribution to meetings has yet been undertaken.

7 Students stated that the Lead Student Representative (LSR) attends all meetings and is supported by two other student representatives, selected by the LSR based on their availability. However, only some minutes actually record three named student representatives. Other minutes record only 'student representatives' or make no mention of student participation. Students described their involvement in meetings as inclusive, confirming that they are able to contribute to discussions, but there was little evidence of active student engagement recorded in minutes.

8 Representatives are chosen by the students in each cohort and represent approximately 40 students each. The LSR is then selected by all the students. Training for the student representatives is provided by the College, and although no formal evaluation or assessment of the training was evidenced, attendees confirmed that this had been helpful and provided them with the confidence to undertake the roles.

9 The College now includes detailed analysis and interpretation of progression and success rates in its Annual College Reports. Analysis of cohort data is used to plan teaching strategy while differentiation of results based on prior attainment has indicated little variation in success rate and progression. However, the planned review of new students' entry profiles and relating of these to student attainment has not yet been implemented. There is also a lack of standardisation in the recording of student data, which has allowed some discrepancies and errors to occur.

10 The College continues to ensure that there are appropriate policies and procedures in place for the admission of students. The Admissions Policy has been revised to include requirements for the recently validated BA Top-Up Degree, from September 2017, and subsequent BA degree. Student applications include a personal statement which is used to confirm fluency in written English as well as intention to study, and this is followed up at interview. Students confirmed that they were interviewed, that their qualifications and proficiency in English were checked, and that they undertook a formal assessment of numeracy and literacy. The admissions team check international qualifications for their correspondence with UK qualifications and Pearson entry requirements. The Pearson Annual Monitoring Reports confirm adherence with Pearson admissions and registration requirements. The Admissions Committee meets regularly to review recruitment and admissions policy and operation.

11 The College governance and committee structure ensures that the Academic Board has oversight of the management of quality and standards, with support and advice from the Advisory Board and external consultants. Policies are regularly revised and posted on the College website. Regular Programme Management Committee meetings are held, at which the end-of-module surveys completed by students are considered, as well as the assessment and attendance data. Details emerging from the regular Assessment Boards are also used in the planning of teaching and assessment strategies. Action planning is in place, with clearly stated actions on minutes that are monitored by the Academic Board and signed off on completion. Observation reports are used to inform staff development needs and to plan internal staff development workshops, as well as ensuring the implementation of teaching and learning policy and strategy. Student attendance is monitored and reported to the Attendance Monitoring Committee.

12 Student views are sought by means of surveys held during induction and at the end of modules, at Staff-Student Liaison meetings and informally. Students confirmed that feedback on their comments is timely and that issues raised are successfully concluded. For example, an additional IT suite has been provided and vending machines installed while email problems encountered by applicants, which were highlighted in the induction survey, were investigated and effectively addressed.

13 The College makes good use of the Pearson external examiner reports and Annual Monitoring Reports, ensuring that recommendations are carried out promptly and that identified good practice is shared. The Annual Monitoring Reports are positive and confirm that quality assurance systems are in place and in compliance with Pearson requirements. The recent successful validation event with the Open University also confirms that programme monitoring systems are operating within the College. The College publishes an Annual Monitoring Report which, together with reports on enhancement activities such as

employability and student engagement, provides an overview of the programme and its management.

14 Of the 299 full-time students enrolled on the HND programme in September 2014, there was an 85.2 per cent retention rate as 44 students discontinued. Of the 255 who completed, 239 passed - a pass rate of 93.7 per cent. There were also 59 full-time distance learners, all of whom completed their studies with 55 passing - a pass rate of 93.2 per cent. Following the revision of admission procedures, the retention rate has increased: of 103 students enrolled in May 2016, 97 have continued - a retention rate of 94.1per cent - while for the 286 students enrolled into three cohorts in Sept 2016 and Jan 2017, the retention rates have been 99 per cent, 98 per cent and 100 per cent respectively.

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

15 College policies and procedures are aligned with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and there has been staff training on the Quality Code. One member of staff has attained Fellowship with the Higher Education Academy (HEA), and several are members of professional bodies such as the Chartered Management Institute (CMI). The College is planning to support more teaching staff in attaining HEA recognition.

16 Through its Pearson HND programmes, the College makes appropriate reference to the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), previously the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF). It also references the Subject Benchmark Statement for Business and Management.

17 The College took part in the National Student Survey (NSS) for the first time this year and the findings will be analysed before the September intake.

18 The College is also part of the Armed Forces Employer Recognition Scheme and is accredited to the matrix Standard for information, advice and guidance services.

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

19 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.

20 The monitoring visit was carried out by Sue Miller, Reviewer, and Jacqueline Young, Coordinator, on 21 June 2017.

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