



# Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Hult International Business School Ltd, April 2016

## 1 Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review panel concludes that Hult International Business School Ltd (Hult) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision since the [previous monitoring visit](#) in April 2015.

## 2 Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The major change since the monitoring visit in 2015 is the agreement for Hult to merge with the Ashridge Business School which has UK taught degree awarding powers. The merger will be completed in September 2016. It received regulatory approval from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges in the USA in June 2015 and from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in the UK in August 2015. The operational aspects of the merger is being undertaken during 2015-16. This visit was extended because of the planned merger.

## 3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 Hult has completed the actions from the QAA Review in 2012, and those action plans have been checked during monitoring visits in 2013 and 2014 with good progress made. Therefore, no actions remain outstanding. Hult is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision and actions have led to improvements. The admissions process is efficiently administered and evaluated (paragraph 5). Annual monitoring is effective in identifying issues and good practice, and in addressing these in action plans (paragraph 9). There is clear evidence of global and local oversight of progression data (paragraph 13). There have been several successful external reviews of Hult (paragraph 14). The planned merger with Ashridge Business School presents Hult with operational tasks which will be completed in 2016.

4 Hult's own annual monitoring has identified actions regarding undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. All the actions have been completed on target and led to enhancements of the provision (see paragraph 9).

5 The Academic Board maintains overall oversight of admissions. The Admissions Committee has delegated authority from the Academic Board to set admissions requirements, oversee their implementation, grant academic credit for prior learning, and for the policies and practice for immigration. The Committee further monitors the implementation of admissions criteria and conducts periodic reviews of admissions processes and associated data. Staff are provided with training on admissions as required. Hult's admissions policies and processes are fair and lead to a diverse international student body.

6 Hult's admissions process continues to be managed centrally for all applicants worldwide and implemented at a local level. Hult has explicit admissions criteria which are set out in the admission procedures for undergraduate programmes. As part of that

approach, the admissions criteria requires Hult to look for applicants who demonstrate a passion for business and curiosity about the world. Hult also looks for the students' extracurricular activities and achievements, including work experience. Admissions criteria for postgraduate students is further set out in the Postgraduate Admissions Procedures to include language proficiency requirements. Both staff and students met by the panel confirmed that they fully understood the criteria for admissions. The application process is well managed. There is an enrolment team which carries out a personal assessment interview. The staff and students further confirmed that all applicants submit their applications online, supported by the Enrolment Team who also conducts a series of interviews to ensure the suitability of the applicants before the Admissions Team starts the process, as set out in Hult documentation. Hult has introduced a new set of standardised admission acceptance letter templates for implementation by the Admissions Team for 2016.

7 Hult does not currently allow credit exemptions for postgraduate programmes. For undergraduate programmes Hult allows a maximum of 60 US credits. For students outside the US system, the final year of secondary school may be considered where it is equivalent to a the first year of university study. Students may also transfer up to 30 US credits. However, in all cases Hult seeks to determine the equivalent of the American C grade as well as contact hours involved, and award credit for the achievement in academic subjects which is at least C standard.

8 Currently, Hult carries out quality monitoring at various times throughout the year, rather than at the end of the year. These are multidimensional reviews that enable Hult to identify promptly issues during the year and provide timely solutions. The individual reports deal with various areas, including student satisfaction and feedback, campus learning resources, student progression and completion and destination data, the staffing base, student appeals, regulations, equality and diversity, currency of the curricula and a review of teaching staff through classroom observation. The reports are evaluative, make use of evidence and identify actions to improve the provision. Student feedback and other forms of student engagement drive these actions.

9 As part of the quality monitoring process, Hult is introducing a policy whereby permanent faculty staff produce a professional portfolio. This will enable staff to identify their achievements, their personal development and research, and feedback from students.

10 Through its Academic Board and the Academic and Standards and Quality Committees, Hult effectively uses quality monitoring to make improvements to programmes and for cross-programme developments. For example, there have been changes to all the postgraduate programmes, such as a new grading system, and replacing traditional dissertations with the Hult Impact Challenge in response to student feedback. Changes across all courses have followed from quality monitoring, including amendments to timetables, student activity support, the use of business simulations, introducing electronic exams, and undergraduate grading. Library resources have been substantially improved, for example supplementing the electronic library with core textbooks, the setting up of a postgraduate library at the London Postgraduate Campus and a small on-site library at the London Undergraduate Campus.

11 Hult is proposing some changes to quality monitoring such as producing a summary of the different monitoring reports at the end of the year. It will also make adjustments to annual monitoring during this year as a result of the merger with Ashridge Business School in order to produce a common system.

12 There are 1,286 students in London (732 undergraduate and 554 postgraduate). There is clear evidence of both global and local oversight. Reviews of progression and completion of student assessment are all carried out by the Postgraduate Central Team on a

termly basis. To support this assessment, Hult reviews grade distribution by instructor for the analysis of awarded grades and a grade report by student which analyses how each student is performing and progressing by term and overall. An emphasis has been placed on monitoring the individuals rather than the cohort and this was clearly of value to students met by the panel. It provides closer monitoring of student progress and enables Hult to respond promptly to students' needs. Hult produces an annual Graduation Report which has information on students' performance by degree type and shows cumulatively how a student has performed along with information about when they started and left. Completion rates and retention reports are further available for review by the Postgraduate Dean and Global Postgraduate Team. Similar reports on retention and completions are monitored annually by their respective Dean and Global Undergraduate Team. The panel also saw tables demonstrating further analysis of the number of graduates across the various campuses, graduation rates across the master's programmes and year-on-year undergraduate student numbers. Hult also undertakes rigorous student destination surveys.

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

13 Since the last Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight visit, a number of external reviews and accreditation events have taken place, for example, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges' review of the merger with Ashridge Business School, the Association of MBAs' review of the MBA and EMBA programmes, the Chartered Institute of Marketing's review and approval of the BBA programme, and the British Accreditation Council's review of the London campuses. All these reviews gave positive outcomes for Hult. Other examples of the use of external reference points include the use of live projects, live clients, internships, the Alumni Mentorship Programme, the Hult Impact Challenge, visiting lecturers and teaching staff who teach in their other sites around the world and also in other UK institutions. Hult's own Annual Monitoring Report makes frequent reference to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and it is clear that staff are able to articulate and use the Quality Code to guide the management of the provision.

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

14 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.

15 The monitoring visit was carried out by Ms Barbara Howell (Review Panel Member) and Mr Phil Markey (Review Manager) on 19 and 20 April 2016.

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