



## Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of HY Education Ltd t/a Apex College, May 2019

### Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that HY Education Limited t/a Apex College (the College) is making commendable progress since the [May 2018 monitoring visit](#).

### Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The College is a registered centre offering the Pearson BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND) in Business Management. The College has recently moved from the first to the third floor in the same building and this has provided additional classrooms, facilities and social space for students, as well as increased office accommodation.

3 The College is currently able to recruit up to 50 students, which they have done by alternating a large cohort of approximately 80 per cent of their allocation with a smaller cohort the following year. Following their successful registration with the Office for Students, the College is planning to increase student numbers in the next academic year. There are nine staff in total. The three academic staff are part-time, three administrative staff are full-time and one of the three management staff is part-time.

### Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The College has made commendable progress with the ongoing monitoring, review and enhancement of its higher education provision. The annual monitoring visit in May 2018 confirmed that the College had completed all the actions identified as a result of the recommendations of the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (HER (AP)) carried out in April 2017. The College has further developed its internal quality processes, through detailed action plans, monitoring of progress and development of impact assessments (paragraph 5). It has built upon the areas of good practice and implemented the affirmation identified in the HER report by developing and delivering regular study skills seminars and workshops (paragraph 6). The College continues to maintain academic standards and to actively enhance the quality of the learning opportunities of its provision. Quality and standards in relation to admissions (paragraph 6) and assessment (paragraphs 7 and 8) are robust and have developed since the previous monitoring visit. Student attendance, progress, retention and achievement are monitored and reviewed proactively (paragraph 9). The College has evidenced highly effective engagement with external reference points and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) (paragraphs 11 and 12).

5 The three areas of good practice identified in the HER (AP) report of April 2017 have been further enhanced. The delivery and assessment of the programme is regularly reviewed and feedback is used effectively to facilitate change, such as the re-designing of assessment briefs and inclusion of external visits for students. Teaching staff are well qualified and have extensive external experience. They are proactive in developing their knowledge and skills and students speak very highly of their teaching and learning experience. The College has continued to monitor, review and enhance its higher education

provision. Policies are well embedded and the impact of actions is now assessed in action plans.

6 Since the previous monitoring visit the College has continued to develop its own internal quality processes, detailing actions and monitoring their progress. The HND Programme Director produces a termly report which is discussed at the Academic Standards Board. The College then incorporates this into a self-evaluation report to the awarding organisation. Action planning is developed from these reports and monitored at HND Programme Board and Academic Standards Board. Oversight is maintained by the Executive Board. Student participation is well developed. Representatives of the student cohorts meet regularly with management and are able to formally raise issues at HND Programme Board and Academic Standards meetings. Informal meetings allow for feedback from students to be addressed quickly. Students confirmed they are able to approach all staff with any queries, problems, comments or suggestions regarding either their academic or general experience. Student surveys are carried out regularly and are reported on in the HND Programme Director's report. Students explained that the recent move to larger accommodation had resulted in much improved facilities; and that developments to the virtual learning environment (VLE), additional workshops and the practical elements incorporated into their programme have enhanced their learning experience.

7 The College employs a rigorous and well managed Admissions Policy and the admissions procedure has been further strengthened by the appointment of a Student Services Officer who manages the process. The Admissions Policy and entry requirements are linked closely to the requirements set out by the awarding organisation for their HND programmes and include English Language requirements for EU applicants whose first language is not English. The majority of students are mature, and many have approached the College as a result of personal recommendations from previous students. Students confirmed that they were interviewed and undertook a numeracy and literacy assessment as well as completing a personal statement prior to admission. Staff confirmed that the interview panel took time during the interview to investigate students' commitment to learning as well as their academic and work experience. Students were complimentary about the contact they had with the College during the admissions and enrolment period. The College has introduced a revised induction programme and students confirmed that this provided a useful introduction to their programme and to the range of support available. Workshops to support academic writing, research and referencing were well received by the students.

8 The College adheres to the Pearson Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment for the management of all assessments. The College has used these guidelines and the course specification documents to produce their own assessment regulations document which has been mapped to the expectations of the Quality Code. In addition to these the College has detailed policies and student guides on internal verification, academic misconduct, extenuating circumstances, feedback on assessment and attendance. Planning for assessment, issuing assessment briefs, submission deadlines, internal verification and assessment boards is supported by the College Academic Calendar. Students confirmed that they are well prepared for assessments, the assessment briefs are clear and timely, submission dates are slightly staggered and formative in-class activities support their learning, research and writing. Students are well informed on the need for clear referencing and strategies to avoid malpractice and understand that following online submission their work will be checked through plagiarism-detection software.

9 Internal verification is in place and effective. The College has been actively working to ensure that feedback to students is timely, developmental and encouraging. Students confirmed that this is the case. The College holds an Assessment Board to confirm assessment decisions. The external examiner's report and the awarding organisation's

Academic Management Report are supportive of the standards of assessment. The reports are considered at Board of Studies and Academic Standards Board and action to address any essential actions or recommendations is taken.

10 Student progress is regularly monitored and reviewed. The Student Services Officer holds one-to-one meetings with students to discuss progress and attendance. Poor attendance is followed up by the Student Services Officer and Administrator and students are provided with their percentage attendance figures each semester. Students were aware of the importance of good levels of attendance and the link to achievement. Students were highly complimentary about the role of the Student Services Officer in supporting them with their studies. Student progress is a standard agenda item at HND Programme Board of Studies.

11 Current student numbers comprise a 2017-19 cohort of nine students and 2018-20 cohort of 41. The 2017-19 cohort was originally 10, with one student having withdrawn from the programme, the small group size making the percentage retention skewed at 90 per cent. In the previous cohort 2017-18, 38 students were enrolled. Of these, three withdrew and 30 of the 35 continuing students successfully completed their HND, giving a retention rate of 92 per cent and a pass rate of 86 per cent. Student data is reviewed regularly at HND Programme Board meetings and in the HND Programme Director's Report to Academic Standards Board, ensuring that management oversight is maintained.

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

12 The College has undertaken a mapping process to ensure that all its policies and procedures meet the expectations of the Quality Code. All policies include details of how the relevant expectations are met and staff are familiar with the requirements of the Quality Code. Work to consider and map policies against the revised Quality Code is planned to take place before September 2019.

13 The College works closely with the guidance documents and specifications produced by the awarding organisation for the qualification. They act on any essential actions and recommendations from the annual Academic Management Review and external examiners reports.

## **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 Mrs Sue Miller, Reviewer, and Ms Christine Bevan, QAA Officer, on 29 May 2019.

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