



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of Inter-Ed UK Ltd t/a The City College, October 2016

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 Inter-Ed UK Ltd t/a The City College (the College) has made **acceptable** progress with implementing the action plan from the October 2015 [Higher Education Review](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 Currently 279 students are studying on the College's higher education programmes. These are Pearson Higher National Diploma programmes in Business; Health and Social Care; Hospitality Management; Travel and Tourism, and Computing/Systems Development. Since the review the College has been accredited to deliver a Licentiate in Acupuncture and 19 students are registered on this programme. There have been no other significant changes.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The College is making **acceptable** progress in response to the good practice and recommendations of the 2015 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (the Review). Pastoral support is maintained through formal and informal mechanisms; student representatives, who continue to sit on College committees, are currently involved in the enhancement of learning opportunities, particularly through their participation in periodic review. The College has revised its Complaints Policy, which is effectively communicated and fit for purpose. Information in student handbooks and on the website has, while remaining work in progress, been strengthened, as has careers guidance, which now benefits from the weekly attendance of a National Careers Office representative.

4 While the College has made progress in strengthening periodic review, the expectation that annual monitoring would be formalised and a Quality Improvement Plan developed has still to be formally met. Usage of the virtual learning environment (VLE), which students described as a useful platform to support their studies, continues to develop; the College has taken steps to ensure that its Admissions Policy and procedure are fully aligned with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code); but, while it also analyses retention and completion data, it has yet to integrate this analysis into a systematic annual review cycle.

5 The College continues to develop its good practice in pastoral support identified by the Review, with sound informal and formal mechanisms in place. It operates an open-door policy, which students described as working well. Student representatives, who are elected and attend an annual staff student liaison meeting, formal College meetings, and meetings with external examiners, report back to the student body on matters which have been raised and addressed.

6 The College maintains the good practice of involving students in the enhancement of learning opportunities. Representatives' attendance at College committee meetings facilitates their involvement in programme review and development, and student involvement

has been strengthened through participation in periodic review: in this regard the review team notes that three student representatives are currently full members of the team reviewing the Higher National Diploma Business Studies. The content of end-of-unit evaluation surveys is addressed appropriately.

7 The Review made three recommendations. The first was that the College should ensure that its Complaints Policy was fit for purpose and effectively communicated. This recommendation has been met, and the significantly revised and extended Policy now available on the intranet sets out each stage in the process, and is free of the minor inaccuracies previously identified. Since no complaints have been made in the current academic year, the Policy has yet to be tested in practice.

8 The second recommendation was to provide more detailed information on the website and in handbooks. Here progress has been made with student handbooks, which now include full specifications for core and optional units, but the College acknowledges that scope continues to exist to improve the website: for example, while the website lists the core and optional units in each programme, it provides only limited details of the content of these units and how they fit into the programme structure.

9 The third recommendation was to develop a strategic approach to employer engagement and career guidance. Here acceptable progress has been made. Invitations have been extended to guest speakers, and discussions have been held with the National Careers Office a representative of which attends the College every week in term time. The Health and Social Care programme involves 200 hours of work experience; staff teaching on the Acupuncture programme are self-employed practitioners; and final year Acupuncture students run a clinic with patients in a manner which offers insight into work experience and opportunities for career progression. Nevertheless, a formal strategy or action plan for career guidance with clearly identifiable objectives linked to learning opportunities has yet to be developed.

10 The College's Review affirmed the actions being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve its educational provision. Here the College has made some progress, with its planned five-year rolling programme of periodic reviews having commenced with the Business Studies review. At the time of the annual monitoring visit, an interim report was available, and a final report was due for submission to the Academic Board in November. While the systematic annual monitoring and the Quality Improvement Plan referred to in the Review have yet to be delivered, external examiner reports are carefully considered, with responses made to any concerns raised, and assessment boards analyse basic data. The College also envisages that an analysis of student achievement data in each Higher National Diploma programme currently being undertaken by the Principal will inform future action plans.

11 The Review affirmed the steps being taken to ensure that all teaching staff made appropriate use of the VLE. This development is continuing satisfactorily: while no formal minimum threshold requirement has been established, all units of study have assignments uploaded, teaching materials are available for most of the modules, and students spoke positively of the overall value of the VLE as a whole.

12 The College's detailed Admissions Policy clearly outlines the key responsibilities involved, and the College carefully administers and documents recruitment, selection and admission arrangements. The process, which includes literacy and numeracy tests for students lacking the appropriate Level 2 qualifications, involves a standardised interview conducted by a trained member of staff, the specifications of which include helping applicants determine the suitability for them of their intended programme. A robust policy on

the recognition of prior learning requires documentary evidence to demonstrate that previous study or experience meets the relevant learning outcomes.

13 As the Higher Education Review report explained, the College was affected by its loss of Tier 4 status, which involved replacing its former high-achieving international students in the academic year 2012-13 (who had a 100 per cent pass rate) with local students of variable ability. This was a difficult period for the College, and in the two years following, with the exception of the Acupuncture students, whose pass rate was 100 per cent, the pass rate was low. For the 2015 intake, however, and prior to the 2015 Review, the College, recognising that this situation was not sustainable, put in place actions, which included a restructuring of the academic year to allow students to take fewer modules simultaneously, to develop their study skills and to undertake assignments at a manageable pace. There are no confirmed figures available for this programme at present. It is anticipated, however, that the procedures being put in place (see paragraph 4) will ensure that accurate numbers are available next year. Students have welcomed the new arrangements.

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

14 The College secured professional accreditation in July 2016 for the Licentiate in Acupuncture. The British Acupuncture Accreditation Board accreditation report noted, amongst other things, 'the design of the curriculum with clear learning outcomes and relevant assessment strategy, and modules which link together helping students progress towards an understanding of complexity'.

15 Since its 2015 Review the College has continued to engage with the Quality Code, reviewing its policies and procedures to ensure their full alignment. For example, following its strengthening of the appeal system against admissions decisions, it now includes provision for a formal admissions representation procedure.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

16 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.

17 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Colin Fryer, Reviewer, and Brenda Hodgkinson, Coordinator, on 12 October 2016.

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