



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of the International School of Sikh Studies, June 2015

Section 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 the International School of Sikh Studies (the School) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the [previous monitoring visit](#) in June 2014.

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The School has no students currently enrolled, as its Tier 4 Sponsorship Licence was revoked in March 2015. Prior to this, from September 2014 to March 2015, 46 students were registered for awards from the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (30), the Chartered Management Institute (8), the Association of International Accountants (4) and the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (4). The School is also accredited by the Association of Business Executives. The School is no longer offering Chartered Management Institute programmes, but all the other awarding organisations reaccredited the School during the 2014-2015 academic year. The School employs 15 permanent members of staff, including six teachers on the programmes. The School's strategy is to recruit home students from September 2015 and reapply for its Tier 4 Sponsorship Licence.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The School has made acceptable progress since the 2014 Annual Monitoring visit in continuing to provide effective oversight to maintain and enhance the quality of its provision, albeit that no students are currently registered. Weekly staff meetings, which were identified as good practice in the 2012 Review for Educational Oversight report, continue to provide an effective mechanism for prompt discussion and feedback for staff (and formerly students) in order to enhance the provision. Students attended the meetings monthly and raised issues, to which the staff responded. The meetings were also used to inform students on assignment deadlines, virtual learning environment developments, and policy and regulation reminders and changes. Staff confirmed that the meetings, which continue to take place on a staff-only basis, provide the opportunity to discuss routine business and specific topics, such as updates from awarding organisations and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code).

4 The School's committee structure has clear membership rules and terms of reference. The first meeting of the Academic Board, which is responsible for maintaining academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, took place in October 2014. Minutes of this meeting and subsequent meetings do not, however, always indicate detailed actions with deadlines. The Planning and Policies Committee is responsible for drafting and revising policies and the updating of all public information documents, but the Policy Handbook 2014-16 does not provide detail of the operation of the quality assurance system. Separate charts for management and professional courses illustrate the effective working of

the quality assurance cycle 2014-15. The Policy Handbook was updated and developed during academic year 2014-2015 to include such policies as Malpractice and Maladministration, in response to requests from the awarding organisations.

5 The Annual Review 2013-14 relates to the whole School. There is an attached summary for all professional programmes, including progression and achievement data. Sixteen students have completed the Chartered Institute of Management Accountant's certificate qualification to date. The Academic Board reviews the programme statistics and reports from awarding organisations, and discusses actions for improvement. Senior management reviews programmes in the summer, using an annual monitoring template to consider possible changes to programme provision. A day for programme review and planning is allocated to each awarding organisation during the September teacher training week. The annual review is also supported by ongoing discussions at weekly staff meetings. There is no formal written annual programme review and, in spite of exploring the issue, the team remains uncertain as to how the School evaluates the effectiveness of its committee structure and annual programme monitoring. Staff recognise the need for a more systematic approach to annual monitoring and action planning, however, and an annual monitoring policy, to be included in the Policy Handbook, is under discussion.

6 The School's Teaching and Learning Policy is displayed on the website. The School collects student feedback on teaching, and senior management monitors trends as part of its summer review. Each programme has a student representative to attend the monthly Student Course Representative Meeting with the Course Coordinators; a role description for this representative is in place and appears satisfactory. A Student Representative Body Meeting, also attended by student representatives and which used to identify common issues for reporting at the staff meetings, was suspended because of the small student cohort. Subsequently, in addition to student course representatives required attendance, all other students were encouraged to attend the monthly staff meetings. Staff provided examples, such as the need for more reference books, where student feedback had been acted upon.

7 Staff development focuses on teaching, learning and assessment during the annual teacher training week, and one-day staff development updates take place every quarter. The team confirms that the School responds appropriately to the recommendations of awarding organisations in respect of staff development. The recent Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality report recommended the provision of an internal verification training session for some staff, and the School is discussing details and scheduling of this event with the awarding organisation. The School also has a system of termly teaching observations, all of which are undertaken by the Vice Principal; in addition, all teaching staff are required to complete a self-assessment form, designed to enable staff reflection on their teaching and assessment practice. The team reviewed the information from the teaching observation and self-assessment forms and found they were effective mechanisms for staff to identify areas for improvement and good practice for dissemination to inform future staff development.

8 The School's Student Recruitment, Admissions and Selection Policy is reproduced in the Policy Handbook. The main sources of recruitment are word of mouth, enquiries from the School's own website and those of the awarding organisations, knowledge in the community, and press advertising. Selection is based on criteria which include previous academic history, attendance, suitability and interest in studying with a view to future employment in a candidate's home country. In addition, candidates are required to take a Home Office approved English language test. Interviews are conducted by the senior management team. In some cases the School submits academic qualifications to the awarding organisation for approval, and further checks take place at the time of admission and enrolment. There are comprehensive forms and letters to support the process. Feedback is provided to unsuccessful students, although there is no appeals procedure.

An induction day is held prior to the commencement of the programme, and students receive a comprehensive induction pack. Use is made of a buddy system whereby new students are paired with established students. Personal Development Planning is also to be introduced. Staff reported how they use *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education* of the Quality Code to support the development of recruitment and admissions policies and procedures, and the team confirms that the School's use of this Chapter is appropriate.

9 For Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality awards, staff assess and undertake internal verification, using set forms and marking criteria. Plagiarism programmes are used before assessments are sent to the awarding organisation for external marking. For all other awarding organisations the School is only responsible for formative assessment, and the team found satisfactory evidence of the tracking of each student's progress and the provision of appropriate feedback. The School continues to ensure it is meeting the expectation of *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning* of the Quality Code in order to be ready for future enrolments.

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

10 The School's awarding organisations are important points of external reference; staff are familiar with all current specifications and requirements, all amendments and updating are displayed on notice boards and relevant web pages, and updating is disseminated to other staff at the weekly staff meetings. The team confirms that staff attend awarding organisations' training sessions.

11 The School has developed a comprehensive system of mapping its policies and procedures on to the Quality Code. Staff receive a synopsis of each section of the Quality Code, which they use to discuss the mapping process at weekly staff meetings, with additional updating provided during Staff Development Week. The team considers the mapping of the Quality Code a significant development since the last monitoring visit in maintaining and enhancing the quality of provision.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

12 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.

13 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mrs Monica Owen (Coordinator) and Mrs Catherine Symonds (Reviewer) on 9 June 2015.

QAA1296 - R4366 - July 15

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786