

## Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Istituto Marangoni, April 2018

### 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 Istituto Marangoni (the Institute) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision from the 2017 [Annual Monitoring Visit](#).

2 The Institute continues to offer undergraduate and postgraduate programmes validated by Manchester Metropolitan University (the awarding body). It currently has 790 full-time students studying on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes; a 7 per cent increase from the previous year. The Institute successfully revalidated its existing provision of four BA programmes and validated six new BA pathways (plus sandwich mode) in March 2017. It also successfully revalidated its existing four MA programmes and validated two new ones in February 2018. The six new BA pathways have been added to the existing BA (Hons) Fashion three-year/four-year undergraduate courses. They are BA (Hons) Fashion Business & Buying, BA (Hons) Fashion Business Communication & New Media, BA (Hons) Fashion Design & Marketing, BA (Hons) Fashion Design & Menswear, BA (Hons) Fashion Design & Womenswear, and BA (Hons) Fashion Styling & Visual Merchandising. The two new MA programmes are MA Fashion Styling, Photography & Film and MA Luxury Accessories Design & Management. A new agreement for the BA (Hons) programmes was signed off in July 2017. All conditions for the new MA programmes have been met and the new agreement will be signed off by October 2018.

3 The Institute has appointed a new internal Director of Education and a new Registrar. It has made a series of internal staffing changes, including the appointment of a permanent Programme Leader for BA (Hons) Fashion Styling and the revision of its programme leadership at postgraduate level. It has also introduced a programme leader academic development project to better manage a tutor faculty. The Institute's current staffing is five full-time academic positions (Director of Education, four Programme Leaders), 14 senior tutors, 24 tutors, four senior visiting tutors and 21 visiting tutors.

### 2 Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The good practice of 'live briefs' and the active engagement with employers continues. All actions related to the enhancement of admissions processes have been completed. The Institute has improved its support for students as they search for suitable work placements. Pre-course information has been further developed, although students still remain confused about the additional costs associated with their programmes. The Student Representative Handbook has been revised and is being monitored. The Institute continues to follow the awarding body's Recruitment and Admissions policy and staff have received training on all changes over the past year. Supporting Professional Admissions guidelines have been refined and embedded into the admissions procedures.

5 The Institute continued to strengthen the good practice identified in the Higher Education Review April 2016 action plan. The use of live briefs has been shared across the Istituto Marangoni Group and projects have also been extended across disciplines in

response to student feedback and through the opportunity provided by new pathways. Students are particularly appreciative of this active engagement with the fashion industry.

6 All recommendations and affirmations from the QAA Higher Educational Review April 2016 action plan have now been satisfactorily addressed, with one exception (see paragraph 8). Enhancements to the admissions process have been completed. All applications are now reviewed by a Programme Leader via the online admissions portal, and there is clarity about the scope and purpose of the two types of interviews the Institute offers (personalised orientation and Programme Leader interviews). The subject-specific entry tests for BA (Hons) programmes have been evaluated and are operating effectively.

7 The Institute has improved its support for students trying to identify suitable work placements by extending its use of Symplicity as a portal for connecting students, alumni and employers across all international Schools. It has created an Academic Placement Tutor Co-ordinator post to further strengthen oversight and support for placements and has clarified the Academic Placement Tutor Responsibilities. Students confirmed that they are well supported.

8 The previous monitoring report noted that students sometimes arrive without being clear about the contents of their programmes. The Institute has now published revised terms and conditions for students, and introduced greater variety of channels of communication that include a series of information events alongside clarification of the number of hours of teaching per week. Students confirmed that the recruitment process had been helpful and clear. However, despite the Institute's actions for improving the clarity of information about additional costs, including its recent direct emailing of information to students and use of multiple media, postgraduate and undergraduate students commented on receiving vague or no information before enrolment.

9 The previous monitoring report noted that although information for students on complaints and appeals had been improved and student representatives had been given more training in this area, the Student Representative Handbook had not been revised. This has been completed and students confirmed that they were clear about appropriate systems and procedures. The effectiveness of the Institute's revised procedures is routinely monitored through their Continuous Improvement Plans (CIPs). The Student Complaints and Academic Appeals Registers are used as a form of student feedback through demonstrating how issues that have been raised have been followed up; examples include timetabling, teaching and value for money.

10 The Institute continues to follow the awarding body's Recruitment and Admissions policy, which is outlined in the previous monitoring visit report (see also paragraph 6). The Institute also continues to use a checklist before taking applications to a School Admissions Team, which includes checking English Language proficiency as evidenced through IELTS scores. Changes to the admissions procedures over the past year include further staff training, the extension of online admissions from 50 per cent to 100 per cent and an increase in entry requirements for entry to the BA (Hons) programmes from 64 to 80 UCAS tariff points. Staff have received additional training for all changes.

11 In relation to some student applications, the previous monitoring visit report noted that it was unclear whether the Supporting Professional Admissions (SPA) guidelines on appropriate recording of information and rationale for decision making were being fully met at interview stage. The Institute has mapped SPA expectations and guidelines against internal procedures, refined its checklist for all assessment interviews, and provided further staff training for the application of SPA guidelines when interviewing prospective students.

12 The Institute uses its awarding body's processes as its main method of internal annual monitoring. Its CIP is updated three times a year and includes useful qualitative and

quantitative information, including a range of statistical information, feedback from students and external examiner reports. The CIP also identifies actions that need to be taken and, in some sections, provides a progress update, though the sections vary in level of detail.

13 The plans are approved by Programme Committees before going to the Quality Enhancement and Academic Development Committee (QEADC) to ensure wider staff and student engagement with monitoring and enhancement. Overview reports from QEADC are passed to the School Board to enable the School Director to report directly to the Board of Directors so that it can satisfy itself that the London courses are meeting the expectations of both the Group and the awarding body. The annual monitoring process is supplemented through the use of termly unit enhancement plans and periodic review according to awarding body requirements. Annual monitoring is also informed by industry experts through the twice yearly meetings of the Istituto Marangoni Advisory Committee.

14 The Institute has adapted the awarding body's standard CIP format by adding additional information relevant to its own provision, including an analysis of student complaints and appeals, progress of students with recognised prior learning, the QAA Higher Education Review April 2016 action plan and the Partnership Review action plan. The CIPs do not contain benchmarking data, although staff reported that evaluation of programme performance took place through formal and informal meetings with local working groups overseeing identified actions. The Institute is part of a larger international network and international benchmarks are used in the UK through such working groups.

15 The Institute participated in the National Student Survey for the first time in 2016-17. It received some low results and has taken steps to improve scores for both overall satisfaction, which ranged from 60 per cent to 43 per cent, and for individual questions which ranged from 89 per cent to 27 per cent. It has produced a School NSS action plan for implementation in 2017-18, and held dedicated focus groups with staff and students in order to set internal and external targets.

16 Overall retention rates are improving for yearly cohorts, from 85 percent for 2014-15 to 91 percent for 2015-16 to 93 per cent for 2016-17. Within this period there is variability for undergraduate programmes ranging from 69-95 per cent, and 83-100 per cent for postgraduate programmes. The Institute takes action where appropriate when cohort retention statistics fall below expected sector norms as was the case with the BA (Hons) Fashion Design October 2016 first year cohort. In order to address this issue the Institute initiated a retention strategy for 2017-18. The monitoring team further noted progression data for 2014 and 2015 student cohorts that show overall pass rates for undergraduate programmes ranging from 71-90 per cent, and 89-100 per cent for postgraduate programmes.

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

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), and subject benchmarks and relevant professional and employment demands were used in degree validations and revalidations mentioned in paragraph 2. Programmes offered abroad on which UK students can study, for instance, in Paris, Florence and Milan, conform to the European Standards and Guidelines.

### **4 Background to the monitoring visit**

20 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.

21 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Sally Bentley, Reviewer, and Professor Edward J Esche, Coordinator, on 17 April 2018.

**QAA2136 - R9990 - May 2018**

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