



## Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of London Bridge Business Academy Ltd, February 2018

### 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 London Bridge Business Academy Ltd (the Academy) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the October 2015 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

### Changes since the last QAA review

2 The Academy recorded 122 full-time students as continuing the BTEC Business Studies Higher National Diploma (HND) in January 2018. It underwent a Pearson BTEC Academic Management Review in July 2017 and a HESA alternative providers student data audit in January 2018; the reports in both cases were favourable. The Academy did not recruit to Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality awards beginning in February 2017 as intended. Staffing remains the same, with the addition of one new part-time lecturer.

### Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The Academy has made acceptable progress with addressing the seven recommendations from the review. It has a clearly articulated and formalised plan to enable students to complete their programme of study by the expected end date of their course, and has implemented a clear process to communicate with each student their status on the course. It has scheduled its Committee (formally Quality Committee) meetings to maximise student attendance, and has ensured consistent use of the awarding organisation's terminology in assessment boards. The Academy has further refined and embedded the role of the Committee and assessment boards to underpin the Academy's quality assurance system. It has rationalised and clarified to students and staff the policies for assignment extensions and late submission of work. The Academy has written a strategy to ensure the sustainability of the Performance Review process, but still needs to improve its content and formatting. The Academy recognises the need to fully evaluate actions taken and to continually enhance the quality of the student experience.

4 To ensure that there is a clearly articulated and formalised plan to enable students to complete their programme of study by the expected end date of their course, the Academy closely monitors students through the Committee (formerly the Quality Committee). A new Journey Planner sets out the specific stages in the student's programme of study to completion. Planning meetings are held with students to discuss their progress and to remind them of submission dates. Emails are sent to students prior to hand-in dates as a further reminder to submit assessments. The revised Internal Progression and Referral Policy clearly states the number of attempts allowed per module and the timing of resubmission. The Academy maintains a Progression Alert List and contacts by email students who have not passed all the necessary assessment for a particular stage of their programme. The recently introduced Completion Plan outlines the procedures for setting additional resubmission dates for student assessment. Additional resubmission dates have enabled 23 students to submit work and progress. Students confirm that they are supported

by their tutors throughout their course, receive clear information about submission and resubmission dates, and are aware of the expected date for the completion of their HND.

5 To clarify and consistently implement the processes used to communicate with each student as to their status on the course, the Academy effectively uses email, the student portal, the notice board and face-to-face meetings, although its communication policy itself does not formalise the process. In addition to the measures outlined above - and the full programme information that students receive online, in the handbook and during induction - the Academy has also introduced an end-of-course results summary form, which lists all the units and grades students have achieved. All students must check, then confirm or return any corrections by email. Students confirm that they are in regular contact with the Academy and are made aware of what is required of them to complete their programme.

6 To schedule the Committee (formally the Quality Committee) meetings to maximise student attendance, the Academy has revised the schedule of meetings; dates are now set in consultation with students. Committee minutes indicate that students are attending. Student representatives confirm that they are now able to attend more meetings and participate more fully in discussions about their course.

7 To ensure the consistent use of terminology in exam boards' decisions, in line with BTEC centre guidance, the Academy has revised the terminology used in Assessment Board minutes to record decisions. Assessment grades are recorded on a form, which is emailed to students at the end of each semester. External reports confirm that the Academy is using consistent and appropriate terminology.

8 To refine and embed further the role of the key Quality Committee and exam boards, to ensure that a robust framework underpins the Academy's quality assurance system, the Quality Committee has been renamed the Committee, and its functions have been reviewed. It is responsible for the oversight of quality, all aspects of programme delivery and the student experience. A structure diagram and the committee rules and purpose set out terms of reference, including membership and frequency of meetings. The Assessment Board remains responsible for making decisions about all aspects of assessment. It is not clear from the structure diagram how the Assessment Board reports to the Committee. However, all but one member of senior and academic staff are members of both the Assessment Board and the Committee, which provides a close system of communication between the two. The Committee reviews the Academy's action plan at the beginning of each meeting, and its minutes now indicate actions required, by whom and within what timescale.

9 To rationalise and clarify to students and staff the processes relating to assignment extensions and late submission of work, the Academy has revised its policy in relation to the late submission of work and the granting of extensions. The policy sets out the procedures for granting extensions, which are for a maximum of three working days. If students are unable to submit by the deadline set, they can submit at the next resubmission date without penalty, but they are required to pay a fine. Staff received training on the revised policy and forms. The new forms were discussed with student representatives and all students were informed of the changes. Mid-term evaluations indicate that students are happy with the revised policy and procedures. Staff and students confirm that they understand the criteria for granting extensions and the policy relating to late submission of work.

10 To develop a strategy to ensure the sustainability of the performance process, the Academy has reviewed the Performance Review process and there is an ongoing action point on the Academy's Action Plan for 2017-18, with a completion date of December 2018, to improve Performance Review content. The Performance Review is not easily accessed because of the variety of formats in which it is presented. The process covers all aspects of

programme delivery, including student numbers, feedback from students, outcomes of appraisal and observation, committee minutes, and the outcomes of assessment and policy updates. However, as indicated in the previous QAA review, it is resource intensive. Performance Review is now being updated on a monthly basis. There is, however, no overall action plan or summary of the data analysis. The Academy has decided to maintain this procedure, but keep it under review. It has an interim plan to increase the resources available to analyse student data and to effectively manage the other data required for the Performance Review should student numbers increase.

11 The Academy has an Admissions Policy, which is guided by the expectations of the Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education*. It sets out the stages of the admissions process, entry criteria and meets the requirements of the awarding organisation. An entry checklist confirms that students have produced all required documentation. All students attend an interview, normally conducted by the Director of Studies, which takes the form of a standard set of questions designed to assess their intention to study. All students undertake a short language test to ensure they have a good grasp of English. Original copies of students' qualification certificates are checked and verified as part of the enrolment process, and, if necessary, referred to UK NARIC or UCAS. The Admissions Policy includes information on how to appeal against an admissions decision. Students confirm that they are aware of the entry requirements for their programme and that the information supplied to them during the admissions process was accurate and appropriate. The recruitment process, including staff training, is discussed and reviewed at the beginning of each year. The HESA alternative provider student data audit confirms that student records, entry requirements, level of English language and other qualifications are fit for purpose.

12 The Academy uses the Performance Review process for programme monitoring and review. The Academy is subject to Academic Management Review by the awarding organisation and uses the outcomes of the Performance Review to provide the necessary information for Academic Management Review. It also undergoes annual monitoring by QAA. The Academy uses the outcomes of these external reviews to inform its action plan and for enhancement purposes. Examples of enhancement as a result of the monitoring processes are the implementation of continuing professional development hours and a process for providing additional submission dates, which has enabled students to submit work over an extended period of time and complete their programmes.

13 The student data return demonstrates an improvement in retention and pass rates. The cohorts recruited during 2016 have retention rates of 92 per cent and 95 per cent on enrolments of 34 and 19 students, respectively, which is an improvement upon cohorts recruited in 2015, where retention rates are 73 per cent and 85 per cent on enrolments of 11 and 13 students, respectively. Pass rates are complicated by the fact that awarding organisation regulations allow students to take up to five years to complete the programme. The data is, therefore, not final. For instance, for the cohort of 19 students recruited in 2015, eight have passed and none have discontinued, but 11 are still registered to complete the programme in a third taught year. The lowest pass rate to date is for the cohort of 11 students recruited in 2015, where two students have passed, three have discontinued and six are still registered to complete the programme. For students who meet its criteria for an extended period of study, the Academy offers an additional third year of teaching to help students complete their course.

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

14 The Academy continues to use appropriate external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education, including those of the Qualifications and Credit

Framework, the Quality Code, *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, the Pearson BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment 2017-18 levels 4 to 7 and the BTEC Guide to Managing Quality 2017. The Academy holds regular discussions and training sessions to ensure external reference points are used effectively.

## **Background to the monitoring visit**

15 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.

16 The monitoring visit was carried out by Ms Brenda Eade, Reviewer, and Professor Edward J Esche, Coordinator, on 22 February 2018.

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