



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of London College of Business Studies, July 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 London College of Business Studies (the College) is making progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision but further improvement is required since the July 2017 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Provider\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 The College currently has no students but is recruiting for programmes commencing July 2018. One student enrolled in September 2017 but left after a short time. The College changed its name in October 2017 from AA Hamilton College to London College of Business Studies Ltd. In 2018, the College changed its name to London College of Business Studies.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The College has made some progress in addressing eight of the recommendations of the 2017 Higher Education Review (Alternative Provider) (HER (AP)) action plan as well as four recommendations from the 2016 HER (AP) which had not been fully implemented. However, not all of the recommendations have been effectively addressed leaving weaknesses which have the potential to put academic standards and quality at risk. At the time of the monitoring visit the College had been unable to implement three recommendations from the 2016 HER (AP) or to fully progress the three affirmations from the 2017 review because they were due for completion when programme delivery recommenced. The review team were unable to meet with students during the monitoring visit but did meet the Operations Manager and Head of Administration.

4 The College has reviewed its quality assurance documents and there are still inconsistencies in structures and nomenclature (paragraph 5). It has developed terms of reference for its committees but there is duplication in the responsibilities (paragraphs 6 and 7). The Quality Assurance Policy now includes student membership of the Quality and Standards Committee and Academic Committee, but this is not yet included in the terms of reference for each committee (paragraph 7). The Academic Assessment and Internal Verification Policy (AAIVP) has been amended to include a statement on the role and procedures of assessment boards but the assessment regulations are still inconsistent with those in the Quality Assurance Policy (paragraph 8). The College has taken steps to ensure that academic appeals procedures and appeals procedures for applicants are available on the website and to ensure that information for all stakeholders about the College and its programmes is fit for purpose and accessible (paragraph 9). The College has not been able to further develop and embed the Higher Education Enhancement Strategy 2017-2020, to ensure the assessment regulations are applied rigorously and equitably or continue to develop the actions affirmed by the 2017 HER (AP) (paragraph 10) because it has only recently recommenced operations.

5 In order to establish a single definitive articulation of every procedure, the College has reviewed its quality assurance documents. Previous reviews suggest that the quality of documentation concerning quality assurance has been a continued weakness at the College. Inconsistencies are still apparent in current documentation. This is demonstrated in the duplication of activity between the Academic Committee and the Quality and Standards Committee (see paragraph 6). The documentation is not always contextualised to the College, for example, the Quality Assurance Policy refers to an Academic Board, itself as a University College and to another College's quality procedures. These inconsistencies and the typographical errors cumulatively have the potential to put academic standards and quality at risk through lack of clarity and applicability. The version control system is not yet fully embedded as not all documents are dated - for example, the Complaints Procedure and the Programme Handbook. There is therefore the possibility of the incorrect document being used. The Quality Assurance Policy now includes details of the Annual Course and College Review (ACCR).

6 Terms of reference and lines of communication have been developed for College committees. However, there are continued weaknesses in the documentation including the precise definition of specific committee roles and responsibilities. For example, they each have oversight of and review learning, teaching and resources, and they each receive annual monitoring and external quality reports. This lack of differentiation in the committees' roles and responsibilities has the potential to confuse and so limit effective oversight and the assurance of academic standards, particularly as the College intends to grow. At the time of the visit, the only meetings taking place were the Board of Trustees and Management.

7 The College intends to continue to prioritise opportunities for student engagement and to provide training for student representatives. The Quality Assurance Policy refers to student membership of the Quality and Standards Committee, however, there is still lack of clarity in student representation at all organisational levels. As reported in the HER (AP) 2017, formal student membership is still not reflected in the terms of reference of the deliberative committee structure or in the comprehensive student Programme Handbook.

8 The AAIVP document has been updated to include details of the role of the Assessment Board. However, inconsistencies noted in the HER (AP) 2016 remain. Individual documents still give incomplete or overlapping accounts of processes. This has the potential to affect the shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made. For example, the internal verification procedures, especially sampling student work, are described differently in both the Quality Assurance Policy and the Academic Assessment and Internal Verification Policy (AAIVP) which may put the reliability of assessment at risk. The Programme Handbook refers to electronic submission of assignments whereas the AAIVP states assignments must be submitted to the designated lecturer who is to assess the work. Mitigating circumstances regulations for late student assignment submission are different in each of these documents. These alternative descriptions of the assessment regulations have the potential to cause confusion with teaching staff and students and put academic standards at risk. In the absence of taught provision, the College is unable to fulfil the recommendation that assessment regulations are applied rigorously and equitably.

9 A comprehensive website has been developed to ensure that the information available is relevant to all stakeholders. Following the recommendation from the 2017 review, the College website now contains the academic appeals procedures for students and the appeals procedures for applicants. The Principal is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of all information following consultation with Heads of Department when these exist. Because the College has no current students and limited numbers of staff, the stakeholders have not yet been able to give feedback on whether the information about the learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

10 The College has not been able to develop further and embed its Higher Education Enhancement Strategy 2017-2020 because of its lack of programmes currently in operation. This Strategy is overseen by the Director of Standards and Enhancement. In the absence of programme delivery, actions in support of enhancement, for example, the development of work-based learning, have not been able to progress. Additionally, the College has not been able to pursue the affirmed action to revise the approach to monitoring student progression at module and course level in order to ensure full consideration of retention and achievement, or to apply the recently developed new module and course approval process.

11 The College has clear systems in place for the admission of students. The website describes how to apply to the College with the minimum English Language requirements for admission. Diagnostic testing establishes whether the student has an appropriate level of proficiency in the English language, mathematics, subject knowledge and skills requirements for the student's chosen course through practical exercises and an interview. Only one example of this test is available but it demonstrates, at the interview stage, when language and mathematical proficiency has been confirmed, that the College considers students' motivation, aspirations, broader knowledge and understanding of the field of business studies.

12 The College undergoes annual monitoring and periodic reviews by its awarding organisation. The most recent Pearson Annual Management Review Report has positive outcomes. The College's Annual Course and College Review process describes an internal cycle of periodic, programme and module review. However, in the absence of students this process has yet to be applied. The College plans to use quantifiable success indicators in the future as affirmed in the 2017 HER (AP) but currently the scale of the business does not allow detailed evaluation.

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

13 Documents produced by the College demonstrate appropriate engagement with relevant external reference points. Quality assurance and enhancement policies are based on the Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code).

14 The College uses further external reference points to assure academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities including the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). The College adheres to Pearson's quality management processes and the requirements set out in the awarding organisation's programme specifications, unit specifications and assessment policies and procedures. Compliance with Pearson expectations is monitored through the external examiner system and the annual monitoring review conducted by the awarding organisation.

5 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 Dr Elizabeth Smith, Reviewer, and Catherine Fairhurst, Coordinator, on 05 July 2018.

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