



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of London School of Business and Management Ltd, September 2017

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 School of Business and Management Ltd (the School) has made commendable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision since the [September 2016 monitoring visit](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 There have been no major changes to the awards or staffing structures since the 2016 annual monitoring visit. There are currently 1,292 full-time equivalent (FTE) students on University of Northampton (the University) programmes, and 40 Pearson HND students completing units as part of the School teach-out plan. There are currently 20 students registered for the MBA awarded through the University. For the 2017-18 academic year the School has 24 FTE academic staff compared with 19.8 FTE at the last visit. An additional 17 professional services staff have also been appointed.

3 The annual monitoring visit in September 2016 reported that the School had made commendable progress. Under normal circumstances the School would not be required to participate in an annual monitoring visit, however, a number of changes had occurred which required a visit to be undertaken by the team. These were; a change of direct owner which was approved by the Department for Education (DfE) on 18 July 2017; a change in the College's Articles of Association and Governance structure; a change of 30 per cent or more of the type of provision offered, with new undergraduate degrees validated by the University of Northampton; and the acquisition of a new building.

4 In January 2017, the School acquired the lease for an additional building, 99 Gower Street. The Academic Division; the Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing, and Success (SEWS); the Learning Technology Team; and the IT Manager are all based at Gower Street together with the Deputy Academic Principal. In addition to the staff offices, there is one court room, two meeting rooms, and two teaching rooms. The School informed HEFCE, who have approved these changes. The majority of teaching continues to take place at Birkbeck College, University of London.

5 In relation to the validation of new undergraduate degrees, the teach out of the HND, and the acquisition of an additional building, the students were consulted and engaged at each stage of the process. The students the team met, including some that were affected, spoke very positively about the management of these changes.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

6 The team found that the School has continued to make commendable progress building on the features of good practice (paragraphs 9, 10 and 11) identified in the HER(AP) October 2015 review visit, and that all recommendations had been met with further improvements implemented since the 2016 visit. Progress on the two affirmations continued in relation to the oversight of equality and diversity (paragraph 7), and the quality and

consistency of feedback (paragraph 8). The review team considered the School had systematically evaluated its response to the recommendations and had successfully implemented enhancements and exceeded these in some aspects.

7 The progress against the affirmation since the 2016 annual monitoring visit to improve the oversight of equality, diversity and inclusiveness within the school is commendable. Progress has been made to review School policies for impact assessment on equality and diversity issues, and compulsory online and face-to-face training has been introduced for all staff. Guaranteed interviews are available for disabled job applicants and newly devised modules on the Foundation Year have embedded equality and diversity within the curriculum. All staff are required to be aware of the Schools Unconscious Bias Guidance, and whenever there is a Panel meeting, for example, Disciplinary or Academic Misconduct, all Panel members are required to re-read the document.

8 Rigorous assessment practice has been maintained and the School uses its online system for students to submit assignments and receive feedback. The students the team met reported very positively about the quality and timeliness of assessment feedback. The change from franchise to validated relationship with the University at undergraduate degree level has enabled the School to influence the content and assessment processes for the new awards. The School has made changes to the assessment structure of the new Foundation Year programmes commencing September 2016 which has resulted in improved retention rates. The School actively engaged and consulted with the student body on the review and changes to assessment practice.

9 The School has comprehensive information concerning the governance structure and subsequent changes to the Corporation. These are well documented within the Articles of Association, the Corporate and Academic Governance Framework and 2017-20 Corporate Plan. The changes followed a Corporate and Academic Governance Review which was undertaken by a Governance Working Group that involved directors, staff, external academic advisers of the Academic Committee and the President of the Student Guild. These changes are recorded at Board of Directors and Academic Committee meetings, and were subsequently approved by the DfE.

10 The School has a detailed Research Strategy which is informed by the Research Excellence Framework (REF) Assessment Framework and Guidance and supported by the Academic Committee. The information provided clearly shows that this area of good practice has been maintained and enhanced through staff being supported to engage in research activity, observations, support materials for staff, seminars and conferences, and through student engagement to share practice.

11 The School has a strong strategic approach to enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, which is embedded in organisational structures and processes. This is supported by a comprehensive and detailed Quality and Enhancement Manual which is available online and incorporates key School policies and procedures. The School has extended the wide range of effective support mechanisms, which are led and coordinated through the SEWS, that enable students to develop their academic and personal potential. This includes the full implementation of the Peer Assisted Learning mentor scheme and the Peer Adviser scheme which ensures at least five Peer Advisers are available at all times on campus. These enhancements have been further expanded for the 2017-18 academic year, and students the team met reported very positively on the changes and valued highly the training given to them to enable them to support other students at the School.

12 The School's admissions procedures are contained within its Admission Policy. The Policy is informed by the report on Fair Admissions to Higher Education Recommendations for Good Practice 2004, which ensures it is transparent, reliable, valid,

inclusive, and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. The Admissions Policy is reviewed annually by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) with any changes requiring approval by the Academic Committee. The Admissions Policy contains detailed guidance on entry requirements for all courses, admissions processes including accreditation of prior learning and application processes. Students who are unhappy about the outcome of an application may make a complaint which will be considered by the Registry. UK/EU applicants must have a GCSE in English Language at Grade C or equivalent. International applicants requiring sponsorship for a Tier 4 visa must demonstrate an IELTS score of 5.5 overall for four-year undergraduate programmes which include a level 0 year or 6.0 for other undergraduate courses. For postgraduate courses, the requirement is 6.5 overall. Intention to study for the four-year undergraduate programmes is assessed by means of interviews. Additionally, the School informs all students that if they do not attend and make satisfactory progress within the first six weeks of their course they may be withdrawn.

13 The School has a comprehensive Annual Planning Cycle which informs the overall Academic Strategic Plan and results in an organisational Business and Improvement Plan (BIP). An Internal and External Intelligence Report is undertaken at the mid-year point, which is a key document within the Annual Planning Cycle. This report is an analysis of key internal strengths and weaknesses and external threats and opportunities. Together with mid-year Course Evaluation Reports (CER) they inform the development of the rolling three-year Corporate Plan and departmental strategies and BIPs. The BIPs are reviewed on a regular basis by the Senior Management and Leadership Team, Academic Committee and QAEC.

14 Periodic review of the provision validated by the University is the responsibility of the University. The first periodic review by the University is not due until 2018, although the School has recently undergone an Associate Institution status review that was held in July 2017. The HND programmes are reviewed by the awarding organisation, Pearson, under its Annual Management Review process (AMR). The most recent AMR in February 2017 identified no essential areas for development and commented positively in relation to the monitoring of student attendance and progression, and student support. There are no recommendations arising from this year or the previous year's Pearson AMRs to follow up. The recommendations made by the Standards Verifier in 2014 were contained in an action plan and are recorded as addressed in a timely manner.

15 Annual programme monitoring within the School is well developed and rigorous. The Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures document contains guidance for staff and students on the elements of the process and was approved by the Academic Committee in September 2016.

16 The Interim Course Evaluation (ICE) is completed by students during the early stages of their studies, and is a check that students are engaging with their course. The ICE also surveys pre-enrolment information, admission, teaching, and resources and provides the School with a valuable check on its recruitment processes and student satisfaction. The Student Module Evaluation Questionnaire (SMEQ) is completed by students at the end of each module and considered by the relevant Course Committee. The Module Monitoring Reports completed by Module Leaders at the end of each semester reflect on a number of areas including the SMEQs and are collated and formally considered within the course level Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report (AMER).

17 The Academic Registrar or Head of Quality receives external examiner reports from the University, and the relevant Course Leader considers the report and completes a response. The report and response is also considered by the relevant Course Committee which agrees any actions and monitors their completion. The QAEC has institutional oversight of all external examiner activity and monitors the responses from the Course

Committees. The Academic Committee also receives and considers all external examiner reports.

18 The School's data on student completion and achievement continues to reflect the demographic characteristics of the student body, with a very high proportion of mature students and students from a BME background, as well as an above sector average declaring a disability. The School has been proactive in introducing new provision to address the low retention rates on the HND provision. The introduction of the 4-year undergraduate awards has improved retention to 86 per cent from the previous HND rates of between 62 per cent and 42 per cent on the last three cohorts. Reported retention statistics for 2016-17 on the degree programmes varies from 65 to 100 per cent. The top-up programmes retained between 74 and 100 per cent of students, with current pass rates between 68 and 87 per cent.

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

19 The School demonstrates highly effective engagement with relevant external reference points, including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), in meeting UK expectations for higher education. The Academic Strategic Plan 2017-2020 makes reference to the Quality Code, the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), and Subject Benchmark Statements (SBS). Additionally, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) 2015 are referred to in the Academic Strategic Plan. The School's Quality and Enhancement Manual, which is available on the School website, and Staff Handbook, contains clear guidance on the external frameworks within which the School's quality systems have been developed.

20 With the change from franchise to validated awards at undergraduate level, the School was able to have a lead involvement in the design and development of the awards, including the structure of assessment. In developing these programmes, the School makes explicit reference to the FHEQ, the applicable Subject Benchmark Statements, the Quality Code, and relevant professional body requirements including accounting professional organisations, the Solicitors Regulation Authority, the Bar Standards Board, and the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

21 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.

22 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Peter Hymans, Reviewer, and Mr Robert Saynor, Coordinator, on 28 September 2017.

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