



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of OLC (Europe) Ltd trading as Organisational Learning Centre, July 2019

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that OLC (Europe) Ltd trading as Organisational Learning Centre (OLC) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the July 2018 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

Changes since the last QAA review visit

2 OLC offers Pearson-accredited higher education programmes, primarily in business, and health and social care, in partnership with University Centre Colchester (UCC) and Sunderland College. Since the last review, OLC has also commenced offering a Level 6 top-up degree in Business and a three-year degree in Hospitality, Tourism and Event Management in partnership with the University of East London (UEL). OLC has campuses in Bolton, Manchester and London. Since the last review, OLC has been notified that its partnership with UEL will end in 2021 and the partnership with UCC will come to an end in 2020.

3 Student numbers have increased from 240 at the time of the last review to 402. The rise in numbers is due to planned increases on OLC's established HNC/D programmes and recruitment to new programmes in business; healthcare; and hospitality, tourism and event management at its Manchester and Bolton sites. There are 26 members of teaching and programme management staff.

4 In May 2019, OLC moved its students to a new teaching site in Manchester due to the loss of its campus in another part of the city.

5 The monitoring visit was extended to take account of the substantial increase in student numbers and the move to a new site in Manchester since the last review in 2018.

Findings from the monitoring visit

6 OLC has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the 2018 review. It has maintained and developed the two areas of good practice and the single affirmation has been progressed. OLC continues to offer a range of staff development opportunities (paragraph 7). The intervention system operated by OLC has been further developed to provide opportunities for additional individual support to students on all programmes (paragraph 8). With regard to recommendations, OLC has implemented actions to ensure the right of appeal is clearly communicated to all unsuccessful applicants on the website and is the process of updating the letter to unsuccessful applicants with appropriate information (paragraph 15). Public information for prospective applicants is now clear in relation to additional charges (paragraph 9). Actions have been taken to share appropriate reports with students but the action to include annual monitoring reports is not yet complete (paragraph 10). The virtual learning environment (VLE) has been further developed to

support students (paragraph 11). OLC has taken further steps with the affirmation noted in the last review to strengthen the use of data to improve learning opportunities (paragraph 12). OLC's admission policies and procedures are transparent, fair and systematic (paragraphs 13-16). Assessment processes meet OLC's responsibilities and obligations to its awarding partners (paragraphs 17-19) and it continues to engage with external reference points to monitor and develop policies and procedures (paragraphs 21-22). As part of its ongoing strategic development, OLC is in the process of implementing a revised organisation structure which has created new posts at director-level to strengthen oversight of quality and standards and the students' learning experience.

7 A range of opportunities are available to support staff in the development of their professional practice. OLC's Staff Development Policy sets out key principles and an ongoing internal development programme plans and records staff development. Individual staff development needs are identified through appraisal and teaching observation, which also highlights areas of good practice for dissemination. Internal development sessions ensure that staff are updated in the use of systems to support students' learning and academic standards. Recent sessions include a focus on marking and assessing, use of the VLE, online marking and use of plagiarism software. Individuals are supported in undertaking higher qualifications and encouraged to engage in external activities to further develop their professional practice. Seven members of staff are progressing through the Pearson Level 5 Diploma in Education and Teaching.

8 The intervention system, identified as good practice in the last review and initially developed with UCC to provide support to students potentially at risk, has been maintained and has been built on to apply to all programmes of study. The system is driven by data obtained from student attendance records and assessment submissions, and provides automatic alerts to staff who can then plan actions to support students. Students who met the team praised the support received from staff to assist them on their programmes and confirmed that they are contacted when they fail to attend or are late in submitting work.

9 OLC has reviewed and updated its public information for prospective applicants to ensure it is clear in relation to additional charges that students may have to pay. The specific example noted in the 2018 review was the cost of a DBS check for the HND Healthcare Practice for England which was not made clear to students. This cost is now clearly presented on the programme page of the website and information is also provided to students at the admissions interview, during which the costs of studying are discussed.

10 The 2018 review recommended that OLC share appropriate reports with students to further develop their role as partners in their education. The annual return submitted in preparation for the monitoring visit refers to students now being provided with all appropriate reports. A check of the VLE by the team confirmed that external examiner reports are available to students. However, the Annual Programme Review identified for inclusion on the VLE in OLC's action plan is not yet available to students.

11 The recommendation to ensure that all students have access to information about their learning opportunities and available support services on the VLE, has been progressed. The plagiarism software system has been integrated into the VLE. This has streamlined the submission of assessments, assessment marking and the provision of assessment feedback to the benefit of staff and students. More discussion boards have been created and staff are making greater use of the VLE during classroom sessions to increase student engagement with the available resources. OLC's teaching observation system includes review of the use of the VLE and this acts as a vehicle for ensuring consistency across programmes and the dissemination of good practice. Students who met the team were appreciative of the resources made available on the VLE.

12 OLC continues to take steps to strengthen its practices in the use of data to improve learning opportunities. Since the last review an audit of data and data systems has been undertaken to identify and address issues in data collection and analysis and this has led to the appointment of a full-time Head of Management Information Services. The Annual Programme Review has been further developed to report on data and to inform enhancement.

13 There is a detailed Admissions Policy and clear admissions procedures. OLC works with agents, known as Community Champions, who play an important role, not just in recruiting students, but in articulating the College's offer and supporting the applicant through the admissions process.

14 All applicants complete an application form and those who meet the admissions criteria, either through certificated or prior experiential learning, are invited to interview. The interview seeks to achieve a number of purposes, including vetting the applicant's motivation to study, aptitude and ability in the English language. Each interview is conducted by two trained members of staff, who record the details of the interview on an interview form and make a decision as to the suitability of the applicant. Applicants are informed of the outcome of the interview by letter.

15 Following the recommendation in the last review, OLC is taking action to ensure that the right of appeal is clearly communicated to all unsuccessful applicants. Information on the right to appeal is now included in policies available on the website. As part of its action plan OLC has also drafted a letter with a brief statement regarding the right to appeal for rejected applicants. However, the letter does not provide information regarding the grounds for appeal or the appeal process to assist applicants. OLC recognises the need to update the content of the letter to include more detailed information.

16 There is a comprehensive orientation programme for new students which includes student finance sessions, DBS sessions (where applicable), a registration week and a separate induction week. Students who met the team were positive about their experiences during the admissions process which they regarded as transparent and supportive and setting clear expectations about studying at the College.

17 A range of policies underpin the OLC's resolve to establish good practice in all aspects of assessment. All new staff receive an induction into assessment and associated processes, and marking and assessment form part of OLC's ongoing staff development plan. There is a clear process of internal verification that aligns with Pearson requirements. OLC staff also liaise with staff from the UEL on arrangements for marking and assessment. External examiners are appointed by Pearson and UEL.

18 OLC maintains records of student achievement and progression, and holds unit and programme assessment boards to ratify results internally. These records are forwarded to Sunderland College and UCC for their own assessment board processes, together with samples of assessed work for review and verification. Internally verified work is externally moderated by lead verifiers at partner institutes, and this is further strengthened by external examination.

19 Students are informed about academic malpractice and submit all written work through plagiarism detection software. Staff use a variety of assessment methods, including unseen examination and presentation, to mitigate against malpractice. External examiners' reports confirm that OLC's assessment practices are appropriate and meet the expectations of its awarding bodies and partner organisations with regard to maintaining standards, ensuring the validity and integrity of assessment, and providing feedback to students.

20 Retention for students on the HNC programme in business, who completed their studies in 2017-18, is 84%. Retention for students on the HND in business, who completed in 2017-18, is 89%. The pass rate for those completing the HNC is 82%; for students on the HND, the pass rate is 73%. The retention rate for students on the HND in business who completed their studies in 2019 is 78% with a pass rate of 100%. Retention on the HND business programmes due to complete later in 2019 and 2020 is currently 65%; and retention on the HND health and social care programmes is 81%. There are mechanisms in place to identify and support individual students at risk of leaving or failing (see paragraph 8) and action is taken at course level to address retention and achievement issues.

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

21 OLC demonstrates effective engagement with relevant external reference points and bases its quality assurance and enhancement processes on the Expectations of the Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). OLC is supported by its awarding partners, Pearson and the University of East London, whose programme specifications and regulatory frameworks ensure that programme design and delivery aligns with *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications*, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the Quality Code. Since the last monitoring visit, OLC's Director of Quality and Standards has attended events relating to the revised Quality Code and briefings on the Code have been provided to staff.

22 OLC strives to ensure that student learning is informed by best practice and uses guest speakers from industry to enhance knowledge and skills development. OLC also makes effective use of external examiner feedback and the experience of its own tutors who are engaged in external roles as external examiners and visiting lecturers. OLC is accredited by the British Accreditation Council.

Background to the monitoring visit

23 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.

24 The monitoring visit was carried out by Professor Chris Maguire, Reviewer, and Dr Judith Foreman, QAA Officer, on 9 and 10 July 2019.

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