



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Pearson College, May 2015

Section 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 Pearson College has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the May 2014 [Higher Education Review \(Plus\)](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review visit

2 Since the last QAA review the College has commenced the delivery of the BA (Hons) Business Management programme awarded by Ashridge Business School. It has acquired additional teaching space at another building owned by Pearson, within walking distance of the College. There are now 141 students compared with 101 at the review. There has been a reduction in the number of students studying the Higher National Diploma programme and an increase in students studying the degree programmes.

3 The College is managed by a Principal with a comprehensive administrative and management team. There are seven Vice Principals with functional responsibilities, 35 teaching staff and three studio assistants.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The College has made good progress in fulfilling the recommendations from the Higher Education Review (Plus). There is a planned monitoring process for each of the recommended actions although this has not yet been completed. The Review and Enhancement Committee will consider the formal evaluation of the actions at the end of the academic year 2014-15 and as an annual process.

5 The College has maintained and developed the good practice in the review. The further development of the Degree Concept Team (DCT) has aided the introduction of new programmes with external advisers contributing to their design. The DCT is trialling a new studio/group-based learning and teaching strategy with the students studying visual effects. The results of the trial are being used to enhance other students' experience which will be evaluated at the end of the academic year.

6 The College has made good progress in embedding a system for structured dialogue between staff and students. The newly established Staff Student Liaison Committee has elected student representatives. Terms of reference show that students have representation on all academic committees and can raise items for discussion. All students have access to minutes of these meetings through the virtual learning environment. Students on business programmes have elected a representative (Student Experience Associate) for each class. The representatives now discuss issues of academic concern formally with programme leaders on a termly basis. There are eight students in the School of Creative Industries and they report that they do not yet need formal representation as they can raise any issues informally.

7 The peer observation process is now in operation and the College has made good progress in clarifying the purposes of this process. There are now staff training sessions with the written guidance containing a statement of the rationale for, and purpose of, peer observation. Programme leaders manage the procedure and they plan that all tutors will have been observed by the end of the academic year 2014-15. The tutors speak positively about the observation process and confirm that it helps to improve their teaching skills and enables them to share good practice. Student feedback is sought and considered as part of the peer observation process and contributes to the evaluation of the observation process. An analysis of this feedback will inform the annual programme monitoring report at the end of the academic year.

8 The Academic Board has recently approved a method for systematically identifying and providing learning resources for all programmes. This has not yet been evaluated but staff and students confirm that there is a clearly understood formal process for requesting learning resources. The College's proactive approach ensures the up-to-date resources are of a high standard.

9 The College has continued to integrate Escape Studios into its processes and procedures. A new post of Deputy Vice-Principal manages all daily aspects of its work and the Review and Enhancement Committee ensures an overall equity of academic approach across the different disciplines. Senior staff continue to work with and develop industry contacts. These industry relationships are a major strength of Escape Studios.

10 The comprehensive admissions procedure ensures that students have sufficient English language competence to complete their programme of study. All programmes have an English language requirement for applicants for whom English is not the first language. The College only recruits students from the UK and the European Union. All prospective students must pass an interview before being offered a place to study. This interview, together with the applicants' personal statements on the Universities' Central Admissions System (UCAS) form, is used to assess that applicants have a genuine intention to study. The College admits candidates to the programmes who either have the relevant UCAS tariff points or successfully undertake an assessment day. This day includes tests of understanding and communication in English, including a written essay. There is a comprehensive accreditation of prior learning process for those applying without the standard entry qualification directly to level 6 of the degree programmes. The awarding body manages the admissions of the students intending to study the postgraduate programmes in Visual Effects.

11 The College has effective controls to ensure that assessment is carried out with rigour and integrity. All assessments are governed by the regulatory regime of the relevant awarding bodies and organisations. The assessment criteria are tightly prescribed and are explicitly linked to the learning outcomes. The College has procedures in place to ensure the validity and consistency of marking. Assessments are marked according to marking criteria which are also available to students in the student handbooks. A sample of marked scripts is internally verified to ensure consistency across subjects. The external examiners, who are appointed by the awarding bodies, specify which students' work they wish to see for each assessment. For degree programmes all failed scripts are sent to external examiners together with all borderline passes and a sample across the grade. The College provides training in assessment, validation and moderation for academic staff. Students submit all their written assignments through plagiarism detection software, which tutors confirm is marked anonymously. There is a robust procedure for cases of suspected malpractice.

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

12 The College continues to make good use of external reference points. The Degree Concept Teams use the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) extensively as a reference point for new programme development. The Quality Code is also used by the Review and Enhancement Committee for monitoring quality processes and procedures. Design of new programmes has also included mapping against relevant external benchmarks and *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The College has used the FHEQ descriptors to ensure that students progressing directly to level 6 of the degree programmes are adequately prepared. Input from external advisers and links with industry form an essential part of programme design. There is experienced and relevant external representation on the Academic Board. The Business and Enterprise programmes have been reviewed by the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and successful graduates are eligible for their awards.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

13 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.

14 The monitoring visit was carried out by Catherine Fairhurst (Coordinator) and Mike Coulson (Reviewer) on 20 May 2015.

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