



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Pearson College Ltd, May 2017

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 Ltd (the College) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision since the 2014 [Higher Education Review \(Plus\)](#).

Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 In the Pearson Business School, 13 students are studying on the Level 5 Pearson Higher National diploma (HND) in Business Studies while 20 students are studying, by direct entry, on the BSc (Hons) Business and Enterprise top-up programme validated by the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College. This validation is coming to an end with students now able to progress from the HND to the top-up with The University of Kent. All existing students are being fully supported until they successfully complete their awards.

3 There are 116 students enrolled on the BA (Hons) Business and Management associated pathways, validated by the Ashridge (Bonar Law Memorial) Trust. A further 155 are enrolled on programmes validated by The University of Kent which includes; BA (Hons) Business and Management and associated pathways, BSc (Hons) Professional Accounting in Business, LLB (Hons) and associated pathways and the MLaw (Integrated Master's) Professional Legal Practice award. At Escape Studios (School of Creative Industries), 91 students are studying across the following; MA Visual Effects Production, MA Game Art, the Suite of BA programmes, and on the MArt programmes in Visual Effects, Game Art and Computer Animation. The 33 remaining students are on either the HND Business with Pearson Education, or the BSc (Hons) Business and Enterprise validated by the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College. In total there are 395 students across all programmes, which is an increase of 156.

4 Delivery of the suite of new programmes in Game Art, Visual Effects, Computer Animation, and in Business Law and Accountancy validated by The University of Kent commenced in September 2016.

Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The College has made good progress in completing the recommendations from the May 2014 Higher Education Review (Plus) report and in developing and evaluating its action plan. The review team was able to view documentary evidence and meet the principal, senior staff, academics, and students. The College has embedded a range of opportunities for effective dialogue between staff and students (see paragraph 7). The peer observation process has been further developed and is now established within College processes. There is evidence that this is effective in identifying development needs and good practice is disseminated across the teaching teams (see paragraph 8). The College has developed a systematic approach for the identification and provision of learning resources which is now fully operational (see paragraph 9). The Design Concept Teams (DCTs) continue to be a feature of good practice (see paragraph 10).

The College is preparing to submit an application for taught degree awarding powers (see paragraph 16).

6 All three outstanding actions from the 2014-15 action plan have been completed. Progress and monitoring was considered by the Review and Enhancement Committee and confirmed as complete at the December 2016 meeting.

7 The Staff and Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) continues to provide an effective forum for consultation with students and discussion of issues raised by student representatives. Feedback to students on actions arising is provided through 'You Said, We Did' documents as well as at SSLC meetings. Minutes of SSLC meetings are presented and scrutinised at the Review and Enhancement Committee. Evidence of its impact was provided, which includes the appointment of an Assessment Officer; moving student services to a more prominent location with a reception desk; the introduction of a student-led incubator programme; and the introduction of live webcasting of lectures. Student representation is included on each committee and students confirmed that the College provides training and support for these roles and that they value this opportunity to raise issues. The success of the incubator programme was also highlighted by them as another positive feature of studying with the College.

8 The peer observation process has been fully implemented. The peer observation policy provides a guide to the process and each observation is formally recorded. Staff are provided with training on the process. There is clear evidence of the peer observation process in action with the outcomes and School summary reports received and monitored through the formal process. Engagement with the peer observation process is checked by each Dean and action plans are developed, which capture good practice and areas for development. The strength of the process is the opportunity it affords teaching staff to be both an observer and observee. The College has met the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and a session has been delivered to staff to explain the routes to fellowship. The College intends to fully support staff in obtaining fellowships during the next academic year.

9 The College continues to use a formal system for identifying and providing learning resources and resources are reviewed annually. There has been a major refit of the main campus at High Holborn with student consultation and input. Students were extremely positive about the resources available to them and the opportunities these provided for group work and collaboration. Since the last review, the College has updated its software, and appointed a Head of Digital Content Delivery and an E-Learning Consultant. These appointments have resulted in staff training on developing e-learning approaches. The students confirmed the value of the live webcasting of lectures and the improved electronic resources available to support their learning.

10 The DCTs continue to be a feature of good practice; those for Visual Effects, Animation and Game Art developed a studio group-based learning strategy, which was presented at a Conference and the College received a finalist award following an application for an HEA Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence. These projects have been disseminated to the Business School resulting in an event involving businesses.

11 The College has recently developed a Quality Enhancement Plan to ensure continual monitoring, review and enhancement of its higher education provision. The Plan was introduced at Academic Board in January 2017 and the College intends to monitor it at Review and Enhancement Committee, with specific strategic areas referred to Academic Board. At the time of the review the minutes of the April meetings of Academic Board and Review and Enhancement Committee were not available to confirm the effectiveness of this.

12 The College has an overarching admissions policy, which is included in the Access and Participation Statement. Admissions criteria are set at validation and are monitored through the annual monitoring process. The College has an Accreditation of Prior Learning process, although no students have been accepted through this route since the last monitoring visit. The Business School and Escape Studios operate admissions processes that are relevant to their applicants. The Business School admits students through either UCAS tariff points or via a successful outcome at an applicant day which involves a workshop, interview and tests. All admissions decisions are made by a Candidate Review Panel which consists of at least two members of academic staff. Escape Studios require all applicants to attend a creative workshop which includes portfolio review and a group exercise. Offers are made following a scoring system. These processes assess applicants' prior qualifications, their ability to study the subject, academic ability and their genuine intention to study. Students confirm the admissions process is transparent and very supportive.

13 All programmes require English Language for applicants whose first language is not English. Communication skills are tested at interview and/or through assessment days. Pearson College has not applied for Highly Trusted Status and does not take non-EU students.

14 The College's academic governance structure is headed by its Academic Board with two committees, Review and Enhancement Committee (REC) and Admissions, Progression, Retention and Attainment Committee (APRAC). The College actively engages with annual monitoring and completes Annual Monitoring Reports in accordance with the requirements of its validating partners. The annual monitoring report for the BSc (Hons) Business and Enterprise programme is submitted to the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College and considered at the Pearson/RHUL Steering Liaison Committee. An annual monitoring report was completed for all business programmes and this was reviewed by the Review and Enhancement Committee and approved by the Academic Board. The College has recently approved its own Annual Monitoring Template, which will be used to evaluate Escape Studio programmes for the 2016-17 period. Ongoing monitoring and review takes place through student module evaluation surveys, SSLCs, peer observation of teaching, external examiner reports and annual programme monitoring. External examiner reports are positive and students confirm they have access to these.

15 The retention rate from year 1 to year 2 for degree programmes is 92 per cent but the overall retention rate is 87 per cent when HNDs are included and is below the intended College Key Performance Indicator (KPI) of 90 per cent. Progression for the HND Business is significantly lower than expected at 59 per cent, mainly due to students withdrawing early. The College has made the decision to no longer recruit to this programme. To improve retention across all courses in August 2016 the College developed a draft Retention Strategy. This has yet to be finalised and the Schools have yet to develop appropriate action plans. Progress on this strategy is captured in the Quality Enhancement Plan and monitored by the (REC). Continuation data was presented to the Academic Board for the first time in January 2017. The intention is for this to be presented annually and developed further with future reports including overall percentages linked to academic KPIs. The Academic Board will have responsibility for monitoring these and any developments identified as part of the enhancement plan.

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

16 The College continues to aspire to seek taught degree awarding powers and recognises the need for robust Academic Regulations. An established working party maps policies, procedures and programmes to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

(Quality Code) and then consults with relevant stakeholders to identify actions which can enhance practice. Academic standards and the Quality Code are included in the Terms of Reference for the recently established Admission, Progression, Retention and Attainment Committee, which had its first meeting in April 2017. All new programmes developed and validated by The University of Kent are mapped to *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and have used the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

17 The College reviews its programmes annually and provides the necessary reference points that assure partner institutions of the setting and maintenance of academic standards. The regular monitoring by external examiners confirms that delivery is in line with UK expectations. Pearson Education recently conducted an Academic Management Review of Edexcel HND programmes, which achieved a successful outcome for these programmes.

Background to the monitoring visit

18 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.

19 The monitoring visit was carried out by Colette Coleman, Reviewer, and Suzanne Richardson, Coordinator, on 16 May 2017.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050
Web www.qaa.ac.uk