

Review for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Queensbury College Ltd, September 2014

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 Queensbury College Ltd (the College) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the September 2013 [Review for Educational Oversight](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 Currently, the College has 826 students, which is an increase of 20, or nearly 2.5 per cent, since the 2013 review. The range of provision is unchanged, but recruitment to the information technology programmes has been closed as a result of falling demand. There has been some discussion with South Thames College about an agreement through which the College might offer Pearson programmes. A decision by the Home Office in 2013 to suspend its Tier 4 Sponsor License has been appealed by the College and it is looking to increase the recruitment of UK and EU students. Additional accommodation has been leased at its existing site but this has yet to be fully occupied. The only significant change to the core permanent staff team was the appointment of a new Head of Business, although the Principal will leave in September 2014 to take up another post.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The College has pursued all of the actions it published in response to the one area of good practice and the 10 recommendations arising from its Review for Educational Oversight (REO) in 2013. The actions are at different stages of implementation but in line with the College's agreed timescales.

4 The Business English course, which was recognised as good practice, is now included in all programmes. The actions in response to the recommendation to introduce a more structured approach to student support has included the key appointment of a full-time Student Support Manager. The management of the virtual learning environment has been strengthened and a minimum content for course materials introduced. Students the team met spoke enthusiastically about these improvements. The arrangements for collecting student opinion include a new college-wide experience questionnaire, which complements the teacher performance questionnaire already in place. There is a system of class representatives and a Staff-Student Consultative Committee, as well as a student representative on the Academic Committee. Students have ample opportunity to express their opinions, although it is still not clear how the various inputs are formally brought together to better inform the internal monitoring and reporting arrangements.

5 The College has introduced a new annual programme monitoring template as part of its review of annual monitoring. Together with a College overview report and formally minuted departmental meetings, the template provides the basis for a more coherent internal monitoring and reporting system. These elements of quality assurance are at a very early stage of implementation and are not embedded as systematic procedures. They are also lacking some features. For example, the reports and minutes do not include explicit action planning, while the first cycle of reports are also limited in evidence-based evaluation and the analysis of statistical data. Quality assurance has been enhanced structurally, but is still largely reactive to external inputs.

6 Policies and procedures relating to good academic conduct have been substantially overhauled in response to the advisable recommendation, but also as a result of plagiarism issues raised by the College's awarding organisation ATHE Ltd's external verifier in November and December 2013. Substantial changes have been implemented in College practices in relation to plagiarism, internal verification and assessment feedback. The focus of these changes has been to ensure compliance with ATHE Ltd's requirements, but they also address the recommendations in the REO report. The new procedures will be monitored during the external verifier visit at the end of 2014.

7 A more robust system of version control has been introduced following the review of arrangements for the approval and revision of published information. While there are now clear staff responsibilities for monitoring information on the College website these are not fully integrated within a coherent monitoring strategy. The membership of the Academic Committee has been strengthened by the appointment of an external member with a legal background. The College has introduced topics of relevance to higher education as a regular feature of its timetabled staff development seminars.

8 The College has a number of published policies and procedures relating to the selection and admission of students. These reflect the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), *Chapter B2: Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education* in most key respects. The College does not have explicit formal procedures for the recognition of prior learning, or for complaints and appeals relating to selection and admissions. A valuable student pre-assessment form, which is used to record previous qualifications and language competency, is only used for applications that are referred to the academic department. The College maintains detailed records of student achievement and progression, at individual, unit and cohort levels. These are routinely checked by the Head of Administration. Students confirm that the clearly defined procedures for checking attendance are systematically applied.

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

9 The College continues to engage with external reference points, mainly the Quality Code and the published requirements of its awarding organisation. Significant progress has been made, although the College acknowledges that the Quality Code has yet to be embedded across all of its procedures and practices. Staff understanding has increased, in part as the result of a presentation at the College by QAA staff. College staff also attended training activities at ATHE Ltd to update their understanding of assessment requirements, including internal verification and student feedback.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

10 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.

11 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr David Lewis (Coordinator) and Dr Tommie Anderson-Jaquet (Reviewer) on 8 September 2014.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Email enquiries@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

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