

## Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements: report of the monitoring visit of Roehampton Pathway Campus Limited, November 2018

### 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 Roehampton Pathway Campus Limited (the Campus) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the November 2017 [Educational Oversight Exceptional Arrangements Review](#).

### Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 There are currently nine students studying at the Campus on the International Foundation Programme. Around ten further students are expected to join them next year in the second term of the programme. These numbers represent a decrease on the previous two academic years in which 30 and 32 students respectively were enrolled on the International Foundation Programme (IFP). There are currently no students on the Pre-session English courses which run in the summer term. Around 50 students are expected to enrol on the Pre-session next year. The Pathway Campus currently employs two full-time members of staff and two sessional staff. Additional sessional staff are employed in the summer when student numbers increase.

3 There have been no significant changes to the organisation or its programmes over the past year. An International Year One and an additional IFP pathway in sciences are under consideration by the University but not yet formally approved.

### Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The review team concluded that the Pathway Campus was making acceptable progress in continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision. This conclusion was reached after reading the action plan drawn up by the institution following the November 2017 Educational Oversight (Exceptional Arrangements) review and discussing its implementation with staff and students. The review team also looked at statistical data and read committee minutes, internal and external monitoring reports, and published information.

5 The November 2017 review did not make any recommendations or identify any areas of good practice. Following the review, QA Higher Education (QAHE) and the University of Roehampton jointly developed an action plan to address internally identified issues and to further enhance the quality of the provision. The plan was produced by, and reviewed at, the Pathway Campus Quality Board which feeds into key committees of QAHE and the University. The Action Plan is treated as a live document and further actions can be included as identified by QAHE, the University, or from quality processes at programme level (such as annual monitoring),

6 All items in the plan have been addressed and a majority has been completed. New staff have undertaken a formal induction programme. Work has been undertaken

related to staff development, including coaching individual staff; producing a CPD plan and developing a joint schedule of events with the University. A personal tutor system has been implemented on the IFP. Students who met the review team confirmed that tutors are accessible, supportive and assist them in understanding their strengths and weaknesses. Staffing pressures during the summer term, when both the IFP and the Pre-sessional are running, have been addressed releasing staff time to advise students when needed.

7 The Pre-sessional programme was reviewed earlier this year and amendments approved by the University. Changes to the programme included updating syllabi, increasing tutorial support and clarifying assessment regulations. The revised programme ran successfully earlier this year - no further changes are planned at the moment. A review also took place of assessment on the IFP. This included the number and scheduling of assessments following comments from the external examiner. Changes approved to the programme included increasing the proportion of formative assessment and improved spacing of assessments across the year. A change has also been made to the process for signing off draft assessment briefs to ensure greater consistency. It is too early to evaluate the effectiveness of the changes as the current intake has not yet completed their first term. The IFP will undergo periodic review in 2019-20. An issue which will be addressed in the review is the length of the course following feedback from both staff and students.

8 The Pathway Campus receives data from the University on the performance of students who have progressed. The data includes the credits achieved by students after progression but not their grades. In discussion with the review team, the University indicated that such data could be made available to the Campus to monitor student achievement after progression.

9 A draft academic enhancement strategy has been developed. The draft is currently being revised to align with the University's enhancement strategy before formal approval by the Campus and QAHE. The review team also noted actions taken by the Campus to address issues that arose during the year which were identified through its quality assurance mechanisms and in response to feedback from students. An example was the decision to stream some classes in the first term in response to concerns raised by students about the range of ability in the classroom once the two intakes were joined together.

10 Recruitment and admission to the IFP is carried out centrally by QAHE. Most recruitment is through agents managed by QAHE. There is also some direct marketing to schools and broader digital marketing, both targeting overseas students. Entry criteria for the IFP are set by the University and published in brochures and on the web. QAHE receives student applications and makes unconditional or conditional offers to the student. The University checks all successful candidates before a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) is issued and also makes decisions on non-standard applications. Rejection and offer letters are sent by QAHE. QAHE uses an online system to track applications and maintains communications with applicants throughout the process and sends pre-arrival packs to those accepting offers. QAHE's processes are documented in its International Admissions Manual which is used in staff training.

11 Students are recruited onto the Pre-sessional programme by the University. Candidates are normally those who qualify academically for admission to a University programme but whose offer is conditional upon improving their English. Details of the Pre-sessional programme are available on the University's website and potential candidates may be referred either by the University admission team or by themselves. Communication with candidates and provision of pre-arrival information is managed by the University.

12 Students who met the review team indicated that they found the admissions process efficient and effective and the information that they received throughout the process was accurate and helpful.

13 Draft assessments are produced by the Campus and scrutinised at QAHE before being given formal approval by link tutors at the University and the external examiner. Assessment schema are set out in programme and module specifications showing the assessment methods by which students can demonstrate intended learning outcomes. Both the IFP and the Pre-sessional use a range of formative and summative assessments. Students receive information about assessment requirements in their handbooks. Assessment briefs provide details of the criteria that are used in grading. First marking is undertaken by the Campus. A sample is moderated internally, by the link tutor and the external examiner.

14 Students that met the review team stated that they were well-informed about what they were required to do to pass their programme and to obtain good marks on their assignments. They commented that they were able to submit draft assignments and received advice on how to improve from their tutors. Feedback is provided in various ways and students may ask for additional advice where they are having difficulty with a subject. Resit opportunities are available if needed. Wherever appropriate, work is submitted electronically using plagiarism-detection software. Students are made aware of the importance of good academic practice and skills sessions cover how to reference and how to avoid academic misconduct. Students suspected of academic misconduct are dealt with under the University's disciplinary rules.

15 As noted above, changes have been made over the past year to the assessment schema and schedule for the IFP as a result of external examiner comment. These changes are currently being implemented. The review of the Pre-sessional programme clarified assessment requirements which are made clear to students in published material. The review team noted that the timing of the assessment schedule for the end of the programme is still challenging, with potential to impact on student attainment.

16 29 out of the 32 students (91%) who undertook the IFP last year completed and passed the programme. The previous year, a similar number and percentage completed and passed the IFP - 27 out of 30, a rate of 90%. The Pre-sessional programme achieved completion rates of 100% in 2017 and 98% in 2018. Pass rates of those completing were 98% in both years. For 2018, this meant that 45 of the original 48 students who registered on the Pre-sessional programme completed and passed it; in 2016-17, 41 out of 42 students completed and passed the programme.

17 In 2017, 30% of those who passed the IFP did not take up places at the University. To address this issue the Campus has been working with the University to increase student engagement and to ensure that, wherever possible, students are on four-year programme visas. As a result, take-up of places has risen from 70% to over 85%.

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

18 The University is responsible for the standards of both the IFP and the Pre-sessional. The requirements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications* (FHEQ) and other relevant external frameworks inform the University's academic framework. The University appoints an external examiner to the IFP. A Programme Annual Review (PAR) is prepared for the IFP covering standards and quality. Programme boards are expected to meet the expectations of both internal and external quality assurance systems.

19 A Pathway Campus Quality Board with membership from both the University and QAHE has oversight of quality and standards on all Pathway Campus programmes. This committee reports to the Roehampton Pathway Campus Board and into learning, teaching and quality structures of the University at both departmental and institutional level. The Pathway Campus Quality Board also links into QAHE's Academic Board which has oversight of all academic provision including the IFP. A link tutor appointed by the University ensures that key staff at the Campus are aware of University regulations and policies that reflect external reference points. Staff from the Campus are involved in QAHE initiatives on development of practice in line with the Quality Code.

20 The IFP and Pre-sessional programmes are accredited by the British Council as part of QAHE's wider provision. QAHE is currently awaiting the outcome of a recent reaccreditation review.

## **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 Dr Carol Vielba, Reviewer, and Cameron Waitt, QAA Officer, on 27 November 2018.

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