



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of SAE Education Ltd, June 2018

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 SAE Education Ltd (the Institute) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance the higher education provision since the June 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 SAE Education Ltd recruited 778 students to its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes for 2017-18, across its four UK campuses. This is a reduction of 69 (or nearly nine per cent) compared to the 2016 Higher Education Review (HER). The 2017-18 total includes 25 (or three per cent) Tier 4 sponsored international students. There is a total of 44 academic staff teaching the provision, plus a further 20 management and support staff. The Institute is currently exploring the development of a three-year degree programme with Middlesex University, its awarding body. It is also considering possible expansion to new campus locations in the UK.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The Institute has made acceptable progress based on the following findings. It has successfully completed all of the agreed actions arising from the 2016 HER, while further developing the seven areas of good practice. These developments have been accompanied by actions to address a set of issues arising from the systematic monitoring of the provision. Overall, the actions have been robustly addressed, although some have yet to impact fully on the experience of students (see paragraphs 4 to 6). There are clear arrangements for the admission of students, although students report some inconsistencies with the process (see paragraphs 7 to 9). Annual quality monitoring is undertaken systematically, notably in the analysis of statistical data, however, one key policy statement includes reference to procedures that are no longer in place (see paragraphs 10 to 13). The Institute continues to make good use of external reference points, both academic and professional (see paragraphs 15 to 16).

4 The Institute has completed all of the published actions arising from the 2016 HER. It continues to monitor the impact of the actions, introducing further development where appropriate. It has also identified a number of issues through its internal quality monitoring arrangements, all of which are being addressed by clearly targeted actions. The enhanced visualisation of data sets through commercial 'dashboard' software is providing academic staff with early notification of student attendance and satisfaction levels. An analysis of the 2017 graduating students' profiles has resulted in an action plan of support to reduce the number of students leaving with an ordinary degree or early exit award. Initiatives have been put in place to improve information on graduate destinations, including the appointment of a Student Experience Manager, whose role includes leading a new employability strategy.

5 The high level of support for students has been further enhanced. A notable initiative is the partnership with the mental health charity MIND to provide professional

support for students. The Institute continues to strengthen the professional focus of its provision through a range of activities, including the introduction of an industry engagement module, guest speakers and professionally staged events for students to showcase their talents. Students attest to the value of the industry links, while indicating that opportunities, including industry placements, have been variable and dependent on the contacts of individual teachers.

6 Action has been taken to improve the quality and consistency of the written feedback given to students on their assessed work by introducing a standard feedback form. This was in response to the recommendation of external examiners, who acknowledge the improvement while indicating that there is scope for further improvement, in feedback as well as in the consistency of assessment moderation. The Institute is addressing student concerns about the virtual learning environment by building on best practice to enhance the available resources for taught modules. A commitment to strengthen academic staff development has resulted in staff being supported to become fellows of the Higher Education Academy. Seven staff are now fellows, with a further nine awaiting the outcome of their submission.

7 The Institute has explicit arrangements for the admission of students that are published in a generic Admissions Policy and a detailed admissions manual, both of which directly reflect the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education*. A specialist admissions team is in place to manage the process and its members benefit from regular training and updating. Published procedures are in place for applicants with additional support needs and for the accreditation of prior learning.

8 Following an initial assessment by the admissions team, the Programme Coordinator determines each applicant's suitability through their record of prior qualifications and experience, a submitted portfolio of work, essay and personal statement. An interview may be arranged where the full standard entry requirements are not met. All applications are considered using clear entry criteria. These include explicit English language requirements, which, for international students, ensures equivalence to the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), band 6. In addition, recruitment officers informally assess applicants' English through telephone conversations and during campus visits. The electronic admission files confirm that detailed records are maintained for individual admissions through each stage of the process.

9 Students met during the visit expressed general satisfaction with the admissions process, although a few reported problems, including unexpected delays, duplication of process and a lack of communication.

10 The Institute has a range of appropriate procedures in place for annual quality monitoring, including a clear committee and reporting structure. The procedures align with the regulations and requirements of the awarding body and operate within the context of a quality manual, which includes a set of relevant published policies and procedures. Although these detailed policies and procedures are subject to regular review, the Institute acknowledges that the key Monitoring and Evaluation Procedure document includes some elements of annual module and programme monitoring that are no longer in use.

11 The Learning, Teaching and Curriculum Committee has direct oversight of the annual quality monitoring process and reports to the Academic Board, the senior academic body. Programme Committees report through the Learning, Teaching and Curriculum Committee, while campus Boards of Studies report directly to the Academic Board.

12 Two institution-wide reports, the Annual Monitoring Report and the Academic Affairs Report, are the principal vehicles for annual reporting of the academic provision. The Annual

Monitoring Report, which is submitted to the awarding body, provides an extensive and evaluative overview of the provision, drawing upon an appropriately wide range of evidence. The Academic Affairs Report covers a spread of additional evidence and is structured to cover student engagement and achievement, staff matters, and learning, teaching and curriculum. There is regular and extensive analysis of statistical data at all levels of annual quality monitoring. Student retention, progression and achievement data are considered at key committees, while the termly analysis of data is undertaken by assessment panels and boards.

13 Students have the opportunity to contribute to quality assurance and enhancement in a variety of ways, both formal and informal. These include regular feedback surveys and through student representatives, with attendance at some academic committees. The meeting with students revealed a high regard for the close working relationship with teaching staff and the fact that this facilitated the easy resolution of minor issues. However, it also revealed uncertainties about the role, support and training of representatives, as well as issues with internal communication about meetings.

14 The statistical data provided with the annual return, show steadily improving retention and achievement rates, although with a significant number of students continuing their studies beyond the expected programme completion date. For the 2014-15 intakes, the data show a retention rate of 79 per cent (375 of 476) and a final qualification pass rate of 55 per cent (206 of 375). Figures for the 2015-16 intakes show a retention rate of 89 per cent (331 of 373) and a final pass rate of 62 per cent (206 of 331). It is too early for most of the 2016-17 intakes to have completed, but the current retention rate is 90 per cent (349 of 387). The retention figures for the 2014-15 intakes include 32 per cent (151) of enrolled students who are continuing on the programmes after the expected completion dates. These students have until September 2018 to complete within the maximum four-year registration period. For the 2015-16 intakes, 29 per cent (108) are similarly registered and continuing their studies.

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

15 The Institute continues to make regular use of a range of external reference points, including the Quality Code, to help assure academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The awarding body's processes for programme design, approval and review ensure alignment with the relevant expectations and indicators of the Quality Code, while also taking account of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, the Higher Education Credit Framework and QAA Subject Benchmark statements. This is evident in the revalidation of undergraduate programmes by Middlesex University in 2015. The Institute has engaged with the UK Professional Standards Framework through its work with the Higher Education Academy to support faculty leadership.

16 The Institute also draws extensively on its strong industry links, including the substantial experience of academic and technical staff. Many of the staff continue their professional practice within the creative media industries and are members of industry professional bodies. The Industry Advisory Council brings together industry experts and senior Institute staff to gain advice on industry best practice and future developments. This diversity of links helps to inform the design and delivery of the industrially-focused programmes.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

17 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.

18 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Ana-Maria Pascal, Reviewer, and Mr David Lewis, Coordinator, on 20 June 2018.

QAA2205 - R10005 - Jul 18

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2018
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050
Web www.qaa.ac.uk