



## Monitoring visit for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of the School of Economics and Law, February 2018

### 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 the School of Economics and Law (SOEL) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the February 2017 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

### Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 SOEL is continuing to operate from its premises in Camberwell and currently has just four students enrolled on ATHE (Awards for Training and Higher Education) qualifications; one each on a Level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management, a Level 7 Diploma in Healthcare Management, a Level 5 Diploma in Management, and a Level 4 Diploma in Management.

3 Two of the current students are distance learners while the other two are campus based. All are supported with one-to-one tuition by either one or two tutors.

4 SOEL is actively involved in international recruitment and is aiming to enrol new students in the coming year. A number of applications are already in process.

5 Key managerial and administration staff have remained the same while teaching staff are recruited as needed from a pool associated with SOEL.

6 SOEL is in ongoing discussion with potential partners to offer a range of undergraduate level accredited qualifications.

### Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

7 The HER (AP) report in February 2017 identified one feature of good practice and made six recommendations. SOEL has made acceptable progress in addressing each of these.

8 In respect of good practice identified in the HER 2017 report, SOEL remains committed to developing programmes that align with its mission focus on social responsibilities. This will include the new qualifications being developed.

9 In response to the recommendation to appoint external examiners for SOEL's internally accredited programmes, two external examiners have been appointed: one for each of the level 7 internally accredited programmes. An induction presentation acquaints external examiners with their responsibilities and sets out SOEL's expectations in detail. The new external examiners' first reports were positive in respect of the assessments reviewed for students who completed their programmes in 2017 but the process for sign-off is not yet fully developed. The two programmes are not currently running but SOEL hope to recruit new students later this year at which point the external examiners' role will

recommence. External examiner reports and School responses will now be reported to the Academic Standards Board (ASB) as a result of the decision taken to include a section dealing with all external examiners' reports in future College Review On Quality Assurance (CROQA) reports. A similar procedure already exists for the Annual Programme Monitoring Reports (APMR).

10 External scrutiny is also being enhanced with the appointment of a new member to the Academic Standards Board (ASB) with experience in law and the recruitment of a new external member for the Advisory Board (AB). Current students demonstrated some awareness of the external examiner role but have not yet had any external examiner reports to consider.

11 The SOEL admissions process involves initial scrutiny of documentation including academic credentials, a two-stage interview process and an English language test. The policy for Assessment of Prior Learning (APL) has been revised in response to the recommendation that APL be made through a rigorous assessment process, providing explicit evidence of the achievement of learning outcomes (Expectation B6). The new policy requires the provision of evidence mapped against the module learning outcomes for each programme before credits can be awarded. Mapping criteria are aligned with the Expectation and indicators set in *Chapter B6* of the Quality Code. Requirements for undertaking the mapping exercise are clearly set out in the Accreditation of Prior Learning Witness Attestation Form.

12 Students wishing to pursue the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) route are now required to produce a broader portfolio of work. All APEL is approved at departmental level by members of the admissions and academics departments. The new external examiners may also sample APEL mapping documents as required to provide some external oversight.

13 For SOEL's law programme, students applying for APL will submit documentary evidence of APL to be reviewed and agreed by the Strategic Education Lead (SEL) and the Lead Law lecturer. The new APL procedures are securely in place but have yet to be applied, as none of the four students currently registered have been accepted on the basis of APL.

14 SOEL has made acceptable progress in meeting the action plan objective to review and update marketing and website information to ensure that the nature of SOEL's relationship to specific partnerships is clear. Both now clearly indicate which are awarded by SOEL and which are part of the articulation agreement with Buckinghamshire New University (the University). The top-up arrangement with the University concerning the law programme has come to an end. However, students passing SOEL's Level 7 programme in Management (Social Enterprise) may register for the University's International Masters of Business Administration Top-Up Degree of 60 credits, providing they take and pass the module 7MSE-FE, Finance and Enterprise, as part of the 120 credits studied. The students confirmed that they were clear on who was the awarding body for their programmes.

15 Acceptable progress has been made in respect of addressing the recommendation to revise the governance structure, and subsequently the Quality Assurance (QA) Handbook to reflect organisational changes and levels of staffing. The quality assurance delivery chart, terms of reference of the major committees and the number of meetings held each year have been amended to reflect SOEL's current size. For example, according to the revised calendar of meetings for 2018, the ASB now meets once, rather than three times a year, and decisions may be approved by Chair's Action in the case of expediency. Pertinent sections of the QA Handbook have also been revised.

16 SOEL has made acceptable progress in improving the rigour of annual monitoring and ensuring that the academic provision is reviewed against the programme definitive records. Standardised procedures already exist for introducing and approving new programmes, and amending or withdrawing existing ones. In response to this recommendation, APMRs are now submitted directly to the ASB for discussion and approval, rather than discussed in the Faculties Board and merely noted in the ASB, as was previously the case. To strengthen the rigour of annual monitoring at the centre level, a section on external examiners will feature in all subsequent CROQAs.

17 Acceptable progress has been made in addressing the recommendation to ensure that all aspects of working with others that support the student achievements of learning outcomes are appropriately considered, approved and monitored through the academic governance structures. To this end, Senior Managers have replaced the single Centre Recognition Application Form previously used for all levels and types of collaboration with separate forms to accommodate individual arrangements. The Collaborations Committee, which reports to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee approves new partnership arrangements that fall under its remit, but none have been developed since the HER in 2017.

18 At the time of the 2017 HER, the College had 13 students registered: 10 in SOEL's PgDip Programme in International Commercial Law, two in the PgDip in Social Enterprise and one student in the Level 6 DHCM. All students completed in 2017, with 100 per cent gaining their qualifications.

19 SOEL's current four students registered on ATHE Programmes, levels 4, 5 and 7 are still in the first term of their programmes and have not yet submitted any summative assessments. The students expressed appreciation for the level of support provided by lecturers.

20 Five students who completed SOEL's accredited level 7 programmes in 2017 as distance learners also attended the student meeting. They confirmed that SOEL's virtual learning environment provided them with the necessary materials to complete their work and that staff support for distance learners had been of a high standard. Positive features included substantial administrative and academic support and the encouragement received from staff members.

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

21 SOEL's policies and procedures are aligned with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). For example, SOEL's revised APL policy has been mapped against *Chapter B6* of the Quality Code while the admissions policies and procedures have been mapped to Chapters B2 and B4.

22 All teaching staff are being encouraged to apply for Higher Education Academy (HEA) Fellowship. One member of staff achieved Principal Fellowship last year. Staff development activities include training with external bodies, such as undertaking online, free-access Open University short courses.

23 External reference points are provided by the awarding body, ATHE, and Ofqual, its accreditor. The UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) are also used for this purpose. The newly developing external examiner reports will provide an additional external reference point.

## Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

24 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.

25 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Tommie Anderson-Jaquest, Reviewer, and Ms Jacqueline Young, Coordinator, on 13 February 2018.

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