



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of the Interactive Design Institute Ltd, November 2016

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 Interactive Design Institute Ltd (the Institute) has made commendable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision from the November 2013 [Review for Specific Course Designation](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 There have been no major changes since the annual monitoring visit in November 2015. As at the time of the previous monitoring visit, the Institute had approval from the University of Hertfordshire (the University) to offer 10 higher education programmes; six bachelor with honours and four master's programmes. There are 643 students enrolled on the University's programmes, an increase of 51 (nine per cent) since the November 2015 monitoring visit.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 During the monitoring visit the review team held an online meeting with a number of students and met Institute staff and tutors. A wide variety of documentation was considered, including the Institute's annual return and supporting evidence, the Institute's website and online platform and additional information requested before and during the visit (paragraphs 4 to 13). Appropriate and effective action has been taken to ensure that the recommendations made in the November 2013 review report have been taken to a full and successful conclusion (paragraphs 4 to 9). A number of innovative and effective additions to the virtual learning environment (VLE) have enhanced the overall student experience (paragraphs 4-7). The Institute is proactive in ensuring that the effectiveness of actions designed to enhance good practice and address recommendations identified by staff, tutors, external examiners and students are recorded, monitored, reviewed and evaluated effectively through an online action plan (paragraph 8). Student admission and annual programme monitoring policy and process meet University and The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) Expectations (paragraphs 9 and 10). Student progression and achievement data forms part of the annual monitoring process and the analysis of the data results in appropriate action to meet University student progression targets (paragraphs 11 and 12). The Institute has made commendable progress in continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision, with progress reviewed and reported at weekly meetings of relevant staff and tutors (paragraphs 4-12).

4 The Institute continues to respond to the recommendations from the review. The VLE remains an effective mechanism to enable students to provide the Institute with feedback on all aspects of their learning experience. Weekly meetings between Course Coordinators, Academic Leaders and Student Support Advisers ensure that all feedback is considered promptly and action taken where appropriate. Since the November 2015 monitoring visit, the VLE has been enhanced through the development of a range of tools and exercises designed to engage and prepare new students for the beginning of their online studies. Examples include the 'Positive Start Strategy' and 'The Hub'. Students are

provided with access to this facility once their place on a programme has been confirmed. Postgraduate students who have made use of the tools found them useful and helpful.

5 There are effective mechanisms in place for individual students and programme cohorts to provide the Institute with comment and feedback where appropriate. However, the Institute does not offer a recognised student representative system. Programme Feedback Forums on the VLE enable students to raise topics for discussion and comment either anonymously or by name. Students indicated that the forums provide a useful mechanism to provide feedback and comment. Course Coordinators were cited by students as being their main point of contact on all matters and that responses are rapid and helpful. Staff stated that the support provided by Course Coordinators, Student Support Advisers and tutors often means that matters raised by students are resolved before being discussed at the weekly meeting.

6 The Institute does not operate a stand-alone alumni engagement mechanism but all graduates have access to the University's established alumni service. To enhance this service, the Institute has developed a Graduate Engagement Plan. The plan uses the online graduate degree show which is an embedded feature within each final module, as a focus for alumni engagement. This is achieved by making the online graduate degree show available on the public website to encourage graduates to network with each other and to maintain contact with the Institute. It is hoped this Plan will also encourage potential students to enrol with the Institute.

7 Continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities are provided for Institute staff and tutors. For tutors, the focus is online teaching pedagogy covering topics such as curricular development assessment strategies and supporting student learning. Increased participation at tutor development events has been achieved by moving from attended to online events. An internal online tutor register, referred to as the Organisational Map (Map), has been developed to record the skills of individual tutors and covers educational and professional qualifications, key skills, CPD activity completed and their level of computer skills. Staff noted that Map is used to align tutors to roles and as a tool to facilitate development of the syllabus by using staff expertise. Map is an effective mechanism for providing oversight of tutor CPD activity.

8 The Institute has an action plan to ensure that the effectiveness of actions designed to enhance good practice and address recommendations identified by staff, tutors, external examiners and students. A working version of the action plan is maintained on an internal drive and progress in completing actions is monitored and evaluated at weekly team meetings. The action plan is made available to students twice annually. Comprehensive guidance on the action plan process is available and all staff are engaged with the concept and the process.

9 The Institute continues to operate an admissions process which adheres to the entry requirements of the University. The process is aligned to the Expectation of the Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education*. Applicants whose first language is not English are required to achieve an overall International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 6.5 for postgraduate entry and 6.0, with no element being less than 5.5 for undergraduate entry. Comprehensive guidance is available on accredited prior learning for all programmes. Students confirmed that information on admission requirements is clearly and accurately presented on web pages and in promotional material.

10 A comprehensive annual monitoring and evaluation report for each programme is submitted to the University. Other key features of the Institute's annual monitoring include online Programme Committee Meetings, online Student Feedback Forums, external examiner reports, and the Link Tutor report all of which feed into the annual reports to the University. Institutional oversight of the annual monitoring process is undertaken by an interdepartmental team and across the Institute's management team through the action plan on the internal drive. Nominated action plan representatives meet four times each semester to monitor and review progress with recorded actions. Students confirmed that there are ample and appropriate mechanisms in place for them to engage with the Institute's quality assurance and enhancement system. This demonstrates that the Institute has developed and implemented an effective and coherent quality assurance and enhancement system, which ensures that the Expectations of the Quality Code, *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning* and *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review* are met.

11 Student achievement and progression information for academic session 2015-16 was unavailable at the time of the visit as the Institute's monitoring cycle does not conclude until December. However, undergraduate student progression statistics for academic session 2014-15 meet University of Hertfordshire expectations of 90 per cent of full-time on-campus students continuing their studies across all years of most undergraduate programmes. The exceptions to this trend are the BA (Hons) Fine Art (85 per cent; 21 of 25 students) and the BA (Hons) Interior Architecture and Design (81 per cent; 70 of 81 students). Programme Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Reports comment that there are a variety of reasons for students leaving their programme including financial and personal challenges. Average postgraduate retention for academic session 2014-15 is 85 per cent (55 of 65 students). Of the 59 students who achieved an undergraduate award in 2014-15, 42 students (71 per cent) achieved at least an Upper Second Class bachelor's degree with honours.

12 Student engagement with their studies is a standing item at weekly meetings between Course Coordinators, Academic Leaders and Student Support Advisers. This is informed by a report from tutors on the level of student engagement. This monitoring process, and the subsequent direct follow-up to 'at risk' students by Student Support Advisers, plus the introduction of the 'Positive Start Strategy' and 'The Hub', are an appropriate response to below average student progression.

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

13 A clear and concise mapping of the Institute's policies and procedures against the Quality Code has been undertaken. The document provides a useful reference point for new and existing staff and is reviewed and updated as necessary by the Academic Quality Team. No external reviews or accreditations have taken place since the November 2015 monitoring visit.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

14 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.

15 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Simeon London (Reviewer) and Mr Grant Horsburgh (Coordinator) on 16 November 2016.

QAA1790 - R6159 - Dec 16

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2016
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050
Web www.qaa.ac.uk