



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of HY Education Limited t/a Apex College London, May 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 HY Education Limited t/a Apex College (the College) is making acceptable progress since the April 2017 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

Changes since the last QAA review

2 Since the April 2017 review, the College moved, as planned, from Brixton, South West London to its current, more suitable accommodation in Elephant and Castle, London, when its lease expired in May 2017. There are 49 students currently enrolled on the College's HND Business programme compared to 50 at the last review.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 Action planning, and progress monitoring against action plans, is an integral part of the College's quality assurance processes. This facilitates the review and consideration every six months, of the QAA action plan by the Academic Standards Board and the Executive Board. Although the February 2018 progress report against the QAA action plan states that all actions have been completed, it is still too early for the College to evaluate the impact of the actions taken, particularly those that involve the introduction or review of policies and other formal documents relating to College processes and procedures. These include the policies for the recruitment and induction of new staff (paragraph 7); and documents relating to staff appraisal (paragraph 8) and student support and career guidance (paragraph 10) which were prepared or revised in response to the recommendations from the April 2017 QAA review. The appointment of a Student Services Officer is also too new to fully establish its effectiveness in meeting the recommendation to further develop the mechanisms to support students' personal and professional development (paragraph 9). The preparatory work for the first teaching of the HND Business programme continues to inform teaching (paragraph 4), whilst the quality of teaching resources (paragraph 5) and annual monitoring processes (paragraph 6) remain robust. However, the impact of new policy approvals to further strengthen these areas of good practice is also yet to be evaluated. To further implement the affirmation regarding the development and delivery of study skills seminars and workshops, the College has put in place a schedule for such events in the 2017-18 academic year (paragraph 11). The team, therefore, concludes that the College is making acceptable progress against all the action points contained within its action plan.

4 Regarding the good practice concerning the detailed preparatory work for the delivery of the HND Programme, staff stated that the initial mapping against the *Pearson HND Business Specification: First Teaching from September 2016 (Issue 1)*, continues to be of value to their teaching. This made it possible for the College to implement an essential action regarding the assessment of one of the units on the programme and

recommendations relating to staff training and feedback to students in the June 2017 External Examiner's report, within the deadlines. In February 2018, in its Academic Management Report, Pearson confirmed that the College has put in place an appropriate structure which allows the effective delivery of the new programme.

5 The College continues its staff recruitment practices which facilitate the maintenance of the good practice noted in the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) report of 2017 concerning the quality of the College's teaching. However, the impact of the Staff Recruitment and Induction Policy, introduced in August 2017 and approved in October 2017, is yet to be evaluated. The new HND Programme Director, who has extensive teaching experience at higher education levels, also possesses relevant subject and teaching qualifications and training.

6 The well-established and comprehensive internal process for annual course quality monitoring continues to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. The Annual Quality Monitoring Policy is updated on a regular basis and revisions made to the Annual Quality Monitoring template as necessary. The annual quality monitoring report for the 2016-17 academic year was considered and discussed at the autumn meeting of the Academic Standards Board. This report followed up on actions identified in the 2015-16 report, showing that they had all been addressed and that a new set had been produced for the 2017-18 academic year.

7 In response to the recommendation to formalise the policy on the recruitment and induction of new teaching staff, the College has developed a Staff Recruitment and Induction Policy which contains general principles relating to the appointment and induction of staff. A Staff Induction Policy which guides the induction of staff new to the College has also been produced. These new members of staff stated that their induction was appropriate and enabled them to start quickly.

8 The College has revised its Staff Performance and Appraisal Policy and Staff Performance and Appraisal form, to include the outcomes of the observation of teaching, which addresses the recommendation to more closely link observations and appraisal. To reflect this change the Observation of Teaching Policy and the Observation of Teaching Form have been amended to clarify that the outcomes of the observation of teaching will feed into the staff performance and appraisal process. Staff confirm that appraisals are informed by lesson observations and that all staff, including sessional staff, are included.

9 To further develop the mechanisms to support students' personal and professional development, the College has created a new position of Student Services Officer which has responsibility for admissions, and the pastoral and professional development of students, including careers advice and guidance. Students met during the visit were aware of the appointment and found the new staff member useful but had not yet taken full advantage of the role.

10 The College has also produced an academic and Pastoral Tutorial Policy and a Careers Advice and Guidance policy to provide students with academic and pastoral support for their studies, including support in specific academic and course-related areas, study skills and academic writing, and understanding plagiarism. The Careers Guidance and Advice Policy states that the College will help students with careers advice and guidance that includes career choices, further study and funding, and self-employment and setting up a business. There is also a new area on the virtual learning environment (VLE) dedicated to careers advice which has links to external sources of information, for example, on becoming self-employed. Students met during the visit were unaware of the part of the VLE containing careers advice and said that they have received some guidance from staff regarding further study. Due to the recent implementation of these actions, they have yet to be fully evaluated.

11 In the response to the affirmation regarding the steps being taken to continue to develop and deliver the programme of study skills, seminars and workshops, the College produced a schedule for the 2017-18 academic year. This identifies relevant activities for each of the three terms of the academic year. Study skills sessions address the Harvard referencing system, report presentation and academic writing skills which were areas requested by students. Students met at the visit stated that they had received these sessions and they were embedded in their programmes of study.

12 The College uses both its website and local advertising for recruitment and admissions of students. The Admissions Policy informs recruitment, selection and admissions practice, and helps ensure that all applications are considered with equity, transparency and fairness. Prospective students complete the Admissions Application Form and are invited for interview using the Admission Interview Guidance which includes guidance to interviewers on assessing the applicant's motivation to study.

13 All certificates, documents and evidence of English standards are checked, with the prospective student presenting their original documents to a member of administrative staff. Where there is any question or uncertainty about the evidence (including work experience) presented by the prospective student, the Principal or Programme Director is required to approve any rejections.

14 The College has its own in-house English language test. All students admitted to the HND Business Management programme to date have undertaken and passed this test. European Union and mainland prospective students whose first language is not English must provide formal evidence of their English Language ability through scores on accepted tests of English. The College requires that all applicants demonstrate English competency at a minimum level of the Common European Framework (CEFR) for Languages Level B2. If such evidence is not available prospective students will be required to sit Apex College's own test of English Language ability. The Principal has the overall responsibility for deciding to offer a prospective student a place on the HND Business programme.

15 The College's annual quality monitoring operates according to its Annual Quality Monitoring Policy and reports are written using the annual quality monitoring template. The annual quality monitoring report is comprehensive, covering the key areas of the College's academic work over the previous year including former action plans, student achievement, external reports, teaching and learning and student support. It also analyses student views which, for the 2016-17 academic year, were reported to be generally positive.

16 The annual quality monitoring report and the action plan from quality enhancement in 2016-17 were considered at autumn meetings of the Academic Standards Board and the Executive Board.

17 The College makes good use of data on retention, progression and achievement of students within its quality assurance and enhancement procedures. Total student numbers are currently restricted to 50 across the programme, which results in low numbers being recruited on alternate years. For the 2014-15 cohort, of the 50 students recruited - 43 (86 per cent) were retained and 40 (80 per cent) achieved the qualification. For 2015-16, the small group of seven students were all retained (100 per cent) and six achieved the qualification (86 per cent). For the 2016-17 cohort of 43 students, 38 (88 per cent) have been retained.

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

18 The College has produced a Brief Guide to QAA and the UK Quality Code, which serves as a useful reference for staff and students concerning QAA, the Quality Code and

the Regulatory Framework for Higher Education. New policies are explicitly mapped to the Quality Code. The HND programme specification, which the College applies, references FHEQ Level Descriptors and professional bodies such as the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Chartered Institute of Management Accounting (CIMA) and the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS). Staff who met the team at the review showed an understanding of the Quality Code.

Background to the monitoring visit

19 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.

20 The monitoring visit was carried out by Peter Hymans, Reviewer, and Christopher Mabika, Coordinator, on 30 May 2018.

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