Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of London School of Commerce and IT Ltd, November 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 London School of Commerce and IT (the College) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the November 2017 monitoring visit.

2   Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2   Since the last annual monitoring visit in 2017 the College started delivery of the Diploma in Education and Training in January 2018 and cohort of 50 students was recruited for the first intake. The programme is delivered and assessed by four part-time academic staff who also act as assessors and internal verifiers.

3   Findings from the monitoring visit

3   The College is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision. It has taken forward the action plan from the 2016 review and started to evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken, where appropriate. Good practice continues to be embedded (paragraphs 4-5). All recommendations have been addressed adequately. The quality of committee minutes has improved (paragraph 6). Students have appropriate access to external examiner reports (paragraph 7). Policies and procedures are updated regularly and involve students in the consultation and sign off processes through standing committees. Some new and amended policies and processes are as yet untested but align to the relevant Chapters of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) (paragraphs 8-9). There is a clear process for the selection of programmes offered and processes for annual programme evaluation are systematically applied. Academic planning and decision making is sound and based on inputs from independent external expertise (paragraphs 10-11). Recruitment and admissions and assessment practice is clear, fair, transparent and robust (paragraph 12). Assessment practices are robust (paragraph 13).

4   The College continues to make effective use of individual learning plans (ILPs) in developing and supporting students identified as being at risk of failure. The Academic and Quality Enhancement Committee (AQEC) monitors ILPs and their associated interventions. This Committee also makes suggestions and recommendations for further support to be made available as appropriate. Similarly, Course Committee Meetings (CCM) provide granular detail of the support being offered to students at risk of failure. Students spoke positively of the ILPs and how they effectively support them in their studies and career ambitions. The ILPs have clearly led to improved identification and support for students which has resulted in positive outcomes, for example in the higher rate of assignment submission and for those with identified learning difficulties.

5   The use of a structured feedback standardisation meeting is a useful vehicle to ensure formative feedback enhances student attainment. Participants in the meeting have a good understanding of how robust processes support outcomes for students. Students also

commented that the one-to-one focused formative feedback provided by their teachers and also constructive feedback received from their peers is highly informative and helpful to them achieving the best possible grades.

6   With regard to the recommendations the minutes of committee meetings now effectively capture the nature of discussions and their associated actions and support the ongoing improvement and enhancement of the College's programmes.

7   Students now have access to their external examiner reports and are able to access them on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and in the College's library in hardcopy. They also are made aware of the content of the report in formal committee meetings that they attend.

8   The College, through the AQEC are advised of the outcome of the review and revision of policies, procedures and handbooks and the associated adjustments to the text. Students are also actively engaged in the review of policies and procedures through the College's governance structure. The revised Academic Appeal Policy and associated flowchart is aligned to *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints* of the Quality Code and now includes an opportunity for the student to discuss any matter with the Dean prior to meeting with the Principal. The amendment to policy was made following the outcome of the Pearson Academic Management Review (AMR) and was communicated to students through the virtual learning environment, email and text message. The revision of the Academic Appeal Policy also removed the requirement for a student to pay a fee in order to lodge an academic appeal. To date the new Academic Appeals Policy has not been formally tested.

9   The College has reviewed its VLE Policy and included a section on social media. It renamed this policy the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and Social Media Policy. It ensures the timely upload of information onto the College's website, VLE and its social media platforms. The College also maintains a useful public information logbook for adding and deleting information from its website and student information platforms. The College's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is ultimately responsible for monitoring the social media.

10   Academic planning and decision making is robust and based on inputs from independent external expertise. Academic planning includes preparation of academic calendar, class timetable, recruitment of teaching staff, assessment planning, resource allocation, quality assurance and enhancement and the programme selection and delivery record. The programme delivery and selection record is considered by the College as a live document and a record for the selection process and interim review of programmes. The design of the programme is also considered at the AQEC, which student representatives also attend. Pearson defines the mandatory units of study and the College choose three optional units based on its own market research that considers potential progression and further study routes for their students. Students expressed how pleased they are with the choice of optional units in supporting them to achieve employment and with their future career goals.

11   Operationally the AQEC, CCM and the standardisation meetings work collectively to ensure policy and procedure is followed and maintains oversight of programme delivery. The Principal verifies the accuracy of the registration and attendance records, while timely and accurate certification claims are ensured through checking and verifying against assessment records. Internal quality assurance mechanisms, including sampling plans, continuing professional development, teaching and learning observations, external verifiers and external annual monitoring reports and lead standards verifier reports combine to provide a fuller picture of a systematic approach of programme monitoring and review.

12   The Student Recruitment Policy is clear and linked to the Expectation of *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education* of the Quality Code. The College strictly follows the awarding organisation and regulatory body criteria for admission of students. Students are required to meet the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level B2, or 5.5 - 6.5 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) framework and must hold a level 3 qualification. Students, who have studied for at least two years in the UK educational institutions, are considered to meet the English language requirements. Students also take part in initial assessment testing in English, Mathematics and ICT. The Principal signs off admissions based on the documentary selection evidence which includes all the above plus the outcomes of interviews with applicants. Additionally, applicants are required to submit a personal statement, specifying their genuine intention to study. The Admission Panel consisting of three senior members, the CEO, Principal and Dean, conduct the interview process for shortlisted candidates. Students are advised of the outcome of the selection process by written and verbal means. Students stated that they found the admissions process robust, fair and well managed. Staff are supported to provide appropriate and useful information, advice and guidance (IAG) to prospective students, supported by training and through formal observation of those involved in the direct delivery of IAG to applicants. Students are also provided with an induction to the programme that prepares them well for the level of study.

13   Assessment practice is robust. Assessment is conducted systematically based on the published assessment plan. Assignment briefs are designed and composed internally and are subject to internal standardisation and moderation procedures, which are then externally validated by the associated awarding organisation. Assessment is carried out as accordance to the Assessment and Verification Policy and Procedure by occupationally competent and qualified staff. The College uses a range of assessment methods, which include written work, group discussion and presentation, and observation of practice teaching. Validation of summative assessment decisions is completed by qualified internal verifiers and the lead internal verifier. The authenticity of learner's work is ensured through a learner declaration form and plagiarism check through the use of plagiarism-detection software.

14   In 2017-18 the Pearson Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training had 49 enrolments with a single student withdrawn leading to an in year retention rate of 98 per cent. The College estimates that it will recruit 50 students for the 2018-19 academic year.

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

15   The College demonstrates effective engagement with external reference points. It continues to use the Quality Code as a reference point to design policies and procedures for maintaining academic standards and quality and continues to work with and take full account of awarding organisation requirements.

5   Background to the monitoring visit

16   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.

17   The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Mark Cooper, Reviewer, and Dr Monika Ruthe, QAA Officer, on 13 November 2018.