



London College of Business Management

Review for Educational Oversight by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

November 2012

Key findings about London College of Business Management

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in November 2012, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **limited confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of ATHE, the Confederation of Hospitality and Tourism and the London Centre of Marketing.

The team also considers that there can be **limited confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the quality and enhancement of the learning opportunities it offers on behalf of these awarding organisations.

The team considers that **reliance can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Recommendations

The team has identified a number of **recommendations** for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it is **essential** for the provider to:

- ensure oversight of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities through the effective operation of the committee structure (paragraphs 1.2 to 1.4).

The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:

- review the Quality Assurance Manual to ensure that it contains all relevant policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities, and that these reflect current practice (paragraph 1.5)
- ensure staff are aware of, and engage fully with, the Academic Infrastructure, and its policies and procedures align with the *Code of practice* (paragraphs 1.7 and 2.4)
- ensure the issues and actions arising from external verifiers' reports are systematically considered and included in the annual monitoring process (paragraph 1.9)
- review the appropriateness and operation of its admissions procedures to secure entry standards and report admission decisions to the Academic Committee (paragraph 2.3)
- develop mechanisms for the collection, analysis and use of a range of evidence, including student feedback, teaching observations, and appraisal to support improvement in teaching and learning (paragraph 2.6)
- develop and implement comprehensive student support mechanisms (paragraph 2.8)
- implement the staff development policy to provide staff development opportunities and a formal mechanism for the sharing of good practice (paragraph 2.9)
- develop an effective induction programme for new teaching staff (paragraph 2.10)
- develop an information policy with a clear process for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of public information, including reporting to the Academic Committee (paragraph 3.4).

The team considers that it would be **desirable** for the provider to:

- introduce a strategy to develop the use of e-learning (paragraph 2.5)
- continue to develop student extra-curricular opportunities (paragraph 2.7)
- indicate clearly on its website the programmes currently being delivered (paragraph 3.1)
- update the Staff Handbook to ensure its relevance to academic staff as well as administrative staff (paragraph 3.2)
- improve the presentation of information on the virtual learning environment and agree minimum information requirements, which are regularly audited (paragraph 3.3).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at London College of Business Management (the provider; the College).

The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of ATHE, the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality and the London Centre of Marketing. The review was carried out by Dr Brian Giddings, Mrs Amanda Greason (reviewers) and Mrs Monica Owen (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).² Evidence in support of the review included the awarding organisations' agreements, quality assurance documents, policies, handbooks and minutes of meetings and other documents supplied by the provider, together with meetings with staff and students.

The review team also considered the provider's use of the relevant external reference points:

- the Academic Infrastructure
- Accreditation Service for International Colleges
- awarding organisations' requirements and regulations
- Qualifications and Credit Framework.

Please note that if you are unfamiliar with any of the terms used in this report you can find them in the [Glossary](#).

London College of Business Management (the College) was registered as a limited company in June 2010. Accreditation was granted by the Accreditation Service for International Colleges in November 2010. In September 2012, this accreditation was extended to 2016. The College received two commendations in Premises and Health and Safety, and Marketing and Recruitment. The College was approved by the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH) to run tourism and hospitality management programmes in July 2010 and this was extended in 2011. The College was fully registered with the UK Border Agency as a licensed sponsor of students in March 2011, and granted 'A status' in August 2011. The College is located on the refurbished third floor of an office building, located in Harrow Wealdstone in north west London. The mission statement includes the aim 'to stand among the leaders of quality education, productive activities and to guarantee a successful future for all'.

The first intake of 17 students to the CTH Advanced Diploma in Tourism Management took place in February 2012, with subsequent intakes in June and September. There are currently 25 students enrolled on the programme. The students are mainly recruited from the Indian subcontinent. The College is also approved to offer programmes on behalf of the London Centre of Marketing and ATHE. No students are enrolled on these programmes. The College has three (1.2 full-time equivalent) lecturing staff and two full-time and one part-time administrative staff.

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4

² www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding organisations and with student numbers in brackets:

ATHE

- Extended Diploma in Management (level 5) (0)
- Diploma in Healthcare Management (level 6) (0)
- Diploma in Healthcare Management (level 7) (0)

Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH)

- Diploma in Hotel Management (level 4) (0)
- Diploma in Tourism Management (level 4) (0)
- Advanced Diploma in Hotel Management (level 5) (0)
- Advanced Diploma in Tourism Management (level 5) (25)
- Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management (level 6) (0)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management (level 7) (0)

London Centre of Marketing

- Professional Diploma in Business Management and Marketing (level 6) (0)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College is responsible for managing the quality of its provision, as laid down in the regulations and ordinances of its awarding organisations. The Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH) retains key responsibilities in defining the curriculum and setting, and marking summative assessments. Assignments are marked and internally verified by the College before being sent to CTH for external verification. CTH marks all examinations. CTH is also responsible for ensuring the level of each award is at the appropriate level within the Qualifications and Credit Framework. On ATHE programmes, the College would also set assignments. The College is responsible for the delivery of the programmes, including learning and teaching, and student support. CTH provides a range of materials, including detailed syllabi and programme handbooks, and supports the College's learning resources with texts and websites.

Recent developments

In May 2012, the total shareholding passed to new shareholders and a new structure instituted with new administrative staff. Recruitment is now being considered for an ATHE Healthcare Management programme in February 2013. There are no current plans to run the London Centre of Marketing programme. The College's overriding objective is to obtain the UK Border Agency highly trusted sponsor status so that more students can be recruited to a wider range of programmes.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. Although a student submission was not submitted, the team met a representative group of 16 students during the visit and explored a number of topics with them to obtain a picture of the student learning experience.

Detailed findings about London College of Business Management

1 Academic standards

How effectively does the provider fulfil its responsibilities for the management of academic standards?

1.1 There is a coherent organisational structure, which reflects the College's small size and allocates specific responsibilities to designated post-holders. The present management comprise two directors, the Principal, who has overall responsibility for the delivery of the programme, and a Course Coordinator, who reports to the Principal. The posts of the heads of department, indicated in the management structure, will be filled as student numbers increase. Their roles are currently split between the Principal and Course Coordinator, who also undertake other responsibilities not currently indicated in the Quality Assurance Manual.

1.2 The current committee structure is not operated effectively. The committee structure includes a Board of Management and an Academic Committee, chaired by the Principal, which has the potential to provide for separation between commercial and academic decision-making. The Academic Committee does not include students or external membership, has no set agenda, and meeting minutes are very brief. While the minutes indicate actions to be addressed, subsequent meeting minutes do not enable the tracking of decisions and proposed actions. Issues such as assessment are discussed at bimonthly lecturers' meetings with the Principal, but there is no formal reporting of these meetings to the Academic Committee.

1.3 The Quality Assurance Manual refers to a Student Support Committee with student representatives. This committee has no detailed terms of reference and has not been established. Instead, the Course Coordinator reports students' views to the Principal at regular meetings. There is no formal tracking of the recommended actions, and matters discussed at these meetings are not always reported to the Academic Committee. The College agreed to a request from students to change the programme timetable from three to two days, without referral or reporting to the Academic Committee.

1.4 The Academic Committee has yet to meet to undertake annual monitoring as the students have not completed a full programme cycle. There has been no ongoing student performance or progress review, as part of the Committee's operational responsibility for the quality assurance of academic standards. While the College data records 16 active students eligible for assessment, only 11 students were recorded on the first examination and assignment report from CTH, and, of these, three students have achieved the pass mark in both assignment and examination in any module. There has been some discussion at lecturers' meetings of how to improve the numbers sitting examinations. However, there is no evidence that the Academic Committee has undertaken any systematic monitoring and analysis of student performance, including the tracking of the progress of students from diverse academic backgrounds, reasons for the withdrawal of students and the deferral of student assessment. Nor has there been any discussion of the implications of deferral for subsequent student assessment performance. There is no systematic and formal approach to the operation of the committee structure, to enable the College to oversee its responsibilities for the management of academic standards and the student learning experience. It is essential that the College ensures the oversight of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities through the effective operation of the committee structure.

1.5 The Quality Assurance Manual contains detailed policies and procedures, including approval and monitoring of programmes, assessment of students, teaching observation and staff appraisal. Many other policies exist separately from the manual, including the internal verification and plagiarism policies. These do not always mirror practice, and many of the policies and procedures either have yet to be implemented or are not implemented in line with the written policies and procedures. References to roles and responsibilities in the Quality Assurance Manual are also not up to date. It is advisable that the College reviews the Quality Assurance Manual to ensure that it contains all relevant policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities, and that these reflect current practice.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management of academic standards?

1.6 The College uses the external reference points set by the awarding organisations in determining standards. CTH takes into account key external reference points in their programmes, processes and procedures, including the Qualifications and Credit Framework. Staff use the CTH programme and module specifications, learning outcomes and other guidance, and clearly understand the required academic standards.

1.7 The self-evaluation and the Quality Assurance Manual make some references to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*). However, meetings with staff indicated that there is limited attention to the *Code of practice* in developing policies and that teaching staff are unfamiliar with the Academic Infrastructure (to be replaced by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education). It is advisable that the College ensures staff are aware of, and engage fully with, the Academic Infrastructure, and its policies and procedures align with the *Code of practice*.

How does the provider use external moderation, verification or examining to assure academic standards?

1.8 Staff are clear about their assessment responsibilities and the Course Coordinator liaises closely with CTH to ensure students meet the required standards. All assessment, including learning outcomes and assessment criteria, is set by the awarding organisation. While CTH sets and marks the final examinations, assignments, which account for 40 per cent of the assessment, are first marked by the teaching team, who also internally verify all the assignments. Student work indicate this process is effective.

1.9 There is no agreed system for dealing with external verifier reports and they are not mentioned in the Quality Assurance Manual as part of the ongoing monitoring procedure. The College is waiting to receive its first external verification reports and needs to plan the process for ensuring they inform academic standards. It is advisable that the College ensures the issues and actions arising from external verifiers' reports are systematically considered and included in the annual monitoring process.

<p>The review team has limited confidence in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding organisations.</p>
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2 Quality of learning opportunities

How effectively does the provider fulfil its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 The College is responsible for the recruitment and admission of students, the general welfare and discipline of the students and the delivery and support of the curriculum. The Course Coordinator is responsible for the delivery of the programme and also has the dual role of Student Welfare Officer. The process by which the College assures itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to the awarding organisations is detailed in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.5. The operation of the committee structure does not enable the College to oversee effectively its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The bimonthly lecturers' meetings with the Principal consider a range of issues related to the students' experience, including resources and student feedback. However, minutes of the meetings do not indicate whether agenda issues are systematically followed up and whether there are resulting outcomes from any actions suggested.

2.2 The College has clear admissions and registration procedures, which detail the different stages in the admissions process. Applicants' documents, including academic qualifications and evidence of their level of English, are checked by the Senior Administrator and signed off by the Principal and Course Coordinator. They will also carry out an interview over the internet if necessary, before a final decision on the suitability of the applicant.

2.3 For the first cohort of students in February 2012, the College recruited students who were less capable of meeting the academic demands of the programme and a number of these students did not undertake their assessment at the first opportunity, and some have yet to do so. Since the new owners took over, a regional office in India has been established to undertake the initial processing of applicants, and there has been improvement in the qualification of students. It is advisable that the College reviews the appropriateness and operation of its admissions procedures to secure entry standards and reports admission decisions to the Academic Committee.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities?

2.4 The College's use of external reference points is described in paragraphs 1.6 to 1.7. The College should consider in more detail the sections of the *Code of practice* related to the quality and enhancement of learning opportunities, such as the *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students*.

How does the provider assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

2.5 CTH lays down the teaching and learning strategy and provides guidance for teachers and students. A range of teaching methods are used, including case studies, group discussions and peer assessment of group work with feedback from the teaching staff. Brief formative feedback is given on written class work. The staff are well qualified and their industrial experience allows the use of relevant examples in their teaching. The students were positive about their class activities. Materials, including handbooks and syllabi from CTH, lesson plans, lecture notes and formative assessment are available on the virtual learning environment and staff encourage students to access this information. There is little focus on the development of e-learning to support, for example, feedback, group work, discussions and reflection. It is desirable that the College introduces a strategy to develop the use of e-learning.

2.6 Student feedback and teaching observations are used to monitor and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. There are clear procedures and criteria for lesson observations, which are undertaken by the Principal. Completed teaching observation forms, however, lack detail or actions. Staff performance is yet to be reviewed through staff appraisal. Although the Student Support Committee has not been established, student representatives do meet bimonthly in small groups to feedback views. The students confirmed that they have the opportunity to approach staff informally with any issues. A suggestion box and end-of-module questionnaires are also used to collect student views, but there is currently no collation of information to provide an overview of student opinion. It is advisable that the College develops mechanisms for the collection, analysis and use of a range of evidence, including student feedback, teaching observations, and appraisal to support improvement in teaching and learning.

How does the provider assure itself that students are supported effectively?

2.7 Students receive formal and informal support. Before arrival and during admissions, students receive a wide range of information, particularly relating to UK Border Agency requirements. A short induction is used to familiarise students with the College and the programme. An induction pack includes the College Student Handbook and relevant policies and procedures, such as Attendance Policy and the Student Complaints Procedure. There is no diagnostic testing of students' support needs on arrival. The College records attendance and contacts students who do not attend regularly. There are few activities to support students to settle into life in the UK, although the College has organised one trip to London. It is desirable that the College continues to develop student extra-curricular opportunities. Although there is no formal entitlement, students are provided with support from staff at the end of each teaching day in response to need, particularly for reviews of draft assignments. Students confirmed that they have ready informal access to staff directly, and by e-mail and telephone.

2.8 Feedback on student assignments includes positive comments and identifies ways for the student to improve. Feedback on the Management Research Project is more limited and lacks clarity. To meet the CTH requirements, a progress tutorial takes place on each module prior to the submission of work, but the records suggest that these are too close to the assignment deadline to be useful and only show brief written feedback to students. A number of students from the February intake, who were not ready to undertake assessment, are trailing assessments from previous modules and have a heavier workload. There is no provision for tracking and extra support for these students. The College does not have a robust system for the collection or use of performance data to inform student support. It is advisable that the College develops and implements comprehensive student support mechanisms.

What are the provider's arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

2.9 The Staff Development Policy has not been fully implemented and there have been few opportunities for academic staff development to date. Examples of staff development activities are limited to health and safety training and a forthcoming ATHE assessment standardisation event. The process for the identification of staff development needs is partly a response to recommendations by the awarding organisations and partly through informal discussions with the Principal, and the bimonthly lecturers' meetings. These also allow for the informal sharing of information, including good practice. It is advisable that the College implements the staff development policy to provide staff development opportunities and a formal mechanism for the sharing of good practice.

2.10 The induction of administrative staff is focused on a three to four-week training period to introduce the College systems with appropriate support. In contrast, induction of new teaching staff is limited to an informal briefing by the Principal and Course Coordinator based on the Staff Handbook. This Handbook consists mainly of employment and administrative issues, and the induction places little emphasis on academic issues. It is advisable that the College develops an effective induction programme for new teaching staff.

How effectively does the provider ensure that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes?

2.11 Resources are discussed at lecturers' meetings and the Academic Committee and budget requests are sent to the directors for approval to ensure resources meet the needs of students, staff and the awarding organisation, CTH. There are three large teaching rooms with interactive whiteboards and 19 internet-linked computers. Other resources include library books, online facilities provided by CTH and study materials on the virtual learning environment, which are also provided in hard copy. Students confirmed that they receive adequate learning materials and can access the virtual learning environment outside the College. They can also use College facilities on non-teaching days and have access to a public library in the same building. There is a safe and comfortable student learning and staff working environment.

The review team has **limited confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the intended learning opportunities it provides for students.

3 Public information

How effectively does the provider's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides?

3.1 The College relies extensively on its website to provide information to potential and existing students and to other stakeholders. Information from the awarding organisations is used to develop marketing information and for website programme information, which includes the prospectus. The monitoring and updating of this information and the publishing of a newsletter for the College's India office is the responsibility of the Marketing Director. The Principal and Senior Administrator have overall responsibility for the supervision of the website. The website contains appropriate information about the College, as well as comprehensive information for potential overseas applicants. The website includes a number of programmes that the College is accredited to deliver but has yet to run. This provides an impression that the College is larger in terms of programmes and students than it actually is. It is desirable that the College indicates clearly on its website the programmes currently being delivered.

3.2 The College publishes student and staff handbooks. The Student Handbook is provided to all students at induction and is a comprehensive document valued by students. However, the Staff Handbook provides information almost exclusively relating to employment and administration and omits reference to academic matters. It is desirable that the College updates the Staff Handbook to ensure its relevance to academic staff, as well as administrative staff.

How effective are the provider's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing?

3.3 The Principal is responsible for monitoring the virtual learning environment, which has the potential to become a useful resource for students. However, labelling of files on the virtual learning environment is inconsistent, making it difficult to find some items, and there is no guidance for staff on what should be posted on it. It is desirable that the College improves the presentation of information on the virtual learning environment and agrees minimum information requirements, which are regularly audited.

3.4 The College does not have an information policy. Responsibilities for ensuring the accuracy of information reside with the Principal and Marketing Director, and there is no record of how and when the checking of information takes place. It is advisable that the College develops an information policy with a clear process for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of public information, including reporting to the Academic Committee.

The team concludes that **reliance can be placed** on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Action plan

The provider was required to develop an action plan to follow up on good practice and address recommendations arising from the review. However, an action plan was not submitted to QAA and the report is therefore published without one.

About QAA

QAA is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

QAA's aims are to:

- meet students' needs and be valued by them
- safeguard standards in an increasingly diverse UK and international context
- drive improvements in UK higher education
- improve public understanding of higher education standards and quality.

QAA conducts reviews of higher education institutions and publishes reports on the findings. QAA also publishes a range of guidance documents to help safeguard standards and improve quality.

More information about the work of QAA is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk.

More detail about Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/tier-4.

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#)³

Academic Infrastructure Guidance developed and agreed by the higher education community and published by QAA, which is used by institutions to ensure that their courses meet national expectations for academic standards and that students have access to a suitable environment for learning (academic quality). It consists of four groups of reference points: the **frameworks for higher education qualifications**, the **subject benchmark statements**, the **programme specifications** and the **Code of practice**. Work is underway (2011-12) to revise the Academic Infrastructure as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

academic quality A comprehensive term referring to how, and how well, institutions manage teaching and learning opportunities to help students progress and succeed.

academic standards The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

awarding body A body with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

awarding organisation An organisation with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England and Northern Ireland (these qualifications are at levels 1 to 8, with levels 4 and above being classed as 'higher education').

Code of practice *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA: a set of interrelated documents giving guidance for higher education institutions.

designated body An organisation that has been formally appointed to perform a particular function.

differentiated judgements In a Review for Educational Oversight, separate judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate awarding bodies.

enhancement Taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of **learning opportunities**. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

feature of good practice A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

framework A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

framework for higher education qualifications A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks:

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx

The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland.

highly trusted sponsor An education provider that the UK government trusts to admit migrant students from overseas, according to Tier 4 of the UK Border Agency's points-based immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must undergo a successful review by QAA.

learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned **programmes of study**, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios) and staff development.

learning outcome What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

operational definition A formal definition of a term, which establishes exactly what QAA means when using it in reports.

programme (of study) An approved course of study which provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

programme specifications Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of **programmes of study**, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

provider An institution that offers courses of higher education, typically on behalf of a separate **awarding body or organisation**. In the context of REO, the term means an independent college.

public information Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

reference points Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured. Internal reference points may be used by providers for purposes of self-regulation; external ones are used and accepted throughout the higher education community for the checking of standards and quality.

quality See **academic quality**.

subject benchmark statement A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

threshold academic standard The minimum standard that a student should reach in order to gain a particular qualification or award, as set out in the **subject benchmark statements** and national qualifications frameworks. Threshold standards are distinct from the standards of performance that students need to achieve in order to gain any particular class of award, for example a first-class bachelor's degree. See also **academic standard**.

widening participation Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

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