



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

SUPPLEMENTARY INSPECTION CHANGE OF MANAGEMENT (Independent Higher Education)

INSTITUTION: QA Higher Education

ADDRESS: International House
1 St Katharine's Way
London
E1W 1UN

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Mr Simon Nelson

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 7 October 2022

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation, 3 March 2023

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

QA Higher Education (QAHE/the Institution) was incorporated as a private limited company in October 2010. It is part of the QA Limited Group, a privately owned training company, with QAHE delivering higher education courses as part of the overarching company's training and education portfolio.

The Institution offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees through partnership agreements with London Metropolitan University, the University of Middlesex, Northumbria University, the University of Roehampton, Solent University and the University of Ulster.

The Institution has four campuses, two located in central London, one in Birmingham and one in Manchester. One of the London campuses is a joint campus with Northumbria University and designated as the Northumbria University of London campus in partnership with QAHE. It is only the provision delivered in London and Birmingham that forms part of the British Accreditation Council (BAC) accreditation.

QAHE's mission is to support its students to fulfil their potential, arming them with the skills to achieve their career aspirations. The Institution's aim is to give students from all around the world access to outstanding higher education.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is supported by the Provost and Executive Dean, the Finance Director, the Chief Marketing and International Officer, the Chief Recruitment Officer and the Chief Operating Officer. The CEO, as the senior post holder, reports to the Executive Board of QA Limited, which agrees the financial and strategic priorities for the Institution.

In January 2013, a ten-year agreement was signed with the University of Ulster, which confirmed QAHE as an affiliate college. Since that time, QAHE has been designated as a branch campus of the University of Ulster. Formal programme recognition agreements were signed in 2013 as well as in January 2014.

A London campus of Northumbria University (NU) was opened, in partnership with QAHE, in September 2014, based in a second location in central London, and offering undergraduate and postgraduate provision in business- and computing-related programmes for full- and part-time study.

A partnership was established with the University of Roehampton in June 2015, and a further partnership was established with Middlesex University in 2017 to offer undergraduate and postgraduate provision at the Rosebery Avenue campus in London, and the Birmingham campus. Partnerships with Solent University and London Metropolitan University were established in 2019 and 2020 respectively.

A new CEO was appointed in 2021 following the departure of the previous CEO, who has taken up the post of Chairman.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Institution offers full-time undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The Birmingham and Rosebery Avenue London campuses offer full-time, three-year taught undergraduate programmes and one-year postgraduate programmes through franchise partnerships with the University of Ulster. These include undergraduate degrees in Accounting and Management, Business, Computing and Marketing, and postgraduate degrees in International Business and Marketing and a Master of Business Administration (MBA).

The University of Roehampton provision offered at the London Rosebery Avenue and Birmingham campuses includes undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Business Management, Marketing and Computer Technologies and degree apprenticeships. Middlesex University franchised provision of a Bachelor of Science (BSc) in Business Accounting is approved for delivery in London and Birmingham. Solent University franchised courses include undergraduate programmes in Management, Computing and Creative Industries and these are

delivered in London and Birmingham. London Metropolitan University degrees in Business are delivered in London only.

The Northumbria University London campus offers 27 courses at Levels 4 to 7 in a variety of subject areas, including Business, Computing, Project Management, Media, Business Enterprise Creation, and Management. Programmes include a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in International Banking and Finance and Management, a BSc in Applied Computing, a Master of Arts (MA) in Design Management and a Master of Science (MSc) in Web and Mobile Development, Computing and Information Technology, Digital Marketing, Cyber Security, Project Management, Computing Technology, Cyber Security Technology, and Information Security Management. Master's programmes are offered as either one-year full-time or two-year part-time study options.

At the time of the inspection, QAHE had 11,743 UK and international students registered on franchised programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level at the London and Birmingham campuses. The Institution has a maximum capacity of 13,000 students.

The Institution does not recruit any students under 18 years of age, and the majority of its international students are from Romania, India, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Pakistan, with broadly equal numbers of male and female students.

There are three main enrolment points each year, in January, June and September. Entry requirements, including for English language proficiency, are clearly published on the QAHE website, and all applications are approved by the partner universities prior to offers being confirmed.

3. Inspection process

The Supplementary Inspection was carried out remotely in one morning by one inspector, with online meetings being held with the CEO and senior managers. A range of documentation was scrutinised in advance of the inspection. The Institution engaged positively with the inspection process.

4. Background to the supplementary inspection

A new CEO was appointed to QAHE in September 2021, and the Supplementary Inspection focused on the implications of this change for the priorities and strategic direction of the Institution.

5. Inspection history

Inspection type	Date
Full Accreditation	9–10 December 2010
Supplementary	23 June 2011
Supplementary	23 August 2011
Interim	14 March 2012
Re-accreditation	16–17 March 2015
Interim	8 February 2017
Re-accreditation	18–20 March 2019
Interim	4 June 2020

PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgements and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution.

1. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

1.1 Governance, Strategy and Financial Management (full inspection)

The numbers below refer to the standards as presented in the Independent Higher Education scheme document and main full inspection report

1. The institution is effectively and responsibly governed

- | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|
| 1.1 | The overall organisational structure, including the role and extent of authority of any owners, directors or governing body, is clearly defined, documented and effectively communicated to stakeholders, including governors, management, staff and students. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 1.2 | There is an identified senior committee, with decision-making authority on academic matters, in order to protect the integrity of academic freedom. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 1.3 | The link between governance and management is clearly articulated and documented. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 1.4 | Internal stakeholders develop and implement policy through appropriate structures and processes while involving external stakeholders. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 1.5 | An explicit procedure for risk assessment is implemented, producing a risk assessment statement, which is regularly reviewed and updated. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 1.6 | Effective action is taken, by the governing body and senior managers, in response to the outcomes of regular risk assessments. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 1.7 | All relationships with other educational organisations are defined formally and are fully transparent with those organisations' requirements. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA |
| 1.8 | There are clear channels of communication between the governing body, the executive, academic management, staff (including those working remotely), students and other stakeholders. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Institution has a clear organisation structure that is communicated effectively to internal and external stakeholders via the website, the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and in handbooks. The CEO, who chairs the QAHE Executive Team, is also a member of the QA Training Board, the parent company of QAHE, and reports to its CEO.

The Academic Council is the senior committee for consideration of academic matters, effectively bringing together academic teams across the range of university partnerships. At the time of the inspection, the terms of reference were being reviewed with a view to broadening its range of responsibilities for QAHE's academic integrity, which are also kept under review by its partner universities.

Links between governance and management are clearly articulated. The QAHE Executive Group is the senior decision-making body, supported by the Senior Management Team (SMT) and a clear, deliberative structure of committees that includes the Academic Council. All committee remits and memberships are clearly documented and communicated to stakeholders.

Partners and other stakeholders are involved in the review of policies and procedures, including monitoring strategies, market insights and new developments, through a range of partnership and staff review and

planning meetings. Employee and student forums offer further opportunities for input into reviews and new developments. Regular surveys of staff and students' views are also undertaken to inform new developments and priorities.

Risk management procedures and a risk statement explicitly identify risks, including those linked to current and future markets, funding and partnerships. Risk registers and associated actions are regularly reviewed by the CEO and SMT to evaluate risk mitigation and to develop new strategies. Appropriate actions to mitigate high risk factors are identified and implemented and their impact is evaluated.

Partnerships with all universities are clear and appropriately documented through formal partnership agreements, which set out clear partnership responsibilities and regulations.

Communication channels are well established, both with partner universities through regular meetings at programme and management level, and with staff and students through forums and online updates. The CEO acts as the key link with the QA Training Board, which receives regular reports and updates.

Clear communication of management and committee structures and responsibilities, engagement with stakeholders and effective risk management procedures ensure that governance is effective.

2. The institution has a clear and achievable strategy

2.1	The institution has a clear strategy for the development of its higher education provision, which is supported by appropriate implementation plans and financial management and takes into account the quality of the student experience.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2.2	There is provision for stakeholder input, including governors, management, staff and students, to inform the strategic direction of the institution.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2.3	The strategy is well communicated to all stakeholders within and outside the institution.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2.4	The governing body and senior management conduct a regular and systematic review of their own performance and the institution's overall performance and each is measured against strategic targets.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Institution has a clearly defined strategy for the further development of its higher education provision and its financial management, which is effectively informed by feedback from students, staff and external stakeholders. The CEO has led on the development of new digital delivery strategies to support both growth in student numbers and increased retention.

The monthly review cycle of institution data by the QAHE Executive Team, which includes reports from all departments and available student feedback analysis, informs the strategic priorities and direction of the Institution, along with the evaluation and monitoring of implementation plans.

Employee forums are held with staff to enable them to comment upon and inform priorities, and regular student surveys and student forums provide clear feedback to inform planning and strategic developments.

The strategic aims are shared internally through meetings with staff and students. The annual report includes the key objectives of the strategic plan and is shared, as appropriate, with individual external partner institutions.

The overview of strategic development and QAHE performance is reviewed by the QA Training Board against its strategic targets. Annual reports are systematically reviewed by the SMT and the QA Training Board to ensure that overall performance is effectively measured and evaluated.

3. Financial management is open, honest and effective

- 3.1 The institution conducts its financial matters professionally, transparently and with appropriate probity. Yes No
- 3.2 The institution's finances are subject to regular independent external audit. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Clear and robust budget management systems and responsibilities ensure that financial matters are appropriately managed. The Finance Director is responsible for the management of the Institution's financial budgets and presents monthly updates to the QAHE Executive Board, which maintains oversight of spending and approves annual budgets. The Institution's finances are externally audited annually.

1.3 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated. Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS

ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

High

Medium

Low

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT *(to be reviewed at the next inspection)*

It is recommended that the revised remit of the Academic Council be made available to all staff and students.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE

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THE INSPECTION WAS CARRIED OUT BY:

Miranda Hobart

Lead Inspector