



# Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Richmond, The American International University in London, February 2015

## Section 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 Richmond, The American International University in London (the University) has made commendable progress in implementing the action plan from the May 2013 [Institutional Review](#).

## Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review visit

2 The University has increased both its student registrations and the number of degree programmes it offers. At the time of the Institutional Review in May 2013 there were 766 students on undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. At the time of the monitoring visit there were 917 students studying for these awards. This represents an increase of 19 per cent. In May 2013 the University offered 11 dual-accredited bachelor's degrees and two master's degrees, with the UK degrees being validated by The Open University and the US degrees accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. It is now offering 21 dual-accredited undergraduate degrees, two US-only undergraduate degrees, three dual-accredited postgraduate degrees and three US-only postgraduate degrees, totalling 29. This represents an increase of 123 per cent.

## Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The University is maintaining the good practice identified at the last review and enhancing it where possible. For example: the results of the credit mapping between US and UK credit systems remain in place and work is continuing to extend the mapping to the University's operations in Italy; the detailed assessment norms identified in the last review remain in place and new ones have been developed for language teaching; and the quality of academic and pastoral care remains high with new developments including peer mentoring of first year students.

4 For all eight recommendations, the University has successfully completed its responses to the action plan. A guideline of 10 working days for return of work has been introduced and this is monitored by a specific question on all course evaluation forms. Students confirmed that staff return work within the specified time. A useful student charter has been produced with the cooperation of the Student Government. The University has improved its published information for students on studying abroad.

5 For some recommendations, not only have the responses to the action plan been successfully completed but the University is now working to achieve additional benefits for the students. Mechanisms for consulting with employers have been improved. The University has increased its involvement with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. This is partly in response to needs of the new BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance with Combined Studies programme which has just been validated and will be seeking approval of exemptions, and BA (Hons) Psychology which is formally mapping professional and

statutory body requirements as an enhancement measure. There has been an employability seminar for staff. The University has introduced two new programmes which are centred on employability and volunteering and involve employer engagement. Employability is one of the criteria in programme validation. The University has aligned its new policies on complaints and appeals with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints*. It has adjusted its committee structure to support the changes and has published comprehensive procedures for both academic and non-academic appeals. The Academic Appeals Committee gives members advice on appeals procedures. The University has provided staff with training in supporting students with disabilities. With two new committees to provide oversight, the University has modified the website, improving the information available to students on the provision, including study abroad. Additional information for enrolled students is available on the University portal. The process for adjusting information is clearly stated in the University's Quality Manual.

6 An effective admissions process is in place to ensure that students are recruited according to the admissions criteria of the Open University and the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Admissions staff and programme-specific staff ensure that students are recruited with integrity and are equipped to successfully complete the programmes on which they are enrolled. Students reported that the University provides clear information and guidance at all stages of the admissions process. A robust credit transfer procedure allows students to use credit from other institutions. After rigorous scrutiny of transcripts, the University determines the exact nature and amount of further study for each student.

7 The University has robust assessment procedures. It complies fully with the requirements of its awarding and accrediting bodies with the effective use of assessment norms and credit mapping. The University adjusts its assessment norms to take into account the different requirements of new subject areas and modes of study as they are added to the provision. Students understand the use of assessment-related activities including formative feedback and moderation of assessed work by external examiners. They confirm that the assessment information they receive is comprehensive. The University is aiming to increase success rates on its programmes by continuing to improve quality assurance through comprehensive assessment policies and processes.

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

8 The University makes effective use of the Quality Code. It formally maps the Quality Code against its policies and procedures on an annual basis. University practice is considered using the guidance in each of the chapters in the Quality Code in an effective manner. For example, the most recent mapping document identifies in detail how the parity of US and UK qualifications has been maintained. In its consideration of the Quality Code, the University provides very detailed and helpful guidance on the information available to staff and students and the location of supporting documents, for example, by reference to particular University policies, websites and guidance. The mapping clearly identifies the staff responsible for University practice on each of the sections of the Quality Code. If there are changes to the Quality Code between the University's annual reviews, immediate action is taken if necessary. Staff use Subject Benchmark Statements as an essential part of validation and review. Curriculum maps for each programme ensure alignment with the Subject Benchmark Statements. The Quality Manual provides staff with helpful advice and guidance on University policies and procedures and covers the requirements of both the UK and US awards.

## Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

9 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.

10 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Peter Steer, Coordinator, and Dr Hayley Randle, Reviewer, on 24 February 2015.

**QAA1158 - R4545 - Apr 15**

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000  
Email [enquiries@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786