



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Istituto Marangoni, April 2019

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that the Istituto Marangoni (the Institute) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the April 2018 [monitoring visit](#).

Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 Undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at the Institute continue to be validated by Manchester Metropolitan University (MMet). There are 854 students enrolled in 2018-19, which is an eight percent increase over the 790 students enrolled in 2017-18, which was also an increase on the previous year. The Institute has a five-year growth plan and validated a new design portfolio in May 2018. This comprised eight titles in undergraduate and postgraduate provision, some of which started in 18-19 and the rest in 2019-20. The Institute employs six full-time academic staff (a Director of Education, four programme leaders, and one technician), 20 senior tutors, 15 tutors, eight senior visiting tutors, 26 visiting tutors, one part-time technician and four co-tutors.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The good practice identified in the 2016 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) and continued in previous monitoring visits has been maintained; the use of 'live briefs' (paragraph 4) forms a key part in assessments and the active and effective engagement with employers continues. The actions from recommendations continue to be observed, with support for students in finding work placements in place, and student awareness and understanding of how to use the complaints process is evident. The outstanding recommendation, which required further development from the previous annual monitoring visit, has been addressed, with ongoing focus on the admissions process and improved provision of pre-course information (paragraphs 4 and 7). The Institute has developed its own quality monitoring processes, with reference to their validating body and they monitor and update a quality-related action plan. For the themes of admissions and assessment, the review team found that the Institute operates reliable processes (paragraphs 7 and 8).

3 The Institute has continued and strengthened the good practice of using 'live briefs' as a deliberate approach to ensure the curriculum stays relevant to industry developments and captures student interest. Students recognise and appreciate the value of these. Industry and employer engagement is consolidated by the opportunity to network with employers and industry professionals, which can lead to placement and job opportunities. The good practice related to employer engagement is further embedded with monthly career service events.

4 The one outstanding action from the 2018 monitoring visit, which related to admissions, has now been satisfactorily addressed. The previous monitoring visit noted that students had commented on 'receiving vague or no information before enrolment' on

unknown additional costs and use of multiple media. The Institute now ensures that students receive clear information in advance of enrolment and as part of the admissions and interview process. Students confirm that this is the case. In addition, they have reviewed and revised their student terms and conditions.

5 The Institute continues to use several approaches to quality monitoring. It was subject to a full partnership review in 2017, which is an integral part of the quality monitoring process and it continues to be regularly updated and monitored. This involves an ongoing Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) and an associated action plan. This action planning process requires dialogue with MMet and covers key areas such as student voice, analysis of complaints, external examiner response and scrutiny of course data. This demonstrates actions related to continuous improvement and is reviewed by the London Governing Board of the Institute. The students are directly involved with quality improvement measures. Each course has a student representative, and the students consider that they are listened to and their views are acted on. As a result of this student engagement in quality processes, students are positive about their ability to express their viewpoint to staff and feel included in ongoing improvements and actions showing appreciation for the termly 'You said, we did' meetings.

6 Attendance was identified by the Institute as an area for improvement, so it could be in a better position to identify and support 'at risk' students. The Institute has enhanced its Attendance Guidance to ensure that students with poor attendance are contacted and, where appropriate, receive counselling and support to remain on their courses and be successful. This initiative was deemed necessary because in some cases attendance was declining, and the link between attendance and retention was recognised. While the new approach to attendance and associated actions is still in its pilot stage, the Institute has noted an improvement in attendance and retention rates are strong. Students confirm that they are made aware of the attendance commitment and recognised the need to monitor it, feeling that it is a positive and proactive move.

7 The approach to recruitment and admissions is sound and the issue that related to clarity of information identified in the previous monitoring visit has now been satisfactorily addressed. The Institute follows the MMet Recruitment and Admissions Policy. All students are interviewed as part of the admissions process, required to demonstrate English language competence and, depending on a chosen programme, produce a portfolio to assess their level of ability. Staff consider prospective students' intention to study at this stage and make them aware of the commitment required, including attendance, to be successful on their courses. They capture information from students on their experience of recruitment and admissions through email and other channels but have not yet developed a formal approach to collecting feedback on, and reviewing the effectiveness of, their admissions process. Nevertheless, students confirm that the approach to admissions is now transparent and supportive, and students who have been at the Institute for several years confirm their view that the recruitment and admissions experience is improving.

8 The approach to assessment is effective. All new staff that set and mark student assessments are trained and mentored to ensure that they are fully equipped to enable students to complete work to the best of their ability. This year they have introduced 'Pre-Exam Boards' to review and improve student progression, and to look at and consider the distribution of marks, but they have yet to monitor the effectiveness of this approach. The recognised good practice of providing 'live briefs' is embedded in their industry-based assessment approach and is a deliberate action to ensure the practical and real-world approach to the curriculum. Students state that in addition to these 'live briefs', a further theme running through assessments is that of sustainability, and they are encouraged by this approach which reflected their views of how the fashion industry should show responsibility to the environment.

9 There is clarity of expectation in terms of what is required from students in assessments. They are made aware of learning outcomes in unit handbooks, and these are reiterated when the assessment is set. Structured formative assessment meetings take place, and students appreciate the guidance and support that these afford. Similar channels are used where students are made aware of the risks of intentional and unintentional plagiarism, as well as the consequences. Students also state that they appreciate staff industry expertise and experience which provides insight to enable them to complete assessments in an industry-informed manner.

10 The Institute considers and evaluates its retention and pass data as part of its CIP, making it a key component of their decision making. The data shows in-year rates for the 2015-16 cohort of students for retention of 54 percent to 100 percent. The 54 percent which was the only concern, (BA (Hons) Fashion Business Year 2) improved to 94 percent for 2016-17, and while it fell to 75 percent for the 2017-18 cohort, this translated to one student from four. For the whole of the Institute the 2016-17 retention shows rates of between 75 percent and 100 percent, and 2017-18 from 68 percent to 100 percent. In each year, the majority of programmes show 100 percent retention. Pass rates for the 2015-16 cohort range from 74 percent to 100 percent and the 2016-17 cohort from 80 percent to 100 percent. On most programmes the pass rate is 100 percent.

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

11 The Institute engages with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and is in the process of planning the mapping of its activities using the new Quality Code. In the development and validation of its courses it has engaged with *The Framework for Higher Education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), and Subject Benchmark Statements.

12 The Institute in London is part of an international organisation with centres in Milan, Florence, Paris, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Miami, as well as having close links with employers and industry. It uses these as external reference points to inform its curriculum content and delivery.

Background to the monitoring visit

13 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.

14 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Mike Slawin, Reviewer, and Mr Kevin Kendall, QAA Officer, on 3 April 2019.

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