



## Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of The Condé Nast Publications Ltd t/a Condé Nast College of Fashion and Design, March 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 The Condé Nast Publications Ltd t/a Condé Nast College of Fashion and Design (the College) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision since the [March 2016 Annual Monitoring Review](#).

### 2 Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The College continues to offer the Vogue Fashion Certificate and the Vogue Fashion Diploma, validated by Gateway Qualifications at level 4. In addition, a BA (Hons) course in Fashion Communication (level 6) was validated by the University of Buckingham and introduced in September 2016. Student numbers enrolled at the date of the actual review were six on the Certificate (runs over 10 weeks), 15 on the Diploma (runs full-time over one year) and 60 students on the BA (Hons) course (runs full-time over two years). Some students who were previously studying for the Diploma transferred onto the BA course at the end of their second term. This fits with the overall College intention to have a greater focus on the BA (Hons) course, with reduced student numbers on both the Certificate and the Diploma. Student numbers overall have increased by 18 since the previous year due to the recruitment of the second cohort of students onto the BA (Hons) course in September 2017.

3 As reflected in the College Strategic Plan for 2018-2021, an MA in Fashion Media Practice will commence in October 2018, validated by the University of Buckingham and in addition, a joint MA in Luxury Brand Management with Richmond, The American International University in London will also commence and be co-delivered.

4 The College has had some changes to its academic staffing. An additional Senior Lecturer and a Course Director have recently been appointed. Other positions are currently advertised for a full-time Course Director for the MA and part-time lecturers in Marketing and Fashion Media. Recruitment for the permanent positions is planned for June/July 2018.

### 3 Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The College has made acceptable progress in continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision and is actively engaged in the enhancement of its provision. A revised Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Strategy has been developed, which articulates current practice and provides a framework for enhancement. An updated Strategic Plan has been developed for 2018-2021. Both strategies were published in March 2018. The actions required to develop these strategies, including feedback from stakeholders, is not formally captured in either Academic Standards or College Committee minutes.

6 College governance and management has been strengthened by the review of the Terms of Reference for each committee. These now clearly state the scope of the committee, the reporting structure and membership, although students are only included in Academic Standards Committee (ASC) and the student steering group. Minutes of all committees are clear and well structured and demonstrate formal consideration of relevant matters presented. Students and external examiners are included in the membership and do attend the ASC. ASC meets once per year in November, which can limit the timeliness of actions (see paragraph 5).

7 The enhancement of Teaching and Learning is supported by peer observation, which encourages personal reflection and professional development. Staff are supported to undertake formal staff development as well as the sharing of good practice. Examples of good practice identified during peer observation and through observations by staff acting as external examiners at other institutions is discussed informally within the team and at Academic Planning meetings. Minutes of the Academic Planning meetings are less formal; they evidence some discussion but the outcomes are less clear, with no timescales. Currently, the identification of training needs and/or structured development opportunities happens informally following an annual performance review.

8 The validation of the two courses, BA (Hons) and MA, with the University of Buckingham demonstrate a formal approach to programme design and the inclusion of external input and internal approval. Students confirm that the external visits and visiting speakers both add interest and valuable content to their studies. Operational changes to the design of the programmes is discussed at Academic Planning Meetings and confirmed where required with the University.

9 Students are able to contribute to the enhancement process through the inclusion of student representation at ASC, Steering Group meetings, and through regular module and programme surveys. Students volunteer for the role of Student Representative and are supported by the College with a handbook and training. The small group size and tutorial structure encourages informal feedback of any concerns or issues, which supports timely interventions by the College. Students are represented at Steering Group meetings where they are able to put forward any issues and suggestions. At the meeting held with students during the review, students confirmed that the College takes any issues raised seriously and provides prompt feedback on actions they plan to take. Student Representatives communicate with their peers either face to face or through social media and the virtual learning environment.

10 Policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated, and an Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Handbook is now available. These all clearly show links to the Quality Code, with a full mapping exercise that remains ongoing within the College. Document management systems and procedures for the systematic review and validation of policies and procedures are not yet formally recorded. The College publishes a range of information for both internal and external use; this is closely monitored to ensure that it is accurate and current. All checks and changes are logged.

11 The College Admissions Policy was reviewed in 2017 and includes the requirement for the completion of either a UCAS application or an online application and personal statement. Qualifications are checked to ensure a suitable standard of English and achievement of the entry requirements. Applicants for the BA (Hons) submit their portfolios or may be required to undertake an assignment known as the College Challenge. Further assessment of competence in English and the intention to study is made during the interviews, which are conducted either in person or via Skype. Admissions staff interviewing international students applying through Tier 4 have an additional checklist and questions to ensure that applicants meet all criteria. Students confirmed that the procedures were

followed and also that the College was able to respond to last-minute applications. The Student Absence Policy supports the requirements for Tier 4 students and makes clear the general requirements of appropriate attendance. Attendance is monitored twice daily and any absence is followed up quickly.

12 Action planning and monitoring is embedded across College processes and systems. Annual Monitoring at course level combines evaluations from a range of sources, including student feedback and external references. They provide a review of the previous year's actions and also detail actions planned for the forthcoming year. The Dean's Annual Monitoring Report now follows the format required by the University of Buckingham. Formal module and programme evaluation takes place as part of Annual Monitoring and includes action planning and review. Students complete module evaluation surveys, which are collated and discussed and used with external examiner reports to inform Module Evaluation Reports. However, students were not aware of, and had not seen, the external examiner reports and the College confirmed that this was something that it intended to change. An evaluation of module content, in particular industrial relevance and assessment, is undertaken informally between staff and at Academic Planning meetings. Annual Monitoring reports are presented to ASC before submission to the University, and the Committee also receives and considers all external examiner reports and College responses to ensure that comments and recommendations are implemented.

13 The data on retention and achievement shows continued success, with 100 per cent retention for the Certificate and Diploma courses. This declined to 94 per cent for the first year of the BA (Hons) course, with two students not continuing. In the last academic year, achievement rates declined to between 80 per cent and 92 per cent for the Certificate and Diploma courses, which compares with an achievement rate of 100 per cent in the previous years. This drop is mainly as a result of Diploma students transferring onto the BA (Hons) course after their second term. It is too early to consider the overall achievement rates for the BA (Hons) course as students have not yet completed the full two-year programme. The data also shows that around 75 per cent of all students on the Certificate and Diploma courses are over 21, in comparison with 20 per cent on the BA (Hons) course. International and non-EU students account for circa 35 per cent across all courses.

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

14 Ultimate responsibility for setting academic standards and ensuring that requirements of the relevant reference points are met lies with the College's awarding organisation and awarding body, Gateway Qualifications and the University of Buckingham. The processes put in place by both ensure that the awards are correctly positioned at the relevant level of the FHEQ, QCF and RQF and are aligned with Subject Benchmark Statements. The evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective and with due consideration given to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code).

15 The College works in partnership with its awarding organisation and awarding body and operates successful practices that ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where learning outcomes and academic standards of the awarding organisation and awarding body have been met. The Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Handbook demonstrates links to the Quality Code and is used a central reference point for all staff. The College should continue the work already started to align its policies and procedures to the Quality Code and other relevant external reference points to make full use of the mapping exercise (see paragraph 10).

## **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 Mrs Sue Miller, Reviewer, and Dr Suzanne Richardson, Coordinator, on 12 March 2018.

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