



Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements: monitoring report of Bangor University International College, October 2023

Outcome of the desk-based analysis

1 From the annual return and documentary evidence, the monitoring team concludes that Bangor University International College (the College) is continuing to maintain academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities since the October 2022 [Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements Review](#).

Changes since the last QAA review

2 The College was opened by Oxford International Education Group in collaboration with Bangor University and is an embedded College on the University's campus. It is now in its seventh year of operation and currently offers three full-time integrated programmes to international students: the International Year Zero (IY0) at Level 3, the International Year One (IY1) at Level 4, and the International Incorporated Masters (IIM) at Level 6. The College also offers a Business Foundation Year (BFY) at Level 3 as a full-time integrated programme to home students. There are six pathways in the IY0 (Business Management and Economics, Law, Media, Psychology, Social Sciences and Engineering, and Computer Science), three in the IY1 (Business Management and Marketing, Accounting, Banking and Finance and Psychology), and four in the IIM (Business and Management, Investment and Banking, Accounting and Finance and Psychology). The College delivers the first stage of all these programmes, with the remaining part being delivered by Bangor University. A total of 418 students enrolled at the College in 2023. The College employs 25 members of academic and professional services staff (18.25 FTE). No material changes have taken place since the last monitoring visit.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The team carefully reviewed all the information submitted by the College and found that it continues to use its Ongoing Action Plan effectively, and that the actions set are appropriate, comprehensive and completed on time (paragraphs 4-7). The team's examination of the College's data return and associated documentation showed that student recruitment, retention, attendance, and first-time pass rates have improved since the last monitoring visit (paragraph 8). The team also found that the College continues to make progress in meeting UK expectations for higher education by systematically employing appropriate external reference points in setting and maintaining the quality and standards of its academic provision (paragraph 9), and in demonstrating the applicable Core and Common practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraphs 10-13).

4 The College has formulated an action plan in response to the second Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements (EOEA) Review by QAA, conducted in October 2022. This plan has been integrated into an Ongoing Action Plan which the College uses to record and address any areas requiring improvement, as identified through the reviews by QAA, as well as its own internal monitoring processes. This central action plan is being consistently

updated as a dynamic document, and progress is reviewed termly by the College's Learning and Teaching Committee and at programme and all staff meetings. An analysis of the action plans reveals a timely and effective deployment, as a robust mechanism for ensuring the quality of academic provision at the College and the continuous enhancement of the overall experience of its students.

5 The College has conducted a review of both formal and informal teaching observation processes and has successfully implemented a range of additional measures of support for its staff in the last year, such as the provision of further training and the development of supporting materials in this area. The College's commitment to fostering an effective learning culture which supports students' academic integrity is evident. The steps taken to support students and staff in this domain - such as the introduction of an academic integrity module for students or the delivery of an in-house development session to staff on assessment design for academic integrity - have been effective and have resulted in a significant reduction in academic misconduct cases at the College since the last monitoring visit.

6 The College actively supports staff to take part in professional development activities and engage with their academic peers externally. There is clear evidence of staff making good use of these opportunities - for example, by participating and presenting at external conferences and by seeking external recognition of their professional practice through the Advance HE Fellowship Scheme. The College continues to increase its adoption of learning technology platforms which improve and enhance pedagogic practice. Effective measures taken since the last monitoring visit include the appointment of a Technology Enhanced Delivery Lead, the development of electronic reading lists for all modules improving access to essential reading materials through the virtual learning environment (VLE), the use of the VLE to facilitate targeted communications and the release of assessment briefs to students, and the introduction of in-house development sessions on learning technologies for staff.

7 As noted above, the College is also actively identifying and addressing actions in response to its internal monitoring processes, such as the University's Annual Review and Enhancement of Programmes, the Internal Quality Audit, or the Institutional Re-Approval Process, as well as the College's own Teaching and Learning Committee and Student Forum. These actions, which are captured in the College's published Ongoing Action Plan, are appropriate and comprehensive, and are being completed on time. For example, the College was asked to review the assessment load in several modules as part of the University's Annual Review and Enhancement of Programmes, and completed this action ahead of the revalidation process in July 2023. In response to input from the Student Forum, the College has also piloted block teaching across all its programmes in 2023 to offer students one teaching-free day per week. Furthermore, appropriate forward-looking actions are being set for the 2023-24 academic year. These include, for instance, several actions in response to external examiner reports and student feedback mechanisms. For example, providing one-to-one drop-in sessions for examination feedback; and reviewing the impact of language proficiency on grades on courses that do not have language proficiency as a stated outcome.

8 Recruitment at the College increased last academic year by almost 3%. The average rate of student retention across the College's programmes has also increased by 4.3 percentage points since the last monitoring visit - from 63.3% in 2021-22 (259 out of 407 students) to 67.9% in 2022-23 (284 out of 418 students). The rate of student retention for some programmes, however, is low. Examples of this include the International Year Zero (IY0) in Business, Management and Economics - October intake (23%), and the International Year One (IY1) in Business, Management and Finance - October intake (35%). Of the 172 students who completed their programmes at the College in 2022-23, 143 were awarded and 6 failed the qualification they initially enrolled on, with 23 students pending reassessment (as of the date of return in August 2023). The average student attendance

reported by the College has improved by 13 percentage points - from 53% in 2021-22 to 66% in 2022-23 - but remains low and is 12 percentage points below that achieved in 2020-21. The number of students at the College requiring reassessment is gradually being reduced.

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

9 The College continues to maintain the quality and standards of its higher education provision, systematically employing appropriate external reference points such as the *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales* (CQFW), any relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The team's inspection of documents such as the University's Code of Practice for Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review and the Programme Specification Form for the IY1 Business, Management and Marketing, showed that use of these external reference points is embedded into the College's initial programme approval and annual review processes, and is reflected in the approved programme documentation.

10 The College continues to make progress in meeting UK expectations for higher education by demonstrating both Core and Common practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, with appropriate dissemination strategies for new and existing staff. Evidence supporting the demonstration of Core practices includes the effective use of arrangements for external oversight through the appointment of external examiners, maintaining a strong collaborative partnership with the University of Bangor as the awarding body, and the existence of sufficient appropriately qualified staff, facilities, resources and student support services at the College to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

11 For example, the College employs five external examiners appointed by the University to oversee its academic programmes across all levels. These examiners are actively engaged in the assessment process by approving draft assessments, moderating a sample of second-marked work, and participating in the Board of Examiners. They produce annual reports, made accessible to both staff and students through the College's virtual learning environment, which include an evaluation of whether threshold academic standards have been met and of the comparability of the standards of student performance with those on similar programmes with which they are familiar. The evidence reviewed by the team shows that the College continues to make effective use of these reports as part of its approach to monitoring the quality and standards of its provision.

12 Evidence supporting the demonstration of Common practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education includes the College's systematic use of its Ongoing Action Plan to drive improvement and enhancement, the effective use of both external examiners and external subject specialists on programme approval panels and reviews, and the continued engagement of students in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience. For instance, the team's review of a sample of module and programme evaluations, and minutes of the Teaching and Learning Committee and the Student Forum, shows that the College proactively engages students individually and collectively in the improvement of their educational experience, and that it responds appropriately to their feedback.

13 Through its internal quality assurance systems, the College has identified a number of matters on which it will be focusing in the coming academic year, including student attendance, retention and completion, the effectiveness of the College's Student Attendance Policy and the arrangements for the induction of new students, as well as making available additional support mechanisms for students who register late.

Background to the desk-based analysis

14 The desk-based analysis 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/annual monitoring. 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 process or review.

15 The desk-based analysis was carried out by Dr Iván García, Reviewer, and Alan Weale, QAA Officer, in October 2023. No meetings were held with students or staff, and the conclusions presented in this report are based on the analysis of documentary evidence submitted by the provider.

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