



# **Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd**

Embedded College Review for  
Educational Oversight  
by the Quality Assurance Agency  
for Higher Education

May 2012

## Amended judgement

The report on the Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight (ECREO) was published in September 2012.

Since that date the review team can now confirm that the institution, working in partnership with the student body, has satisfactorily addressed the review team's initial recommendations through the action planning process.

In particular, those recommendations which led to the initial judgement of limited confidence in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers through embedded college provision, limited confidence that academic standards at the University of Surrey International Study Centre are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of the provider, and limited confidence that academic standards at the University of Lincoln International Study Centre are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of the provider have been satisfactorily addressed.

In December 2012 the judgement in the soundness of the provider's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards and those at the University of Surrey International Study Centre and the University of Lincoln International Study Centre was amended to **confidence**.

## Key findings about Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd

The QAA review team (the team) formed the following judgements about Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd.

The team has **limited confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the academic standards of the awards it offers through its embedded college provision.

The team has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for students through embedded colleges.

The team considers that **reliance can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself, its embedded colleges, and the programmes that it delivers.

## Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following **features of good practice** at Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd:

- a consistently high level of academic and pastoral support is provided for students (paragraph 2.21)
- high-quality staff development, including teachers' conferences (paragraph 2.31)
- structured networking arrangements are made for staff with similar responsibilities across International Study Centres (ISCs) (paragraph 2.32).

## Recommendations

The QAA review team made the following recommendations to Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd.

The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:

- establish policies and procedures to ensure that inter-institutional agreements which take full account of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (e-learning)* are in place before any students are admitted to ISC programmes (paragraph 1.6)
- make clear, in its inter-institutional agreements and/or governing documents for each ISC, which institution is responsible for the academic standards of each programme (paragraph 1.7)
- clarify and consistently apply the meanings of academic standards-related terminology in formal documentation for each ISC (paragraph 1.8)
- establish a formal process, aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*, for the approval of all new programmes which are not validated by partner universities, and ensure that this process, and the validation processes of partner universities, are completed before students are admitted to ISC programmes (paragraph 1.11)
- ensure that all programmes are covered by assessment regulations which are aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*, and that they are communicated to students in writing and applied consistently (paragraph 1.18)

- implement consistently its procedures to secure the accuracy and completeness of information supplied to partner universities for their approval before publication (paragraph 3.7).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight](#)<sup>1</sup> (ECREO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (the provider). Bellerbys Colleges are separately inspected by Ofsted and do not fall within the scope of this review.

The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd delivers in collaboration with Heriot-Watt University; the University of Huddersfield; University of Keele; Kingston University, London; University of Lancaster; the University of Leicester; the University of Lincoln; Royal Holloway, University of London; the University of Surrey; the University of Sussex; Liverpool John Moores University; the University of Stirling; and the University of Wales, Newport. The review was carried out by Professor Alan Jago, Dr Sylvia Hargreaves, Professor Duncan Lawson, Professor Graham Romp and Dr Monika Ruthe (reviewers), Mrs Alison Jones, Mr Tony Platt, Mrs Mychelle Pride and Ms Siobhan Tuohy-Smith (review secretaries), and Mr Alan Hunt (QAA Officer).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).<sup>2</sup> Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd provided a self-evaluation document with supporting documentary evidence, including structural information, inter-institutional agreements, student handbooks, annual monitoring reports, external examiners' reports, the Draft Provider Quality Policy, staff handbooks, centre handbooks and operational guides. Further documentation was provided during the review process, including sample transcripts and certificates, minutes of assessment boards, steering committees' reports, and prospectuses. During visits to Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and to each embedded college, reviewers met staff of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and its partner universities, and representative groups of students.

The review team also considered the provider's use of the relevant external reference points:

- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*), Sections 2-7 and 10
- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- subject benchmark statements
- the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

Please note that if you are unfamiliar with any of the terms used in this report you can find them in the [Glossary](#).

Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd, part of Study Group UK-EU Higher Education Division, is owned by Providence Equity Partners, a US private equity partnership specialising in investment in the education industry. Its embedded colleges are known as International Studies Centres (ISCs); these were first conceived in 2005, following a successful model operated by Bellerbys Colleges in the UK, beginning with a foundation programme in the early 1990s at Liverpool John Moores University. In 2006, the first ISC was established at the University of Sussex. This was followed by the establishment of 12 further ISCs in the

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/embedded-college-handbook.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/embedded-college-handbook.aspx)

UK and two in Ireland. This review covered all 13 ISCs in the UK (listed below). Since the establishment of the first ISC with 90 students in 2006, the network has grown to be an organisation with around 2,000 students. The embedded colleges are developed in close partnership with the partner universities, and in all cases are situated on or near the campus of the relevant university.

Within the network, partnerships can take slightly different forms. Normally, the ISC is in a direct relationship with the university in which it is embedded, and successful students normally progress directly onto that university's undergraduate or postgraduate programmes. The single exception to this model is the Wales ISC; it is situated at the University of Wales, Newport, but it prepares students for entry to most of the higher education institutions in Wales and also to the University of Bristol. The programmes in all the ISCs are either approved or validated by the university within which they are located, except at the Wales ISC, where the programmes are currently validated by the University of Wales.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes at its ISCs:

#### **Heriot-Watt University International Study Centre**

- Undergraduate Certificate (Engineering and Computing; Business and Management; Life Sciences; Mathematics and Computing)
- Pre-Master's Programme for International Students (Business)
- English Language Preparation Programme

#### **University of Huddersfield International Study Centre**

- International Foundation Year (Business, Law and Social Studies; Creative Arts; Engineering, Computing, Science)
- Certificate in Business
- Certificate in Engineering
- Pre-Master's (Business, Computing, Art and Design)
- English Language Preparation Programme

#### **Keele University International Study Centre**

- International Year 1 (Business and Management, Computing, International Relations and Politics, Media)
- Pre-Master's (Business and Management, Computing)
- English Language Preparation Programme

#### **Kingston University, London International Study Centre**

- International Foundation Year (Business, Management and Economics; Engineering, Computing and Mathematics; Law, Politics and Social Sciences; Life and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Psychology, Communication and Media Studies)
- Pre-Master's (Business and Management)

#### **Lancaster University International Study Centre**

- International Foundation Year (Business and Management Studies; Law and Social Studies; Engineering and Computing; Life Sciences)
- English Language Preparation Programme

#### **University of Leicester International Study Centre**

- International Foundation Year (Economics, Business, Social Sciences; Engineering, Physics, Mathematics; Science and Computing)
- English Language Preparation Programme

### **University of Lincoln International Study Centre**

- Foundation Diploma (Business and Management; Computer Science; Media Studies; Journalism)
- University of Lincoln/ISC Integrated Engineering Programme
- Pre-Master's (Business and Management; Engineering)
- English Language Preparation Programme

### **Liverpool John Moores University International Study Centre**

- International Foundation Year (Business and Law; Science and Technology)
- Pre-Master's
- English Language Preparation Programme

### **Royal Holloway, University of London International Study Centre**

- International Foundation Programme (Arts, Business, Economics, Sciences, Social Sciences)

### **University of Surrey International Study Centre**

- International Foundation Year (Business, Economics, Law and Politics; Engineering, Science and Mathematics)
- Pre-Master's (Economics)
- English Language Preparation Programme

### **University of Sussex International Study Centre**

- International Foundation Year (Business, Management and Economics; Engineering and Physics; Computing and Mathematics; Law, International Relations and Social Studies; Media and Communications; Life Sciences and Psychology)
- International Year 1 Diploma (Business and Management)
- Pre-Master's (Computing; Management and Finance; Media, Journalism and Film Studies)
- English Language Preparation Programme

### **University of Stirling International Study Centre**

- Undergraduate Certificate (Business and Social Studies; Sciences and Computing)
- Undergraduate Diploma (Business and Management)
- Pre-Master's (Business and Management)
- English Language Preparation Programme

### **Wales International Study Centre (Newport)**

- International Foundation Year (Business and Law; Engineering and Science)
- International Year 1 (Business)
- Pre-Master's in Business
- English Language Preparation Programme

## **The provider's stated responsibilities**

Inter-institutional agreements outline the responsibilities of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and its university partners.

The programmes provided in each ISC vary according to the agreement with the relevant partner university. Typically, they may include a foundation year at level 3 of the FHEQ or the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework (SQCF) level 7, or the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) level 3; international year 1, sometimes termed

certificate, at level 4 of the FHEQ or SQCF 8 or CQFW 5; and a pre-master's programme at level 6 of the FHEQ or SCQF 9/10, or CQFW 6. These programmes of study lead, through the articulation routes agreed with the partner university, to the first or second year of undergraduate study, or, in the case of pre-master's programmes, to taught postgraduate study. These programmes all aim to meet the needs of international students, and, consequently, all of the ISCs, except Royal Holloway, also offer the English Language Preparation Programme and also, in some cases, pre-sessional English programmes. A common feature of all the programmes is that the learning outcomes cover general abilities and skills, some discipline-specific knowledge and skills, and language proficiency, including academic communication.

ISCs have broadly similar structures working within a defined framework and guided by centralised management and administrative functions. Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd's head office in Brighton provides management and administrative services in relation to overall strategy, recruitment and admissions, marketing, publicity and web management. Strategic leadership and development, including partner selection, are undertaken by the Senior Management Team (SMT), headed by the Managing Director Study Group UK and Europe HE Division. The overall management of the network of embedded colleges is undertaken by the SMT. Oversight of academic and operational matters is delegated to the ISC Operational and Academic Committee (OPAC), a new committee established in September 2011. Operational running of centres is led by the Operational Services Manager, who is responsible for coordinating capacity management and acts as a key interface between ISCs and OPAC. Oversight of the new quality assurance framework is undertaken by the ISC Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (ISCQAEC), a very recently established body. Both OPAC and ISCQAEC are chaired by the Principal of ISCs. The review team found that some new committees had not yet met, or had met only once.

For each ISC, there is a steering committee comprising senior managers of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and the partner university. This group is responsible for strategic matters. Operationally, each ISC is managed by the Head of Centre.

## Recent developments

Recent developments in higher education provision at Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd include the addition of its latest ISC at Royal Holloway, University of London (autumn 2011); the appointment of regional directors with responsibility for the implementation of new provision and delivery of existing programmes with regional groups; and the continuing development of the provider-level quality assurance framework.

## Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at ISCs were invited to present a submission to the review team, and submissions were received from all but three ISCs. These submissions were helpful in providing a basis for discussions with students about their learning experiences. Student representatives received general guidance from their ISCs about the preparation of these submissions. Students met the QAA Officer during the preparatory meeting, and reviewers during the first team visit and all visits to embedded colleges.



## Detailed findings about Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd

### 1 Academic standards

#### How effectively does the provider fulfil its responsibilities for the management of academic standards?

1.1 Generally, in each ISC the partner university is responsible for the academic standards of programmes which it validates. Also in general terms, Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd is responsible for the academic standards of programmes which are approved, but not validated by the partner university. In some cases, responsibilities are shared or delegated. However, some inter-institutional agreements and related documents do not make these responsibilities clear (see also paragraph 1.7).

1.2 All ISCs work closely with their partner university in the management of their programmes. The main committee dealing with these matters in the ISC is the Academic Management Board, reports from which go to both the university and the provider. The Wales ISC does not have links with a single university, and thus does not have such a board; instead, a moderator is appointed by the University of Wales and reports to it on the operation of the ISC.

1.3 The first stage in the approval of an ISC is a decision by Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and the partner university to establish such a college. There are established procedures in place in relation to the selection, development and contractual arrangements. Factors such as geographical spread, subject availability, reputation and resource availability are taken into account in the process. Following agreement to proceed, the parties negotiate an inter-institutional agreement covering a wide range of matters relating to the partnership, including commercial and financial arrangements. In relation to quality assurance, the inter-institutional agreements refer to management processes, modification processes, module and progression assessment boards, annual monitoring, complaints and appeals, and marketing and admissions. Agreements are signed by a Director of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd, or a representative to whom this responsibility is delegated, and the head of the partner university or their representative.

1.4 The inter-institutional agreement governing the provision at the Wales ISC was not clearly drafted in all respects: in particular, it did not follow the normal pattern of agreements made by Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd, whereby Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd, as a legal personality, enters into agreements in its own name and not in the name of the individual centre (see Annex 13: Wales International Study Centre). Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd will no doubt wish to ensure consistent use of its established practice in this regard.

1.5 Although there are some common elements in the inter-institutional agreements, essentially they are separate bilateral collaborative agreements between Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and the partner university. Each agreement has a review date for possible extension, and agreements with six partners have been extended. Each agreement also establishes a steering committee, which has as its main task the oversight of the contractual partnership. The Steering Committee meets twice a year and includes senior staff from the partner university and key staff from Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd.

1.6 The review team found that at two ISCs students had been admitted to programmes before inter-institutional agreements were signed by both parties (see Annex 2: University of Huddersfield International Study Centre and Annex 13: Wales International Study Centre). Programmes at another ISC had opened on the basis of a 'heads of agreement', the full

inter-institutional agreement being signed some months later (see Annex 3: Keele University International Centre). The review team therefore considers it advisable that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd should establish policies and procedures to ensure that inter-institutional agreements which take full account of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* are in place before students are admitted to programmes at ISCs.

1.7 Some inter-institutional agreements (for example Heriot-Watt and Lancaster) seen by the review team did not clearly state which institution - the partner university or Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd - was responsible for the academic standards of each programme (see Annex 1: Heriot-Watt University International Study Centre and Annex 5: Lancaster University International Study Centre). In order to establish a clear basis for the management of academic standards it is advisable that each agreement should clarify this responsibility in relation to each programme of study.

1.8 It was not always clear in inter-institutional agreements and other documentation (for example Keele and Lancaster ISCs) how the meanings of academic standards terminology were being used (see Annex 3: Keele University International Centre and Annex 5: Lancaster University International Study Centre). This issue applied particularly to terms such as validation, approval, articulation. While some agreements included a definition of terms used in the agreement, it was not always clear whether a particular programme was to be approved or validated. Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd is advised to clarify and consistently apply the meanings of academic standards-related terminology in formal documentation for each ISC.

1.9 Procedures for the development and validation or approval of programmes vary between the ISCs. In most cases, Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd puts forward a programme proposal, usually based on their experience of running similar programmes in other ISCs. Proposals are modified in light of the particular needs of the university partner. New programme proposals are discussed initially at the steering committee. If agreed at that level, the decision as to whether programmes should be approved or validated rests with the partner university. Validated programmes are normally required to meet all the policies and procedures of the partner university, and it is clear that responsibility for academic standards and quality remains with the university. For approved provision, the partner university maps the ISC programme against its own programme, and this forms the basis of an articulation agreement. The recently formed ISC Programme Development Committee, a subcommittee of the International Study Centres Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (ISCQAEC), will in future oversee new programme developments across the network of ISCs.

1.10 Proposals for new modules within existing programmes may arise from individual ISCs, partner universities or from Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd. Such proposals arise from possible opportunities for new pathways, identified either by Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd through its marketing function or by the partner university, repackaging of existing programmes as a consequence of student comment, student performance or meeting changing external conditions. Modifications to programmes are discussed between the ISC and Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd senior managers before being submitted to the partner.

1.11 The review team found that in some instances students had been admitted to programmes which had not been formally approved or validated, and/or for which there was no definitive programme document (see Annex 10: University of Surrey International Centre and Annex 13: Wales International Study Centre). The team advises Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd to establish a formal process, aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review* for the approval of all new programmes

which are not validated by partner universities, and ensure that this process, and the validation processes of partner universities, are completed before students are admitted to ISC programmes.

1.12 ISCs produce annual monitoring reports for their partner university and for Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (at corporate level). In some cases, these are the same report. The format of the annual monitoring report for each partner university depends on its requirements and the status of the course. Typically, programme leaders incorporate comments on progression and completion data, module review, student satisfaction gleaned from student surveys and external examiners' comments. The reports also deal with issues occurring during the year and make recommendations for any consequent change. The review team saw numerous examples of annual monitoring reports to universities and noted that they fulfilled the requirements of their partner. The reports made by the Head of Centre to Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd's Head Office contain the same information, often in considerably more detail, in relation to withdrawal, progression and completion data. The reports are produced in line with a Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd template. These reports are now sent in September to the newly established ISCQAEC for review. They are also discussed at the annual heads of centre conference before being sent to any relevant ISCQAEC subcommittees which cover matters such as admissions, programme development, staff development, and teaching and learning. Following their consideration, heads of centre are required to submit quarterly reviews on progress on action points which have been identified through the monitoring process. The review team considered that this process, although only recently introduced, had a clear design and there was evidence of its effectiveness.

1.13 Programmes within each ISC are subject to the partner university's requirements in relation to periodic review. The new quality assurance structure introduced by Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd is designed to provide a process of continuous review which will apply across the network of ISCs.

1.14 On the basis of the evidence seen, the review team considered that the procedures which had been developed were appropriate and would further strengthen the quality of programme delivery and the setting and maintaining of standards.

### **How effectively does the provider manage the assessment of students?**

1.15 Centre handbooks and operational guides contain policies and procedures for the assessment of students. Except in relation to the specific issues reported below, the review team found that the information was clear and comprehensive, provided extensive guidance to ISC staff and established a sound framework for ensuring the effective management of assessment. During visits to the ISCs, the team found that staff were familiar with these. The provisions were being implemented as required at the ISCs, with the exception of Lincoln ISC, where the review team found significant shortcomings with respect to assessment boards, the treatment of late coursework submissions and the moderation of examination papers (see Annex 7: University of Lincoln International Study Centre). Students whom the team met had a clear understanding of what they could expect and what was expected of them with respect to assessment. They were also satisfied with the timeliness and level of feedback they received on their work.

1.16 The review team identified a number of issues concerning assessment regulations. At Lancaster ISC, the team was informed that programme-level assessment regulations did not conform to the University regulations, but are specified in the student handbook. However, Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd was unable to confirm that assessment regulations at module level are routinely provided to students, and staff at the ISC were unable to supply a definitive set of programme level assessment regulations. In particular,

there was no programme-level regulation stating that it is not possible for students to resit any module if they have failed more than two modules in any term, even though this requirement had previously been used to withdraw students from the programme.

1.17 The review team was also told that these withdrawal decisions at Lancaster ISC had been taken by the Head of Centre, though it was unclear whether, in this respect, he acts in the capacity of chair of an assessment board. The team found that, at Lancaster and other ISCs, there is a lack of clarity as to where the power to issue 'fail and terminate studies' decisions resides. A number of centre handbooks referred only to the responsibility of programme assessment boards to 'recommend' whether students who fail to reach the required progression grade or have failed the programme should be allowed to continue or retake the whole or part of the programme. Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd was not able to provide evidence indicating to whom such recommendations were addressed.

1.18 At Lancaster ISC, the review team found that practice for reassessment of students undermines a general principle of assessment that the awarded grades must reflect student performance (see Annex 5: Lancaster University International Study Centre). It is advisable that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd ensures that all programmes offered at ISCs are covered by the assessment regulations which are aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*, that these regulations are communicated to students in writing, and that they are applied consistently.

1.19 Across the ISCs, in respect of programmes leading to awards of the partner universities, such as many of the foundation year programmes, certificates bearing the name and logo of the respective university are issued either by the university itself or by the ISC in the name of the university. Only transcripts are issued in respect of programmes not leading to a university award, such as the pre-master's programmes. The review team found that certificates and transcripts generally contain information providing a full understanding of students' achievements.

1.20 However, the team found that in the case of one ISC, information necessary to provide that full information had been omitted. Transcripts for all the programmes offered at Huddersfield ISC are produced and issued by the University, with the University logo affixed, but they do not record the name and location of the ISC. In the team's view, this has the potential to mislead stakeholders as to the organisation engaged in delivery of the programme and, therefore, as to the precise nature of students' achievement (see Annex 2: University of Huddersfield International Study Centre).

1.21 At the Lancaster ISC, the international foundation year is not an award of the University and does not offer academic credit. However, the programme specification, student handbook and the transcript issued to students who successfully complete the programme explicitly refer to credit. The review team believes that this has the potential to mislead students and other stakeholders about the status of the international foundation year programme offered at this ISC (see Annex 5: Lancaster University International Study Centre and Annex 10: University of Surrey International Study Centre).

### **How effectively are UK external reference points used in the management of academic standards?**

1.22 As a development exercise for managers, mapping of relevant aspects of the Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd's internal quality assurance procedures against relevant sections of the *Code of practice* have recently been undertaken and resulted in the development of a draft Quality Policy. The Programme Development Committee will monitor the alignment of provision with external reference points. There are plans to develop a

comprehensive training programme about the *Code of practice* and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

1.23 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd takes account of the *Code of practice* in the setting up of a new partnership or the development of a new programme. This includes the establishment of an academic working group comprising Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and university partners' staff. Programmes put forward for validation or approval by the university partner are mapped against external reference points, such as the FHEQ and other national qualifications frameworks, subject benchmark statements, and, where appropriate, professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements. English language provision is mapped against the Common European Framework.

1.24 Partner universities also make appropriate use of external reference points for setting and maintaining academic standards in ISC provision, which leads to their awards. All validated programmes have programme specifications, which are approved by the partner universities, and most use the university's programme specification template. There is close consultation between staff at ISCs and partner universities in the development, annual monitoring and review of all validated programmes. This aims to ensure that the content, level and standards of the programmes are appropriate to allow articulation with the related university courses, and that student achievement matches the partner's expectations.

1.25 The review team found that in some ISCs (Keele, Lancaster, Leicester) where programmes are approved rather than validated by the partner universities, engagement with external reference points is generally less rigorous. About half of the approved programmes have programme specifications (for example, at Keele, Heriot Watt, Lincoln). Where this is not currently the case, the elements typically contained in programme specifications are normally considered as part of the approval process by the relevant university (for example, Leicester and Lancaster), but in one case (Surrey) there has been no formal approval of academic content, and no programme specification (see Annex 10: University of Surrey International Study Centre).

1.26 Overall, the team concluded that there is generally appropriate engagement with external reference points in managing academic standards of the programmes.

### **How effectively does the provider use external examining, moderation, or verification to assure academic standards?**

1.27 As specified in inter-institutional agreements, external examiner appointments are made by the partner universities or formally approved by them, following nomination by Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd. External examiners are expected to assure the maintenance of academic standards according to the procedures of the partner universities. Centre handbooks and operational guides set out the details of external examiners' roles. This information is set out clearly and the team found that it is understood by ISC staff.

1.28 With the exception of one programme at Lincoln ISC, for which no University-approved external examiner had been appointed during its first year of operation (see Annex 7: University of Lincoln International Study Centre), ISC programmes have external examiners in place wherever this is required by the partner university. The review team learned in discussions with senior staff of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd that they intend to adopt a policy of external examiners' appointments across its entire ISC provision, a development which the team encourages Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd to progress.

1.29 The team found individual isolated examples of external examiners whose work do not meet expectations and requirements of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and/or the

university partner in all respects. At Keele ISC and Huddersfield ISC, recent programme and course assessment boards have taken place without the external examiners present; at Keele ISC not all external examiners had submitted reports for the previous year, resulting in the termination of their contracts by the University; and at Lincoln ISC there was no evidence of the effectiveness of external examining (see Annex 7: University of Lincoln International Study Centre).

1.30 Overall, however, the team found evidence, in the minutes of assessment boards, external examiners' reports and annual monitoring reports, and in meetings with ISC staff, that requirements regarding external examiners' moderation of students' assessment work, examination board duties and written reporting are being met.

1.31 Discussions with ISC staff, and the ISC annual reports available to the team, confirmed that ISCs respond appropriately to external examiners' comments. The responses, together with a record of action taken, are reported by heads of centre through the annual monitoring processes of the partner universities. Agendas and minutes of steering committee meetings indicate that, in most ISCs, heads of centre annual monitoring reports are also presented to the steering committees, though the review team was unable to establish how extensively these are considered and discussed.

1.32 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd has produced an overview document analysing critical external examiners' comment from the last two years' external examiners' reports. This contains an informative snapshot for reflection and action regarding areas for improvement, which goes beyond the basic requirements for responding to formal recommendations. While providing a useful analysis, it is not clear whether the document forms part of an established system of monitoring and action planning with respect to external examiners' reports. Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd will no doubt wish to apply appropriate mechanisms to ensure that these overviews are used to initiate and complete effective action in the areas for improvement which have been identified.

1.33 As a result of its investigations, the team concluded that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd makes effective use of external examiners to assure academic standards.

### **How effectively does the provider use statistical information to monitor and assure academic standards?**

1.34 ISCs collect and monitor progression and completion data for all their programmes. Comprehensive statistical data is compiled by heads of centre for presentation to Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd, through steering committees, in the annual academic and operational reports. The data was first presented to steering committees in a consistent form during the autumn of 2011. It includes analyses by programme and by cohort, together with termination data and narrative analysis of achievement and retention data by cohort. Full evaluation and extensive action plans accompany the statistical data.

1.35 ISCs also undertake student number forecasting, which is informed by historic and current student numbers data, as part of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd's capacity-planning process. Forecasts and supporting data are presented at steering committees in the annual academic and operational reports. This annual process is supplemented by a system of weekly forecast updates and monthly capacity meetings, allowing appropriate action within a reasonable timescale.

1.36 In the self-evaluation document, Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd expresses its intention to continue to work on its current approach to the collection and presentation of data, and, with respect to the articulation of ISC and partner university data, to develop a consistency of definitions, data collection, selection and presentation. Currently,

most partner universities share degree performance data with the ISC or with Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd at corporate level. The extent of the information shared ranges from detailed analysis of students' performances compared with other international students, through anecdotal evidence about specific cohorts, to the provision of no data at all in the case of one ISC identified by the review team.

1.37 In an update on the enhancement of its data systems, Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd reports on the development of a working practice for centres, standardising data collection and submission processes; establishment of a system of formal termly planning meetings at ISC level to review withdrawals and evaluate the effectiveness of entry requirements, identifying any issues with specific regions or agents; and plans to establish joint ISC/university groups to develop agreed methodology for recording data on students' performances through their degree programmes.

1.38 From its review of annual reports and meetings with staff, the review team learned of a number of specific examples of ISC and Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd's responses to statistical analysis and evaluation. In particular, actions had been taken to improve student progression, completion and achievement. Analysis of data on withdrawal on academic grounds, by nationality, had prompted Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd to terminate the relationship with some of its agents.

1.39 In the light of its findings, the review team formed the view that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd uses statistical information effectively to monitor and assure academic standards, and has formulated well considered strategies for further enhancements in this area.

The review team has **limited confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers through embedded college provision.

## 2 Quality of learning opportunities

### How effectively does the provider fulfil its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd has a number of processes for assuring and monitoring the quality of learning opportunities. These include the annual monitoring and review process, which includes a comprehensive review of both programme delivery and reports on completion and progression data. There is also consideration of student feedback on the quality of teaching and the learning environment in the annual reports. Students met during the review process confirmed high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning support at each ISC. External examiners often comment on the quality of learning opportunities in centres.

2.2 The annual centre report provides an overview of the quality of learning opportunities. It is seen by the senior managers of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and also by senior staff of the partner university at the steering committee. This report often includes considerable detail about the quality of learning opportunities, including student support issues. It is also normally considered at ISCs' academic management boards, and local actions often result from their consideration of issues raised.

2.3 A key way in which evidence of the appropriateness of the learning opportunities is apparent is by means of the successful transfer of students from ISC programmes into their destination programmes within the university. Rigorous analysis is made of progression

data. Generally, a high level of satisfaction was expressed by partner universities with the way in which the students are taught, and the level of preparation for their undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

2.4 Overall, the team concluded that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd makes effective use of a range of evidence in its management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

### **How effectively are external reference points used in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities?**

2.5 As noted in paragraphs 1.22 - 1.28, Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd develops its programmes in accordance with appropriate external reference points which bear upon the quality of learning opportunities. All colleges have close relationships with their partner universities for the management and enhancement of learning opportunities. The quality of learning opportunities in validated programmes is monitored and reviewed by the universities' quality assurance requirements and processes. For all programmes, learning opportunities are reviewed by academic management boards (or equivalent).

2.6 The team concluded that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd makes appropriate use of external reference points in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities.

### **How effectively does the provider assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?**

2.7 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd has a variety of mechanisms in place through which the quality of learning and teaching is maintained and enhanced at ISC level. These include formal lesson observation, external examiners, the annual monitoring process, as well as the work of academic management boards (or equivalent) and staff-student liaison committees. Staff development opportunities, particularly the annual Teachers' Conference (paragraph 2.31), also contribute to the enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

2.8 All ISCs operate a teaching observation scheme whereby teaching staff are formally observed by the Head of Centre, the outcomes of which feed into the annual staff appraisal. This process enables each ISC to monitor the quality of teaching.

2.9 External examiners are also invited to comment on the quality of learning opportunities in their reports. The review team read external examiners' reports and ISCs' responses and was able to confirm that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd responds and takes action appropriately with regard to learning opportunities.

2.10 In some ISCs, staff evaluate modules after each delivery, an example being the Module Review Development Plans at Kingston (see Annex 4: Kingston University, London International Study Centre). These evaluations usually feed into the ISC's annual monitoring report to the partner university. Students are also invited to comment on their learning opportunities through the representative system operating at each ISC (see paragraph 2.13).

2.11 Academic management boards play a key role in monitoring the quality of learning opportunities. The review team saw the minutes of academic management boards (or equivalent) and was able to confirm that proper consideration is given to the learning experience of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd's students.



## **How effectively does the provider make use of student feedback to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities?**

2.12 Consistent with the Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd's expectations, there are a range of formal mechanisms designed to obtain student feedback, including post-arrival questionnaires, online module questionnaires and end-of-year questionnaires. The outcomes of these are shared with individual tutors and/or discussed at staff/student meetings.

2.13 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd operates a student representation system, whereby each class has an elected student representative. ISCs and/or their partner universities provide briefings on what the student representative role involves. The team examined copies of student feedback surveys and the minutes of staff/student committee meetings, and discussed the level of responsiveness to student feedback with students during visits to ISCs. In all cases, students expressed the view that their feedback is valued and taken seriously, and they identified examples of ways in which their feedback had been used to make improvements which benefitted themselves or future cohorts.

2.14 Learning in ISCs is characterised by relatively small student communities, high staff-student ratios, a short duration for most of programmes, and a lack of prior familiarity (for many students) with UK expectations of student participation. Consequently, informal opportunities for students to offer feedback are at least as significant as formal systems. Students are encouraged to provide informal feedback in their Academic and Welfare Advice classes and/or their personal tutor groups. Students who met the review team were in general highly appreciative of the accessibility of academic and support staff at all levels.

2.15 Student feedback is analysed, and an action plan developed, within the annual monitoring reports written by each head of centre and this is considered by the steering committee and Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd's senior managers. Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd also receives a summary of student feedback in the Academic and Operational Report for the steering committee. It recognises, however, that more work is required to formalise processes by which feedback from the ISCs leads to evaluation and action by Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd at senior management level.

2.16 The team concluded that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd makes effective use of student feedback to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities across the ISCs, including the use of student evaluation surveys and student representation.

## **How effectively does the provider assure itself that students are supported effectively?**

2.17 In all ISCs, the professional and academic staff work effectively as teams to provide comprehensive student support tailored to the needs of the individual students. High staff-student ratios and an organisational commitment to excellent support ensure that student support is personalised and effective. The review team noted many positive comments on the quality of student support expressed in meetings with the review team. Students particularly value small classes and close contact with their teachers, as well as the helpfulness of administrators. All students have a personal tutor and meet for regular group tutorials. Although personal tutorial meetings take place in groups, students reported that they can make individual appointments to see tutors at other times. Typically, ISCs operate an open-door policy, so students can approach any tutors and administrators for individual help and guidance. Students referred to the high level of support provided as a strong feature of the ISCs.

2.18 The tutorial system is underpinned by established procedures for intervention when students are in difficulty, and individuals' progress is regularly discussed at staff meetings. There is also a strong focus on effective attendance monitoring and timely intervention, if required. For students who require extra support, additional classes are available in English and mathematics. Students requiring any form of specialist support are referred to university support services. There is a particular emphasis on support and monitoring of students under the age of 18. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, and equivalent checks in Scotland, are undertaken on all ISC staff and a CRB register is kept centrally by Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd.

2.19 A range of university support services, specified in inter-institutional agreements, is usually made available to students. As a result, students at the ISCs typically view themselves as members of the universities. Some ISC students reported that they had been able to attend lectures and other sessions at the university. In most ISCs, there is also support for students from university link tutors. Although this link tutor role is seen as important in helping students in their progression to subsequent programmes of study, it was acknowledged at some ISCs that this aspect of support could be more consistently implemented and further developed.

2.20 Students expressed satisfaction with their induction, student and module handbooks, learning materials, including the use made of virtual learning environments, the quality of the teaching and feedback on their work. They had a clear understanding about plagiarism and academic misconduct. Students also had a clear understanding of ISCs' complaints and academic appeals procedures.

2.21 The review team concluded that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd's students are supported effectively in all ISCs through well developed academic and pastoral support systems, which were highly praised by students. This consistently high level of provision for academic and pastoral support of students was judged to be good practice.

### **How effectively does the provider manage the recruitment and admission of students?**

2.22 Recruitment and admission of students are managed centrally at Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd's headquarters in Brighton. Students initially receive information about the ISCs and their programmes from a variety of sources prior to application, including from prospectuses, overseas agents and the Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd's website. Students generally reported that they have sufficient and accurate information prior to admission and that the admissions process works smoothly.

2.23 Students apply to a particular ISC with a view to progressing to the specific partner university. The only exception to this is the Wales ISC where students may progress to one of 11 different universities, subject to meeting their entry requirements. Entry and progression requirements are determined in consultation with the university admission tutors when individual programmes are developed, and any changes must be approved by the relevant university. Offer letters to students specify the programme to which they intend to progress. This choice may subsequently be changed following agreement with the ISC, provided the substitute programme is one of the recognised progression programmes. Students confirmed that they have a clear understanding of the progression criteria.

2.24 Some ISCs are keen to have more diversity in its recruitment of students from different countries and Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd recognises this as a challenge. At least one of the partner universities has agreed maximum numbers of students that can progress to specified degree programmes. It was confirmed that this information has been made clear to students in advance of attending the relevant ISC.

2.25 The review team found that some ISCs are running programmes with small numbers of students. Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd acknowledged that this does not always give students an ideal learning experience, particularly with regard to working in groups, and it is reviewing its viability policy in an attempt to prevent recurrences.

2.26 As a result of its investigations, the team concluded that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd manages recruitment and admissions effectively.

### **How effective are the provider's arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?**

2.27 Opportunities for staff development, and the amount and quality of training available, are of a high standard. The attention paid to development opportunities for part-time staff is particularly effective. All teaching staff are provided with a well structured induction. In the same way, all ISC managers undertake an induction period and are mentored throughout their first year by a senior manager from Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd.

2.28 Staff support and professional development continues throughout each teacher's career at Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd, through annual appraisal, teaching observation by management and, in some cases, also through a peer observation process. Where further training needs are identified, support is given.

2.29 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd offers ongoing support to all its staff through organisation-wide policies, local college activities, and through a framework of cross-college activity mainly centred around a series of annual conferences for teaching staff, heads of centres, heads of English and administrators. In addition, the staff development programme of the partner university is open to staff in all the embedded colleges. A budget for staff development is available at each ISC to be used as it sees fit, and a diversity of training opportunities are funded, including attendance at conferences, study for higher degrees or carrying out peer observation in other colleges. A noteworthy example is the staff development provided at the Surrey ISC for the use of the virtual learning environment (see Annex 10: University of Surrey International Study Centre). Training can also be bought in for particular purposes.

2.30 Expertise is also shared across the ISC network. A good example is the Learning Award Scheme which rewards teachers for projects or other work. The review team was provided with several examples where projects had led to an enhancement of the student experience.

2.31 The annual Teachers' Conference is well attended by teaching staff from all ISCs; it provides an opportunity for teachers to showcase their creativity in lesson design and to facilitate the dissemination of good practice. Similar staff development opportunities are available for college managers. Biannual heads of centre conferences offer the opportunity to network with other heads and share expertise. Themes emerging from the conference have resulted in specific projects across the ISC network to enhance the students' learning experience. A leadership programme for all Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd's senior managers, including heads of centre, is in preparation. A learning forum where college administrators share best practice and participate in training sessions was recently introduced with the establishment of an administrators' conference. The review team identified the high-quality staff development, including teachers' conferences, as good practice.

2.32 Staff performing similar roles in ISCs also engage in structured networking activities which share expertise and good practice. For example, heads of centre and heads of

English have dedicated areas on the intranet for their respective groups, where they discuss pedagogy and academic management. Heads of centre also have six-weekly teleconferences to share expertise and support each other as a group. There are also administrators' teleconference calls held every three months, where ideas are shared, issues addressed and training sessions held. The review team identified the structured networking arrangements for staff with similar responsibilities across the ISCs as good practice.

### **How effectively does the provider ensure that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes?**

2.33 Inter-institutional agreements detail what the partner university will provide in terms of physical space (such as teaching rooms, reception area and offices) and ISC students' access to university resources, such as library and IT facilities. Inter-institutional agreements also contain provision for ISCs to gain access to additional resources (particularly physical space such as lecture theatres and laboratories) by a process of negotiation, should student numbers increase out of line with planned growth.

2.34 Through Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd's annual budgeting and capacity-planning process, individual ISCs can bid for additional funds to enhance their provision. This planning process takes into account any anticipated increase in student numbers at individual ISCs. Where recruitment is unexpectedly large, it is possible for a head of centre to request additional resources outside the normal planning cycle.

2.35 The adequacy of learning resources is considered as part of the annual monitoring cycle. Heads of centre are required to produce annual strategic reviews which are considered by the steering committees. External examiners are asked to comment on the adequacy, or otherwise, of learning resources and, where they have critical comments, these should be reflected in the heads of centre's annual strategic reviews. Students met by the review team generally confirmed that learning resources were appropriate and accessible.

2.36 Students can raise issues about the quality and quantity of learning resources through the staff-student liaison committees or through direct contact with the Head of Centre. The availability of the heads of centre to students at all the ISCs makes this an effective feedback mechanism.

2.37 In the light of this evidence, the review team concluded that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd effectively ensures that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes.

The review team has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for students through embedded colleges.

## **3 Public information**

### **How effectively does the provider's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides?**

3.1 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd provides pre-entry information through a variety of sources, including the internet, for prospective students, agents and quasi-governmental

agencies. Students met by the review team reported that they generally receive sufficient and accurate information about the ISC and its provision prior to enrolment. All ISCs have a thorough induction process for new students covering induction both to the embedded college and to the university. Students met by the team found these inductions effective and helpful.

3.2 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd requires each ISC to issue its students with a Student Handbook. Handbooks give a wide range of information, including details regarding student responsibilities, access to resources, assessment requirements, progression regulations, academic appeals and complaints procedures. Throughout the network of ISCs, students generally regarded these documents as helpful, comprehensive and user-friendly sources of accurate information.

3.3 The review team formed the view that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd communicates effectively with students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides.

### **How effective are the provider's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing?**

3.4 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd, through its international marketing managers, is responsible for drafting and providing publicity materials for each ISC's prospectus/ brochure and for the website. Inter-institutional agreements specify that final sign-off of these materials must be given by the partner university since these materials will feature its logo and refer to courses which it has approved or validated. The review team found that responsibilities for public information are clearly understood except at the Wales ISC, where it was told that the ISC is responsible for public information, although the inter-institutional agreement states that all promotional information requires the written approval of the University. Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd should ensure that all concerned at WISC understand the University's ultimate responsibility for public information and act accordingly.

3.5 The review team found a handful of instances at some ISCs where there were inaccuracies in published information. These instances were predominantly minor, although one (Lincoln ISC) related to the publication of a prospectus in which the requirements for progression to University courses were incorrect for all but one of the undergraduate courses. When the reviewers pointed this out, Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd immediately withdrew all copies of the brochure which had already been distributed to agents.

3.6 The review team found that that there has not been sufficient systematic involvement of key ISC staff, such as heads of centre, in the preparation of public information. Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd formed the same conclusion between the initial and final visits of the review team, and has developed a new process to concentrate on the development and preparation of publicity materials for transmission to partner universities for approval.

3.7 In view of the inaccuracies identified by the team, it is advisable that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd implements consistently its procedures to secure the accuracy and completeness of information supplied to partner universities for their approval before publication.

<p>The team concludes that <b>reliance can be placed</b> on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.</p>
---

## Action plan<sup>3</sup>

Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd action plan relating to the Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight May 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a consistently high level of academic and pastoral support is provided for students (paragraph 2.21)</li> </ul>	<p>Examine the approaches to student support across the centres with a view to establishing a systematic way in which innovative and effective practice can be promulgated across the network</p> <p>Invite heads of centre to present sessions on their systems at the heads of centres conference</p>	<p>August 2012</p> <p>September 2012</p>	Heads of centres	<p>Vehicle for promulgating the identified good practice across the network and timeline for establishing its use agreed</p> <p>Uptake by heads of centre to present sessions at the heads of centre conference</p>	<p>Steering committees (two per year)</p> <p>Student/staff meetings (termly)</p> <p>Regional Director (monthly)</p>	<p>Positive student feedback on support offered to them</p> <p>Improved student retention and satisfaction</p> <p>Annual monitoring reports, action plans, external examiners' reports</p> <p>Overview to ISCQAEC for consideration of further action (annually)</p>

<sup>3</sup> The provider has been required to develop this action plan to follow up on good practice and address any recommendations arising from the review. QAA monitors progress against the action plan, in conjunction with the partner higher education institution.

						ISCQAEC to consider all forms of feedback and reporting on student support to confirm continued good practice and to identify any new areas of good practice with potential to apply across the network
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>high-quality staff development, including teachers' conferences (paragraph 2.31)</li> </ul>	Encourage increased involvement of teaching staff in teachers' conference	September 2012	Teachers' conference representatives	<p>Increase in number of staff attending in 2013 compared with 2012</p> <p>Increase in number of staff presenting</p> <p>Student module evaluation to include related implementation of good teaching practice for modules related to work presented at the conference</p> <p>Receipt of positive student feedback in</p>	<p>Regional Director and Deputy Principal through monthly and six-weekly reports</p> <p>Teachers' Conference Committee, ELSG</p> <p>Student/staff meetings (four per year)</p>	<p>Annual monitoring report and action plan</p> <p>Feedback from Teachers' Conference Committee, post-conference survey (considered by the next Teachers' Conference Committee for changes to the following year's conference)</p> <p>ISCQAEC to receive report from Teaching and Learning Committee</p>

	Plan for regional conferences for heads of centre and their teams	August 2013	Regional directors	Annual monitoring report  Biannual regional conferences to share good practice across regions  Feeds into the main heads of centre conference	Deputy Principal  ISCQAEC	To receive report from Teachers' Conference Committee and survey  Feedback surveys, input into the annual monitoring report and action plans  ISCQAEC to receive overview of action plans
	Encourage more staff to submit LIA proposals (previously LAS award)	August 2012	ISC Teachers' conference representatives	Increase in LIA submissions	LIA Panel, ISCQAEC, Teaching and Learning Committee (four per year)	LIA Panel (annually) to monitor a number of submissions, quality of submissions and review for changes to next year's LIA
	All academic staff to undergo training for teaching at higher education level  Academic staff to join The Higher Education Academy fellowship scheme through	Ongoing from September 2012 in first instance	Teaching and Learning Committee, heads of centre conference	Number of staff enrolling for teaching qualifications increased by September 2013	Teaching and Learning Committee  ISCQAEC (four per year)	Appraisals and peer review at centre level, student feedback, annual monitoring report, ISCQAEC (annually)



	<p>Teaching and Learning Committee</p> <p>Establish a systematic approach to informing staff about developments in national expectations and benchmarks for the management of academic quality and standards</p> <p>Embed quality assurance training in induction for heads of centres</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>From August 2012</p>	<p>Deputy Principal</p> <p>Deputy Principal</p>	<p>Systematic approach to informing staff about national expectations in place</p> <p>Induction training for heads of centre, including quality assurance, in place and completed</p>	<p>ISCQAEC, ISCSMT, steering committees</p> <p>Regional Director to Deputy Principal to Principal</p>	<p>Completion of annual academic audit of centres annual monitoring report, ISCQAEC, appraisals</p> <p>Probation period/ first-year monitoring</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>structured networking arrangements are made for staff with similar responsibilities across International Study Centres (ISCs) (paragraph 2.32).</li> </ul>	<p>Examine the potential for extending the staff networking arrangements, with particular reference to academic staff</p> <p>Investigate ways in which the virtual learning environment could be used to build on networking arrangements for academic subject</p>	Ongoing	<p>Heads of centre, heads of English, administration and ISC Academic Coordinator</p> <p>Heads of centre working on the heads of centre's website with a higher education e-trainer and</p>	<p>Use of networking arrangements, attendance/ participation at networking teleconferences</p> <p>Greater use of the virtual learning environment for working documents and sharing of best</p>	<p>Teaching and Learning Committee, ELSG</p> <p>ELSG, Teaching and Learning Committee, ISCQAEC</p>	<p>ELSG, ISCQAEC, Teaching and Learning Committee receive reports and feedback</p> <p>Input into the Annual Monitoring Report and action plans reviewed by ISCQAEC</p>

	areas		Academic Coordinator	practice across staff networks		
<b>Advisable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establish policies and procedures to ensure that inter-institutional agreements which take full account of the <i>Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (e-learning)</i> are in place before any students are admitted to ISC programmes (paragraph 1.6)</li> </ul>	<p>Review the current approaches to securing the forms of legal agreements against the relevant guidance in the <i>Code of practice</i></p> <p>Check the validity of legal agreements covering all existing programmes and centres</p> <p>All guidance documents for the establishment of new centres and programmes to stipulate that the requisite legal agreements must be in place before students are admitted to programmes of study</p>	<p>Policy: July 2012</p> <p>August 2012 onwards</p>	<p>Deputy Principal to ISCQAEC</p> <p>ISCSMT</p>	<p>No centres, or programmes, to be in operation without being covered by a valid legal agreement</p> <p>All agreements loaded to the virtual learning environment</p>	<p>Chair of ISCQAEC</p> <p>ISCQAEC, ISCSMT and ISCSPT</p>	<p>Reports and feedback to ISCAQEC, ISCSMT, ISCSPT, steering committees</p> <p>Annual monitoring report will include an action plan for review by ISCQAEC</p> <p>Annual academic audit for modification and review</p>

	Continuous review of these documents with reference to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>make clear, in its inter-institutional agreements and/or governing documents for each ISC, which institution is responsible for the academic standards of each programme (paragraph 1.7)</li> </ul>	<p>Develop, pilot and monitor new template to secure clarity of responsibility for academic standards for each programme</p> <p>Include a clear statement of the allocation of responsibility or delegated authority to act in respect of the management of academic standards in all legal agreements and procedural documentation for the operation of provision</p>	<p>Development: June 2012</p> <p>All existing ISCs August 2012</p>	<p>Deputy Principal/ Academic Coordinator</p> <p>Deputy Principal/ Academic Coordinator</p>	<p>Completed templates signed by higher education institutions and uploaded to central system</p> <p>All new agreements to have completed the template included</p>	<p>Chair of ISCQAEC</p> <p>Deputy Principal to ISCQAEC/ ISCSMT</p>	<p>Annual monitoring report to include an action plan and report back to ISCQAEC</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clarify and consistently apply the meanings of academic standards-related terminology in formal documentation for each ISC</li> </ul>	<p>Development of agreed standard definitions for BES overall, with provision for defined variations to accommodate specific local arrangements with collaborative partners</p>	<p>Development June 2012</p> <p>All existing ISCs August 2012</p>	<p>Deputy Principal</p> <p>Heads of centre with higher education institutions</p>	<p>Standardised terminology used in BES documentation</p> <p>In consultation with partner higher education institutions all</p>	<p>Chair of ISCQAEC</p>	<p>Steering committees, annual monitoring report to include an action plan and report back to ISCQAEC</p> <p>Steering committees,</p>

<p>(paragraph 1.8)</p>	<p>Within BES agree academic standards-related terminology</p> <p>Ensure that these definitions are used in formal BES documentation</p> <p>Gather acceptable local (centre) exceptions to the terminology and ensure that a glossary record is kept of these</p> <p>Quality assurance and compliance team set up and weekly calls with Deputy Principal</p>	<p>August 2012</p> <p>December 2012</p>	<p>Heads of centre with higher education institutions</p> <p>Regional Director for northern region</p>	<p>ISCs produce glossary for individual ISCs and upload to central system</p> <p>Glossary used in all ISC documentation and communicated to staff</p> <p>Minutes of staff meetings recorded and uploaded to central system</p>	<p>Deputy Principal</p>	<p>Annual Monitoring Report to include an action plan and report back to ISCQAEC</p> <p>Feedback from students/staff</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establish a formal process, aligned with the <i>Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review</i> for the approval of all new programmes which are not validated by partner universities, and ensure that this</li> </ul>	<p>Develop, pilot and monitor new process for the approval by Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd of non-validated programmes</p>	<p>Policy: July 2012</p> <p>To be used from August 2012</p>	<p>Deputy Principal</p>	<p>Approval process implemented</p> <p>No students admitted to programmes before full approval process is carried out</p>	<p>Chair of ISCQAEC</p> <p>Deputy Principal to ISCQAEC/ ISCSMT</p>	<p>Steering committees, Annual Monitoring Report to include an action plan and report back to ISCQAEC</p>

process, and the validation processes of partner universities, are completed before students are admitted to ISC programmes (paragraph 1.11)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that all programmes are covered by assessment regulations which are aligned with the <i>Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students</i> are communicated to students in writing, and are applied consistently (paragraph 1.18)</li> </ul>	All ISCs to look at programmes running at their ISC and work with a higher education institution on process of developing academic regulations	<p>Start: July 2012</p> <p>All existing ISCs August 2012</p>	Heads of centre with higher education institutions	<p>Assessment regulations in place</p> <p>All new programmes to have assessment regulations included in documentation</p> <p>To be communicated to staff and students through staff/student meetings</p>	<p>Chair of ISCQAEC</p> <p>Deputy Principal to ISCQAEC</p>	<p>Steering committees, annual monitoring report to include an action plan and report back to ISCQAEC</p> <p>Feedback from staff and students to be included in the annual monitoring report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement consistently its procedures to secure the accuracy and completeness of information supplied to</li> </ul>	Implementation of agreed procedure for all existing and future publications, ensuring accuracy and sign-off at all stages with all parties	Start July 2012	Head of Marketing	Policy implemented	<p>Chair of ISCQAEC</p> <p>Deputy Principal to ISCQAEC</p>	Steering committees, annual monitoring report to include an action plan and report back to ISCQAEC

partner universities for their approval before publication (paragraph 3.7).	ISC Communications Sub-Committee established reporting to ISCQAEC					Effective reporting of ISC Communications Sub-Committee to ISCQAEC
---	---	--	--	--	--	--

Key to Action Plan:

- BES: Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd
- ELSG: E-Learning Steering Group
- ISCQAEC: International Study Centres Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee
- ISCSMT: International Study Centres Senior Management Team
- ISCSPT: International Study Centres Senior Project Team
- LIA: Learning and Innovation Award
- LAS: Learning Award Scheme

## About QAA

QAA is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

QAA's aims are to:

- meet students' needs and be valued by them
- safeguard standards in an increasingly diverse UK and international context
- drive improvements in UK higher education
- improve public understanding of higher education standards and quality.

QAA conducts reviews of higher education institutions and publishes reports on the findings. QAA also publishes a range of guidance documents to help safeguard standards and improve quality.

More information about the work of QAA is available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

More detail about Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/tier-4](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/tier-4).

## Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary). Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook<sup>4</sup>](#)

**Academic Infrastructure** Guidance developed and agreed by the higher education community and published by QAA, which is used by institutions to ensure that their courses meet national expectations for academic standards and that students have access to a suitable environment for learning (academic quality). It consists of four groups of reference points: the **frameworks for higher education qualifications**, the **subject benchmark statements**, the **programme specifications** and the **Code of practice**. Work is underway (2011-12) to revise the Academic Infrastructure as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

**academic quality** A comprehensive term referring to how, and how well, institutions manage teaching and learning opportunities to help students progress and succeed.

**academic standards** The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

**Code of practice** *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA: a set of interrelated documents giving guidance for higher education institutions.

**differentiated judgements** In a Review for Educational Oversight, separate judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate awarding bodies.

**enhancement** Taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of **learning opportunities**. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

**feature of good practice** A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

**framework** A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

**frameworks for higher education qualifications** A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*.

**highly trusted sponsor** An education provider that the UK government trusts to admit migrant students from overseas, according to Tier 4 of the UK Border Agency's points-based immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must undergo a successful review by QAA.

---

<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/embedded-college-handbook.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/embedded-college-handbook.aspx)



**learning opportunities** The provision made for students' learning, including planned **programmes of study**, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios) and staff development.

**learning outcome** What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

**Partner higher education institution** A body with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

**programme (of study)** An approved course of study which provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

**programme specifications** Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of **programmes of study**, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

**provider** An institution that offers courses of higher education, typically on behalf of a separate **partner HEI**. In the context of ECREO, the term means an independent college.

**public information** Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

**reference points** Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured. Internal reference points may be used by providers for purposes of self-regulation; external ones are used and accepted throughout the higher education community for the checking of standards and quality.

**quality** See **academic quality**.

**subject benchmark statement** A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

**threshold academic standard** The minimum standard that a student should reach in order to gain a particular qualification or award, as set out in the **subject benchmark statements** and national qualifications frameworks. Threshold standards are distinct from the standards of performance that students need to achieve in order to gain any particular class of award, for example a first-class bachelor's degree. See also **academic standard**.

**widening participation** Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

**RG 1031 09/12**

**The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**

Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000  
Fax 01452 557070  
Email [comms@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2012

ISBN 978 1 84979 693 4

All QAA's publications are available on our website [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC03778