



Educational Oversight for embedded colleges: report of the monitoring visit of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Study Group), October 2017

Huddersfield International Study Centre

1 Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the monitoring team concludes that Huddersfield International Study Centre (HISC) is making commendable progress with implementing the action plan following the November 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#). All actions have been implemented fully and have led to improvements in HISC's management of its higher education provision.

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 There have been no significant changes since the last review. HISC introduced an Academic English Skills module which replaced ESUS. It is being implemented during 2017-18. There are 238 students.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The HER (EC) identified three instances of good practice and made one affirmation. Actions related to these have been fully implemented and resulting improvements in the Centre's management of its higher education provision are clearly evidenced. Actions are listed on the Centre Action Plan, which is regularly monitored by the Centre's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG).

4 The first instance of good practice was the close relationship with the partner university and the integrated approach to securing academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities. Throughout the 2016-2017 academic year these links have been extended and strengthened, with additional meetings arranged between HISC and the University's Business School, Registry, International Office and the Schools to which HISC students' progress. In its evaluation of such close collaboration, HISC notes a number of areas where there has been impact, including: the involvement of the Designated Academic Liaison Officer (DALO) in the introduction of the new Academic English Skills Module (AES) and formal discussions with the University Registry, leading to successful validation of AES for the current academic year; improvements in the effectiveness of assessment boards; and links with the International Office that ensure support for students both pre and post arrival - for example, the joint CAS process introduced for the Extended International Year One programme. Link tutors have been appointed in all partner university schools that receive HISC students and most schools also have an Associate Dean with particular responsibility for international business (in some cases this is the link tutor). An updated link tutor job description has been produced, strengthening the role with earlier meetings with students and at least two visits per year to HISC. Students reported opportunities to visit the University and meet with staff and students.

5 A second point of good practice was the establishment of the role of the Head of International Projects as a joint appointment between the Centre and the University to support effective recruitment and marketing. The postholder works closely with Study Group's centralised Sales and Marketing teams, and has contributed to ensuring improved co-ordination between Study Group and University-led recruitment activities and improved sales and recruitment outcomes as reported to the Steering Group. Part of the role is to provide regular market intelligence to Study Group and to the partner university and this has led to the introduction of the extended International Year One in Business for the 2017-18 academic year.

6 The third point of good practice was the comprehensive training and written guidance provided for personal tutors, which supports their role. All students have a personal tutor and the tutorial system comprises a mixture of one-to-one and group meetings. An innovation in 2016-17 saw students asked to complete a short, online survey following each group tutorial in order to provide insight into the effectiveness of group tutorials. As a result of this, the need for raising awareness of mental health issues was identified, the Personal Tutor Co-ordinator and the Designated Safeguarding Lead made use of sessions facilitated by the University's Staff Development Centre on Basic Counselling and Listening Skills and Mental Health First Aid, and all Personal Tutors are being encouraged to follow these programmes in the current Academic Year. Further support for students is provided by the introduction this year of a Mentoring Scheme using HISC's alumni now studying at the University as Student Mentors, who hold regular drop-in sessions for current students and attend events such as induction.

7 Study Group monitors all students using its RPAG (Red, Pink, Amber, and Green) system supported by software now in use across all the ISCs. Students identified as at risk of failing to progress to their chosen university programme are offered additional support; the success of this approach is evidenced by the high rates of completion and progression at HUISC with 87 per cent of those who complete the course offered progression to the partner university. The team noted innovative practice in English, where both additional support for less able students and more challenging material for those with a good grasp of English is embedded in the module.

8 The 2016 review made one affirmation of the steps being taken to minimise academic misconduct in assessment. Staff who met with the review team confirmed the range of approaches taken to ensure that students understand the issue. Both the tutorial system and the English programme include a focus on academic integrity and this is also one of the areas promoted by the newly introduced Student Mentors. All students have access to a copy of the Student Handbook (available on the VLE) and this also includes both assessment regulations and information on academic integrity. Students who met with the review team confirmed that they had covered issues concerning plagiarism in class and had completed exercises to help them understand how to avoid this by proper referencing. Cases of academic impropriety are recorded in the Academic Integrity Log, which shows significantly fewer cases in 2016-17 than in previous years, evidencing the success of the strategy.

9 Admissions to Study Group's International Study Centres are carried out centrally by Study Group based in Brighton and Singapore. Borderline cases where potential students have narrowly missed the entry requirements or have exceptional circumstances are referred to the Head of Centre, who will make a decision in consultation with Centre and University staff as appropriate. Students who met with the reviewers had learned of HISC from a variety of sources including family and friends, agents and sponsors. They reported that information received prior to leaving their home countries had been sufficient and accurate with respect to the performance required to allow progression to the partner university and that on arrival they had a comprehensive induction programme. Late arrivals

also received an induction. Information produced by Study Group and HISC about learning opportunities it offers for students is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

10 The annual monitoring process begins with the collation of student feedback from module surveys and module tutors use this in completing a module review form. Data from modules is then collated to complete a programme review form. Holistic annual monitoring uses the partner university's template to produce an Annual Evaluation Report (AER) developed from the programme review. This meets the provider's requirements and is subject to peer review by another head of centre before being submitted to the Regional Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (RQAEG) for discussion. RQAEG reports to the provider's central Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC), escalating any issues or good practice of general interest.

4 The embedded colleges' use of external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

11 Programmes offered by the Centre are validated by the partner university and benchmarked against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), Subject Benchmark Statements where appropriate, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and (for level 3) the Regulated Qualifications Framework. The programme approval process checks standards against these reference points as evidenced by the approval of the Extended International Year One in Business. Programme and module specifications also refer to external reference points, listing appropriate benchmarks and expressing aims and learning outcomes in terms of the appropriate level. External examiners are in place for all programmes and their reports confirm standards. HISC demonstrates highly effective engagement with relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code.

12 The team noted, in particular, that student engagement, in line with the Quality Code, was effective, with student representatives elected for all cohorts and offered training and support. Student representatives meet as a student panel and are invited to QAEG. Various examples of change resulting from the representative system were offered to the review team, including the use of alumni representatives as mentors for the current cohort.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

13 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's and its embedded colleges' continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider and its embedded colleges of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

14 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Philip Markey, QAA Officer, and Professor Gaynor Taylor, QAA Reviewer, on 19 October 2017.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557050
Website: www.qaa.ac.uk