



Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd, (Study Group UK), July 2015

Section 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 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Bellerbys) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the previous Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight [monitoring visit](#) in June 2014.

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 There have been a number of changes to the key personnel managing the provision of programmes in the network of Bellerbys International Study Centres (ISCs). New appointments have been made to the posts of Regional Directors with the role being strengthened, and some new Heads of Centre. A Director of Learning and Teaching has been appointed and an Acting Principal is in post in the light of other senior team changes.

3 During 2015, parts of the admissions administration function are being moved from Brighton to Singapore. This includes all work related to initial enquiries and bookings. Bellerbys hopes that this will enable around the clock admissions activity and improved proximity to some of its key markets.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

4 With respect to actions noted in the previous monitoring visit, progress continues to be made towards strengthening the quality management system through the development of a set of documents, which together constitute a Provider Academic Quality Handbook, containing updated policies, processes and regulations for all Centres. To date the Handbook has not been finalised but is expected to be completed at the next meeting of Bellerbys' Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. A process of Centre review has been introduced. From the evidence seen by monitoring and review teams, this initiative has the potential to become good practice and should be further explored at the next monitoring or review visit. The intention is for the Centre reviews to be periodic on a three-year cycle, although this may be changed if a risk at a particular centre is identified. Quality Assurance and Enhancement Groups (QAEGs) have been established in all Centres, although in some cases there has been overlap in responsibilities with other committees already in existence.

5 All Centres now have a system of peer observation in place, although progress has been slow in formalising the arrangements in some Centres. Across the network there is some good practice in implementing peer observation with interesting initiatives, but as acknowledged by Bellerbys, there is potential to make greater use of the lessons being learnt.

6 From 2015-16 all Centres will be required to publish a full set of assessment regulations in their student handbooks. There is some variation in regulations between

Centres because of the requirements of different awarding bodies but there is still a need to ensure students are fully aware of the particular requirements they have to meet with regard to assessment submission and the facility they may have for retake or resubmission. Bellerbys has produced a new Assessment Framework which seeks to clarify key assessment terms for all Centres. This was also due to be received at the July 2015 QAEC meeting for approval.

7 Assessments are set, marked and moderated at individual Centres, with some examples of cross-Centre moderation. External examiner reports are now made available to all students and staff. Bellerbys acknowledges that there is some inconsistency in the way in which external examiners are used across the network, and in response is developing a set of minimum expectations which will apply across all Centres.

8 Work is still in progress at some Centres to improve student representation. From 2015-16 there will be student representatives on all QAEGs. Bellerbys acknowledges that there is still progress to be made in developing student engagement and senior staff are aiming to produce a student engagement policy in the near future.

9 Bellerbys is aware that the relationship varies between individual Centres and their host university. There are some examples of good practice with direct links between Centre staff and subject staff in the university. In other Centres there is scope to improve liaison at subject level.

10 Student admission is managed centrally by Bellerbys. As previously noted, there is a continuing review of admissions processes following the relocation of some functions from Brighton to Singapore. The review includes an assessment of the information available to prospective students.

11 There is still room to improve the process of ensuring that students are informed of progression requirements from Centres to university programmes in a timely and consistent way. During the review of one Centre it was evident that progression requirements could change after students had accepted the offer of a place on their Centre programme. It is important that Bellerbys ensures that accurate information about progression requirements is given to students prior to enrolment. Bellerbys plans to formally review processes relating to progression.

12 Good progress has been made in the Centres and by Bellerbys in supporting students who are predicted not to meet progression requirements or who opt for progression to an alternative higher education provider.

13 Overall, Bellerbys is making progress in bringing about changes to the delivery and management of provision at Centres. It was obvious to the monitoring team that the changes to structure and personnel were resulting in some planned improvements to the way in which Centres manage academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. It was also evident that increased effort is being put into learning from good practice across the Centres.

Section 4: The provider's use of external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

14 The Centres manage the academic standards of their provision by using frameworks of their university and those of Bellerbys. There is evidence of use of external reference points such as the National Qualifications Framework, Subject Benchmark Statements and the descriptors for English skills in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

15 There are mechanisms in place to facilitate and encourage staff to engage with learning and teaching practice in the higher education sector. Bellerbys is engaged in a number of projects designed to embed the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and to develop a more consistent approach to the Quality Code across the network of Centres. It was clear to the monitoring team that this was further developed in some Centres than others. Bellerbys is encouraged to make sure that the good practice in some Centres is disseminated across the network.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

16 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.

17 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Neil Casey (QAA Officer) and Professor Alan Jago (QAA Reviewer) on 9 July 2015.

QAA1345 - R4537 - Sept 15

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786