



Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Study Group)

Istituto Marangoni International Study Centre

October 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the Istituto Marangoni International Study Centre. The review took place from 11 to 12 October 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Brian Anderton
- Ms Kate Wicklow (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by the Istituto Marangoni International Study Centre and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)¹ setting out what all UK [higher education providers](#) expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
 - the setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards
 - the quality of student learning opportunities
 - the information provided about higher education provision
- provides a commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) there is also a check on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG). This check has the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure of their education provider.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

In reviewing the Istituto Marangoni International Study Centre the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [themes](#) for the academic year 2014-15 are Digital Literacies and Student Employability,² and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.³ A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges).⁴ For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

² Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106.

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

⁴ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about the Istituto Marangoni International Study Centre

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at the Istituto Marangoni International Study Centre.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the provider **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendation** to the Istituto Marangoni International Study Centre.

By April 2017:

- ensure sufficient information about course content is available to prospective students across both admission routes (Expectations C, B2).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that the Istituto Marangoni International Study Centre is already taking to make academic standards secure and improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the steps being taken to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of recording meetings to enhance the oversight of quality assurance (Expectations A2.1, C)
- the plans in place to fully implement Study Group's procedures for annual programme review (Expectations A3.3, B8)
- the steps being taken to implement a more systematic and effective process for the identification and support for students with specific learning difficulties and take into account the outcomes of Study Group's working group (Expectation B4).

Enhancement of student learning opportunities

The self-evaluation document identifies two types of enhancement activities: those that relate to provider-level initiatives and their implementation at International Study Centre (ISC) level; and local Istituto Marangoni International Study Centre (IMISC) initiatives. The self-evaluation document enumerates a number of local-level developments which are enhancing the student learning experience. For example, earlier pathway specialisation in Term 1 of the programme; the move away from IELTS to the provider-level Academic English and Study Skills modules; the enrichment of the curriculum through external visits; and the innovation of drawing classes reflecting student feedback.

Staff use existing industry links to enrich the student learning experience. Being close to other ISCs in the greater London area facilitates the sharing of good practice, acting as a deliberate step to enhance the quality of the student learning experience.

Theme: Student Employability

The programme structure and content enable students to learn key industry skills, taught by current and recent professionals. IMISC is engaging with Study Group's CareerAhead Initiative by using academic tutorials, embedding employability skills in the curriculum and by asking students to complete the Study Group Personal Development Plan that can be taken with them to the Istituto. Assessments use life and simulated project briefs in order to give student experience of applying their skills in the workplace.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Higher Education Review](#) (Embedded Colleges).

About the Istituto Marangoni International Study Centre

The Istituto Marangoni International Study Centre (IMISC) opened in October 2012. IMISC is a private Italian college specialising in courses in Fashion and Design. The head office, fashion and design campuses are in Milan, with additional schools in Florence, central Paris, London and a new fashion training centre in Shanghai. Istituto Marangoni offers full-time undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Paris and London and in Milan, diploma-level courses.

IMISC used to run the Edexcel BTEC Level 3 Foundation Diploma in Art and Design between October 2012 and June 2014. A new Level 3 programme written by Istituto Marangoni was introduced in October 2014, as it was felt that it better focused students on the relevant topics required to be a successful future student of Istituto Marangoni. From September 2016, the Study Group-approved programme was implemented, which created a greater alignment to Study Group expectations and afforded IMISC an opportunity to further embed an enhanced governance structure, calendar of business and quality review cycle to support the learning, teaching and assessment in the Centre. IMISC ran a Pre-Masters Programme (PMP), accredited by the Association of Business Executives (ABE) at Level 6, between February and June 2015. The course ran for one intake only, with a view to reviewing and rewriting the programme in accordance with the needs of IMISC and the students. It was the general feeling from IMISC and the School that, based on student achievement, the Pre-Masters model would work better as a more bespoke, Study Group-approved programme, which would focus on developing students from a range of degree backgrounds by providing a suitable transition platform in Fashion and English. The PMP is planned to be developed throughout 2016-17.

Both the undergraduate and postgraduate courses at London and Paris are validated by Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). The undergraduate validated courses can be taken over three or four years; this includes a sandwich course with one year in industry. The postgraduate Masters courses last for one year with an additional three-month placement in industry.

IMISC recruits students who want to study their chosen undergraduate degree at the London, Paris, Milan or Florence campuses of Istituto Marangoni. At the time of the review there were 79 full-time students; of these, 97 per cent are international or EU students. Student enrolments fell slightly in 2015-16 and by a considerable 45 per cent in February 2016. This meant that the total number of new students fell by 15 per cent between 2014-15 and 2015-16. This was likely due to the changes in UK Visas and Immigration regulations, which led to challenges in the market for students to access approved IELTS testing centres. Recruitment is a key challenge for IMISC.

This review is the first for IMISC, so there are no previous matters to be addressed.

Explanation of the findings about the Istituto Marangoni International Study Centre

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the provider

Expectation (A1): In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:

a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* are met by:

- positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications
- ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications
- naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications
- awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes

b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics

c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework

d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

Quality Code, Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards

Findings

1.1 Study Group has been involved with IMISC at Istituto Marangoni since 2012 because, at that time, both organisations had the same parent company. From 2012-13 to 2013-14, IMISC had a Level 3 Edexcel BTEC Foundation Diploma in Art and Design which was delivered on its behalf by Study Group. From 2015-16, Istituto Marangoni developed its own foundation programme which Study Group adopted and for which it accepted responsibility for academic standards. The current foundation programme offered by IMISC from 2016-17 was developed and approved in summer 2016 as a Study Group-approved programme, so that Study Group has responsibility for academic standards.

1.2 IMISC ensures UK external reference points are used effectively in the management of academic standards on all programmes. It lists various external references used by IMISC: RQF level 3; FHEQ Level 4 (as the reference point for academic standards on the receiving programmes to which IMISC students graduate); QAA benchmark statements for Art and Design; the Common European Framework (CEFR) descriptors for languages; and other foundation programmes in the ISC network. The programme specification refers to RQF level 3, FHEQ Level 4 and CEFR at 6.5.

1.3 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

1.4 To test whether the Expectation is met, the review team scrutinised documentation, in particular that relating to the approval of the new foundation programme in 2016, together with information gained in discussion with senior staff at IMISC.

1.5 The outcomes of the approval panel for the new foundation programme held in July 2016 included conditions relating to academic standards and their management in relation to external reference points. The programme team were required, as a condition of approval, to ensure learning outcomes meet the threshold standards at the levels for which they are intended; and to present documentation linking RQF, FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements to programme and module learning outcomes. In discussion with senior staff, the review team sought to understand how the programme team had addressed these conditions so that the programme could be approved to recruit students from September 2016. It was told the programme team had used staff away days to address different aspects of the conditions, and support had also been received from Study Group and other ISCs to assist in the process of meeting the conditions. The review team saw documentation which showed how the programme team had mapped modules against the QAA Art and Design Subject Benchmark Statement, A-level Art and Design programme descriptors, RQF levels 3 and 4 descriptors and A-level assessment standards. The foundation programme at IMISC does not lead to an award, but allows successful students to progress to an undergraduate degree programme at Istituto Marangoni. There is no credit-rating of either the programme or the individual modules.

1.6 Overall, IMISC makes use of reference points for its qualifications and the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.

Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards

Findings

1.7 IMISC has a number of committees to assure standards and manage quality within its organisation which feed directly in to the provider committee systems. The Head of Centre is the key contact between the ISC and the Istituto. Istituto staff attend joint committees of the Academic Management Board, Steering Group and the Operational Working group. Quality Issues are reported at the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG) which is then reported to Study Group's Regions Quality and Enhancement Group (RQAEG) and the Academic Quality and Enhancement Academic Committee (AQEAC) groups.

1.8 IMISC has a Centre Action Plan to log its key priorities for the year, as per the requirement of the provider. As a new approved centre its main actions focus is on embedding new procedures and ensuring alignment with Study Group requirements. The action plan is considered at QAEG and RQAEG.

1.9 The IMISC, staff and student handbooks contain all of the policies and procedures that govern the provision. These align to Study Group expectations as well as those of the Istituto.

1.10 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

1.11 To test whether the Expectation is met, the review team evaluated evidence including minutes of committees, terms of references and policies and procedures of the ISC as well as meeting with staff of both IMISC and the Istituto.

1.12 As the partnership between IMISC and Study Group has only been approved to operate since late 2015, at the time of the review IMISC were still rolling out new governance structures to meet Study Group requirements. Because of the timing of the visit they were unable to show the review team examples of students sitting on QAEG and had as yet not run an Academic Management Board. However, good progress is being made to ensure that they would be fully operational in the timescales outlined in the Centre Action Plan. At present QAEG is acting as the sovereign committee of the IMISC.

1.13 Minutes of all the committees which had already taken place under the Study Group management indicate that the reporting of the committees is very sparse. It was difficult to get a sense of the discussions which took place and the actions being taken. The senior management have acknowledged this shortfall and have provided training for minute takers and ensured appropriate staff cover if a member of administrative staff is unable to attend. The review team affirms the steps being taken to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of recording meetings to enhance the oversight of quality assurance. This also relates to section C of the report.

1.14 Overall IMISC is making good progress in developing its governance structures to align with Study Group. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards

Findings

1.15 IMISC uses the Study Group template for programme specifications which are seen as the definitive course record. These were developed from discussions at staff away days during the design of the programmes, and were approved using Study Group's processes. The programme specifications provide details of the learning outcomes of the programme, details of the assessment strategy, admissions criteria and structure of the course. IMISC would use the Study Group's process for modifying this document.

1.16 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

1.17 To test whether the Expectation is met, the review team evaluated evidence pertaining to the development and approval of the new course, saw minutes of meetings and discussed this Expectation with staff.

1.18 The programme specification provides comprehensive detail on the delivery and assessment of the course. It shows the admissions policy, assessment strategy, and module mapping against overall learning outcomes as well as performance descriptors and key skills mapping.

1.19 This information is available to students through the virtual learning environment (VLE), and prospective students also have access to the programme specification through the IMISC website.

1.20 Overall IMISC has a comprehensive definitive record of its programme which acts as the reference point for delivery. Therefore, this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.

Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards

Findings

1.21 Study Group has established procedures for the approval of programmes which are an 'approved provision'. These are rigorous and include scrutiny by an approval panel which incorporates an external academic adviser. The self-evaluation document discusses the 'enormity of work relating to the development of the foundation programme amongst such a small team', and outlines the approach adopted to review the existing provision through a series of staff away days. The self-evaluation document says the new programme, with its more bespoke and pathway-focused structure, was approved under Study Group's approval process in July 2016. At the time of the review team's visit in October, the conditions attaching to the approval had been met and the new programme had been approved on behalf of AQAEC to run in 2016-17, with approval limited to one year and a further re-approval panel required before the programme runs in 2017-18.

1.22 The procedures for the approval of new programmes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.23 To test whether the Expectation is met, the review team read documentation, particularly the report of the approval panel in July 2016, together with documentation relating to the fulfilment of approval conditions, and also held meetings with senior and teaching staff who had been involved in the approval process.

1.24 The report from the approval panel in July 2016 shows that an appropriate panel was convened, including an external academic adviser, under the chairmanship of the Study Group Director of Learning and Teaching. The report demonstrates a rigorous implementation of the Study Group procedures for programme approval, and the review report contained a significant number of conditions relating to academic standards, and also recommendations. It also realistically limited the period of approval to one academic year, given the significant volume and nature of the conditions attaching to the approval. The review team asked how the programme team had responded to these conditions, so that the programme would be given approval to recruit students from 2016-17. It was told about staff away days to deal with different aspects of the conditions, and it also saw documentation relating to the use of external reference points. The programme was approved by the Chair of AQAEC on 20 September 2016, after other members of the approval panel had indicated their agreement that all the conditions imposed by the panel had been met.

1.25 The self-evaluation document says that IMISC plans to develop a Pre-Masters Programme (PMP) during 2016-17, and this is incorporated as part of its Action Plan. The review team asked about the development plans and processes for this new programme. It was told the programme proposal was still under consideration, with market research to be undertaken, and a formal decision to proceed would need to be taken based on both business and academic considerations. It was noted that the Istituto is planning to review its current postgraduate programmes next academic year, so it may be advantageous to develop the new PMP alongside and reflecting this development.

1.26 The review team concluded that IMISC has procedures which ensure programme approvals are set at the level that **meets** UK threshold standards. The Expectation is met and the level of associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards

Findings

1.27 IMISC is responsible for setting assessment and approving marks through marking and moderation. Moderation takes place three times during the academic year and is undertaken by the Deputy Head of Centre. Feedback as well as marking is reviewed.

1.28 The programme specification provides definitive information on the requirements for passing assessment and meeting the learning outcomes of the course. No formal credit is awarded on completion of the course; instead, guaranteed entry onto HEI courses is offered to students who meet the pass marks for each module.

1.29 The IMISC has introduced Module and Programme Assessment Boards (MABs and PABs) to monitor student progress and approve marks. PABs receive a verbal report from the external examiner to confirm standards and reports of the Academic Impropriety Panels and External Factors Panels.

1.30 Link tutors have been appointed to the programme to assist in progression decisions and to support the securing of academic standards. Additional progression decisions are made at the HEI Admissions meetings after PABs have taken place.

1.31 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.32 To test whether this Expectation is met, the review team evaluated minutes of the PABs and MABs, the programme specification and met with senior, teaching and support staff and students.

1.33 The MABs and PABs are an effective approach to monitoring student attainment, confirming achievement and recommending progression to the HEI. External examiners approve assessment tasks before students undertake them to ensure they align with the module and overall learning outcomes.

1.34 Students who the review team met were clear what was expected of them to achieve grades needed to progress to the HEI.

1.35 Overall IMISC is ensuring that academic standards have been satisfied through their use of MABs and PABs and through the external examiners. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.

Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards

Findings

1.36 Study Group has developed a standard set of procedures for the periodic review of its approved programmes which mirror the procedures used for programme approval. These should prove fit for purpose and contribute to the Expectation being met. The current International Foundation Year (IFY) was approved in July 2016 but only for one year, so Study Group will need to invoke the review and re-approval procedure during 2016-17 prior to recruiting students in 2017-18.

1.37 In relation to annual programme monitoring, the self-evaluation document states that up to 2014-15, IMISC submitted a Continuous Improvement Plan which served as the annual monitoring report for the Centre. For the annual programme review of 2015-16, the intention is to develop and submit an Annual Monitoring Report to RQAEG and to the Steering Group in December 2016. The annual review will be conducted using the new Study Group template. The process will be coordinated by the Head of Centre who will write the report. As the process of annual programme review was still in progress at the time of its visit, the review team were not able to see evidence of its operation in practice. However, it formed the view that the approach being adopted should ensure that the Expectation was met with minimal risk. The review team **affirms** IMISC's intention to fully implement Study Group's procedures for annual programme review.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards

Findings

1.38 IMISC recruits its own external examiners which are then approved by Study Group. Their roles and responsibilities are detailed in the Centre Handbook as well as Study Group's Quality Manual. These include attending IMISC to review students' final projects, attending one PAB, and providing a verbal and written report using the template of the Istituto BA programme. The Head of Centre will formally respond to external examiner reports and these will be reported at RQAEG.

1.39 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

1.40 To test whether the Expectation is met, the review team reviewed PAB minutes and approval documentation, viewed the first external examiner report for this programme, and met with senior, teaching and support staff and students.

1.41 During the approval process external expertise is used in the approval of the programme. This external expertise comprises an academic with relevant subject knowledge, and a head of centre from another of Study Group's ISCs.

1.42 As the approved programme was yet to complete a full cycle at the time of the review visit, the review team were unable to see how external examiners' reports had been fully used by IMISC as it had not been received before the October QAEG. The report was provided on the validating University template and minutes of QAEG were prepared to receive it. The external examiner has given a verbal report to the June 2016 PAB which was documented in the minutes.

1.43 IMISC also draw on external expertise through their teaching team, many of whom are current or recent practitioners in the field. Their experience influences the project briefs students are set, and provides additional knowledge of the industry to students in classes.

1.44 Overall the review team concludes that this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the provider: Summary of findings

1.45 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.46 IMISC is a new Study Group Centre and is in the process of setting up systems to maintain academic standards on behalf of Study Group.

1.47 All Expectations are met with low risk. There are two affirmations, one regarding improving the recording of meetings and another concerning annual programme review. The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards at IMISC **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval

Findings

2.1 Study Group has established procedures for the approval of programmes which are an 'approved provision', and they are described in section A3.1. The new foundation programme was approved under Study Group's approval process in July 2016. At the time of the review team's visit in October, the conditions attaching to the approval had been met and the new programme had been approved on behalf of AQAEC to run in 2016-17, with approval limited to one year and a further re-approval panel required before the programme runs in 2017-18.

2.2 The procedures for the approval of new programmes would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.3 To test whether the Expectation is met in practice the review team read documentation, particularly the report of the approval panel in July 2016, together with documentation relating to the fulfilment of approval conditions, and also held meetings with senior and teaching staff who had been involved in the approval process.

2.4 The report from the programme approval event in July 2016 shows that an appropriate panel was convened, including an external academic adviser, under the chairmanship of the Study Group Director of Learning and Teaching. The report demonstrates a rigorous implementation of the Study Group procedures for programme approval, and the review report contained a significant number of conditions relating to academic standards, and also recommendations. It also realistically limited the period of approval to one academic year, given the significant volume and nature of the conditions attaching to the approval. The review team asked how the programme team had responded to these conditions, so that the programme would be given approval to recruit students from 2016-17. It was told about staff away days to deal with different aspects of the conditions, and it also saw documentation relating to the use of external reference points. The programme was approved by the Chair of AQAEC on 20 September 2016, after other members of the approval panel had indicated their agreement that all the conditions imposed by the panel had been met.

2.5 The review team concluded that IMISC has a rigorous approach to programme approval based on the procedures laid down by Study Group. The Expectation is met and the level of associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.

Quality Code, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission

Findings

2.6 Study Group and the Istituto jointly manage the admissions process for students to enrol at IMISC. The contract details the ways in which this relationship differs to those in other Study Group centres. Students are either able to come through Istituto's application system, or apply directly to Study Group through their usual channels. Entry requirements for the programmes are clearly stated in the programme specification and are available to students through both the Istituto and Study Group website.

2.7 Once a student has applied through either channel, the Study Group Admissions Team processes student details and enrolls them on the programme where appropriate. Where a student applies to study at IMISC but does not quite meet the admissions criteria, the Head of Centre will ask to see whether a student is deemed an exceptional case.

2.8 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

2.9 To test whether the Expectation is met, the review team evaluated the admissions processes of Study Group and the Istituto, documentation and information on the website relating to admissions, and minutes of committees. The review team met senior staff and asked students about their admission experience.

2.10 At present 60 per cent of applications come directly from the Istituto. This is due to the very specific nature and reputation of the BA courses offered by the Istituto, and the necessity for some applying to its BA programmes to undertake a foundation year before the commencement of study. Staff articulated the process for managing the dual admissions system, and responsibilities were clear between the two parties. The review team were provided with the application form which is comparable to the requirements of Study Group.

2.11 The review team met with current and former students of the programme who confirmed a smooth and swift application process regardless of who they applied through. Some are interviewed through the internet, and many are recruited through agents in their home country. Entry requirements are clear to prospective students, as were details of the content of the programme. However, the review team found discrepancies between the Istituto website detailing the IMISC programme and the Study Group IMISC website, with only the programme specification and a detailed description about the programme available on the IMISC site. This relates to a recommendation made in Part C of this report.

2.12 There is no requirement for prospective students to submit a portfolio of work as part of the application process, and students are not evaluated on their creative talents. This aligns with the Istituto's own admission processes for the BA programme. While it is recognised that this is a foundation course to bring students up to the appropriate level to succeed on a degree-level course, the external examiner has commented that there has been significant variation in the creative and academic experiences of students on entry, which has impacted on their rates of progress.

2.13 The admissions staff at Study Group and the Istituto have an effective working relationship, with regular communication to ensure a smooth process for students. The

Steering Group provides an opportunity for both parties to evaluate recruitment targets and manage admissions effectively.

2.14 IMISC works jointly with Study Group and the Istituto in managing a transparent processes for the admission of students and adheres to the principles of fair admission. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B3): Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.

Quality Code, Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching

Findings

2.15 The self-evaluation document states that IMISC monitors and reviews the quality of delivery through both internal and external mechanisms. The external mechanism is primarily the reporting by the external examiner through formal written reports and verbal comments made at the Programme Assessment Board (PAB). The Study Group's governance structure (recently introduced) and its Centre Review (undertaken in early July 2016) provide internal oversight.

2.16 The Programme Review Report for the IFY includes a recommendation that the programme team should articulate more fully a programme teaching, learning and assessment strategy. Study Group has also put a requirement on all ISCs that they should produce a learning, teaching and assessment strategy by September 2016. It was confirmed that this had been done by IMISC, and that it was currently lodged with the Study Group Curriculum and Learning Enhancement Committee (CLEC) for evaluation and approval.

2.17 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.18 To test whether this Expectation is met, the review team scrutinised the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, the programme review report, arrangements for staff appraisal and teaching observations, the Centre Review Report, the Staff Handbook and QAEG minutes. It also met with senior, teaching and support staff and students.

2.19 The Programme Approval Report recommended that the Regional Director should work with IMISC to ensure a clear staffing strategy. Study Group works with all its ISCs to ensure appropriate staffing levels are established, and that IMISC had a staffing plan. Arrangements are in place for staff appraisal which incorporate at least an annual observation of each staff member's teaching. Peer review of teaching has been 'encouraged' but with 'limited success'. The process was introduced in 2015-16 with staff pairings being outlined and supporting documentation provided. The Centre Review Report recommended that IMISC should ensure the linking of management appraisal and peer observation processes to a formal staff development plan, and affirmed the fact that IMISC had the intention to work towards a staff development strategy. Peer observation is now mandatory and linked to the appraisal process and a staff development plan had been created.

2.20 Under the contract between Study Group and Istituto, the latter agrees to provide appropriate teaching space for the use of IMISC, and to provide access for IMISC students to its learning resources including the library, careers services and student services. At the same time the self-evaluation document identifies that some elements of the learning space available to IMISC are not ideal for delivery of aspects of its programme, notably English language. Students' learning is supported by the Study Group VLE StudySmart which is subject to Study Group guidelines on minimum content. IMISC states that the use of the VLE is good but has identified areas for improvement. The Head of English has recently taken on the role of E-Champ, with responsibility for oversight of the content and use of the VLE by staff and students, and the further development of the VLE.

2.21 Information for students in relation to learning opportunities is provided through the Student Handbook and through the VLE. The former includes statements on equal opportunities and on student responsibilities. Information on student progression is made available through the 'RAG' system, and students are able to discuss their progress reports with the Deputy Head of Centre.

2.22 IMISC would fully meet all the Indicators within the Expectation. The review team examined documentation including reports and handbooks, it had a demonstration of the VLE, and held meetings with senior, teaching and support staff and students to ascertain whether the Expectation is met in practice.

2.23 The draft Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy was developed in conjunction with staff of IMISC and coordinated and written by the Deputy Head of Centre. Its content reflects the distinctive nature of education in creative subjects, the task-focus of learning and group working. It will be subject to peer review within CLEC prior to its implementation.

2.24 Staffing at IMISC consists of the Head of Centre, seven teaching staff including the Deputy Head of Centre and Head of English, and an administrative member of staff. Teaching staff have a high level of industry expertise and experience, all teaching staff hold at least first degree qualifications and all have a significant number of years' teaching experience. There were, however, significant staffing gaps in the Centre Organogram provided as part of the evidence base for this review. The review team asked about this and were told the gaps had now been filled by staff appointed to the named roles. In addition, one of the teaching posts had been expanded to include the new role of Welfare Officer, and there was an intention to appoint a new Head of Centre as the existing post-holder had been appointed as Regional Director for the London-based ISCs.

2.25 IMISC makes use of part-time teaching appointments as these provide greater flexibility as student numbers change. New staff receive an Induction Checklist which must be completed and signed off by the staff member and their line manager. All staff, teaching and support, are subject to an annual appraisal system which is detailed in the Staff Handbook and which is based on the procedure specified by Study Group. Teaching staff are subject to a formal management observation of their teaching at least once each year as part of the appraisal system. Peer observation of teaching has now been made mandatory for all teaching staff, and documentation is in place to support this. The developmental aspects of peer observation remain confidential between the reviewee and the reviewer, but the statement of agreed outcomes from the peer observation will be lodged as part of the staff appraisal process. It may be used to identify staff development needs. Forms for staff appraisal and peer observation are included as part of the Staff Handbook appendices.

2.26 IMISC recognises that staff development is an area in need of improvement. Progress has been made through implementation of yearly appraisals and the completion of Personal Development Plans. The newly created Staff Handbook has a statement of support for staff development based on needs identified through appraisal and peer observation, and staff are able to request financial support for development activities from Study Group through the Centre Head. The newly created Staff Development Plan 2016-17 contains a range of pedagogic, subject-based and skills-based development activities directed variously at specific groups of staff and staff in general.

2.27 Students confirmed with the review team that they had full access to the learning resources provided by the Istituto. The alumni students said they had found the learning resources provided to be effective in supporting their studies. They also confirmed that the VLE, StudySmart, provided effective support. Staff upload learning and teaching material for each module.

2.28 Students make use of some specialist resources provided by Istituto, particularly in relation to the creation of fashion-artefacts as part of their assessment. Students receive training in the use of these resources at induction. Their only criticism was that they were only able to access the sewing room to undertake their own work when the facilities were not being used by the Istituto to support the learning and teaching of its own students. Minutes of QAEG for June 2016 refer to a letter of complaint signed by 50 per cent of the 2015-16 cohort of students. Staff told the review team the issue raised by the students had related to a number of problems with their learning experience. These included dissatisfaction with a part of the curriculum, flooding to part of the premises of the Istituto used by IMISC which had disrupted the teaching timetable, and the sudden loss of two members of staff. The issues had been addressed and the students concerned had chosen not to proceed to make a formal complaint to IMISC.

2.29 IMISC articulates and systematically reviews and enhances the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.30 Students receive a mixture of pastoral and academic tutorials. These are supported by Academic Tutorial Feedback Sheets, which contain assessment criteria, and which give feedback individually on progress relating to each element of the programme. IMISC makes use of the provider's process for identifying students at risk of non-progression (the 'RAG' system). The 'RAG' system entails the production of reports on student progress every three weeks, and these are available to all staff. They facilitate appropriate interventions to support students identified as at risk. A robust system of monitoring attendance is in place. However, it has not always been possible to identify patterns of non-performance, and the introduction of the provider's Progresso student tracking system will address this.

2.31 In relation to student support, Study Group has policies on welfare, health, safety and U18/safeguarding. These have been introduced at IMISC. The IMISC has introduced the role of Welfare Officer by upskilling an existing member of staff. However, the self-evaluation document concedes that there is a need for student counsellors and/or an Additional Learning Support Adviser and that IMISC is currently consulting the provider.

2.32 Students are informed of the arrangements in place to develop their academic, personal and professional potential through the Student Handbook and the VLE, StudySmart. This includes the statement of equal opportunities. The programme contains modules specifically designed to develop skills, notably the Academic English Skills modules. Development of academic and practical skills is also implicit in other modules within the programme. Staff who support student development are appropriately academically qualified, and have teaching and industry experience (see section B3). Learning resources including the VLE are available to support student development (see section B3). IMISC is supported by a link tutor who is a member of Istituto's staff. This has helped to develop greater linkage between IMISC and the Istituto, including opportunities to meet students who have already moved on to degree programmes, and to participate in activities at the Istituto.

2.33 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

2.34 To test whether the Expectation is met, the review team read documentation relating to student support arrangements, and held meetings with staff and students.

2.35 Pastoral support arrangements are channelled through the Welfare Officer. The Welfare Officer provides one pastoral tutorial per term for each student. In addition, there is a College Guardian who has specific responsibility for those students under 18 years old. For academic support, students are not allocated to a personal academic tutor, but rather are expected to seek help from the relevant tutor for the module in which they need support.

2.36 The 'RAG' system enables student progress to be evaluated every three weeks. Where a student is identified to be at risk, it is the responsibility of the Deputy Head of Centre to counsel them and agree with the student what additional support is needed. This is made available at no additional charge to the student. The Administrative Officer is also able to provide more general help with the programme during office hours. Staff operate an open-door policy so that students are readily able to access support from any member of the teaching team.

2.37 IMISC is too small to offer specialist support and counselling facilities, particularly for students with special learning needs. It has used a mix of informal referrals to support facilities in other ISCs and external counsellors able to offer independent guidance and support. Students are asked to declare any special learning needs they may have on admission, but it is recognised that some students will not do this, even if they are aware of their learning disability, for cultural reasons. The small class size at IMISC also means staff may pick up on special learning needs. IMISC is not currently able to test students in relation to their learning needs. It recognises that support for students with special learning needs is an area for development, and is consulting with Study Group. The review team **affirms** IMISC's development of a more systematic and effective process for the identification and support of students with specific learning difficulties, and taking account of the outcomes of the Study Group working group when they are available.

2.38 Students confirmed the induction programme had been effective in helping them to understand the requirements of the programme and the learning resources available to them, and to settle into IMISC and life in a different country. Students who had arrived late had received a briefing which covered the essential information provided during the induction week. Current students had only been in IMISC for a few weeks so had no experience of student support arrangements on which to comment. The alumni students said they had found support arrangements satisfactory during their time at IMISC.

2.39 As a result of student feedback, mechanisms are being introduced to allow interaction between different cohorts of IMISC students, including those who have progressed to the Istituto, through the Student Ambassador scheme. Student ambassadors are identified by the Istituto to come back and talk to students. The link tutor role is also valuable in easing transition to the Istituto and the link tutor begins their engagement with IMISC students through their involvement in the induction programme. The link tutor attends the Programme Assessment Board (PAB) which enables them to see student progress. The Link Tutor is currently in discussions with IMISC about deeper engagement with the Centre. Enhancement weeks for students include Istituto inputs. Alumni students said they felt well prepared by their experience at IMISC and at an advantage over other students who had come directly to the Istituto.

2.40 An issue has been the relatively low percentage of students qualified and eligible through their foundation-level studies who have chosen to progress to the Istituto, as low as 45 per cent of eligible students in 2014-15. This has been addressed, and the trend for 2015-16 students has improved. Progression rates are consistently high, with the rate for the most recent cohort at 89 per cent of students eligible to progress to the Istituto in London and a further 5 per cent eligible to progress to the campuses in Milan and Florence.

2.41 IMISC has in place monitoring and evaluating arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.42 The programme approval report in July 2016 recommended IMISC should develop further opportunities for students to engage with quality assurance, review and development of the programme. The Student Handbook 2016-17 informs students that IMISC regards the 'student voice' as crucial in the process of developing and informing its new programme, and that to facilitate this a formal student feedback structure has been implemented.

2.43 The principal component in this structure is the Student Voice Committee (SVC). This acts as a formal channel through which student views can be sought and expressed, and it reports to QAEG. The SVC is made up of student representatives from each pathway, the Head of Centre and the Administration Officer. Students receive training through the Head of Centre for their role. At the strategic level, student representatives are to be introduced on to QAEG from September 2016 in line with Study Group policy. In addition to the representational system, student views about the quality of their learning experience are also gained through the administration of a range of questionnaire surveys.

2.44 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

2.45 To test whether the Expectation is met, the review team scrutinised the Student Handbook, minutes of QAEG, the Centre Handbook, the Student Voice Committee and module and programme questionnaires. It also met with senior, teaching and support staff and students.

2.46 Although some of it is still new or to be implemented, IMISC has systems in place which should enable it to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

2.47 With the caution that the minutes of the SVC available related to students from 2015-16 who were studying on the predecessor programme, examination of these minutes shows student representatives freely raising a wide range of operational issues for discussion and resolution. At the time of the review visit, the 2016-17 students with whom the review team met knew about SVC, but election of representatives had not yet taken place. Of the alumni students from 2015-16 none had been student representatives, so had no direct experience of the operation of SVC.

2.48 The terms of reference of QAEG for 2016-17 now show student representatives as members of this committee. The terms of reference do not specify how many student representatives will be members. Minutes of the first meeting of QAEG in 2016-17 in October 2016 noted that student representation will commence from the next (January 2017) meeting.

2.49 More general views of students about their learning experience are obtained through a range of survey questionnaires completed by students. These include a survey of student views about induction. Current students confirmed they had completed this survey, but said it was too soon to expect any response from IMISC. Termly surveys seeking student views about aspects of their programme are administered, while students are also asked to complete an end-of-programme survey to ascertain their views about the programme, any changes or additions they would wish to see, and the effectiveness of the learning environment. Student feedback is discussed in staff meetings and there were a number of

changes which had resulted from student feedback, for example the development of a more effective fashion business pathway.

2.50 IMISC takes deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning

Findings

2.51 IMISC is responsible for setting assessment and approving marks through marking and moderation. The programme specification provides definitive information on the requirements for passing assessment and meeting the learning outcomes of the programme. No formal credit is awarded on completion of the course; instead, guaranteed entry onto higher education programmes is offered to students who meet the pass marks for each module. External examiners approve assessment tasks before students undertake them to ensure they align with the module and overall learning outcomes.

2.52 The ISC has introduced Module and Programme Assessment Boards (MABs and PABs) to monitor student progress and approve marks. PABs receive a verbal report from the external examiner to confirm standards and reports of the Academic Impropriety Panels and External Factors Panels. IMISC actively uses the Study Group process for monitoring student progression and this data is used to support academic tutorials for students.

2.53 Marking is undertaken using grade descriptors. New staff are supported by fellow team members in using these effectively. Moderation takes place three times during the academic year and is undertaken by the Deputy Head of Centre. Feedback as well as marking is reviewed.

2.54 Link tutors have been appointed to the programme to assist in progression decisions and to support the securing of academic standards. Additional progression decisions are made at the HEI Admissions meetings after PABs have taken place.

2.55 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

2.56 To test whether the Expectation is met, the review team evaluated minutes of the PABs and MABs, the programme specification and assessment regulations and met with senior, teaching and support staff and students.

2.57 The MABs and PABs are an effective approach to monitoring student attainment, confirming achievement and recommending progression to the HEI. MABs will also receive reports from the Head of English with regards to students' language attainment.

2.58 Students undertake a range of assessment which include reflective diaries, group work and practical making. The Centre Action Plan cites a commitment to developing formative assessment practices within the IMISC Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The external examiner is complimentary about the approach to assessment and feedback provided to students.

2.59 Students are clear about what was expected of them to achieve grades needed to progress to the Istituto. Assessment Regulations are clearly expressed in the student handbook and are clear on the process for referencing and what constituted plagiarism. However, the external examiner was less clear on how grading was reconciled into final marks for modules. This is currently being addressed by IMISC.

2.60 The periodic review process enables staff to reflect on their assessment practices, as does feedback from the external examiner and annual monitoring reports. When the Academic Management Board is established, this will also function as a forum to discuss student achievement and changes to assessment. The recent staff away days before the re-approval for the programme also provided an opportunity to discuss grading within the teaching team.

2.61 IMISC operates equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.62 IMISC recruits its own external examiner who is then approved by Study Group. Their group roles and responsibilities are detailed in the Centre Handbook as well as Study Group's Quality Manual. These include attending IMISC to review students' final projects, attending one PAB, and providing a verbal and written report using the template of Istituto's BA programme. The Head of Centre will formally respond to external examiner reports and these will be reported at RQAEG. At present there is one external examiner appointed for the fashion portion of the programme, with another external examiner yet to be appointed for the English language study.

2.63 External examiners provide a verbal report at the PABs and then submit a written report directly after the meeting.

2.64 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

2.65 To test whether the Expectation is met, the review team reviewed PAB minutes, the first external examiner report for this programme, Centre Handbook Group's Quality Manual and met with senior, teaching and support staff.

2.66 As the approved programme is yet to complete a full cycle at the time of the review visit, the review team were unable to see how external examiner reports had been fully used by IMISC as it had not been received before the October QAEG. The report was provided on the Istituto template (based on Manchester Metropolitan University). The external examiner had given a verbal report to the June 2016 PAB which was documented in the minutes. Once processed, actions arising from the external examiner report will be recorded on the Centre Action Plan.

2.67 The external examiner indicated in their last report that they had the opportunity to meet with students. Students are able to access external examiner reports through the VLE.

2.68 IMISC makes scrupulous use of external examiners. The review team concludes that this Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.69 Study Group has developed a standard set of procedures for the periodic review of its approved programmes which mirror the procedures used for programme approval. These should prove fit for purpose and contribute to the Expectation being met.

2.70 In relation to annual programme monitoring, previously IMISC submitted a Continuous Improvement Plan which served as the annual monitoring report for the Centre. With effect from the annual programme review of 2015-16, the intention is to develop and submit an Annual Monitoring Report to RQAEG and to the Steering Group in December 2016, using the new Study Group template. The process will be coordinated by the Head of Centre who will write the report. As the process of annual programme review was still in progress at the time of its visit, the review team were not able to see evidence of its operation in practice. However, it formed the view that the approach being adopted should ensure that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.71 IMISC's Complaints and Appeals Process is outlined to students in the Student and Centre Handbook and on the VLE. It conforms to the Study Group process and provides a clear approach for the management of complaints and appeals. The process details an internal management of the complaint or appeal before referring the student to a Study Group-level process. Student are unable to appeal on the grounds of academic judgement.

2.72 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

2.73 To test whether the Expectation is met, the review team evaluated the complaints and appeals procedure, read minutes of the QAEG and met with senior, teaching and support staff and students.

2.74 To date the IMISC has received one formal complaint from a cohort of students in 2015. Details of the complaint were discussed at the QAEG and informal action was taken to address the students' concerns. IMISC has addressed these concerns. Students are encouraged to seek independent advice if they wish to submit a formal complaint, but most are resolved informally by the teaching teams. The review team met with students who confirmed they understood the process for both complaints and appeals, and the grounds on which an appeal could be made.

2.75 IMISC has procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints that are fair, accessible and timely and have shown how institutional oversight of issues is undertaken. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.76 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.77 IMISC has systems in place to manage all aspects of the quality of learning experiences. All Expectations are met with low risk. There is one affirmation regarding the identification of and support for students with specific learning needs.

2.78 The quality of student learning opportunities at IMISC **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 IMISC has a prospectus which is produced in conjunction with the Head of Centre and the Istituto. The website provides further information to prospective students about the programmes on offer, the entry requirements and how to apply.

3.2 IMISC students receive a student handbook which details the policies and regulations which manage their programme. Further information about the programme is provided on the VLE.

3.3 The IMISC staff handbook provides staff with the necessary policies, procedures and regulations which govern the provision. All handbooks are signed off annually at the QAEG before being reported at the provider's RQAEG. Study Group produces templates for handbooks. The content is broadly aligned to the Istituto documentation to ensure continuity for students.

3.4 These arrangements allow the Expectation to be met.

3.5 To test whether the Expectation is met, the review team reviewed a range of documentation relating to published information and how it is managed, and met with senior and academic staff and students.

3.6 The Head of Centre has overall responsibility for public information and Heads of Centre Accountabilities Statement (BES034) confirms compliance with information requirements of the provider. While handbooks have been correctly signed off, the review team noted a series of minor typos in the IMISC documentation.

3.7 The IMISC Centre Action Plan commits to auditing public-facing information and ensuring compliance with provider requirements in 2016-17. An audit of the public-facing website has already been undertaken by the Istituto. However, the review team found discrepancies between the Istituto website detailing the programme and the Study Group IMISC website, with only the programme specification and a detailed description about the programme on the Istituto site and no curriculum content information being accessible on the Study Group site. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that IMISC ensure sufficient information about course content is available to prospective students across both admission routes. This recommendation is also linked to section B2.

3.8 IMISC is keen to develop its VLE resources and draw on good practice. It has appointed a VLE champion to coordinate this activity and support the production and monitoring of information.

3.9 The review team received minutes of all the committees which had already taken place under the Study Group management. It was found that the reporting of those committees was very sparse, and it was difficult to get a sense of the discussions which took place and the actions being taken. The senior management have acknowledged this shortfall and have provided training for minute takers and ensured appropriate staff cover if a member

of administrative staff is unable to attend. Since this training, the quality of minutes has dramatically improved and the review team therefore **affirm** the steps being taken to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of recording meetings to enhance the oversight of quality assurance. This affirmation is also linked to section A2.1.

3.10 Students have clear information about what is expected of them to achieve grades needed to progress to the Istituto. They receive the assessment regulations in their student handbook and were clear on the processes for complaints and appeals as well as other key procedures relating to their programmes. They confirmed that information is accurate, timely and trustworthy at all stages of the student journey.

3.11 IMISC produces information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.12 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.13 IMISC with Study Group has systems in place to ensure that information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, although there is one recommendation concerning information available for students across both admission routes.

3.14 The quality of the information about learning opportunities at IMISC **meets** UK expectations.

4 Commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities

Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Findings

4.1 The self-evaluation document identifies two types of enhancement activities: those that relate to Study Group-level initiatives and their implementation at IMISC level and local IMISC initiatives. Of the Study Group-level enhancements, the self-evaluation document comments on the introduction of the governance structure in 2015-16 onwards, a new Academic Management Board and Curriculum Committee, which will assist with improvements to periodic review, and the review of teaching, learning and assessment against Study Group's newly developed strategy. At the IMISC level, there is the introduction of the Academic English Skills (AES) initiative which will enhance the linkage between the English team at IMISC and other ISCs, and allow the delivery of a standardised and centrally overseen model for English language development. There is the introduction of progression-tracking of students through the RAG-rating system, and the supportive work on data analysis undertaken in other parts of the ISC network which will help it make more effective use of data in quality reviews.

4.2 The self-evaluation document enumerates a number of local-level developments which are enhancing the student learning experience. For example, earlier pathway specialisation in Term 1 of the programme; the move away from IELTS to Study Group-level Academic English and Study Skills modules; the enrichment of the curriculum through external visits; and the innovation of drawing classes reflecting student feedback.

4.3 Staff cited using existing industry links to enrich the student learning experience and being close to other ISCs in the greater London area, which facilitated the sharing of good practice, as deliberate steps to enhance the quality of the student learning experience.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

Findings

5.1 IMISC provides a vocationally based foundation programme to students. Its modules ask students to demonstrate both academic and technical skills to progress to the Istituto. The programme structure and content enable students to learn key industry skills, taught by current and recent professionals. This experience allows tutors to supply students with expert field knowledge and develop appropriate assessment tasks, and their publications and artefacts are used as teaching resources.

5.2 IMISC is engaging with Study Group's CareerAhead Initiative by using academic tutorials, embedding employability skills in the curriculum and asking students to complete the Study Group Personal Development Plan that can be taken with them to the Istituto.

5.3 Formative and summative assessment comprises live and simulated project briefs to give student experience of applying their skills in the workplace. Students are heavily involved in the Bottletop Company project which aims to get students thinking about ethical fashion. From 2016-17 this project will form part of students' summative assessment.

5.4 Eighty per cent of students are able to progress onto the BA programme at the Istituto; however, many choose to use their experience on the foundation programme to apply to other fashion schools in the UK, or transfer to the Istituto's programme abroad.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 27 to 29 of the [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\) handbook](#).

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality.

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx.

Academic standards

The standards set by **degree-awarding bodies** for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

Award

A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

Blended learning

Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

Credit(s)

A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

Degree-awarding body

A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers or university title).

Distance learning

A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'.
See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them.
See also **multiple award**.

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Embedded college

Colleges, often operating as part of a network, that are embedded on or near the campuses of two or more UK higher education institutions (HEI) and that primarily provide preparatory programmes for higher education.

Enhancement

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

Expectations

Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

Flexible and distributed learning

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework 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* (FHEQIS).

Good practice

A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Operational definition

A formal definition of a term, establishing exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

Programme (of study)

An approved course of study that 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.

Public information

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

Quality Code

Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of **reference points** for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the **Expectations** that all providers are required to meet.

Reference points

Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

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.

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

Threshold academic standard

The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic **award**. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**.

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

Widening participation

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

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