



Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd, May 2015

Lancaster University International Study Centre

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 Lancaster University International Study Centre (LUISC) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the previous monitoring visit [previous monitoring visit](#) in June 2013.

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 There have been no significant changes at LUISC since the previous annual monitoring visit. Student numbers have increased by 22 per cent from 344 in 2013-14 to 419 in 2014-15.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 LUISC has built on existing good practice and further enhanced the quality of student learning opportunities identified in the previous annual monitoring report, tracking progress through the centre action plan, which is a detailed and living document. It uses its own internal monitoring framework, comprising the quality assurance and enhancement committee structure, student evaluation processes, annual monitoring processes and informal staff and student feedback mechanisms, to identify and act on good practice and areas for improvement.

4 The high level of academic and pastoral student support continues and has been enhanced through early diagnostic testing, additional English and subject-specific support for weaker students and setting challenging targets, stretching the most able. These measures are facilitated within a new streaming system and further supported by the continuing and enhanced 'cause for concern' and attendance monitoring systems. LUISC has produced pre-arrival packs which include subject-specific information, extended induction information to include welfare handbooks, and upgraded and extended electronic learning resources. Support for students with special educational needs or disability has been enhanced at LUISC and through University services.

5 In response to student requests, LUISC has provided further support for progression through talks and extended opportunities for interaction with University departments. Students have clear information about progression requirements before entry; during induction; in handbooks; in progression talks; at Academic and Welfare Advice (AWA) sessions; and during University lectures and at University open days.

6 Staff continue to engage with action plan developments through regular updates and attendance at Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG) meetings and LUISC has promoted and achieved greater student involvement through their representation at QAEG meetings. In addition, external examiner reports are now available to students on the virtual learning environment, and external examiner comments are discussed at staff-student meetings.

7 LUISC has effectively progressed enhancements to the quality of student learning opportunities identified through its own internal monitoring processes. These include increased staff development activity and structured networking, the improved presentation of information for staff and students, and the development of assessment strategies. There are extensive staff development activities and opportunities, including LUISC representation and presentations at BES teachers' conferences; attendance at external training and conferences; University training sessions; and a comprehensive internal staff development programme. Collaboration and structured networking across the Centre network have provided opportunities for sharing good practice. Within LUISC, peer observation of teaching is undertaken to support learning and teaching enhancement. A new staff courses handbook providing a single source of programme information and an assessment regulations flowchart have improved staff accessibility to course and assessment information.

8 Admissions are managed centrally by the BES Admissions Centre. There are policies and processes in place to ensure admissions standards are met and maintained. One of the key functions of the Admissions Centre is to ensure that all applications which do not meet entry criteria are filtered out. Any borderline exceptional cases are referred to the Head of Centre for a decision.

9 LUISC has effective assessment processes enabling students to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes. Enhancements to assessment strategies include the introduction of alternative and more inclusive forms of assessment, helping students develop skills not typically assessed by traditional closed book examinations, an initiative praised by the external examiner, and the further development of diagnostic testing. Student understanding of the assessment regulations, which are set out in the student handbook, is supported by a simple user-friendly flowchart and further guidance at AWA sessions.

10 Clear processes are established, and being implemented effectively, for assessment scheduling; conduct of examinations; writing and approving assessment briefs; marking and moderation; secure recording of marks; provision of mark sheets for assessment boards; and conduct of assessment boards. The meaning of academic misconduct and associated procedures are clearly communicated to students in classes and in handbooks.

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

11 LUISC makes effective use of external reference points. Work on mapping module and programme learning outcomes to relevant Ofqual subject benchmark statements has been completed for level 3 courses. English and Skills for University Study (ESUS) modules are benchmarked against the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, at BES level. LUISC seeks and receives input from the University to ensure that the International Foundation Year curriculum takes account of requirements for access to University courses.

12 Staff met by the monitoring team had a clear understanding of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), and LUISC continues to reinforce this understanding through focused staff development. Effective use of the Quality Code is demonstrated in LUISC procedure and practice relating to relevant areas, including assessment, student development and achievement, learning and teaching, and student engagement.

Section 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 Mrs Freda Richardson, QAA Officer, and Dr Sylvia Hargreaves, Reviewer, on 27 May 2015.

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