



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

Annex 8: Liverpool John Moores 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 Liverpool John Moores University International Study Centre (LJMU ISC) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the [previous monitoring visit](#) in June 2013.

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 There have been no significant changes since the previous monitoring visit. In December 2014 Liverpool John Moores University (the University) validated two new pre-master's programmes which are due to recruit their first cohorts in June 2015. Discussions are also taking place to consider October starts for the foundation pathways to diversify student intakes.

3 Growth in student and staff numbers, and a desire for increased engagement at all levels with the University, has led to the establishment of two new management groups: the Operational Group, chaired by the University's Registrar and Deputy Chief Executive; and the Programme Development Group, chaired by the University's Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education). These new groups provide regular forums for collaborative work and programme development and are helping to raise the profile of the Centre across University schools and faculties.

4 In March 2014 a new contract was drawn up between Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (BES) and the University.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The LJMU ISC has robust and effective systems for monitoring, review and action planning, which facilitate building on strengths and addressing opportunities for improvement. Since the last monitoring visit the Centre has strengthened its governance structures by introducing a Quality Assurance Enhancement Group (QAEG) in line with BES requirements. The Centre Action Plan is derived from multiple sources, including BES initiatives, QAA monitoring reports, annual monitoring by the University, external examiners' comments, mid-term reviews of student performance, and student feedback. The Action Plan is presented to QAEG which agrees new actions and monitors progress. QAEG meets quarterly and reports to committees at BES. Items on the Action Plan are given a red, amber or green (RAG) rating. All items have been addressed in a timely way. The effectiveness of actions is evaluated through feedback, and where outcomes are unsatisfactory further action is taken.

6 The current Action Plan includes a range of actions concerning administration, staff support and development, student support and student engagement. The Centre has introduced a new appraisal system for all staff and is developing a Centre Quality Handbook that combines the quality assurance frameworks of BES and the University, and which will be available in September 2015. It has also enhanced staff induction and implemented pilot cross-institutional peer reviews. Staff development opportunities remain plentiful and the Centre is developing initiatives to increase staff engagement in discussion and decision making, including a new programme and module review event in June that will feed into annual monitoring.

7 The Centre continues to provide high levels of academic and pastoral support to its students. Improvements are being made to student tracking through the planned installation, in September 2015, of BES's student information system. The Centre has already provided additional small classes for under-performing students who are struggling with personal issues, maths or English. These classes were precipitated by student feedback. The Centre is further preparing students for University study by the introduction of compulsory study techniques sessions and is enhancing the student induction process by including an induction refresher session in the first term. In addition, from September 2015, student timetables will include an enrichment week to facilitate further industrial visits.

8 Students are very appreciative of the quality of teaching and feedback they receive and confirmed that the information and learning resources available to them are effective in meeting their needs. There is a formal system of student representation. Representatives state that they are able to make an effective contribution to decision making and that the Centre listens to, and acts upon, student feedback. The Centre is taking action to ensure that all students are aware of the opportunities that exist to give feedback and is enabling student representatives to meet their counterparts at other Centres.

9 Admissions are managed centrally by BES using entry criteria agreed between LJMU ISC and the University. BES has systems in place to check that applicants are suitably qualified, have appropriate levels of English language competence and a genuine intention to study. The Head of Centre may be consulted in marginal cases and interviews students for any programmes that have additional entry requirements.

10 LJMU ISC manages assessment using policies and procedures which are robust and fully aligned with the University's assessment regulations. Standards are assured through formal processes of internal moderation and the use of external examiners appointed by the University. Assessment boards are chaired and serviced by University staff. The University's regulations include academic misconduct. Students are briefed on the principles of good academic practice and have access to guidance on how to undertake and present their work. Staff and students have access to plagiarism-detection software which is used effectively to support good academic practice.

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

11 The University validates and is responsible for academic standards for all programmes offered by LJMU ISC. One of the main reference points for LJMU ISC is the University's Academic Framework with which it engages very effectively. LJMU ISC also fully engages with the University's policies and procedures and reports to the BES quality assurance framework.

12 Programme validation and review processes are as prescribed by the University and are therefore closely aligned to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). The use of University systems and processes for activities, such as engagement with

external examiners, assessment and annual monitoring, ensures further alignment with relevant aspects of the Quality Code.

13 While staff whom the annual monitoring team met were not familiar with the detail of the Quality Code they were aware of it and use it implicitly in all aspects of the management of standards and quality, through engagement with University and BES systems, processes and regulations.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

14 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.

15 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mrs Freda Richardson, QAA Officer, and Dr Carol Vielba, Reviewer, on 18 May 2015.

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