



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

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 the Liverpool John Moores University International Study Centre (LJMUISC) is making acceptable progress with implementing the action plan following the May 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 There has been an increase in the number of students entering in January 2017. A new Head of Centre was appointed in June 2016.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The recommendations to LJMUISC have been implemented and have led to a range of improvements in the management of the Centre's higher education provision. There remains work to be done with respect to presenting and analysing progression figures, but given improvement in data collection, this is on track for the current academic year and will not put academic standards or quality at risk. The changes made show effective engagement with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Such engagement is also demonstrated by the annual monitoring process, the report from Study Group's Centre Review and the mechanisms for student engagement. Two areas of good practice have been extended, namely the processes for ensuring information offered about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

4 The Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) in May 2016 made three recommendations. The first of these was to ensure that definitive student progression is clearly presented and analysed in Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs). LJMUISC uses the Annual Monitoring Report template of the university partner, which reports by programme. An additional form has been provided for the LJMUISC as a whole, but while this gives overall progression data, the format does not allow for detail of individual courses to be presented. Individual reports show retention and completion, plus details of the mean marks and pass rates of individual modules. They do not record how many students progressed to the partner university. There is some quantitative analysis of module marks and suggestions for change, but no in-depth analysis of the reasons behind poor performance. LJMUISC's Annual Monitoring Report gives data for those offered progression and those who accept it, but without breaking this down to individual courses precluding a comparison of courses or analysis of the reasons for lack of progression across the Centre. Therefore, the Centre has made considerable progress towards

meeting the recommendation, but there remains work to be done. The Annual Return Form notes that analysis will be expedited by the implementation for the year 2016-17 of Study Group's Progresso data system for tracking student progress.

5 The second recommendation was to work with the University to enable data on student progression at the University to be shared with the Centre. The Centre Annual Monitoring Report gives data for the number of students who progressed to the partner university. The reviewer was also informed of ongoing work giving certain LJMUISC staff access to partner university data. While analysis of this was in the early stages, first results suggested that students progressing from the Centre were performing increasingly well, with over 50 per cent of those alumni who graduated in 2015-16 achieving a first or upper second class honours degree, an increase from 25-30 per cent in previous years.

6 The third recommendation was to ensure that Centre Review recommendations are fully incorporated into the action plan. Scrutiny of the action plan showed this to have been achieved and it was also noted that actions from the Centre Review in February 2017 had been included in the most recent copy of the action plan.

7 Considerable work has taken place around the recommendations, but there is still progress to be made with respect to recommendations 1 and 2. Accurate data will be available from this year, hence there is no impact on standards.

8 There were two examples of good practice. The first of these - 'the sharing of good practice through peer to peer observations with another International Study Centre(s) and University Faculty Staff' - has continued and expanded with further engagement through peer observations, for example with English tutors linking with lecturers in the Liverpool Business School and Faculties of Engineering and Science. Additionally, a chemistry event was held for students involving the science team working collectively with a guest lecturer. This experience was shared within the Study Group, the University partner and others in the ISC network through a newsletter. There is a continuing peer-review relationship with Keele University ISC and LJMUISC is looking to establish other reciprocal activities, for example to support the establishment of best practice for the migration to the Canvas VLE platform with the University of Kingston ISC and to explore formative assessment in science and engineering with staff from the University of Sheffield ISC.

9 The second example of good practice was the integration of educational visits into the student learning experience. A programme of events to maximise the student learning experience and support student transition seemed sparse. However, the reviewer learned during the visit that a full programme was available. It is intended to evaluate this programme through the Staff Student Liaison Committee forum and end-of-semester surveys. Students who met with the reviewer were aware of some elements of the programme and of their opportunities to meet with partner university staff.

10 All admissions to LJMUISC are handled by Study Group's admissions teams in Brighton and Singapore. The Head of Centre or a nominated representative (Head of Programmes or Head of English and Academic Skills) assesses all exceptional and borderline cases. The Admissions team provides detailed information about the applicant, including qualifications and a personal statement. The applicant may be requested to undertake a Skype interview or provide additional evidence to demonstrate their academic ability. The HEI may also be consulted, as deemed appropriate by the Head of Centre.

11 A set of Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR), one for each programme, plus a Centre report using the university partner's template, are submitted to the Regional Quality and Enhancement Group (RQAEG) by the end of the calendar year. RQAEG discusses all AMRs for the region, providing an element of peer review by other Heads of Centre. A report summarising any issues or good practice in the region is then taken to the Study Group's central Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee (AQAE). The reports are also presented to the partner university. Some detail concerning progression is not clear from these reports, but the reviewer was informed that, as an element of the peer review at RQAEG, the template is to be revised.

12 Since the Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges), in addition to annual monitoring, the Centre has experienced a Centre Review, and various validation events conducted by Study Group. Actions from these activities have fed through to the Centre Action Plan.

13 The Annual Monitoring Report shows that in 2015-16, 68 per cent of those who completed their programmes were offered progression to the partner university and of these, 96 per cent registered with the University. The data was not broken down by programme.

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

14 As indicated in section 3 above, LJMUISC has made progress in seeking to meet UK expectations for higher education. Annual monitoring, although there is need for further presentation and analysis of progression data, meets the expectation. Centre Review and the approval documentation demonstrate that expectations are met and show that programmes are monitored by the partner university to ensure that they are operating at the expected level and standards. The reviewer noted also the introduction of a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy in line with Study Group's requirements.

15 Student engagement centres on the class representative system. Student Representatives (one male and one female for each pathway) are elected by their peers and briefing and support is provided within the Centre to develop and extend representatives' skills in presenting their cohorts' views and providing updates on issues. Representatives come together to form the Staff Student Liaison Committee and they may also attend QAEG and the Board of Studies. Staff informed the reviewer that attendance was regular, but not all representatives attended at any one meeting. Volunteers are sought from the body of Student Representatives to take on and share the role of Lead Student Representative. From 2016-17, LJMUISC's Lead Student Representative has been invited to join fellow Student Representatives from other ISCs and attend a network Student Council meeting, enabling the Centre to discuss directly with students the quality of their learning experience. Both students and staff gave examples of change resulting from the student representation system.

16 In addition to the representative system LJMUISC seeks student views through a range of surveys.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

17 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.

18 The monitoring visit was carried out by Phil Markey, QAA Officer, and Professor Gaynor Taylor, QAA Reviewer, on 19 May 2017.

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