



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

### Annex 7: University of Lincoln 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 University of Lincoln International Study Centre (ULISC) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the previous [monitoring visit](#) in May 2014.

#### Section 2: Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 In January 2015 ULISC introduced an International Foundation Year (IFY) in Business and Management at qualification level 3, with the intention of creating opportunities for students to progress to Year 1 of relevant undergraduate courses at the University of Lincoln. ULISC expects to develop additional foundation provision in the future.

3 The main focus for progression to undergraduate courses in 2014-15 is the International Year One (IY1), and 279 students are currently enrolled across the four pathways (Business and Management; Computer Science; Engineering; and Media Studies).

4 The Pre-Master's Programme in Business and Management, approved in 2010, has not recruited this year. It is anticipated that this programme will undergo re-approval in 2015-16.

5 ULISC was reviewed by BES in February 2015, under its Centre Review process.

#### Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

6 ULISC continues to support staff development. Staff have attended the Study Group Teachers' Conference, external conferences, and staff development events at the University. BES's Centre Review found, and ULISC recognises, that more needs to be done to enhance staff development opportunities, including a planned approach informed by the outcomes of staff appraisal and peer observation, processes which are being further developed and formalised for full implementation in 2015-16.

7 One-to-one tutor support has been extended to include additional, focused support for 'at risk' students. ULISC plans further developments in e-learning, following a successful e-portfolio pilot involving Computer Science students.

8 Students confirmed that information provided pre-entry, at induction and in handbooks is accurate and helpful; and that degree progression requirements are made clear at every stage. However, if adopted by the Steering Group, a proposal to raise the IY1 (stage 2) degree

progression requirements with effect from 2015 ULISC entry, raises a potential risk of confusion for prospective students as they could be in the position of relying on previously accessible ULISC website information on progression requirements. That omission has been addressed through a website amendment indicating that progression grades are subject to change. Senior staff confirmed that, once approved at Steering Group, the website information will be updated to show the new progression grades. Any student who has been offered a place (or has been offered and accepted a place) will be written to by the Admissions Centre to inform them of this change. The letter will include an option to withdraw their application with no financial penalty.

9 The assessment regulations are now set out in identical format in relevant documentation, including ULISC, Staff and Student Handbooks. Potentially confusing terminology has been replaced with clear and consistent language.

10 ULISC has formally documented its requirements regarding feedback to students. Students confirmed that they receive helpful feedback, though staff and student understanding of the timescale for providing summative feedback was not entirely consistent with documented requirements. Students also confirmed that assessment scheduling is being managed effectively to avoid assessment 'bunching' and overload.

11 ULISC uses internal monitoring processes to act on good practice and identify areas for improvement, including analysis and use of feedback from students (through module evaluation and the staff-student committee), staff (through staff meetings and peer observation), and external examiners. ULISC also takes action in response to recommendations arising from BES's Centre Review process.

12 The Centre Action Plan, which is informed by review processes and the annual monitoring report, is effectively used as a vehicle for recording, tracking and evaluating action taken. Progress against actions is monitored by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group. In response to a BES Centre Review recommendation, ULISC is taking steps to ensure that enhancements are more clearly documented.

13 The assessment regulations set out procedures for producing assessment briefs and examination papers; standardisation, marking, second-marking and moderation; composition and conduct of assessment boards; and the role of external examiners. Although external examiners generally confirm that assessment processes operate effectively, one of last year's reports indicates lack of marking consistency in one subject area. In response, one-to-one staff development sessions were provided for relevant tutors. Similar support is planned for other subjects.

14 Students receive extensive guidance concerning academic offences, including plagiarism. Last year, an external examiner raised concern about the rigour of plagiarism penalties. ULISC has reviewed its processes, established the Academic Offences Committee, which has operated this year (reporting to the module assessment board), and clarified the criteria for determining penalties. Previously, academic offences were reported directly to the module assessment board for decision. ULISC recognises the need to gather and more closely monitor academic offences data.

15 The external examiner action plan is formally embedded in annual monitoring. While external examiners seem generally satisfied that their comments are addressed, ULISC does not currently respond directly to external examiners. BES's Centre Review recommended that action be taken in this respect, and staff indicated that this matter is to be addressed.

16 The monitoring team concluded that assessment processes are clear and, generally, working effectively and that action is taken to address areas of concern raised by external examiners. ULISC recognises the need to gather and more closely monitor academic offences data.

17 Admissions are managed centrally by BES's Admissions Centre. Policies and processes are in place to ensure admissions standards are met and maintained, and evidence of entry qualifications and a genuine intention to study are carefully checked.

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

18 The learning outcomes for the English and Skills for University Study (ESUS) modules have been developed in line with the Common European Framework (CEFR) global descriptors. Following formal BES-initiated mapping of ULISC's provision against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), and in accordance with BES guidance, ULISC is pursuing a thematic approach to the use of the Quality Code in the further development and evaluation of its provision, including a recent focus on the external examining system. Relevant staff development has been provided.

#### **Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit**

19 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.

20 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Neil Casey (QAA Officer), and Dr Sylvia Hargreaves (QAA Reviewer), on 3 July 2015.

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