

Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd, June 2013

Annex 11: University of Sussex 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 Sussex International Study Centre (USISC) is making acceptable progress following the May 2012 [Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 Four additional programmes - three additions to the International Year One (in Computing, International Relations and International Development, and Media and Film, and a Pre-Masters in Law - have been validated during the last year.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The QAA 2012 review report annex for USISC did not make any specific recommendations or identify any features of good practice in its 2012 review report. USISC has acted on the features of good practice in the provider's main review report. There is clear commitment to enhancement in USISC's Action Plan, and this is discussed in regular staff meetings. Academic and pastoral support is generally viewed positively by the students. Weekly tutorial meetings are held with Academic Progression Advisers. Students reported that staff are accessible and helpful, though the timeliness and detail of assessment feedback are variable, and some students thought there could be more clearly defined assessment criteria and guidance. Students do not routinely see external examiner reports, but summaries of their comments are reported and discussed at the Staff-Student Committee. Students did not always feel that issues raised at these Committees had been effectively dealt with.

4 The quality and availability of staff development continues to be a strong feature of USISC. Staff are encouraged to attend courses in USISC and the University. Issues emerging from external examiners' reports are discussed at staff development days. Peer observation of teaching takes place, though without a formal system. The monitoring team found evidence of networking across the ISCs, including the use of the provider's virtual learning environment, to share good practice.

5 USISC has responded to all the overall recommendations made to Bellerbys Educational Services (BES). The contract has been amended so that responsibilities for academic standards are now clearly defined. A glossary of academic standards-related terminology has been produced; it is given to all staff teaching on the programmes and consistently applied in documentation. Assessment regulations are made available to students in the Student Handbook, and are also in the Centre Handbook for staff. Student handbooks contained a statement of assessment requirements and procedures.

The students do not believe that they could receive any feedback on examinations, although staff said such feedback was available.

6 Grade requirements for progression to the University are clearly set out in the regulations for each programme and the students are aware of them. There are resit and retake opportunities, but USISC acknowledged that they are more difficult to access for students who start their programmes later in the academic year. Students are supported in making applications to other universities if they do not meet the University's progression requirements. There are continuing discussions about progression requirements with the University, informed by the detailed tracking of the progress of former USISC students.

7 BES standard procedures for checking and confirming the accuracy of information provided for sign-off by the University are working effectively. Students confirmed that information given to them before entry was full and accurate.

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

8 The UK Quality Code for Higher Education has been used by USISC as its main external reference point. Considerable effort has been put into its understanding and communication. Staff are kept informed of any changes at staff meetings, and there is regular email communication of any updates.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

9 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 with the action plan 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.

10 The monitoring visit was carried out by Alan Hunt, QAA Officer, and Professor Alan Jago, Reviewer, on 26 June 2013.