



Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Study Group UK), June 2014

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 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (BES) University of Sussex International Study Centre (USISC) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the June 2013 [monitoring visit](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 A new International Year 1 programme in Electrical and Electronic Engineering was validated, and the International Year 1 programme in Business and Management was revalidated, during the last year. During 2013-14 a revised management structure, including additional subject leaders, was introduced. Further changes are planned for 2014-15 with the appointment of a Centre Director who will provide strategic leadership, while a Deputy Head of Centre will be responsible for operational academic management. In September 2014 USISC is scheduled to move into new teaching premises on the University of Sussex's (the University) campus. There were 644 students at USISC in 2013-14.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 Since the last monitoring visit there remains 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. Students have weekly tutorial meetings with Academic Progression Advisers, and report that staff are accessible and helpful.

4 The information given to students about the assessment requirements has been improved and include detailed assessment criteria. A formal policy specifies that assessments should be returned within 14 days of submission, and students confirm that this target is consistently achieved. USISC has provided further guidance to teaching staff on good practice in assessment feedback, and there is now greater emphasis on providing both typed and audio feedback. However, students reported that less feedback may be provided to students who are deemed to be performing well compared to those who are performing at a lower level. During 2013-14 students received summaries of comments made by external examiners, but USISC intends to make the full reports available to students in 2014-15.

5 The quality of staff development remains a strength, with good practice disseminated through staff meetings and ISC network events. Staff attend conferences and cascade their learning to colleagues. Staff are able to participate in the University's staff development programme and can take the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. An informal process of peer observation of teaching is

designed to disseminate good practice, and USISC intends to make this more formal in 2014-15.

6 Assessment regulations are made available to students in the Student Handbook, and are also in the Centre Handbook for staff. Grade requirements for progression to the University are clearly set out in the regulations for each programme and the students are aware of them. Typically, students are able to resit an element of assessment if they are required to improve their mark. However, it remains the case that students who enrol in January, or those who are required to repeat one of their terms of study, are unable to retake all final-term assessments. Staff acknowledge that this can be unfair for such students. Not all students who started in January were aware of this restriction prior to enrolling. Resit arrangements are currently being reviewed to ensure that such students are aware of any restrictions before joining USISC, and that they are not unduly disadvantaged compared to other students.

7 Students provide feedback on their learning experience in various ways, including Centre Board meetings and various questionnaires, and USISC is currently considering introducing student representation on its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group in 2014-15. There has been an increased emphasis on facilitating the role of student representatives with further training planned for next academic year. Since the previous monitoring visit, students are now invited to complete the Student Satisfaction Survey to provide feedback to the provider on issues such as the quality of pre-arrival information and the admissions process.

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

8 Staff have been briefed, through staff meetings and focused workshops, on the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). These events have focused on issues such as the use made of external examiners and the provision of assessment feedback. USISC intends to use the Quality Code more systematically in the future to review and enhance provision.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

9 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous monitoring visit. 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 full review.

10 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Alan Hunt (QAA Officer) and Professor Graham Romp (Reviewer) on 27 June 2014.

QAA920d - R3992 - Aug 14

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

