



# Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements: report of the monitoring visit of Bangor University International College, May 2019

## Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that Bangor University International College is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the May 2018 [Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements review](#).

## Changes since the last QAA review visit

2 Bangor University International College (the College) is a partnership between Oxford International Education Group (OIEG) and Bangor University (the University). The partnership was established to increase the number and range of international students studying at the University. The College has seen a 28% increase in total student enrolments from 2017-18 to this point in the academic year 2018-19, with a further intake to follow in July 2019. There had been three withdrawals and 28 completions at the time of the visit. 18 staff in total support the programmes, comprising 14 part-time or 5.75 full-time equivalent staff directly involved in teaching the provision. Only one change has taken place since the last QAA review in May 2018. An interim College Director was in place at the last QAA visit and has subsequently been replaced by the Head of English who stepped up as College Director in August 2018.

## Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The outcome of the review was reached by reading the Annual Monitoring Return Form, review of the documentary evidence and meetings with staff and students. The College received two advisable recommendations in the last review, and both recommendations have been met. The College engages with further scrutiny through its University awarding body resulting in enhancements of the student experience. The College operates a clear, fair and robust admissions process, informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), *Chapter B2* and as set out in their policies and procedures. Procedures for the setting, moderation and feedback of assessed work comply fully with University regulations, and the students met understood assessment criteria and how to avoid plagiarism. Data returns showed growth in student numbers and high levels of retention, completion and pass rates. While working closely with the University, the College continues to be informed by external reference points.

4 The College received two advisable recommendations in its Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements (EOEA) review in 2018. The first required the provider to discuss with the University, the explicit inclusion of the level of programmes on the transcript issued to the students. Discussions on the form of the transcript have taken place since the last review at the Bangor University Operations meeting in August 2018, the Joint Management Board in October 2018, and College and Bangor University Systems meeting in January 2019. The latter meeting agreed to produce a transcript which includes the level of the programme and individual modules from the next academic year (2019-20).

5 The second advisable recommendation required the provider to clarify with the University and make explicit to students, the regulations that apply to incorporated degrees. The student handbook has been revised to state that the University Regulations for Taught Programmes apply to the International Incorporated Bachelor's and International Incorporated Master's programmes. Most of the students met during the monitoring visit had received their handbook before they arrived, and all confirmed that those regulatory details were discussed during the College induction.

6 OIEG introduced the OIEG Quality Committee in 2017 which brings together the Centre Directors from all four partnerships - for the review and enhancement of academic provision; the operation of internal processes; and the quality of student experience through ongoing action planning at College level. The outcomes for the College from this sharing of good practice include a revised student handbook, optional observation tasks as part of the In-Service Teacher Development Project (INSETT) and the integration of the virtual learning environment (VLE) and academic integrity tools.

7 The selection and admission process for the College is determined by the OIEG Admissions Policy, which in turn is guided by the Quality Code, *Chapter B2*. Student admissions onto programmes is a shared responsibility between OIEG and the College, with final decisions resting with the University as set out in the Collaboration Agreement. OIEG handles the admissions process up to the point of offer, with those applications handled by a central OIEG Pathways Admissions team. To ensure the integrity of the admissions process, the Head of Admissions and Conversion, and the Admissions Manager undertake regular spot checks as set out in the Admissions Manual. Compulsory training of Pathways Admissions staff and a Training and Development policy is in place for the development of all permanent and temporary employees. Training for the OIEG agents, representatives and partners include webinars, familiarisation trips, in-country visits and attendance at the OIEG Sales Conference.

8 Academic entry criteria are agreed with the University at the point of course validation and before the commencement of student recruitment, and are set out in the College brochure. English language criteria for entry by Tier 4 students are governed by the Home Office/UKVI regulations with OIEG operating a Secure English Language Test and the International English Language Testing System. Any changes or additions to admissions criteria are fully ratified by the University, and those changes are then communicated to the OIEG Global Recruitment Unit who have the responsibility for recruitment and marketing. The website is regularly evaluated for accuracy of information and the students commented favourably on its clarity and comprehensiveness. The students met found the application process easy with the exception of visa issues.

9 There is an appropriate appeals procedure for admissions decisions, and the complaints procedure and appeals on admissions decisions are set out in the OIEG Admissions Policy.

10 Responsibility for assessment rests with the College tutors under the supervision of the Academic Director and College Director. Internal moderation as set out in the Internal Moderation Guidelines is conducted by another academic tutor, the Academic Director and the College Director, and takes place via an assessment moderation site on the VLE.

11 External examiners review and sign off both assignments and examination scripts. These are made available on the VLE, however the rate of scrutiny is not as good as the College would like. To improve the rate of scrutiny, the College has taken practical steps to encourage the external examiners to be more proactive in early engagement with the VLE and has increased the time frame of access to assessments.

12 The internal moderator is also the second marker for a proportionate sample of scripts and, once second marked, they are uploaded onto the assessment moderation site for review by the External Examiner. The final agreed marked scripts are conveyed to the Academic Director who acts as the Examinations Coordinator and makes the collated assessments, examination papers and associated papers available to the Board of Examiners. The Examinations Coordinator is also responsible for the examination timetable, scheduling invigilators, and securing examination materials.

13 The College complies with the University regulations for assessment and feedback. The College employs a range of assessment modes to enable the students to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes as specified in the module specifications, and those were clearly understood by the students met.

14 The policy for plagiarism is set out in the Student Handbook, and information on avoiding plagiarism can be found in the College Academic Handbook. Steps have also been taken to prevent malpractice, for example, through taught modules with specific learning outcomes on academic writing, and by requiring typed in-course assessments to be submitted through academic integrity software.

15 Following the completion of each cohort, the College is responsible for organising Internal Exam Boards (Pre-Boards) and the Board of Examiners - with the College Director as Chair, and the Academic Director and College tutors present.

16 The College has increased its student intake year-on-year with a 28% increase for the academic year 2018-19, up on the previous with one further intake point in July. Of students enrolled, 24% are on the International Year Zero programme, 31% on International Year One and 45% on the International Incorporated Master.

17 The College can also demonstrate high levels of retention, completion and pass rates with 90% completing stage 1 of their integrated programme in the academic years 2017-18 and 100% of those passed. Of those completions, 94% progressed to stage 2 of their integrated programme at the University. Of the first cohort of nine master's students to graduate from the University in December 2018, all were successful, and five achieved a merit, demonstrating high levels of student achievement.

## **Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education**

18 The College continues to be informed by the external reference points working with the University for revalidation and programme development. In particular, the *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales* and Subject Benchmark Statements as evident in their programmes and modules specifications, and language modules reflect the requirements of the *Common European Framework of Reference*.

## **Background to the monitoring visit**

19 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 review. Also, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider 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 Barbara Howell, Reviewer, and Ian Welch, QAA Officer, on 14 May 2019.

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Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FL  
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)