



Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements: report of the monitoring visit of Bangor University International College, May 2021

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 (the College;BUIC) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the [May 2020 monitoring](#) review.

2 As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the review was conducted online and included meetings with senior management teams, teaching staff and students. The scope of the evidence considered, and the nature of the judgements and operational milestones have remained the same but with some adjustments due to the online format. A risk assessment was carried out prior to the review to identify and mitigate any potential risks.

Changes since the last QAA monitoring review

3 Bangor University International College is in its fifth year of operation, having opened in September 2016. The College was opened by Oxford International Education Group (OIEG) in collaboration with Bangor University (BU), and is an embedded college on the Bangor University campus.

4 The College has four intake points during the year and 189 students are currently enrolled on a range of programmes: the International Year Zero (IYZ); the International Year One (IY1); and the International Incorporated Masters (IIM). IYZ subject pathways cover: Business, Management and Economics; Law, Media, Psychology and Social Sciences; and Engineering and Computer Science. IY1 subject pathways cover: Business, Management and Finance; and Psychology. IIM subject pathways cover: Business and Management; Investment and Banking; Accounting and Finance; and Psychology. In this academic year (2020-21), the College has introduced a full-time integrated programme for domestic students - the Business Foundation Year in Business Management and Economics. Data indicates that staff numbers have remained broadly comparable over the last two years, and comprise full-time staff (College Director, Academic Director and Administration Manager) and 17 sessional tutors.

Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The outcome of this monitoring visit was determined by reading the Annual Monitoring Process Annual Return Form, reviewing the documentary evidence provided and conducting online meetings with staff and students. Findings indicate that the College has made commendable progress and continues to engage actively with the University awarding body in enhancing the student experience and, through its actions and activities, demonstrates that it meets the mandatory Core and Common practices set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).

6 The College has responded effectively to the two suggestions made in the May 2020 Annual Monitoring Report: to evaluate the impact of termly meetings for developing

staff practices and to develop further practices aimed at facilitating staff members' understanding of the revised Quality Code. The College's ongoing Action Plan, the Annual Return for 2021, and meetings with college staff confirm that planned initiatives for staff development are ongoing and topics covered have impacted positively upon the quality of academic delivery - for example, reflective sessions aimed at improving online teaching skills and the introduction of the annual Staff Development Day. With respect to the Quality Code, all staff can access the College's current mapping document on the virtual learning environment (VLE), and, in October 2020, a development session entitled 'How does BUIC meet the requirements of the UK Quality Code?' took place during the annual Staff Development Day.

7 The College continues to maintain, review and enhance its higher education provision through the ongoing Action Plan. In 2020-21, to improve approaches to marking and feedback, the College held a session for marking and standardisation on the Staff Development Day in October 2020 and, in January 2021, produced a video on the subject that tutors could access on a one-to-one basis. To develop online teaching strategies further, in-house development sessions aimed at engaging and motivating students, took place in November 2020 and February 2021, which subsequently resulted in the production of standardised guidelines for online classes. In response to concerns about plagiarism, title pages on all assessments were updated to include disclosure statements in December 2020 and, in February 2021, catch-up sessions were introduced for late entry students.

8 The College has submitted a detailed data return and provided a comprehensive analysis of results in the Annual Monitoring Return for 2021. Information received in March 2021 confirmed that 110 new students had enrolled in 2020-21. An additional 79 students were subsequently recruited in April 2021, largely as a consequence of approving an April start date for the IYZ Business Management and Economics programme, bringing the current figure to 189, representing a 20% increase over the previous year. Final results for retention, progression and completion in 2019-20 remain high and are above BUIC's targeted completion, pass and progression rates of 87%. Records indicate that 88% of registered students completed stage one, with 93% of those passing. Of the students who passed, 92% progressed to stage two.

9 The current governance structure continues to ensure that the College's academic provision remains fit-for-purpose. The Steering Board is comprised of Bangor University and Oxford International Education Group officials who meet periodically to discuss College matters and to monitor and review comments and reports received from the Joint Academic Board and the Joint Operations Board. The Joint Academic Board - made up of BU, OIEG and college representatives - continues to maintain oversight of the College's internal monitoring processes; in particular, activities of the Teaching and Learning Committee, the Student Forum, and Programme Committees. It also receives feedback from external examiners and link tutors.

10 The College maintains robust internal monitoring processes to ensure that standards and expectations set by Bangor University are met. Information gained from Teaching and Learning Committee meetings, Student Forum sessions, Programme Meetings, student surveys, external examiner reports and the College's responses to them, and link tutor reports, informs the annual QA 1 (programme) and QA 2 (module) reports required by the University.

11 The College continues to build upon the comprehensive approach embedded in its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and has enhanced student opportunities for learning during the pandemic. For example, the College has developed a comprehensive online welcome programme, designed a guide to studying online, organised online 'live' sessions to ensure students' active participation and produced a number of online study

skills videos. To assist lecturers, the College has developed and distributed user guides to facilitate online teaching, introduced drop-in observations across all modules to share good practice, conducted various in-house development sessions aimed at improving online and blended learning delivery, and introduced an annual Staff Development Day.

12 The College applies a consistent approach to monitoring and enhancing the effectiveness of staff members, and expectations are set out clearly in the BUIC Operational and Quality Assurance Manual. Formal Peer Review Observations take place on a periodic basis and are mandatory for all lecturers delivering on the programmes. In addition, staff members undergo performance appraisals on an annual basis and are expected to participate actively in developmental activities hosted by BUIC, OIEG and Bangor University, aimed at improving learning experiences for students.

13 The College continues to build upon the systematic approach taken to gaining feedback from students and, since November 2020, has included student representation on the Teaching and Learning Committee. As representatives of the student voice, student representatives play an important role in the feedback system by enabling senior staff to acquire the views of students less willing to bring personal and academic concerns directly to staff members. Student Forums take place every term, aimed at strengthening communication links between senior staff members and students. The College also undertakes surveys on a termly basis to gain information about students' perceptions of their learning experiences. In addition, the College has set up a website for students to post issues anonymously, thereby removing any fear of speaking up, or worrying about what others might think.

14 The College adopts a proactive approach to student support, and participants in the student meeting confirmed this to be the case. Every student has a Personal Tutor who provides academic and practical advice, and access to a network of academic and support staff willing to help. Students also have access to a number of useful guidelines available on the VLE. In addition, as university students, they are entitled to use the full range of university services, including the VLE, the University Library, additional online provisions, access to formal complaints and appeals procedures and health services.

15 The College consistently provides comprehensive information about entry requirements, programme offerings, regulations and policies to prospective candidates and students already registered. Details provided on the website, in programme specifications, student handbooks, and on the VLE are clearly stated, and attendees in the student meeting confirmed this to be the case. New students are required to attend induction sessions where they meet academic staff, learn more about their academic and collegial responsibilities, receive details about the Bangor University Campus and obtain practical information about the city, such as how to register with a GP.

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

16 The College continues to work closely with the University in developing new programmes and modifying or revalidating existing ones, and ensures that all requirements set out in the University's Code of Practice for Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review are met. In developing new programmes, the College continues to make effective use of external reference points such as the *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales* (CQFW), QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, the Common European Framework of Reference, and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) to ensure that module content, delivery methods and assessment requirements are set at the appropriate level, and incorporated into each programme specification. For example, the CQFW and QAA Subject Benchmark Statements were used in developing the IIM Level 6 programmes

in Business and Psychology. External assessors, including external examiners, also provide feedback on programme development.

17 The College's engagement with external examiners remains highly effective. Staff value the feedback provided by external examiners and respond proactively to all reports received. External examiner reports and responses are shared with staff and students, discussed formally, and suggestions made for improvement are entered into the College's ongoing Action Plan, where they are used to enhance the quality of the academic provision. For example, in response to one external examiner's observation on assessment feedback, the College organised a session on standardising approaches to feedback and marking on the Staff Development Day in October 2020.

18 The College has demonstrated commendable initiative in building upon the OIEG's initial mapping exercise in relation to the revised Quality Code, undertaken in August 2019, by transforming it into a living document updated on an ongoing basis that is accessible to all staff members via the VLE. The mapping exercise continues to serve as an effective mechanism for monitoring, reviewing and enhancing the College's higher education provision in relation to the Expectations for standards and quality, and the Core and Common practices set out in the Quality Code, and for providing practical examples to explain and illustrate linkages. To ensure the continued engagement of staff members with the Quality Code, and familiarity with updated information, the College carried out a refresher session during the Staff Development Day in October 2020 - entitled 'How does BUIC meet the requirements of the UK Quality Code?' - and plans to undertake this each year from now on.

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. In addition, 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 Dr Tommie Anderson-Jaquest, Reviewer, and Nadine Baker, QAA Officer, on 27 May 2021.

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