



# Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Bournemouth University International College

April 2018

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd, Bournemouth University International College. The review took place from 24 to 25 April 2018 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Brenda Eade
- Mrs Catherine Fairhurst.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provision and to make judgements as to whether or not academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<sup>1</sup> setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#)<sup>2</sup> and explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#).<sup>3</sup> For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code).

<sup>2</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges): [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/higher-education-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/higher-education-review) .

## Key findings

### Judgements

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the College **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is **commended**.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice**.

- The extensive range of staff development opportunities, which includes the Kaplan-led training programme, access to University staff development activities and the College's weekly Friday sessions for both full-time and sessional staff (Expectation B3).
- Student involvement in external business activities in the local community (such as the Big Pitch) which enriches their learning opportunities, is linked to the development of their personal portfolio (KapPACK) and supports students to become independent learners (Expectation B3).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team made no recommendations.

### Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team did not affirm any actions already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students.

### Financial sustainability, management and governance

The financial sustainability, management and governance check has been satisfactorily completed.

## About the provider

Bournemouth University International College (the College) is an embedded College which is part of the Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd pathways framework, branded as Kaplan International Pathways, operating in partnership with Bournemouth University. Students who achieve the progression requirements agreed with the University are able to proceed directly to a programme at the University.

Kaplan International Pathways aims to deliver world-leading pathway programmes designed specifically to meet the needs of international students primarily based outside the EU. Kaplan Pathways programmes prepare international students to progress to university and are designed in close collaboration with partner universities. Programmes incorporate study skills, English language, transferable skills and discipline-specific academic modules for the programme to which students wish to progress.

Kaplan International Pathways has nine Colleges across the UK. The majority of the Colleges are linked to a single partner University but Kaplan International College London offers progression to several universities.

Kaplan International Pathways has established a Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ). CLIQ is primarily based in Nottingham and Liverpool with virtual team presence across all colleges and, together with colleges, has responsibility across all the Kaplan Pathways colleges for academic development and enhancement and for coordinating quality assurance.

This was the second QAA review of the College. The College opened in 2013 and underwent an Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight (ECREO) in 2014. The outcome of this review was that confidence could be placed in academic standards and quality of learning opportunities and that information about learning opportunities was reliable. The review highlighted four areas of good practice and made two advisable recommendations. An annual monitoring visit in 2015 concluded that the College had made commendable progress in continuing to review, monitor and enhance its provision since the 2014 ECREO.

KIC underwent a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) - HER (EC) - at provider level in 2016, with positive outcomes (including commended judgements for information and enhancement). QAA has reviewed other KIC Colleges (University of Brighton International College, Glasgow International College, Liverpool International College, Nottingham Trent International College, the University of the West of England, Bristol's International College and Kaplan International College London), with positive outcomes. The HER (EC) visit to the College was one of three (the others being the University of the West of England, Bristol's International College and The University of Nottingham International College) which took place during March and April 2018.

The College offers pathway programmes at Foundation Certificate and pre-master's levels for Business, Law or Finance; Events, Tourism and Hospitality Management; and Media and Communications. In addition it offers a Foundation Certificate for Computing and an International Year One in Business; a master's Enhancement Programme (MEP), bachelor's Enhancement Programme (BEP), Pre-Sessional English (with Study Skills) and Pre-Sessional English (Fast Track).

At the time of the review visit there were around 130 students studying at the College.

## Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

### **1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the provider and/or on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations**

**Expectation (A1):** In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:

**a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* are met by:**

- **positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications**
- **awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes**

**b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics**

**c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework**

**d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards***

#### **Findings**

1.1 Kaplan International Pathways is responsible for ensuring that the pathway qualifications awarded by the College are positioned at the appropriate levels, named in accordance with the conventions of the relevant framework and that learning outcomes align with the qualifications descriptors. Kaplan International Pathways has a Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) which includes its own qualifications framework. The credit point framework, which is also part of the QAF, is used for the award of pathway qualifications. The QAF maps to the UK credit and qualifications frameworks, links to QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and specifies the characteristic outcomes for each of the awards. The procedures for programme design and development are set out in the Kaplan International Pathways Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM).

1.2 The processes for aligning qualifications to the appropriate framework, for the award of credit and for referencing Subject Benchmark Statements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.3 To test the operation of these arrangements the review team scrutinised a range of documentation relating to academic standards and quality assurance, including the QAF, the ASQM, programme documentation (programme and module specifications) and an example of a programme approval process. The team also met staff from the College, the University and Kaplan International Pathways.

1.4 The review team found that the Pathway Specifications define the content and structure of each programme and the volume of credit awarded, and link to the relevant qualifications frameworks. The Foundation Certificate programmes are mapped to level 3 of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). They have a credit volume of 80 credits. The International Year One programmes are mapped to level 4 of the FHEQ and have a credit volume of 120 credits. The pre-master's programmes are mapped to level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and have a credit volume of 80 credits.

1.5 The programmes are designed by the College in conjunction with Bournemouth University. They are validated through the processes defined by Kaplan International Pathways in the ASQM. The Joint Academic Board (JAB) is responsible for the final approval of programmes. This ensures that they provide access to the designated undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at the University as set out in the agreements between the College and the University.

1.6 The Multi-Progression Pathway programmes provide an opportunity for students to progress to Bournemouth University or other university pathways on a negotiated basis.

1.7 Changes to the programme specifications and module content, including assessment, are overseen by CLIQ, approved by the Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC) and then confirmed by the JAB. Staff at the College and University indicated that the programmes are constantly reviewed to ensure that the learning outcomes map to the programmes offered by the University, and this was evident from the minutes of the JAB.

1.8 The recently introduced Kaplan International Pathways Specification Management System provides an effective and secure system for maintaining up-to-date programme specifications and for tracking any changes to them.

1.10 The review team concludes that the programmes are aligned to the relevant framework, that qualifications are set at the appropriate level, and that learning outcomes reflect the descriptors for that level and take account of QAA Subject Benchmark Statements. Kaplan International Pathways awards qualifications to indicate the achievement of programme learning outcomes. Kaplan International Pathways has comprehensive and detailed processes for securing academic standards, which the College adheres to. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards**

**Findings**

1.9 Kaplan International Pathways has overall responsibility for governance and for managing academic standards and quality. This is effected through the APQC which normally meets four times per year. The Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes Report which takes an overview of Annual Programme Reports (APRs) from all Colleges is considered by APQC and enables Kaplan International Pathways to monitor academic standards across all its international pathway colleges.

1.10 The Governance Framework, which includes management and committee structures established by Kaplan International Pathways, provides clear lines of responsibility and reporting. It sets out the roles and membership of the key committees for all embedded colleges.

1.11 College Directors report to the Director of Colleges based at Kaplan International Pathways Headquarters in London. Committee structures are standardised across colleges with some local variations to conform to university requirements. The committees include JAB, Joint Strategic Management Board (JSMB), APQC, New Product Development and Approvals Group (NPDAG), Business Approval Group for Programme Developments (BAGPD), Senior Management Team (SMT), programme committee and student representative meetings.

1.12 Policies and procedures for the maintenance and management of academic standards and quality are set out in the QAF and the ASQM. These include assessment regulations, and make provision for assessment boards to confirm the achievement of the learning outcomes for the award of qualifications.

1.13 The centralised policies and procedures, together with the governance and management structures that provide a framework for the award of credit and qualifications, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.14 To test the operation of these arrangements the review team scrutinised a range of documentation including the terms of reference and minutes of the central committees referred to in paragraph 1.11. The review team analysed the College's APR for 2016/17 together with the relevant sections of the Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes Report and the College action plan. The review team referred to the reports from external examiners. The review team also met staff from the College, the University and Kaplan International Pathways.

1.15 The review team found that the staffing structure of the College aligns with the central Kaplan International Pathways organisational structure, providing clear lines of reporting on quality and standards at the operational level. The College Director has overall responsibility for all aspects of the student experience and standards. The Academic Director is responsible for the delivery of the curriculum and for managing academic staff. The Head of College Services reports to the College Director and is responsible for student services including student support.

1.16 The JSMB between the Kapan International Pathways college and Bournemouth University is responsible for reviewing the performance of the College, developing the relationship between the University and Kaplan International Pathways and planning the strategic direction of the College. It receives reports from JAB and has overall responsibility for risk management and the operation of the College.

1.17 JAB has oversight of standards and monitors the progression of students from the College onto the relevant University programmes. It is chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University.

1.18 The Academic Liaison Forum (ALF) has been set up specifically to report to JAB on issues relating to the progression of students to the University and to provide a wider and more informal forum for University and College staff to discuss transition and progression issues. It oversees activities that are designed to help students from the College integrate into the relevant department in the University and monitors the performance of students once they have progressed to the University.

1.19 The SMT monitors the performance of the College, including standards and quality, at the operational level.

1.20 The Programme Committees, which have a standard agenda, consider the APRs and monitor programme action plans. They discuss operational issues relating to the College pathways including matters that have been raised by students who attend the meeting. They also consider the notes of the student representative meetings. Issues discussed feed into APRs and the College action plan. The minutes of Programme Committee meetings provide details of those present, review matters raised at previous meetings and include an action plan.

1.21 External examiners' reports confirm that academic standards are equivalent to those of programmes at the same level in other higher education institutions.

1.22 The review team concludes that the College has effective management and committee structures, which enable staff and students to participate in the governance of the College. The regulations provided by Kaplan International Pathways together with the monitoring of standards by external examiners and JAB ensure that the College has transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks for the award of academic credit and qualifications. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**



**Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards**

**Findings**

1.23 Kaplan International Pathways has developed templates for programme and module specifications that enable definitive information to be recorded for each award including the programme structure, indicative content and assessment. These are aligned to Kaplan International Pathways' Qualifications Framework, which maps to the relevant UK qualifications frameworks, and are used for the purpose of the award of credit and qualifications as defined in the programme specifications. Kaplan International Pathways has a detailed system for the approval and amendment of programmes which is set out in the ASQM.

1.24 The arrangements in place, including templates and systems for recording programme content, and the approval and amendment of programmes, which are provided by Kaplan International Pathways, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.25 The review team tested the operation of these arrangements through scrutiny of a range of documentation relating to the award of qualifications to students including programme and module specifications, transcripts and records of changes to programmes. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University.

1.26 The review team found that the programme specifications for the College are clearly set out on the Kaplan International Pathways templates, make reference to the UK Quality Code, and are mapped to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements for the University pathway to which they provide progression. Programme specifications set out the learning outcomes for the programme and for the constituent modules and specify the means by which these are delivered and assessed.

1.27 The College has clearly defined agreements with the University that enable students to progress to the designated University programme upon successful completion of their pathway. College programmes are developed in consultation with the University through JAB. All new programmes and any changes to programmes are approved by APQC and JAB. Minor modifications are approved by the Programme Committee in consultation with SMT.

1.28 Kaplan International Pathways has recently audited its programme specifications and these are now stored on the intranet - KI Connect. This provides secure storage and central access to definitive programme documents.

1.29 Overall responsibility for the award of credit and qualifications rests with Kaplan International Pathways. Records of study/transcripts, confirming the achievement of the learning outcomes for the programme and listing the modules studied, are given to students upon successful completion of their programme.

1.25 The review team concludes that Kaplan International Pathways has detailed systems for making awards to students following successful achievement of the learning

outcomes for their programmes, which are used effectively by the College and monitored centrally by Kaplan International Pathways. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

## Findings

1.30 The QAF and the Curriculum Development Process defines Kaplan International Pathways' principles of programme design and approval. The key focus of the Approval Group (NPDAG), is on the outcomes of the Product Review (Kaplan International Pathways' review of its offering). BAGPD and NPDAG consider any marketing, recruitment, financial, academic and compliance implications of new or changed programme proposals.

1.31 The QAF identifies academic frameworks against which undergraduate and postgraduate awards are mapped. Kaplan International Pathways uses the RQF and FHEQ as the external reference points for the QAF. Kaplan International Pathways' intranet, with all staff access, contains QAA Subject Benchmark Statements. Academic approval takes place through the APQC with oversight by the College and JAB. Kaplan International Pathways' ASQM describes the process for the approval of taught programmes. The College has responsibility for implementing these processes. There is a formal procedure for course closure.

1.32 Kaplan International Pathways has designed programme approval procedures to ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets UK threshold standards and are in accordance with relevant academic frameworks and regulations. The arrangements in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.33 The review team tested the operation of these arrangements through scrutiny of Kaplan International Pathways' quality documentation together with approval documentation and minutes of College and JAB meetings to consider the application of these procedures. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University.

1.34 An example of recent programme approval documentation for the Research Project of the Pre-Master's for Media and Communications programme demonstrates that the processes described above operate effectively and as intended. Kaplan International Pathways and the College pay strict attention to standards throughout the preparation and approval of new programmes. Kaplan International Pathways has designed and the College applies programme approval policies and processes to ensure the alignment of content and assessment with the UK threshold standards contained within the FHEQ. JAB receives a programme plan for discussion and approval. The minutes of JAB demonstrate thorough consideration of academic standards when approving modifications to programme specifications and module specifications.

1.35 The external examiner's report template asks for comment on the alignment of the programme learning outcomes with the level of the award, the FHEQ and QAA Subject Benchmark Statements. External examiners confirm that content is appropriate to the level and that the learning outcomes are comparable to similar programmes across the sector.

1.36 The review team concludes that the application of Kaplan International Pathways' policies and processes for programme approval ensure that academic standards are set at a

level that meets UK threshold standards and are in accordance with relevant academic frameworks and regulations. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:**

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.37 The APQC is responsible for monitoring the consistency of academic quality and comparability of standards across all Kaplan Pathways Colleges. The Kaplan Graduate Performance at Host Partner Universities and the Annual Report on the Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes (ASQP) presented to APQC compare the performance and progression rates of student cohorts, modules, programmes and Colleges. This level of analysis further secures academic standards.

1.38 The programme approval procedures consider learning outcomes and their assessment to ensure alignment with threshold standards. Programme and module specifications state the programme learning outcomes as defined in the QAF. The ASQM details Kaplan International Pathways' assessment principles and regulations. The Assessment Board ensures the award of credit is awarded only where both UK threshold standards and Kaplan International Pathways' academic standards have been satisfied. Kaplan International Pathways provides a guide for Colleges on establishing alternative assessment arrangements for students with disabilities.

1.39 The College is responsible for securing academic standards through setting, marking, moderation and feedback of all assessment except for the centrally managed English Language Exit module.

1.40 The policies and regulations in place would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.41 To test the operation of these arrangements the review team considered a range of evidence including programme and module specifications, Kaplan International Pathways' quality manuals and the external examiners' reports. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University.

1.42 The College tests that students have achieved the set academic standards by formally assessing learning outcomes. The arrangements for these assessments are effective. The College carries out assessment according to the procedures and regulations of Kaplan International Pathways.

1.43 The College's formally constituted subject and programme Assessment Boards, chaired by the Academic Director or other members of the Academic Management Team, are responsible for determining and approving awards in accordance with the regulations and in conjunction with external examiners. The minutes demonstrate that student achievement is calibrated relative to the threshold standard in a consistent manner and systematic.

1.44 The external examiners' reports all confirm that programme structures enable the learning outcomes to be met, that assessment processes are appropriate and that they allow students to meet the programme and learning outcomes.

1.45 Students are able to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes through varied modes of assessment. Assessment briefs clearly define learning outcomes and grading criteria.

1.46 Programme handbooks and module specifications on the virtual learning environment (VLE) clearly describe academic regulations and students are also made aware of these by their lecturers.

1.47 The review team concludes that the students' achievement of the learning objectives of their programme is demonstrated through assessment. These decisions are reached at formally constituted Assessment Boards. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.48 The ASQM provides the framework for the monitoring and review of programmes to ensure that colleges achieve appropriate academic standards. The Programme Leader, or relevant member of the Academic Management team drafts an APR. The APR is approved by the Programme Committee and received by the College SMT, JAB, the external examiner and CLIQ. CLIQ then compiles the Kaplan International Pathways' annual ASQP from APRs for the APQC, the College Executive Management Board (CEMB) and the Kaplan International Pathways SMT, to provide a summary of the overall academic performance of each Kaplan Pathways College and compare standards across programmes in the network.

1.49 The policies and procedures detailed in the ASQM allow Kaplan International Pathways and the Colleges to explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required to progress to the host university are being maintained. These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.50 The review team scrutinised a range of evidence to test the success of the framework and its associated processes. This included documentation including the ASQM, JAB minutes and the APR reports. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University.

1.51 Discussions with Kaplan International Pathways, College and senior University staff contributed evidence that programme monitoring and review processes address the achievement of academic standards and the policies and procedures detailed in the ASQM.

1.52 The College implements Kaplan International Pathways processes for the monitoring of programmes to maintain academic standards. The Academic Director produces the College's APR annually within Kaplan International Pathways' standard template. This contains detailed programme quality and enhancement activities, qualitative and quantitative data including success and challenges, student achievement and performance, and student and external examiner feedback. The Programme Committees actively consider academic standards through the review of teachers' feedback, external examiners' reports and programme modifications. JAB considers student performance and progression in detail and performance of students once at the University.

1.53 The external examiners confirm that academic currency is maintained and that the programmes continue to meet the UK threshold standards in accordance with the FHEQ and applicable Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.54 The review team concludes that the effective partnership with the University and the careful application of the policies and procedures detailed in the ASQM allow Kaplan International Pathways and the College to determine whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required to progress to the

host University are being maintained. The College effectively draws upon a wide range of information including data on student performance and achievement within its monitoring and review activities. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**



**Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:**

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.55 Kaplan International Pathways now includes external involvement in the processes for setting and maintaining academic standards and the curriculum development processes. This is described in the new External Review Guidelines document. External review evidence is an element in the curriculum change proposal forms submitted to APQC and colleges must ensure curriculum changes and new programme proposals are evidence-based and have received an appropriate level of external scrutiny.

1.56 External examiners are members of the Assessment Boards and submit written reports. The host universities through their JAB chairs and link tutors also contribute significant external expertise to the programmes, which are approved by Kaplan International Pathways and endorsed by the universities.

1.57 Kaplan International Pathways achieves additional external referencing through the RQF, FHEQ, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA).

1.58 The arrangements in place, including the partnership with the University and the regulatory and policy framework of Kaplan International Pathways, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.59 The review team tested the operation of these arrangements by reviewing a range of documentation and guidance including the ASQM; policies and regulations relating to approval, monitoring, review and the role of external examiners; minutes of meetings; and external examiners' reports. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University.

1.60 As there is a defined centralised curriculum development and approval process for all Kaplan pathways/programmes the use of external and independent expertise applies to them all. The College demonstrates external and independent expertise at key stages of the quality processes mainly through the University and external examiners. The University has appropriate and robust oversight of academic standards through JAB and the link tutors. The minutes of JAB and the Assessment Boards demonstrate that the College uses the externality of the University in a systematic way.

1.61 The external examiners are members of the Assessment Boards and provide impartial advice and recommendations as to whether the assessments demonstrate that academic standards are achieved. Their reports confirm that programmes adhere to relevant professional and regulatory standards and benchmarks.

1.62 Kaplan International Pathways' recent External Review Guidelines ensure external contribution to programme modifications.

1.63 The review team concludes that there are appropriate procedures for the use of external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards for the College's programmes. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

## The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the provider: Summary of findings

1.64 In reaching its judgement, the review team considered its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.65 All Expectations in this area are met and the associated level of risk is low in all cases.

1.66 The College has appropriate procedures for assuring academic standards, which are aligned with Kaplan International Pathways' policies and procedures. There are effective arrangements in place for the management of the quality of programmes in partnership with the University.

1.67 There are no recommendations in this judgement area, no identified good practice and no affirmations.

1.68 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the College **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.**

### **Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval**

#### **Findings**

2.1 The Kaplan International Pathways SMT has strategic oversight of programme design, development and approval through the NPDAAG and the BAGPD. The central processes are in the QAF and ASQM as described in Expectation A3.1. APQC takes final decisions on programme and module approval and significant modifications. To ensure consistency between colleges the QAF defines learning outcomes for each level of programme together with an analysis of graduate attributes. Kaplan International Pathways is currently undertaking a Product Review. Changes as a result of this will be introduced after consultation in the colleges from Autumn 2019. Kaplan International Pathways has recently revised the Curriculum Change Proposal Form to include external review. The College is responsible for curriculum design and development with CLIQ support.

2.2 The procedures for programme design, development and approval would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.3 The review team tested the effectiveness of these procedures by scrutiny of documents including Kaplan International Pathways' quality manuals, JAB minutes and programme approval documentation. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.4 Kaplan International Pathways and the College systematically and consistently apply processes for programme design, development and approval to enhance the quality of learning opportunities. The 2017 programme modification documentation clearly illustrates the application of these processes. All significant modifications are approved by JAB. This ensures that new or modified programmes are assessed against the criteria in the QAF. The current Product Review and the introduction of the External Guidelines show how Kaplan International Pathways evaluates and improves these processes. This College is able to contribute to Kaplan International Pathways' design and development of all programmes as the Academic Director is a member of Kaplan International Pathways' central APQC. Teaching staff say they have opportunities to contribute to programme modifications, and several examples were provided of mapping the design of a new programme initiative onto the University's programmes. Students and staff contribute to modifications of programmes through Programme Committees and there was an example where a portfolio had been replaced by a mid-term test.

2.5 There are extensive formal discussions at JAB about new routes and alignment of the College's programme developments with those of the University's curriculum.

2.6 The review team concludes that the process for the design, development and approval of programmes aligns with Kaplan International Pathways quality systems, and

the process is enhanced by the close communication with the University. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education**

**Findings**

2.7 Recruitment selection and admission is managed centrally by Kaplan International Pathways. Within the Marketing and Recruitment team there are a number of functional teams to support students, for example: Admissions, Pre-Enrolment services, Central Accommodation services; and Visa and Auditing services. The Director of Admissions oversees the teams. The policies and procedures for admission of students to all Kaplan Pathways programmes at embedded colleges are set out in the Admissions Manual, are linked to B2 of the UK Quality Code, and include a detailed process for making decisions about the suitability of each application.

2.8 The centralised admissions processes implemented by Kaplan International Pathways would enable the Expectation to be met. To test the operation of these processes the review team scrutinised documentation, including the policies and procedures relating to admissions, offer letters and information given to students such as the prospectus and other pre-entry material. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.9 The review team noted that academic staff are provided with an overview of the role of admissions, for example at the Kaplan International Pathways Leadership and Management programme. Kaplan International Pathways has a training policy for admissions staff that includes keeping a log of the training each member of staff has undertaken.

2.10 Overseas agents are appointed to recruit students in their home country. The appointment of a new agent is subject to due diligence activities undertaken by the wider Kaplan International Pathways group. Training is provided for all agents through the Kaplan Pathways 'on-boarding' process.

2.11 Recruitment targets and the introduction of new courses are discussed with the University through JAB. The College is constantly reviewing and updating the programmes offered to ensure they align with any changes made by the University to their pathways. This includes Multi Progression Pathway options that enable students to join the College without an offer from the University. The College supports students who choose an open progression option to apply through UCAS to join either a course at Bournemouth University or to apply for a programme at another university.

2.12 Kaplan International Pathways has a process for programme closure that makes provision for supporting students who have already been made an offer for a programme no longer being offered.

2.13 The general entry requirements for all the College pathways are agreed with the University and are published in the prospectus and on the website.

2.14 Admissions' decisions are normally made by the central admissions team at Kaplan International Pathways, and there is a detailed procedure for verifying qualifications and

making decisions about the suitability of a student to study at the College. This is clearly set out in the Admissions Manual. External reference is made to the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) to check international qualifications against the entry requirements.

2.15 The College is consulted by the admissions team about students who do not meet the entry criteria for their chosen pathway. The College provides a point of liaison between Kaplan International Pathways and the University for the consideration of students with non-standard entry qualifications.

2.16 A joint offer letter from Kaplan International Pathways and the University is sent to all successful applicants which states the grades they must achieve on their pathway programme to enable them to progress to their designated University programme.

2.17 Students confirm that they receive all the information they require prior to joining the College. Several indicated that they had chosen the College because of the high reputation of the University, particularly in the area of Media. They are supported by agents during the application process and are able to contact the Kaplan International Pathways admissions team and College staff prior to starting their course. The College provides opportunities for students to discuss specific learning needs.

2.18 A Welcome Week induction is held at the beginning of each course to introduce students to their programme of study. Students also have the opportunity to meet alumni who have graduated to the University. Those who arrive late are given all the information from the induction on a one-to-one basis. Feedback on the admissions process is collected through the arrival survey.

2.19 The suitability of the entry criteria is monitored by tracking student performance on their pathway programmes and the College is working with the University to obtain more data on student performance once they have progressed to the University. Kaplan International Pathways has undertaken several admissions monitoring activities, which includes analysing student performance in relation to start dates. Through the JSMB, the College and the University discuss the possibility of additional entry routes for students. Three new articulation routes to the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences (FHSS) were approved on 15 November 2017 including MA Social Care, MSc Nutrition and Behaviour, and BA (Hons) Social Work.

2.20 Academic Liaison Tutors, through the Academic Liaison Forum, monitor the number of students progressing to the University programmes.

2.21 Retention and progression data indicates that students are able to complete their programmes of study and successfully progress to their University pathway. Alumni of the College confirmed that their Foundation Certificate programme had effectively prepared them for their University course, providing them with the necessary academic skills to study at the appropriate degree level.

2.22 The review team concludes that the centralised admissions process, which adheres to the principles of fair admission, is transparent, reliable, valid and inclusive and is effectively implemented for the recruitment and admission of students to the College. Meetings with admissions staff, College academic and support staff and students confirmed that there are procedures and policies in place to support the selection of students who are able to successfully complete their programmes and progress to the University. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B3): Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.**

### **Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching***

#### **Findings**

2.23 Kaplan International Pathways takes a strategic approach to learning and teaching, which is included in the Strategic Plan. The UK Pathways Learning and Teaching Framework is the reference point for the Learning and Teaching and Assessment Strategy for each college. The Framework sets out five main areas of practice: pedagogy, quality assurance and enhancement, blended learning, student engagement and professional development. CLIQ has central oversight of the quality of teaching and learning for all colleges.

2.24 The arrangements in place, including central guidance through the Teaching Framework, oversight by CLIQ and the College's LTAS, would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team tested the operation of these arrangements by reviewing the documentation relating to learning and teaching, including policies and terms of reference and minutes of JAB, SMT and Programme Committee. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.25 The review team found that a variety of teaching methods is used by the College, which includes group work, guest lectures and tutorials. Close support is provided for students to develop their academic skills.

2.26 Students participate in 'Learning Outside the Classroom' activities, which include social activities to support their integration into the UK system of education. They also receive guest lectures from University staff. The College encourages students to become independent learners through the completion of personal achievement portfolios.

2.27 Students from all pathways participate in the 'Big Pitch' which enables them to undertake creative projects in conjunction with local businesses. Prizes are awarded for the best project and feedback from the local business community and students is extremely positive. Students who met with the review team were enthusiastic about the project and confirmed that it had developed their team-working skills, improved their confidence and supported them to become independent learners. Student involvement in external business activities in the local community, such as the Big Pitch, which enriches their learning opportunities, is linked to the development of their personal portfolio (KapPACK) and supports students to become independent learners is **good practice**.

2.28 Students provide feedback on the quality of teaching through end-of-module surveys through the tutorial system and frequent meetings with academic staff. The outcomes of module evaluation are included in the APR. As a result of student feedback, the College has developed a maths module that is specific to the computing pathway.

2.29 All teaching staff are qualified to the level above that which they are teaching. New staff complete an induction programme that includes an introduction to both the content of the pathway programmes and guidance on teaching international students.



2.30 Teaching observations are linked to probation and annual appraisal. Staff also participate in peer observation, which enables them to share best practice.

2.31 CLIQ provides information about training sessions, conferences and projects and supports the sharing of best practice. Kaplan International Pathways provides a dedicated 'best practice' site on the VLE, which acts as a hub for collaboration and is a repository for sharing resources and finding answers to frequently asked questions. College staff attend the University Festival of Learning to share best practice when innovative approaches to teaching and learning are showcased.

2.32 The College has continued to develop the good practice in terms of provision of staff development, which was highlighted at its 2015 QAA review. Support for continuing professional development is provided through centrally run internal training programmes such as the Kaplan International Pathways Professional Development Programme. Staff also participate in the staff development programme offered by the University and have attended training on mental health issues. The College organises weekly training sessions for both academic and support staff every Friday, which enables staff to share best practice and keep up to date with their professional practice. The extensive range of staff development opportunities, which includes the Kaplan International Pathways-led training programme, access to University staff development activities and the College weekly Friday sessions for both sessional and full-time staff is **good practice**.

2.33 Kaplan International Pathways has introduced the Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy (TEL). This is designed to develop staff competence in the use of technology for the delivery of learning and teaching, and to encourage them to experiment with popular apps such as Padlet and Quizlet. The College has two designated champions who arrange group meetings and colloquiums. The group plans to use the JISC survey tool to assess staff views on the use of digital technology for learning. There are also plans to expand the use of the VLE.

2.34 The review team concludes that through the implementation of its Learning and Teaching Strategy, the College provides a range of learning opportunities which are regularly reviewed and enhanced and which enable students to develop as independent learners with the capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking. This is confirmed by successful student progression to University pathways. There is systematic monitoring of learning and teaching by Kaplan International Pathways. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement**

**Findings**

2.35 Kaplan International Pathways aims to provide a high quality learning experience that meets the specific needs of international students and facilitates their smooth transition to higher education. There are central systems that support students throughout the recruitment and enrolment process and provide opportunities for the identification of additional needs. Kaplan International Pathways takes a strategic overview of academic and pastoral support and the resources provided by all its Colleges through the Kaplan International Pathways SMT.

2.36 The range of policies and procedures facilitate the smooth transition of students to higher education in the UK, and to their chosen University pathway; this includes the development of digital literacy skills.

2.37 The arrangements in place, including procedures and policies which are implemented by the College and monitored by Kaplan International Pathways, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.38 The review team tested the operation of these arrangements by scrutiny of a range of documentation relating to the systems and resources in place to support students throughout their programmes of study and enable their successful transition to University pathways. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.39 The learning experience and support offered by the College, which begins at the recruitment stage, is the responsibility of the Head of College Services who manages a team of support staff and reports to the College Director. Meetings between Heads of College Services enable the level of support provided to be monitored across Colleges.

2.40 At the operational level, the Programme Committee is responsible for developing and monitoring the quality of learning opportunities including the provision of resources and support to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Oversight of student support rests with JAB.

2.41 Guidance and support for students begins at the admissions stage when they are supplied with extensive pre-arrival information and an accommodation guide. The induction programme is specifically designed to prepare students for study in the UK. During their programme of study, student attendance is closely monitored and students are contacted if they have unexplained absences.

2.42 During the admissions process students are able to disclose any specific learning needs. This will be discussed with the College and the University to ensure that the necessary support can be provided. Students confirm that they are able to discuss specific learning needs and that academic guidance and support is tailored to meet the needs of individual students.

2.43 The College has a tutorial system that offers both academic and pastoral support to students and is tailored to their specific needs. Students confirmed that this enabled them to discuss both academic and personal matters with their tutors. The College also employs a

University Placement student who is an alumni of the College to further support students and provide information about their course and progression to the University.

2.44 There is effective collaboration between the University and the College to support students in their transition to the University. The Academic Liaison Forum has been established with a Liaison Coordinator in each faculty to organise activities to facilitate student progression to the University. The Forum reports to JAB and produces termly reports on the transition activities in each Faculty.

2.45 Students who have chosen the Multi-Progression Pathway Programme are supported in their UCAS applications for appropriate programmes at a range of universities, which may include Bournemouth University. Kaplan International Pathways has a University Placement Service (UPS) which helps students who do not meet the entry criteria for their chosen course to find an alternative university programme.

2.46 The review team concludes that the comprehensive support and resources, which have an international focus and are tailored to individual needs, enable students to develop their academic personal and professional potential, and to successfully progress to their university pathway. There are extensive processes in place for oversight and monitoring of these services through Kaplan International Pathways and the University. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.47 The College is responsible for student engagement based on Kaplan International Pathways' policies detailed in the ASQM. Colleges appoint and train Lead Student Representatives to gather views of other students and disseminate information. A summary of the findings of student feedback is included in the APR, which is considered by the Programme Committee. The colleges use various methods for eliciting student opinion including focus groups, formal staff and student forums, use of student representatives on Programme Committees, student representatives' feedback to senior management, feedback boxes, and email surveys and questionnaires. This feedback is reviewed and acted upon through the APRs. The Terms of Reference of the Programme Committee include a student member. Feedback methods are reviewed regularly, for example questions were adjusted after consultation with alumni.

2.48 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.49 The review team tested the operation of these arrangements through scrutiny of documentation, including the student submission for the review, minutes from meetings where students had been invited to participate, and information available to staff and students. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.50 The College provides a wide range of opportunities for students to engage in enhancing their learning experience, including arrival questionnaires, module and Student Experience feedback questionnaires. There is an elected student representative for each subject group. They meet together in a formal, minuted meeting and they are members of the Programme Committees where the student voice is a standard agenda item.

2.51 Student representatives confirm that their role and responsibilities have been fully explained to them and receive a student representative handbook. Students met by the review team confirmed that they can provide feedback to the College through their student representatives as well as informally and at tutorials. They indicated that action is taken to address issues that they raise, for example a review of the tutorial system. The College records actions taken in response to items from student representative meetings in a Student Voice Impact Summary chart.

2.52 Students engage in the assurance of the quality of their educational experience through their representation at Programme Committee meetings. Programme Committees consider and approve APRs and student, teacher and external examiners' feedback is discussed to be included in the College action plan. The APRs demonstrate that the College carefully considers the results of Kaplan International Pathways' Student Experience questionnaire, the College module surveys and student feedback from Programme Committees. The College gives feedback to student representatives on actions taken in response to these mechanisms, and actions taken are also published on posters. Students are associate members of Bournemouth University, which includes membership of the Students' Union.

2.53 The College has a clear view of its approach to student engagement. There is evidence that the College values and responds to the students' contributions and has taken

deliberate steps to engage all students individually and collectively as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their education experience. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning**

**Findings**

2.54 Kaplan International Pathways' ASQM describes the assessment principles together with the regulations, moderation processes, assignment submission, marking procedures and feedback mechanisms. It specifies the minimum requirements for successful completion of modules and programmes, and how individual module marks are awarded and aggregated at programme and module levels. There are standardised templates for Assessment Board agendas and minutes. CLIQ provides support for colleges in implementing these assessment processes, for example it has produced an Assessment Development Guide and disseminates information to colleges through the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Newsletter. Kaplan International Pathways provides extensive development on student assessment for college teaching staff to ensure that student performance is equitably judged.

2.55 The arrangements in place, including Kaplan International Pathways' academic rules, regulations and procedures, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.56 The review team tested the operation of these arrangements through scrutiny of relevant documents, such as regulations, policy and strategy documents, and minutes of meetings including an Assessment Board, assessment information for students, and external examiner comments and reports. The review team viewed an example of assessment-related information for students on the VLE. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.57 The College has effective processes of assessment that specifically follow Kaplan International Pathways' ASQM policies and regulations. Internal verification and moderation processes, together with external examiners' scrutiny, support Assessment Board decisions. The external examiners confirm that the assessment regulations are applied fairly, equitably and consistently and the Assessment Boards operate effectively. They verify assessment and moderation standards.

2.58 Students receive assessment information during induction and on the VLE. They say they understand the regulations and know where to find the details. During class sessions the tutors provide the students with guidance on how to meet the requirements of the assessment. The assessment briefs and marking schemes are very clear.

2.59 The teaching staff provide widespread formative feedback to support the students' summative assessments. Students confirm that feedback to them on their assessed work is constructive, developmental and usually timely. The College aims to provide feedback from course work within 10 days but there have been challenges in meeting this objective. Staff explained that it occasionally may be longer than this because of moderation and if a third mark is needed, but that students are given an explanation. The subject and study skills tutor work together to devise appropriate assessments and relate study skills essays to the students' subject areas. Students normally submit their assessments through plagiarism-

detection software so they are very aware of the implications of plagiarism. The College participates in trialling an online assessment platform to deliver assessments and has piloted online interactive examinations.

2.60 The College uses assessment procedures that are fully aligned to Kaplan International Pathways' regulations. These enable students to demonstrate they have achieved intended learning outcomes through equitable, valid and reliable processes. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

**Findings**

2.61 Kaplan International Pathways has explicit policies and regulations for the appointment of independent external examiners. The ASQM defines their roles and responsibilities. Colleges appoint external examiners for their programmes. One external examiner operating across colleges is responsible for the English Language Exit module (Language for Study 3).

2.62 External examiners report to colleges using a common template. They are required to analyse, reflect and comment upon the standards and quality of programmes as determined by student performance and on the appropriateness of the assessment process. The report sections cover academic standards, assessment processes, comparability of standards with other similar institutions and good practice.

2.63 External examiner reports are made available to staff and students on the VLE. External examiners attend Assessment Boards where decisions are made on the conferment of awards.

2.64 These arrangements, including Kaplan International Pathways' central policies and oversight procedures, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.65 The review team tested their operation by scrutinising documentation, including Kaplan International Pathways' policies and procedures, ASQP, APR and external examiners' reports and JAB minutes. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.66 The College has external examiners for each of its subject areas, which secure academic standards. They are appointed according to the ASQM-defined criteria and are confirmed by JAB. This appointment procedure demonstrates that they are able to give impartial and independent advice on the assessment processes, the academic standards and student achievement.

2.67 The external examiners receive assignment briefs and questions in advance to confirm the academic level of the assessments. The College has an External Examiners' Day when they are able to meet staff and students. The external examiners receive a sample of the examination scripts to scrutinise and they attend the Assessment Board, either personally or via Skype where they give a verbal report on student achievement and assessment practices.

2.68 External examiners' reports on Kaplan International Pathways' templates show that they are satisfied that the assessment methods used are suitable for accurately assessing the performance of students and their appropriate progression to university-level programmes, they receive sufficient information on assessment and that assessment procedures and practices are appropriate.

2.69 The appropriate member of the Academic Management Team responds to external examiners' comments, which are then reviewed by the Programme Committee. The teaching staff confirm that they use the external examiners' comments to improve their teaching and assessment and any responses are included in a programme's action plan. External examiners' reports are published on the VLE, although students the review team met at the visit said that they were not aware of them.



2.70 The College formally considers the external examiners' reports through the annual monitoring procedure and the University through JAB.

2.71 The review team concludes that the College follows Kaplan International Pathways' procedures and makes scrupulous use of external examiners. The College uses their reports to ensure comparability of student learning. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review**

**Findings**

2.72 Kaplan International Pathways' ASQM provides the framework for the systematic monitoring and review of programmes for assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. This is as that for setting and maintaining academic standards in Expectation A3.3. The APQC has strategic oversight of the outcomes of all colleges' programme monitoring and reviews to ensure the enhancement and the parity of student experience. At the colleges, the Programme Committee approves the APRs, which are received by the college SMT, JAB and the external examiner. Any changes arising from the Kaplan International Pathways Curriculum Review (the Product Review) will be implemented in 2019-20.

2.73 The arrangements in place, including the policies and procedures of Kaplan International Pathways, would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team tested their operation through scrutiny of a range of documentation relating to programme monitoring and review, including policy documents and templates, monitoring and review reports, action plans and committee minutes. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.74 The College monitors its programmes effectively through its committee structures and produces APRs. The minutes and staff members confirm that APRs are discussed at Programme Committees and that feedback from modules, programmes and online surveys, together with external examiners' comments, contribute to the process. Kaplan International Pathways and the University maintain strategic oversight of the processes and outcomes of programme monitoring. The College follows Kaplan International Pathways' processes rigorously. The Kaplan International Pathways APR template requires both quantitative and qualitative information relating to the programmes. There is a matrix of quality assurance and enhancement activities, data of student success and achievement and the programme's challenges and progression, together with comments for the student experience survey and quotations from the external examiner's report. Although the template does not formally include consideration of staff surveys, their views are considered through the standard agenda item on the Programme Committees. Students are involved through their completion of surveys and membership of the Programme Committees where APRs are carefully considered, which demonstrate that the College actively seeks feedback from students about their learning experience.

2.75 Kaplan International Pathways and the University maintain strategic oversight of the processes and outcomes of programme monitoring. The College's statement on enhancement demonstrates that the outcomes of programme monitoring are deliberately used for enhancement purposes. The University confirms that although the responsibility for implementing periodic reviews falls to the JSMB there is no specific requirement for the University to conduct periodic programme reviews given the regular monitoring and oversight that takes place through JAB. There are appropriate arrangements for course closures through Kaplan International Pathways' arrangements.

2.76 Regular oversight by Kaplan International Pathways and the University ensures the operation of systematic and regular processes for monitoring the quality of the students' learning opportunities. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints**

**Findings**

2.77 Kaplan International Pathways has procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints, which are set out in the AQSM and apply to all the international pathway colleges.

2.78 The procedures make provision for both informal and formal complaints and set out a staged process for considering complaints, including escalation to higher authorities should the complainant not be satisfied with the outcome. Colleges are required to inform students about the complaints procedure on the VLE and in the programme handbooks. There is an online complaint form.

2.79 The procedures relating to complaints and appeals, set out in the ASQM, would enable the Expectation to be met. To test their operation the review team reviewed the information available to students about complaints and appeals, including appeals about admissions. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

2.80 Formal complaints are dealt with by the Head of College Services and if necessary referred to the College Director. If students are not happy with the outcome they can put their concerns in writing to the Director of Colleges. Responses to complaints should be made within five working days.

2.81 The College keeps a log of formal complaints and their outcomes, which is reviewed by the College SMT to assess any trends or issues. This is then reviewed by Kaplan International Pathways SMT. Appeals normally have to be lodged within three days of an Assessment Board. Where an initial settlement through discussion with the Academic Director cannot be agreed an appeals panel will be convened. The procedures for complaints and appeals now include a requirement for students to be informed in writing about the outcome of a formal appeal or complaint. This responds to the recommendation made following the Higher Education Review of Kaplan International Pathways in 2016.

2.82 Information about how to make a complaint or lodge an appeal is available on the VLE. This includes access to the relevant forms for a complaint or an appeal, and sets out clear guidelines about the stages of a complaint or an appeal, and the timeframe for a response.

2.83 Students who met the review team confirmed that they know how to make a complaint and that this information is given to them during the induction process. They are aware of the procedure for appealing about an assessment decision and had been made aware of how to appeal against an admissions decision during the recruitment process.

2.84 The College encourages the resolution of complaints through an informal process. In relation to academic appeals, students are made aware of the process and the grounds on which they can appeal. Where there are grounds for an appeal and a settlement cannot be offered, or is not accepted, an Academic Appeals Panel will be convened. A summary of a successful appeal by a student was provided by the College.

2.85 Students can make a complaint by discussing their concerns informally with their tutors, or can go directly to College Services. Formal complaints are made via an online form, which is sent directly to the Head of Student Services. As associate members of the University, students are able to use the services offered by the Students' Union to support their complaint or appeal.

2.86 The review team concludes that the College makes effective use of the central procedures for the handling and resolution of academic appeals and complaints about the quality of learning opportunities. Students confirm that these procedures are fair and accessible and responses are timely. Oversight by JAB provides an external reference point for decisions about complaints. It also provides an opportunity for enhancement of the learning opportunities to be implemented in response to the outcomes of complaints and appeals. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.87 In reaching its judgement, the review team considered its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.88 All Expectations in this judgement area are met, and the associated level of risk is low in all cases.

2.89 The review team identified two areas of good practice in this Judgement area: the extensive range of staff development opportunities, which includes the Kaplan-led training programme, access to University staff development activities and the College's weekly Friday sessions for both full-time and sessional staff; and student involvement in external business activities in the local community (such as the Big Pitch) which enriches their learning opportunities, is linked to the development of their personal portfolio (KapPACK) and supports students to become independent learners.

2.90 There are no recommendations in this area and no affirmations.

2.91 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College is **commended**.

### 3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

**Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.**

#### **Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision**

##### **Findings**

3.1 The Agreements between the University and Kaplan International Pathways include arrangements for the provision of public information. All information for students and other stakeholders requires approval by the University. The use of the University trademark is also covered in the agreements together with intellectual property rights.

3.2 Kaplan International Pathways has a nine-stage process for producing and signing off information contained in the prospectus. This includes design, content and checking the use of the University and Kaplan logos.

3.3 The processes in place for managing the provision of information and ensuring that it is reliable and trustworthy would enable the Expectation to be met.

3.4 To test the Expectation the review team scrutinised documentation including the information available to students in hard copy and through the website and VLE. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University, and students.

3.5 Kaplan International Pathways uses the centrally managed Higher Education Course Management (HECM) system to capture information about all pathways and their progression routes. A Product Catalogue is being developed that will provide a more effective link between the various information management systems, including the course content library, which holds programme specifications, information on the VLE and progression routes. This is part of a revised IT strategy.

3.6 Information for prospective students and other stakeholders is provided through the Kaplan International Pathways website and the College prospectus. The Kaplan International Pathways website has a direct link to Bournemouth University.

3.7 Details of the international pathway programme and the University programme to which students can progress is included in the offer letter that is sent to successful applicants. Students are provided with an Accommodation Guide and a Pre-Arrival Guide. These documents are also available on the College website.

3.8 Students confirm that the information they receive prior to joining the College enables them to make a decision about whether or not to accept the offer made to them.

3.9 The student handbook is available through the VLE and contains information about the College and the University. It includes information about living and studying in the UK and signposts students to other more specialist sources of information. A code of conduct that sets out the expected behaviour for students is provided during induction. Students confirmed that they had received the code of conduct.

3.10 A Programme Handbook is available on the VLE. This includes the course structure and module specifications. Students indicated that they no longer receive a paper copy of

the handbooks, but receive details of the course structure during induction and can access module guides on the VLE.

3.11 The handbooks are produced by the College using the Kaplan International Pathways template and are checked for accuracy by the College Director and then by CLIQ to ensure that they align with the information contained in the programme specifications. Staff confirmed they have an input into the content of the handbooks - for example reading lists.

3.12 On completion of their pathway programme students receive a transcript from Kaplan International Pathways setting out the modules they have studied.

3.13 Feedback from students about the information they receive from the College is collected through the Arrival Survey, student experience survey and the Module Questionnaire. The accuracy and appropriateness of information provided by the College is also discussed at meetings with students.

3.14 Students who met the review team confirmed that they received detailed and helpful information about their course.

3.15 The review team concludes that the College has effective systems in place to ensure that the information provided to its intended audiences is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The University and Kaplan International Pathways maintain oversight of the information provided by the College. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**



## The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.16 In reaching its judgement, the review team considered its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.17 The Expectation in this judgement area is met, and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or identified areas of good practice.

3.18 Published information for the College is produced in accordance with Kaplan International Pathways' procedures that involve a staged process for production and approval, and provide standard templates for documentation. The College works with the University and Kaplan International Pathways on the production and approval of information, and Kaplan International Pathways and the University maintain oversight. At the time of the visit, Kaplan International Pathways was engaged in a review that aimed to ensure improved links between its various information systems including a course information library.

3.19 Students indicated that the information they received prior to joining had been accurate and had assisted them in decision-making. The College has processes in place for evaluating the effectiveness of published information, and student views are considered as part of this.

3.20 The review team found that there are appropriate procedures in place for ensuring that published information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.21 The review team concludes that the quality of the information produced by the College about its provision **meets** UK expectations.

## **4 Commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities**

**Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.**

### **Findings**

4.1 The strategic approach to enhancement is led and driven by the Senior Management Team, which ensures that both centralised and College-level initiatives lead to improvements. Kaplan International Pathways uses a wide range of quality review processes to identify opportunities for enhancement and colleges are encouraged and supported to share good practice. CLIQ plays an important role in supporting both central and college-level projects. Integrated initiatives include the Kaplan Assessment Development Guide and the introduction of the VLE as a host for assessment questions and student forum.

4.2 The College continues this strategic approach to enhancement that is led from its Senior Management Team. Committee structures and annual monitoring processes ensure that quality enhancement is embedded within the College. The College shares good practice through an active learning space which is monitored by CLIQ.

4.3 Students are clearly able to influence the cycle of enhancement through the Programme Committees and by giving formal and informal feedback. There is a systematic approach to staff development that encourages staff to be proactive in recognising the College's and their own development needs. The College demonstrates commitment to the enhancement of the student experience by out-of-class activities such as the Big Pitch.

## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 24-27 of the [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\) handbook](#).

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer Glossary on the QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/glossary](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/glossary).

### Academic standards

The standards set by **degree-awarding bodies** for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

### Award

A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

### Awarding organisation

An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

### Blended learning

Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

### Credit(s)

A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

### Degree-awarding body

A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers or university title).

### Distance learning

A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'. See also **blended learning**.

### Dual award or double award

The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also **multiple award**.

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

### Enhancement

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical

term in our review processes.

### **Expectations**

Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations. See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

### **Framework for higher education qualifications**

A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS).

### **Good practice**

A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

### **Learning opportunities**

The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

### **Learning outcomes**

What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

### **Multiple awards**

An arrangement where three or more **degree-awarding bodies** together provide a single jointly delivered **programme** (or programmes) leading to a separate **award** (and separate certification) of each awarding body. The arrangement is the same as for **dual/double awards**, but with three or more awarding bodies being involved.

### **Operational definition**

A formal definition of a term, establishing exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

### **Programme (of study)**

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

### **Programme specifications**

Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

**Quality Code**

Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of **reference points** for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the **Expectations** that all providers are required to meet.

**Reference points**

Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

**Self-evaluation document**

A report submitted by a higher education provider, assessing its own performance, to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

**Subject Benchmark Statement**

A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

**Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

**Threshold academic standard**

The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic **award**. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**.

**Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

**Widening participation**

Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

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