



Educational Oversight for Embedded Colleges: report of the monitoring visit of Navitas UK Holdings Ltd, May 2019

Cambridge Ruskin International College

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that Cambridge Ruskin International College (the College) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since May 2018 [monitoring visit](#).

Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The College underwent a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) (HER (EC)) in April 2016. It received a monitoring visit in 2018 to discuss progress, which concluded that the College was making acceptable progress implementing the action plan drawn up following the April 2016 review. The 2018 review noted several significant changes that had occurred recently at the College, including significant growth in student numbers, increased recruitment of domestic and EU students as a proportion of the total student body, a proposed new contract with the University, and the introduction of new governance and management structures. Since the 2018 visit, student numbers and the profile of students by nationality, has stabilised after a period of rapid growth. A notable trend has been the increased recruitment of mature students attracted by the support available to returning learners.

3 As part of the changing relationship with the University, the College's provision plans to acquire core student status by September 2019. The status allows College students equal access to all university facilities and services. Plans are advanced for the College to take over the teaching of the remainder of the University's Level 3 provision, and for the University to teach all Level 4 provision from September 2019. The College will continue to deliver Level 4 provision to EU and international students. All Level 3 college provision has recently been revalidated jointly by the College and the University as part of a move to offering four-year integrated programmes. Plans are underway for the College to move its offices into a main building on campus later this year and, at the same time, acquire more space for its activities.

Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The College has built further on the strengths identified by QAA in previous reports. It has also identified and addressed effectively issues, weaknesses and opportunities for enhancement through its own monitoring and review processes. The College has a three-year strategic plan, updated annually, which is aligned with the strategic plans of Navitas UK and the University. The production and implementation of action plans produced across the College, as part of the College's committee work and annual cycle of evaluation, is monitored by the College Management Team (CMT) led by the Principal.

5 The last full QAA review in 2016 made no recommendations for action by Navitas UK or the College. The report on the College identified five features of good practice. Since

the last monitoring visit, the College has undertaken further enhancement in these areas and they continue to be strengths of its provision. Actions and enhancement have occurred in the context of the changing relationship with the University.

6 The first feature of good practice was the holistic approach to academic and pastoral support creating a caring and supportive learning environment. In order to continue building on this strength, the College focuses: on staff training and support; assuring the effectiveness of the College Learning and Teaching Board (CLTB), and the College Enhancement team (CET); and active sharing of good practice with the University and the Navitas network. Enhancement activities have included: reviewing student governance; input into the network-wide review of the Independent Learning Charter; curriculum development; retention campaigns; dyslexia training for staff; and a review of student feedback.

7 The second area of good practice was the comprehensive and supportive preparation for transition to University study, which leads to high levels of progression. The evolving relationship with the University has resulted in the College becoming more integrated with the University, and the transition for students, from one to the other, increasingly seamless. This is further fostered by a full programme of campus tours and visits, and close working relationships between the College and faculties. Students who have progressed to the University confirm that they have been well-prepared for the transition. The third area of good practice was the arrangements for ensuring that individual student participation is recognised and rewarded, which contribute to the effectiveness of the student voice. Tutors continue to focus on increasing individual student engagement in learning. Students have been actively involved in the curriculum review and a review on student feedback.

8 A fourth feature of good practice identified in the 2016 review, was the flexible and effective assessment feedback mechanisms which enables and promotes student learning. Students appreciate the frequency with which they receive feedback on their progress; feedback on drafts; and the prompt and helpful comments received on their submitted work. Feedback has been enhanced by the continued provision of small group tutorials and the use of anti-plagiarism software that permits online marking as well as originality reports. Virtual reality has been used to allow students to 'see' their presentations as they make them and improve their performance. Staff training and development on good feedback processes has been provided.

9 The fifth area of good practice was the effective use of tracer data in reviewing existing curricula, which enhances student learning opportunities. The data continues to be used for annual monitoring and allows comparison of CRIC students with those recruited directly to the University. Analysis of the data is included in the Annual Monitoring Report. College students who have progressed to the University, overall perform as well as their peers. The recent revalidation of all Level 3 provision has provided the opportunity to address issues with modules where data demonstrates CRIC students underperform.

10 Admissions is a centrally-managed process with local input into defining admissions criteria and decisions on non-standard candidates. The College admissions policy reflects the policies and requirements of Navitas UK and the University which, in turn, reflect the requirements of the Quality Code for Higher Education and UK Visa and Immigration. Admission requirements are agreed with the University and reviewed annually. Criteria are published on the College website and in brochures. Navitas UK's Admissions and Recruitment Centre (ARC) works closely with the College to ensure that admissions requirements are met, and that ARC staff are familiar with the College's programmes. International students must meet English language entry requirements, assessed through the use of Home Office approved Secure English Language tests. The College, and where relevant the University, advises on the suitability of non-standard candidates such as those

with alternative and borderline qualifications. Interviews are used to check on an applicant's genuine intention to study. A significant number of UK and EU students are recruited through clearing. Clearing is managed by the University but is assisted by College and ARC staff to ensure speedy decision-making. Students state that the admissions process operates smoothly and effectively.

11 Recruitment and admissions are overseen at the College by the Academic and Quality Operations Committee (AQOC) and the Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board (JSPMB). Under its developing relationship with the University, the College will in future manage the admissions of all extended (four-year) undergraduate students. The College will cease direct recruitment onto Level 4.

12 The college assessment framework reflects the policies and regulations of Navitas UK and the University which, in turn, reflect external reference points including *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and the Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). Assessment strategies and progression requirements are set out in programme documentation. Students state that they are well-informed about what they must do to pass their studies and how their work will be graded. The importance of good academic practice is emphasised by tutors throughout the programme. Anti-plagiarism software is used where possible for the submission of assessed work. Level 3 assessments are set, marked and moderated internally. Link tutors check that marking and moderation processes have been conducted fairly. Level 4 assessments require university approval. Navitas University Partnerships Europe (UPE) moderates samples of student work on the centrally-designed ILSC module. Wherever possible, marking is undertaken anonymously. The University appoints an external examiner who reviews samples of Foundation student work and attends formal progression boards. Assessment and feedback are a core theme of the *Navitas UPE Learning and Teaching Strategy 2018-2023* which guides the work of the CLTB. Assessment is also considered in annual monitoring.

13 The College monitors pass, retention and progression rates which are analysed in the annual monitoring report. Pass rates are high and have increased, a trend which is attributed to effective initiatives aimed at increasing student engagement. Retention is good, given the challenges posed by the changing student profile to include students who have greater mobility as they are outside the visa system. Progression of those students successfully completing their college studies is very high. Tracer data is provided by the University. This provides the College with information on the performance of its students who progressed to the University. Student performance after progression is comparable to that of directly recruited overseas students.

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

14 Local policy documents are developed within the frameworks provided by Navitas UK and the University, both of which align their policies to the Quality Code and relevant external reference points. University-appointed external examiners report on the comparability of standards with those found elsewhere in the sector as well as the conduct of assessment practices. The new, integrated four-year degrees in areas such as social work and nursing, will require greater attention by the College to PSRB requirements. Staff are encouraged to engage with the wider sector in order to deepen their understanding of UK expectations for higher education, including HEA fellowship. College tutors have access to staff development opportunities locally at the University and through Navitas UK. The CLTB and other committees, and the College Director of Teaching and Learning, ensure that tutors are aware of the Quality Code and encourage the sharing of good practice.

Background to the monitoring visit

15 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's and its embedded colleges' continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider and its embedded colleges of any matters that have the potential to be of interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

16 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Philip Markey, QAA Officer, and Dr Carol Vielba, QAA Reviewer, on 3 May 2019.

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