



Educational Oversight for embedded colleges: report of the monitoring visit of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Study Group), October 2017

Coventry University London International Study Centre

1 Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the monitoring team concludes that Coventry University London International Study Centre (CULISC) is making acceptable progress with implementing the action plan following the October 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 There have been two significant changes at CULISC since the last review in October 2016. Firstly, the University of Law (ULaw) has not renewed its agreement with CULISC, and the 2016-17 cohort was the last to progress in October 2017 to the ULaw. Only programmes that facilitate progression to Coventry University London Campus (CUL) will be offered from 2017-18. There are no students who were on the International Foundation Year (IFY) Law programme who will need to be supported in 2017-18. The second and consequent result of the ULaw exit has been the relocation of CULISC to premises near Greenwich. The new location is not a university campus, but premises belonging to Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd which are shared by another constituent part of the Bellerbys Group unconnected with Study Group. Planning for the relocation commenced in April 2017, but the move could not take place until mid-September 2017 after the 2016-17 cohort of students had completed their programme of studies and assessment.

3 Student numbers appear to have been stable in 2015-16 and 2016-17, but actual and projected recruitment for 2017-18 suggest a reduction of around 20 per cent in student numbers. Staffing levels are stable, and all the staff transferred to the new location.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The previous review identified one recommendation and one affirmation. The recommendation has been addressed, though further enhancements are planned for 2017-18 (paragraph 5), and the affirmation fully implemented (paragraph 6). There have been major changes since the last review in 2016 in terms of the relocation of CULISC from the University of Law campus to the Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd campus in Greenwich, and the attendant changes in the provision this has entailed. Evidence seen and heard by the monitoring team suggests this process has been well managed, though students do have some ongoing concerns. Evaluation of how effectively the actions required by the relocation have been implemented will only be possible at the end of the academic year 2017-18 (paragraphs 7-9).

5 The October 2016 review made one recommendation and one affirmation. The recommendation was for CULISC to ensure that additional support is in place and accessible to students identified as at risk by the student progression system (RPAG).

The review report noted that for students at risk of non-progression, interventions were used to give students a better chance, but the nature of them was variable, they were not mandatory and incurred an additional charge. As a result, not all students at risk availed themselves of additional support. CULISC has responded to the recommendation by introducing a system of support classes. Students were consulted to ascertain which areas, within modules, they found most difficult, and personal tutors assisted in identifying areas in which students needed support. CULISC implemented a system for students to sign up for support classes and a timetable was published. Take-up of support classes is said to have been very good from both students at risk and other students, so that the number of workshops has been increased. Data relating to attendance at support classes and success in transferring to the universities is being captured. CULISC notes that progression to partner HEIs was below their benchmark in 2015-16 (49 per cent) and increased significantly in 2016-17 (86 per cent). This correlates with the introduction of the enhanced support programme, and discussion in the Centre's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG) reported its success, though progression from the IFY programme may also have been improved by CUL lowering its progression criteria. CULISC is further enhancing its provision of support classes in 2017-18. Summative and formative assessments are being analysed to refine the identification of areas with which students struggle and need support. Diagnostic tests, using a Study Group pro forma, are being used to predict which students may have areas of weakness needing support, and the support classes for Academic English Skills (AES) will now start in Term 1 with subject support commencing in Term 2.

6 The affirmation regarded the steps taken, based on analysis to date, to develop the curriculum to better support students. The Centre Action Plan (CAP) says that tutors will provide proposed changes to the curriculum, which will go forward to QAEG for approval. There is evidence in QAEG minutes of this process working effectively. Curriculum changes have included introduction of the AES module in 2016-17, and changing the sequencing of marketing modules so that learning was more progressive. The impact of changes such as these can be evidence by the improved progression rates identified above (paragraph 5).

7 The major actions in 2016-17, outside of the October 2016 review, have related to the relocation of CULISC from premises it occupied within ULaw to Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd premises in Greenwich, and ensuring that everything was in place at the new location to commence delivery of programmes in 2017-18. Students who had already accepted offers of a place at CULISC needed to be notified of the change of location, and also of the withdrawal of the partnership with ULaw. Students confirmed that they had received such notification and the offer of a refund of any fees paid if they chose to withdraw. UCLISC also needed to ensure that its website and other marketing collateral was updated, and agents briefed.

8 Staff reported that they believed the new teaching accommodation was of a better quality and more flexible than at the previous location, and there is the potential to book additional rooms when required. They also commented favourably on the resources room which now houses a small collection of business books previously acquired by UCLISC to broaden the business collection in the ULaw library. However, the main route through which UCLISC proposed to meet the library and information resources requirements of its students was through an enhanced subscription to EBSCO which included e-books, and which was accessible on and off campus through the StudySmart VLE. Asked about how provision would be made for the informal space required for group work and private study, staff said each student group had a dedicated classroom, and when it was not scheduled for classes it would be available to students of the group as a work space. This was in addition to the resources room. Students told the monitoring team that, while they found the StudySmart VLE very helpful and user friendly, they regretted the lack of a real library with a significant collection of books and other information resources. They had asked about gaining access to the library facilities housed at the CUL campus but had been told this was not possible.

Staff said they were in discussion with CUL but it was currently the case that students could not use the CUL library. Students also reported difficulties in accessing Wi-Fi connection both on campus and in their residential accommodation. Staff told the monitoring team they were aware of some problems and were seeking to resolve them.

9 The e-Champ, in conjunction with the Head of Curriculum (Learning Technologies), undertook the migration from the ULaw to the Study Group VLE platform. This had been completed in time for the commencement of 2017-18. To support the transition, all staff were being given a training day and further one-to-one support.

10 Module review, designed to ensure relevance and that assessment criteria continue to align with the university partner, commenced in January 2017 and is scheduled for completion in December 2017 as part of the annual review process. Changes to module content and assessment criteria are discussed at the Curriculum Committee, which is informed by student feedback elicited through analysis of the Module Evaluation questionnaires. Details of the changes proposed are brought to QAEG for approval, with major changes going to the provider-level Programme Approval and Validation Committee (PAVC).

11 Enhancing the proportion of eligible students who progress to CUL rather than to another university is part of UCLISC's strategy, and the proportion of students progressing to CUL had increased markedly in 2016-17 compared with the previous year. Increasing contact with CUL through taster days and the work of the University link tutors was an integral part of this, but students said they had no input from CUL at their induction and were keenly aware they could not currently gain access to the CUL library and information resources. Tracking student progress at partner universities has been part of the CAP during 2016-17. The first CUL cohort completed their first year of study at the University during 2016-17. CUL had provided summary data on student progression at the University. The University was willing to share more detailed information and this would be discussed at the joint Academic Management Board in 2017-18. A short emailed questionnaire will also be used with alumni students to ascertain how well they believe study at CULISC prepared them for the University and their course of study, and to elicit suggestions for change and improvement at CULISC.

12 Admission of students is a centralised activity based both in market (Singapore) and at Study Group's head office in Brighton. Policies and procedure are unchanged from the Review in October 2016. Borderline cases where potential students have narrowly missed the entry requirements or have exceptional circumstances are referred to the Head of Centre who will make a decision in consultation with Centre and University staff as appropriate. Students who met with the review team had learned of CULISC from agents. They reported that information received prior to leaving their home countries had been sufficient and accurate with respect to the performance required to allow progression to the partner university. On arrival they had an induction programme and late arrivals also received an induction.

13 The process for annual programme monitoring is unchanged from the previous review in October 2016. An annual monitoring report is completed using the provider's template. This incorporates programme and module evaluation, external examiners' reports and key quantitative data such as student attendance, retention and academic outcomes. The annual monitoring report for 2016-17 was due to be completed in December 2017. It is discussed by QAEG, prior to being presented to the Regional Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group. Issues identified are incorporated in the Centre Action Plan and RQAEG makes a report to the provider's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, drawing attention to issues or good practice of general interest.

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

14 Arrangements whereby CULISC utilises external reference points have not changed since the review in October 2016. Study Group references itself against *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and, for its level 3 programmes, the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) when it approves or re-approves programmes. English language modules are referenced against the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Qualifications descriptors in the FHEQ and RQF are used to ensure the drafting of learning outcomes at the appropriate level. QAA Subject Benchmark Statements inform programme development, and the standard Study Group module template requires reference to be made to the Subject Benchmark Statement(s) utilised. Study Group programmes do not lead to the award of credit, but programmes and modules are designed to reflect the credit equivalence in the partner university.

5 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 particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

16 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Cameron Waitt, QAA Officer, and Professor Brian Anderton, QAA Reviewer, on 10 October 2017.

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