



Educational Oversight for embedded colleges: report of the monitoring visit of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd, June 2017

Glasgow International College

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 Glasgow International College (GIC) is making commendable progress with implementing the action plan following the [June 2016 Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 There has been a steady growth in student numbers (12.6 per cent), attributed to a number of factors including successful student outcomes and the College's maturity, noting its 10-year anniversary. As a result, allocation of teaching space has been challenging but has eased since the College gained direct access to the University's timetabling system for booking rooms. The College was also able to respond quickly to student growth through sessional staff appointments. While part-time staffing numbers have remained constant, their teaching hours have increased to accommodate the additional student numbers.

3 The College has successfully established a new pre-master's Arts and Humanities programme, which means that the College now provides progression routes to all University colleges. Other developments have included a new Engineering module and a redistribution of credits of specific Engineering content within the Foundation Certificate, based on University feedback. In response to student feedback, a non-credit bearing module providing employability skills was introduced as an alternative option for language-exempt students.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

4 No actions were identified for GIC at the last review visit in 2016. However, Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd (KIC) has updated the Complaints Process in line with the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), in response to the recommendation set at the last review of KIC in 2016, to ensure that students receive written confirmation that internal complaints and/or appeals procedures have been completed and what independent recourse options are available. The revised complaints procedure was rolled out to all Colleges during 2016-17, including the implementation of the procedure to record informal complaints, with regular reporting to the CEMB/Director of Colleges. The College's complaints procedure has been publicised to staff and students using posters and the virtual learning environment (VLE), and students confirmed that they are aware of the procedures for raising complaints/appeals.

5 The College has continued to build upon the two areas of good practice identified at the 2016 review. An evaluation of its staff induction process has resulted in a two-day staff induction event supported by enhanced materials. Feedback on the revised process will be reviewed by GIC over the summer. The College has also continued to develop its expertise in supporting staff in managing the challenges arising from teaching international students. It has undertaken training sessions for University of Glasgow staff and produced a video for future use, which has enhanced the sharing of best practice between the College and the University following the University's Periodic Subject Review.

6 The College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) has been developed by a working group based upon the Kaplan framework, with a planned implementation of the final version in September 2017. The LTAS sets out the College's goals, which reflect its focus upon student engagement, blended learning, staff development and QA processes. A revised assessment strategy has been introduced to support the re-alignment of assessment deadlines, which has successfully reduced the number of late submissions and requests for extensions. The College has reduced the number of assessments; changed its delivery structure to termly to achieve a more evenly distributed workload; and moved to electronic submission for a number of modules, including study skills. The impact will be monitored through module and programme evaluation. Additional language support has been achieved through extra classes on a Friday, which are mandatory for those students who were required to improve their performance. Furthermore, a chat café has been well attended, with up to 50 students attending to enhance their language skills.

7 The College has achieved a significant increase in the number of student representatives, following the implementation of the recommendations of the Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ) Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund study on Student Voice. This has been attributed to a revised process of establishing cross-representation of groups (two from each class) to achieve diverse representation from all programmes and levels of study. The role and responsibilities have been clearly defined and greater focus has been placed on helping students to engage with the process by making time available to them to undertake the role, providing bespoke training, and forming a student representative council and executive committee. One benefit of the new Student Voice programme was noted as the ability of the College to implement actions at the time when students raise the issue, rather than at the end of the programme after they have finished. The College also held a student meeting with the external examiners for the 2015-16 cohort, which led to timetabling changes (stopping lecture and seminar being held on the same day to enable more time for reflection), with a further meeting planned for August 2017.

8 GIC has continued to develop its relationship with the University through improved communications including data sharing. This has enabled GIC to make improvements at programme level, such as increasing the maths content within the economics unit at foundation level. Progress was also noted in the transition arrangements and activities to help integration of GIC students with second year University students, including University staff and alumni attendance at induction and other GIC events. The University has been supportive in identifying former GIC students who were prize winners, and those who progressed to PhD study as part of the 10 years of alumni testimonials being collected by GIC.

9 The central KIC Admissions Team is responsible for managing student recruitment and admission for all colleges, and involves a network of KIC overseas offices and agents. The KIC Admissions Manual sets out the central admissions process, which includes assessing an applicant's eligibility for the different offers available, including those with non-standard entry

qualifications. During the meeting with students, the monitoring team was advised that experiences of the admissions process had been positive, noting that staff had been very responsive and maintained regular contact throughout. Students had received a useful pre-arrival guide and welcome pack of information, together with a College handbook. Induction week had provided a helpful introduction to the College and the University, together with excursions and social activities.

10 The College has established a shared drive platform for projects and provides a weekly email update for staff to keep them informed of progress. The College has participated in another CLIQ project, funded by the Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund, to embed Nearpod blended learning technology within modules. This initiative has been particularly successful in supporting large size classes, receiving positive student feedback, and has now been rolled out to other Kaplan colleges.

11 Data provided by the College for 2016 showed that 93 per cent of students passed the KIC Award, of whom 81 per cent progressed to the University of Glasgow and a further 18 per cent accepted unconditional offers from other UK higher education institutions. The College closely monitors its student progression and retention data, and actions to improve student progression and achievement are identified in the Annual Programme Reports and reflected in the College Action Plan. Effective programme monitoring has been enhanced through closer liaison with the University to track student performance after they have progressed to degree-level studies. As a result of improved data monitoring, an additional Engineering module was developed for delivery in the 2016-17 session. A Physics module was also amended following analysis of students' performance at the University.

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

12 KIC undertakes an annual review and updating of the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM) to ensure alignment with the Quality Code. KIC updated the Complaints Process in line with the expectations of the Quality Code in response to the recommendation set at the last KIC review visit. As evidenced within the Action Plan, the College continues to make effective use of a range of external reference points through explicit mapping of the actions against the relevant sections of the Code.

13 External examiner reports confirm that the programme and module learning outcomes are appropriate to the level of the award, in accordance with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and applicable Subject Benchmark Statements.

14 College staff have attended external staff development events, including the University of Glasgow's Teaching and Learning Conference. Liaison with the University regarding the implementation of actions arising from the 2015 Periodic Subject Review has also provided further external reference points for the College.

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 Cameron Waitt, QAA Officer, and Alison Jones, QAA Reviewer, on 07 June 2017.

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