



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd, Glasgow International College, February 2022

The impact of COVID-19

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the review of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd, Glasgow International College, was subject to an interim outcome in June 2020 and was concluded at the virtual monitoring visit in February 2021. The annual monitoring review of February 2022 was conducted online and included meetings with students and the senior management team, academic and support staff. The scope of the evidence considered, and the nature of the judgements and operational milestones have remained the same but with some adjustments due to the online format and availability of students. A risk assessment was carried out prior to the review to identify and mitigate any potential risks.

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd, Glasgow International College (GIC; the College) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the [February 2021 Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

Changes since the last QAA review

2 Glasgow International College (GIC; the College) offers a range of programmes at foundation certificate and pre-master's levels. Subject areas include Arts and Humanities; Science and Engineering; Law and Social Sciences; Business, Economics and Finance; and Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences. GIC's primary relationship remains with the University of Glasgow (UoG) and programmes are specifically designed in collaboration with the University to prepare international students to succeed in UK higher education.

3 There have been no significant changes in the management, course structure or accommodation at the College since the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (HER(AP)) in February 2021. Student numbers at GIC have remained stable year-on-year, with 874 enrolments in 2017-18; 1175 in 2018-19; 1654 in academic year 2019-20; 1126 in 2020-21; and 1441 in 2021-22. At the time of the review, the College had 1191 students enrolled with additional intakes due in spring 2022. There are 28 full-time equivalent and 86 part-time (26.6 full-time equivalent) academic staff, 19 management staff, 13 full-time and three part-time non-academic staff.

Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The overall outcome of this monitoring visit was determined by reading the Annual Monitoring Process Annual Return Form, the Annual Data Return Form, reviewing documentary evidence provided by the College, and conducting online meetings with a

range of staff and students. The College continues to enhance the student experience through collaboration with both the University of Glasgow and with Kaplan International Colleges UK. Findings indicate that the College has made acceptable progress in demonstrating that it meets the mandatory Core and Common practices set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).

Overview of progress against the Action Plan

5 The College is currently operating flexibly to accommodate its international students from a number of different countries and regions of the world. At the time of the HER(AP) visit in February 2021, the College had no students being taught on campus. Due to lockdown restrictions, all provision was being delivered remotely, whether to students isolating in Glasgow or resident internationally. By February 2022, 50% students are in Glasgow and 50% are attending remotely, from various countries. The College is running a parallel operation, with online sessions offered to fit with varied international time zones, and with on-campus activity running all day. All staff are provided with individual licences for video conferencing software.

6 Students consider that their studies have not been disrupted significantly and that they have been well supported during periods of COVID-19 lockdown, self-isolation or quarantine. The College undertakes regular welfare checks for students, as well as weekly meetings with advisors for students not in attendance on campus. As the College is currently operating with a mixture of on-campus and remote learning, all work is routinely posted onto the virtual learning environment (VLE), including presentations, slides and recordings. Virtual laboratories have been included for engineering subjects, and these are greatly appreciated by students. If required, additional academic help is readily available, whether on campus or online. Students confirmed that tutors, welfare advisers and college services staff are very responsive by email.

7 The College has established a range of means for the student voice to be heard. There is an established system of student representation. Students are invited to submit an expression of interest to become a representative, and students reported that online training is provided through the VLE. Representatives attend programme committee meetings throughout the year, and are helped to understand the paperwork. Meetings focus on what is working and what is not working. Matters raised at meetings are actioned by staff, and students are then provided with a note of what has been done. Students cited examples of issues with time-zone differences and punctual starts of synchronous online classes. Programme committee meetings are all minuted, and the minutes and outcomes are uploaded to the VLE for all students to access. Student representatives attend the College Support Forum, which deals with non-academic matters. The College also has a Student Forum for the wider student body and actions from this are recorded and reported back to students or to programme committees through a detailed tracker. Student representatives discuss minutes of formal meetings with the wider student community.

8 The College has built on its good practice of allocating Advisors, formerly referred to as Learning Advisors, to all students, and they are now allocated to each student during Welcome Week. Students feel that they are well supported by Advisors, that they are very accessible and play a valuable role. Good practice in induction is shared between all advisors. Although the college system requires that Advisors meet with students four times per term for 30 minutes, students reported that, in practice, the system is more variable, with meetings often taking place more frequently. Advisors discuss a range of topics with students, from project work and essays to general welfare. The role has been extended to include helping to monitor a personal development e-portfolio. The ongoing success of the system is monitored and evaluated through student experience surveys and attendance records.

9 All students at the College are affiliated with the University of Glasgow, and have access to its facilities. As building work is being undertaken to extend the College, more classes are scheduled to take place at the University. Students now have access to a new learning hub, which provides quiet study spaces and bookable rooms for group work. Outside of specific college-to-university transition activities, students report a variety of activities where they meet UoG staff, including specific visa information sessions, option courses, attendance at guest lectures, meetings with lecturers, and progression-led webinars.

10 The College has made progress on promoting further the Kaplan UK Pathways E-Safety Policy. Work has been undertaken across all the Kaplan centres in tandem with further recommendations arising from a review of the Prevent duty by the Office for Students. The intention was to create a package of self-directed resources. The revised E-Safety materials were launched in January 2022, with students having been advised of this in early February. Students met by the team were not yet aware of the new materials or of a workshop arranged for early February 2022. All students had been sent an email with details of online meetings to address E-Safety, although only one student, during the meeting, reported having seen the email. The dissemination of the E-Safety materials is also intended to be part of a review of general safety, including working with Glasgow police. Due to the 2022 launch of the revised scheme, no evaluation activity has yet been possible. The College will monitor activity logs and consult with student representatives.

11 The College employs staff on full-time, part-time and sessional contracts. Staffing has mainly remained stable, with some fluctuations in turnover during the course of the year, partly due to new and hybrid ways of working. With the increase in online learning, more sessional staff are able to work across a number of Kaplan centres, which aids recruitment in specialist subject areas. Students recognise that the College tries to maintain continuity of staff throughout their programme.

Overview of progress with identifying actions from the providers' own internal quality monitoring processes

12 The College has an institutional Action Plan, last updated in December 2021, although actions from the HER(AP) 2021 have not been included in this. A separate action plan was drawn up following the February 2021 HER(AP) but was discontinued in November 2021. The ongoing development of the identified area of good practice and the completion of the recommendation for improvement will need to be monitored at the next QAA annual review.

13 The College has a robust process of annual monitoring in place. Reports are provided at module and programme levels. These reports are informed by a range of information and data, including subject moderator, external examiner reports, themes included within the previous Kaplan Pathways Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes (ASQP) report, mid-module pulse survey data, and end-of-module survey data. The annual monitoring reports feed into the ASQP Report compiled annually for the nine colleges within the Kaplan International Pathways UK network.

14 Academic attainment is good with a 95% completion rate in 2020-21; three percentage points higher than the previous year despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenging educational situation in which many students found themselves. The completion rate is defined as 'the proportion of students that start the programme and complete their Kaplan Award'.

15 Successful students are able to progress to their degree programme at the University of Glasgow. Over the last two years, there has been an increase in the volume

of students reaching the threshold for an unconditional offer from the University, rising from 75% over the previous three academic years to 92% of all students starting the programme in the 2020-21 academic year. It is considered that this improvement is the result of curriculum changes brought in as part of the Kaplan-wide Product Review, and also through the University's increased flexibility due to the difficulty in judging language attainment during the pandemic. Achievement against original English language progression requirements reduced slightly to 90% in 2020-21, and can be attributed to the University modifying their position slightly on required language attainment levels. Improving student outcomes, while adhering to the attainment levels necessary for students to be ready for study at the University of Glasgow, has been critical to GIC's enhancement strategy.

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

16 The College makes good use of external reference points and expertise. The College ensures that all requirements set out in the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SQCF)*, Subject Benchmark Statements, the *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)*, and University's Code of Practice for Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review, are met when developing new programmes and modifying or revalidating existing ones. Reference is also made to the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The College has also started to work more closely with the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET). College staff maintain a productive link with Advance HE, with attendance at good practice seminars and applications for professional recognition.

17 A detailed mapping exercise of the Quality Code has been undertaken across all the Kaplan international colleges, creating a live document. The College Action Plan is mapped to the Quality Code and this is reflected in the Academic Standards and Quality Manual.

18 The College continues to work closely with the University of Glasgow. Regular scheduled meetings of the Joint Academic Management Board (JAMB) oversee the relationship between the College and the University. The quality processes overseen by the JAMB ensure that the Quality Assurance Framework requirements continue to be met. The College works closely with designated subject moderators, appointed by specific faculties within the University. Subject moderator reports are completed based on a sample review of assessed work and are reviewed annually in advance of the JAMB. Subject moderators are consulted regarding changes to programmes, modules and the suitability of assessment strategies. Subject moderators report to their respective Deans of Learning and Teaching, who in turn report to the JAMB.

19 Subject external examiners are appointed by the College and approved by the JAMB. A network-wide external examiner has been appointed to review the English for Academic Purposes module that operates across all Kaplan international pathway colleges. Reports are detailed and constructive. Responses are provided by the College for specific subject areas or by the central team at Kaplan International Colleges UK for English for Academic Purposes.

20 External examiners are all appointed from UK universities, and all new external examiners receive an induction when they visit GIC, together with a comprehensive Information and Guidance for External Examiners document. In 2019-20, following consultation with colleges, the previous External Examiner Handbook was replaced with an enhanced online induction to provide most of the information the examiner needs. External examiners attend annually or have a remote session with the College to provide guidance to teaching and support teams, and managers. Recently, this highlighted the need to expand

procedures for the checking of examination scripts, and the need to increase levels of support for second-marking due to increased student numbers within certain subject areas such as the Foundation Certificate for Science and Engineering.

21 Students were clear about the use of marking criteria, double-marking by tutors and the role of feedback. However, not all were clear about the processes for moderation, including the role of subject moderators from the University, or the existence and role of the external examiner. Some of the students met by the team were not aware that external examiner reports are available on the VLE. Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, student representatives met with external examiners annually, and raised awareness of the availability of external examiner reports to the wider student community.

Background to the monitoring visit

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

22 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Helen Corkill, Reviewer, and Dr Margaret Johnson, QAA Officer, on 10 February 2022.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557000
Web www.qaa.ac.uk