

Educational Oversight-Exceptional Arrangements: report of the monitoring visit of Glasgow International College, February 2023

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that the Glasgow International College (the College) is making Commendable Progress since the February 2022 [monitoring visit](#).

Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The annual monitoring review of February 2023 was conducted online and included meetings with students, senior management team and the academic and support staff. At the time of the Annual Return, there were 1028 students all now studying on campus. This compares to 1191 students in the previous year, 542 of whom were studying on campus with the rest studying online, an overall reduction of 13.7%. At the time of the Annual Return there were 67 permanent staff (including management) with 10-15 sessional staff. Teaching is now fully on-campus with all teaching taking place in person and no contact hours online. The College has opened a new student hub space to promote peer working and collaboration among the student body. This also provides the opportunity for social and extracurricular activities to take place within the College.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 All areas of the annual monitoring have been examined together with all relevant evidence provided with the Annual Return and that requested later. The team met with students, senior staff, and academic and support staff during the virtual visit and felt confident with the sufficiency of information and with the outcomes. The College monitors, reviews and enhances its higher education provision. Identified actions are being taken forward and a number of further enhancements have been introduced (paragraphs 4-7). Student achievement remains good with high levels of successful completion and progression rates to the University (paragraph 8). The College continues to demonstrate effective engagement with relevant external reference points, including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) (paragraphs 9-11).

4 The College is making commendable progress on its action plan, building on good practice, and achieving actions within planned timescales. The monitoring team reached this conclusion through examination of a wide range of documentation and data, and through online meetings with students and staff, including students who had progressed to the University having previously studied at the College.

5 The most recent Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of the College in February 2021 made one advisable recommendation that the College takes steps to further promote the Kaplan UK Pathways E-safety Policy and to ensure students are aware of its requirements. The College identified a number of actions designed to meet this recommendation, all of which have now been fully completed. These actions include: the E-safety Policy being placed in a prominent position on the College virtual learning environment; e-safety is now a standing item on the Student Representative Forum and the

College's Safeguarding Panel; an e-safety pulse survey, devised by the Digital Literacies College Group, is undertaken with incoming students to evaluate their initial knowledge of e-safety; and the updates to the Policy are shared with staff in Key Information sessions. In addition to these actions the College now highlights e-safety to students in pre-arrival information, and within induction and teaching sessions. The College has also introduced a further questionnaire undertaken by students in their first term to test and provide feedback on their knowledge of e-safety. Students and staff met by the monitoring team stated that they valued the information shared with them and that they are now more aware and confident on how to ensure their own e-safety.

6 The 2021 review identified the appointment of Learning Advisors to provide individual and personal academic and pastoral support to students on a regular basis; the team regard this as good practice. The College has further enhanced this identified good practice by having more staff take on Learning Advisor responsibilities, the allocation of students to a named Learning Advisor, and the introduction of regular meetings for students with their Learning Advisor, with the initial meeting taking place in Welcome Week. Students met by the monitoring team stated that they found the support of their Learning Advisor valuable both for general academic and pastoral support.

7 Changes within the College since the 2021 review include the appointment of additional permanent staff - reducing the need to rely on sessional staff, and the upgrading of both the physical and virtual learning environments. Students met by the monitoring team stated that the support they received from staff was very useful, and that they engaged in a wide range of learning activities within classes. Staff reported that enhancements to the physical and virtual learning environments allowed them to implement more active learning, teaching and assessment activities designed to enhance student learning.

8 Academic performance of students at the College has remained strong. In the 2021-22 academic year, 95% of students were successful and achieved the Kaplan Pathways Award. 93% of those (88% of all starting students) reached the performance threshold to receive an unconditional offer from the University, rising from 81% (75% of all starting students) over the previous three years (2016-19) with those remaining being supported with another opportunity or alternative university offers. This increase is partly attributed to the enhancements introduced as a result of curriculum changes within the Kaplan-wide Product Review.

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

9 External reference points are used effectively to allow the College to meet UK expectations for higher education. The College effectively implements Kaplan's formal policies and procedures including the Quality Assurance Framework and the Academic Standards and Quality Manual, which are updated annually, and align with the Quality Code. Kaplan has reviewed the recently-published QAA Characteristics Statement for International Pathway Courses and confirmed that its provision aligns with this statement.

10 The College Action Plan is explicitly mapped against the Quality Code, and programmes are aligned with the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (SCQF), the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), Subject Benchmark Statements, and relevant professional body requirements. The Subject Moderator system has recently been supplemented with the appointment of Quality Assurance Partners within each College of the University and the development of Assessment Collectives across the Kaplan network of colleges to further ensure that academic standards are maintained in line with external reference points.

11 The College undertook its most recent Periodic Review with the University of Glasgow in August 2022. This process involved submitting an evaluation document and supporting evidence to the University and attending review committee meetings chaired by the Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) at the University of Glasgow. At the time of the monitoring visit, the outcomes of this review had not been formally confirmed but an unofficial summary of the commendations and recommendations of the review had been circulated to the College. Once these commendations and recommendations are approved by the University, it is the intention of the College that they will inform the ongoing development of the College Action Plan.

Background to the monitoring visit

12 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.

13 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Graham Romp, Reviewer, and Millard Parkinson, QAA Officer, on 7 February 2023.

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