



Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd Heriot-Watt International Study Centre, February 2014

Section 1: Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review panel concludes that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (BES) Heriot-Watt International Study Centre (ISC) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the [previous monitoring visit](#) in June 2013.

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The range of programmes offered by the ISC remains unchanged.

3 Current student numbers stand at 67, a significant decrease from 2012-13, when numbers had risen to just under 200. However, changes in a Middle Eastern government's policy, designed to spread student sponsorship across a wider range of universities, have impacted on student numbers.

4 In May 2013 BES and Heriot-Watt University (the University) decided not to renew the contract after August 2014. The ISC enrolled the last intake of students in January 2014. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to ensure that academic standards and the student experience are not adversely affected by this development.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

5 Processes for checking the accuracy of website and prospectus information have been reviewed and are working effectively. All students whom the team met stated that their decision to apply to the ISC was informed by website information.

6 Following a review, the ISC website now sets out clear and accurate information about the grades required for progression to University master's and second year undergraduate programmes. The website also makes clear that there is no guarantee that completing students will receive an offer for first year undergraduate entry if they do not meet the required progression grades, and that acceptance on a postgraduate programme is at the discretion of the University.

7 The ISC prospectus is less detailed, stating simply that entry to the second year of the degree programme is subject to students meeting required entry standards, that entry to University postgraduate programme is at the discretion of the University and directing the reader to the ISC website for further information. Neither the website nor the prospectus provide information about the options and support offered to students by the ISC if they fail to make the progression grade, though this information is readily available to undergraduate certificate students post-entry in the Student Handbook. The required progression grades for undergraduate and postgraduate entry to the University are also set out clearly in the Student Handbook and displayed in teaching rooms and public areas.

8 The ISC document entitled Assessment Regulations 2013/14 is appended to the Student Handbook. While this document does not set out the full assessment regulations, it refers to the detail of the assessment regulations contained in operational guidelines available from the Administration Office. The Programme Operational Guides 2013/14 set out the full assessment regulations, including the criteria for decision-making in borderline cases. The Student Handbook 2013/14 provides information about the opportunity to restart the programme. The ISC has acted on the recommendations of the previous QAA review visit concerning communication of the assessment regulations to students in writing.

9 All references to the award of credits in student handbooks and operational guides have been removed. The monitoring team was informed that the programmes do not carry credits but that the University recognises 120 'notional' credits with respect to undergraduate certificate students who progress to the University having achieved the required progression grades, on the basis of the recognition of prior learning.

10 The ISC continues to provide a high level of academic and pastoral support for students and support for high quality staff development.

Section 4: The provider's use of external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

11 The ISC has made some progress in working with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). The Quality Code has been used as a reference point in the review of the assessment regulations and in drawing these together from the operational guides into a single, coherent document.

12 The ISC action plan reported that work was being undertaken to map the ISC's quality management systems to the Quality Code. This work was still ongoing and relevant documentation was not yet available to the monitoring team. Teaching staff know of the mapping process, have been introduced to the Quality Code by way of general awareness raising, and expect to be more involved in future through the identification and implementation of specific changes to practice as the mapping process progressed.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

13 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider and its embedded college'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 and its embedded colleges of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

14 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Alan Hunt (Coordinator) and Dr Sylvia Hargreaves (Reviewer) on 13 February 2014.

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