



## Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Holborn College Limited, trading as Kaplan Holborn College, June 2015

### Section 1: Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that Holborn College Limited, trading as Kaplan Holborn College (the College), has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the [previous monitoring visit](#) in March 2013.

### Section 2: Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The College's awarding bodies now include Anglia Ruskin University and the University of the West of England, Bristol, which account for in excess of 50 per cent of provision by student number. At the time of the College's annual return to QAA, there were 437 higher education students, compared with 596 enrolled students in June 2013.

3 Kaplan UK has reviewed its corporate structures and the College has been removed from Kaplan Financial UK and placed within Kaplan International Colleges to reflect more accurately the function and ethos of the College. The new structure provides a clearer line management and a higher degree of transparency at corporate senior management level. Kaplan UK believes that the reorganisation does not have a noticeable impact at operational delivery level while hoping that it will facilitate communication links, increase the level of expertise and ensure the adoption of best practice.

4 During the current annual monitoring process, Kaplan UK decided to close the College to new admissions and to discontinue teaching from 15 September 2015. It announced the closure decision to staff on 22 April 2015 and to students on 23 April 2015. Since then the College has been concentrating on transitional arrangements for its staff and students to maintain standards while teaching out programmes or transferring students to other appropriate programmes. These arrangements were well underway at the time of the monitoring visit.

### Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The College ensured that all stakeholders were promptly and fully briefed on the closure and its implications. It announced the closure to students in an email sent directly to their individual accounts on 23 April 2015. The email contained not only the statement of closure and the reasons for it, but also what procedures would be in place to allow students to complete their individual studies. Senior staff went to every class the same day of the announcement and discussed the implications of the closure decision with students. The College also arranged a number of follow-up group meetings with students and offered individual consultations upon request. From that time to the time of the visit, students confirm that all of their concerns and questions have been answered. The process is tracked by an Ongoing Activity Log and will continue for some time to come.

6 The teaching of the College's provision validated by the University of Wales and its provision recognised by the University of London, under its Teaching Institutions Recognition Framework for its tuition support of the International Programmes, will be completed at the end of this academic year. The University of London conducts the exams for its programmes. Should students need to continue their studies beyond the end of this academic year, the College and the University of London will work together to find them a suitable London campus to continue. The College has in place procedures for resit examinations for all students on its programmes validated by the University of Wales who may need them. Should any Tier 4 student require a second resit beyond an individual CAS residency deadline, the College will follow procedures it has used in the past to deliver such a resit in the student's home country. They will secure agreement with the awarding body and then make arrangements for the resit to be taken at either British Council or Kaplan International offices. Students representing the University of Wales confirm that all of their concerns have been addressed in a helpful manner.

7 The teaching of the College's provision validated by the University of the West of England, Bristol, which are all accelerated two-year degrees, will be taught out on the current premises. The BA (Hons) Business and Management finishes this academic year. The BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance and the LLB (Hons) will continue until October 2016. The College is in the process of appointing a Programme Manager (academic) and a Programme Coordinator (administration) to oversee the teaching-out process and ensure the maintenance of quality. The College is also in the process of appointing full cover for the teaching of four modules per semester for each of the continuing degrees. The lecturers will be sessional appointments, but they will be in post for the whole year, thus ensuring teaching continuity. Students who have failed modules on any of these accelerated degrees and who, therefore, cannot by definition complete an accelerated degree, are supported to find places elsewhere to complete their studies. This process will continue until all accelerated degrees have been taught out.

8 Arrangements have been made for all students continuing on the College's provision validated by Anglia Ruskin University to transfer to Anglia Ruskin University (London) at the end of this academic year. Anglia Ruskin University staff came to the College on 23 April 2015 to explain the procedures for transfer and to answer student questions. The College arranged a visit to Anglia Ruskin University (London) on 27 April 2015 for students to meet staff there and to ask questions. The College also provided contact information for students who have any further questions and there will be other opportunities to visit the new provider after student examinations are finished. Students confirmed that the visit was productive. They also confirmed that they continue to contact staff with their concerns and to receive helpful responses.

9 The College has successfully supported students through the changes to date and will continue to do so. The teaching for this year has not been significantly interrupted for any students and all teaching processes and practices remain unchanged. The College has also ensured that no students will be financially affected by the changes. Fees will not rise for continuing students at Anglia Ruskin University (London) nor for those continuing on the degrees being taught out at the College; students will not be charged additional fees for resits; and fees for Tier 4 students changing sponsors for their visas will be paid for by the College. Any other reasonable unforeseen costs to students will also be considered by the College.

10 The student survey system has been usefully changed to a standard approach adopted from Anglia Ruskin University. There is a benchmark score of 6.0 for overall satisfaction for all programmes. Any score less than 6.0 requires a discussion with the member of staff and their line manager in order to ensure that an action plan is completed to document what changes are proposed to improve student satisfaction. In practice, the

discussion and actions are recorded in an email which is then tracked by the Associate Dean and fed into the staff appraisal system.

11 The student voice is also heard effectively through other channels, including a formal student representative system, attendance at College committees and informal approaches to staff. Student representatives are usually elected, but are also occasionally appointed when no one stands for election. The representatives meet students during and after classes to receive concerns and feedback actions from appropriate committees. Committee minutes are posted electronically on the College website and in hardcopy on a notice board. Students confirmed examples of changes that came about because of their initiation, including timing on assessment feedback, access to IT facilities and extended submission deadlines.

12 The College has a comprehensive generic staff development cycle. Individual staff development is handled at annual appraisal, goal-setting and audit, as well as informally throughout the year. Staff continue to pursue scholarship and professional activity, which is supported by the College.

13 The College has clearly identified and progressed appropriate additional actions as a result of its own quality assurance monitoring procedures, including those to address attendance problems and to enhance the student experience.

14 The College has developed new initiatives to address its low student attendance in some lectures and classes, which include an 'Early Warning System', regular discussions at Academic Board, a review of its induction process, and data analysis to identify characteristics of students who are not engaging. It also set up working groups, such as the Induction Working Group, a student engagement working group and a working group on student involvement with quality assurance.

15 The College has taken specific actions to enhance the student experience, including holding regular student representative meetings, inviting students onto core College committees, conducting extra feedback mechanisms, such as 'You said, we did' posters, providing updates in the student newsletter 'At-a-Glance' and initiating a student forum. Students are aware of and appreciate these initiatives.

16 The College has consistent, fair and transparent admissions processes that are clearly documented, in line with those of partner universities and available to everyone as outlined in its comprehensive Admissions Policy. The Admissions Policy is robust and thorough. The College ensures that students have sufficient English language competence to complete their programme of study by clearly stating the expected level of competence required for its programmes in a number of areas, including online, in print and within information available from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). The Admissions Team, which receives annual training, checks the authenticity and accuracy of all English certificates.

17 The College, through its Admission Team, scrupulously verifies applicants' prior qualifications and their suitability to study by mapping qualifications to stated entry requirements using the UCAS Tariff, UK NARIC (National Recognition Information Centre) and guidance from Anglia Ruskin University in terms of international equivalencies. The College also assesses students' personal statements. When a student is a non-standard entry with strong work experience, that experience must be clearly documented; the student is interviewed and tested.

18 The College has robust assessment processes to ensure that assessed work is completed with rigour and integrity, that students' work is their own and that students have not engaged in academic malpractice. It follows guidelines provided by the awarding bodies

for double-marking and moderation processes. Awarding body representatives attend examination boards. Teaching staff brief students at induction on academic misconduct and, specifically, how to avoid plagiarism. Students must sign a declaration stating that their work is their own and submit their work through software that provides similarity indices. They must also follow the comprehensive examinations' regulations outlined in programme handbooks and are overseen at examinations by trained regulators. The College will continue all of its robust assessment processes for the remainder of this academic year and for the teaching out period until October 2016.

19 Internal and external verification processes ensure that student work is genuine, achieves the learning outcomes required and is marked fairly and securely. To assist the process, each teaching member of staff receives a planner at the beginning of each academic year which includes submission dates, marking deadlines, internal and external verification deadlines and return of work deadlines. All awarding bodies provide generic marking criteria templates, which staff not only follow but also modify to create more detailed marking criteria. Scrutiny of evidence, including the internal verification, external verification and samples of marked work, demonstrates that the College maintains appropriate standards and levels.

#### **Section 4: Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education**

20 The College had a training session for its staff to ensure awareness of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) on 24 September 2014. It also has a comprehensive action plan to secure alignment of its provision with the Expectations of Part B of the Quality Code. The single relevant action scheduled for completion within the current monitoring cycle has been superseded by the discontinuation of the College's programmes.

#### **Section 5: 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 Professor Edward J Esche (Coordinator) and Mr Jonathan Baker (Reviewer) on 15-16 June 2015.

**QAA1306 - R4372 - Jul 15**

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2015  
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000  
Email [enquiries@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786