



Navitas UK Holdings Ltd

Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

April 2013

Annex 4: International College at Robert Gordon University

Introduction and background

International College at Robert Gordon University (ICRGU) recruited its first cohort of students in November 2011. A second cohort increased student numbers to a level which required a review visit rather than a monitoring visit, with 97 students currently on ICRGU programmes compared to 17 at the 2012 review visit. Programmes currently on offer are:

- First Year Degree in Accounting and Finance
- First Year Degree in Life Sciences
- First Year Degree in Engineering
- First Year Degree in Management
- Foundation Year in Pharmacy
- Intensive English Language CEFR B2

These are delivered by ICRGU staff under the standard delivery model, where the ICRGU staff teach across all of the programmes. Students who are successful on the first year degree programme progress to year 2, taught and assessed by the Robert Gordon University (the University). There is no integrated provision in which Navitas students are taught alongside University students on the same programme. The management, engineering and pharmacy programmes have contributed to the significant rise in student numbers.

ICRGU is managed by a Principal and Director. Management structures mirror the arrangements in England and Wales.

Navitas UK defines the normal structure of committees, and these have been established at ICRGU and are meeting at the designed frequency. The University indicated it regarded the committee structure as robust and fit for purpose, and meetings between senior staff of both ICRGU and the University regularly take place to ensure both strategic and operational issues are discussed. The combination of executive and deliberative meetings at ICRGU, combined with the joint meetings with University staff, contribute to the effective development of the programmes delivered.

Systems continue to be in place for the approval and monitoring of programmes by both Navitas and the University. Rigorous moderation of assessments is also undertaken by the University. There is good evidence that the student voice continues to develop.

There are robust systems for ensuring the accuracy of public information in both ICRGU and the University.

Key findings

Academic standards

As a result of its investigations, the review team considers that there can be **confidence** that academic standards at International College Robert Gordon University are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of Navitas UK Holdings Ltd and the partner university.

Quality of learning opportunities

As a result of its investigations, the review team considers that there can be **confidence** that the quality of learning opportunities at International College Robert Gordon University is assured and enhanced appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of Navitas UK Holdings Ltd and the partner university.

Public information

As a result of its investigations, the review team considers that **reliance can be placed** on the accuracy and completeness of the information that International College Robert Gordon University is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

No additional features of good practice were identified above those recorded for Navitas UK group last year.

Recommendations

The review team did not identify any matters requiring action by ICRGU..

Detailed findings

How effectively do Navitas and ICRGU fulfill responsibilities for the management of academic standards at this college ?

1 The Recognition and Articulation Agreement signed in 2010 was stated to be the standard agreement used by the Navitas group, which had been subject to some redrafting and editing prior to signing, following contractual discussions between the University and Navitas. The 2012 review team had sight of a Recognition and Articulation Agreement document.

2 Securing standards depends on the programme approval process used by the University, together with the involvement of the University link tutors. The latter continue to be at a senior level within the University to ensure strong development of the role and to give the University security in relation to standards in these developmental stages of the relationship. The intention remains to rotate these jobs within the University as the relationship between the two institutions and the role of link tutor develops.

3 The University had decided to utilise a variant of its own programme approval process in 2011 to approve the programmes to be offered in the ICRGU as progression routes to further study within the University. This University process involved no externality. Navitas UK has now approved new guidelines which partially embrace an element of externality as a standard feature, to address this point raised by the 2012 review team.

The review team has made a recommendation in the centre's report on this aspect. No approval events have taken place since the May 2012 review visit.

4 ICRGU uses the Navitas standard process of completion of a monitoring report at the end of each semester, with an annual overview report also being produced. The University is able to access ICRGU's monitoring outcomes through the Academic Advisory Committee, with papers flowing into its committees at institutional and faculty levels. The University does not carry out any separate annual monitoring using its own procedures.

5 Though the provision is almost two years old, the Academic Advisory Committee had discussed the approach that will be taken to support periodic review. It was anticipated ICRGU's provision would fall within the University's institution-led subject review procedure, while there is provision within the Recognition and Articulation Agreement for a separate, five-yearly review of all provision.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

6 College staff set and mark assessments based on existing procedures set by the University. University staff moderate the assessments before they are presented to students, and the students' work once it has been marked by ICRGU staff. This typically only applies for assessments contributing at least 50 per cent to a module mark.

7 Students confirmed they were clear about assessment requirements and they received good quality and timely feedback on assessed work.

8 Normal progression and module boards are held with link tutors attending.

9 Students were aware of the existing Navitas Confirmation of Attainment statement they would receive when they progressed from ICRGU to the University. They are recruited under the University's CAS numbers and ICRGU is a branch campus with respect to UKBA. Successful completion of the Navitas programmes leads to automatic progression to the next stage of the programme within the University. The student receives a single visa covering the whole of their study at ICRGU and the University. The University proposes to issue a detailed Diploma Supplement in relation to the final three years of the undergraduate programme that students take within the University. They also propose to indicate the modules studied on the Navitas stage, but without detail such as grade achieved. This means that students will not have full certification of their first-year degree studies, including the credit achieved and level at which this was achieved, since the Navitas Confirmation of Attainment statement does not include this detail. This is also true of students on the pre-master's programme. As associate students, any student who successfully completed the first year of an undergraduate programme within ICRGU, but was then unable to proceed for personal reasons, would not receive an exit award from the University.

10 The review team concluded that the full and complete certification of learning achievements at the first year undergraduate level within ICRGU was something which should be reconsidered for the benefit of the students. The current action plan to address this specific 2012 recommendation establishes a completion date at the end of 2013, and the review team would encourage the two institutions to continue progress towards achieving this action.

Where appropriate, how effectively are UK external reference points used in the management of academic standards?

11 Reference to the elements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) appears in Navitas centre activity, including mapping between the Quality Code and the Navitas College Policies and Regulations (CPRs). Briefing sessions have been held with

sessional teaching staff at ICRGU, along with written communication to help raise awareness of changes and new procedures adopted in response to the Quality Code introduction.

How effectively are external examining, moderation, or verification to assure academic standards?

12 There is no external examining of either the undergraduate or the pre-master's programmes. However, University staff moderate assessments and the assessment outcomes.

How effectively is statistical information used to monitor and assure academic standards?

13 The Navitas standard management information system MAZE generates data, which is used in the preparation of comprehensive module reports and to inform the semester and annual reports that go to the Academic Advisory Committee. The ICRGU's use of MAZE was seen by the review team as being effective.

How effectively are responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities fulfilled?

14 Students use the learning resources of ICRGU and also have access to all learning resources of the University, including support services. Teaching staff indicated that, should they need additional learning resources to support delivery, requests would be routed via ICRGU'S management structure. Students confirmed they regarded the availability of learning resources as very good, and they made use of university-provided library and information, and IT resources. They were also clear about accessing the virtual learning environments of both ICRGU and the University, and had received training for both.

15 Teaching staff use the definitive module guides effectively.

16 ICRGU has implemented the Navitas UK-designed College Enhancement Task Force, and this had met three times, currently based on a monthly schedule. There is limited student participation at this stage, so the opportunity for greater participation exists in the future. The agenda has encouraged wider issues to be addressed than previously considered at the Learning and Teaching Board, such as identifying opportunities for extra-curricular activities, which were seen as a feature of good practice in another Navitas centre during last year's review.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities?

17 Curriculum development is managed by the Navitas UK Quality and Standards Office and ICRGU are required to adopt this approach.

How effectively do Navitas and ICRGU assure themselves that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

18 ICRGU has previously used a combination of manager observation of teaching; analysis of student feedback; and analysis of module assessment results and trends to gain an overview and to ensure the quality of teaching and learning is maintained and enhanced. ICRGU has also introduced peer teaching observation this year, although this is relatively new and not all staff have yet participated due to their recent recruitment. Therefore, it is too early to comment on the effectiveness of this additional aspect.

How effectively is student feedback used to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

19 ICRGU uses the standard Navitas approach of locally designed module and programme questionnaires to elicit student feedback. The outcomes of module feedback questionnaires go to the Learning and Teaching Board. Students are currently represented on the Student Forum that meets regularly. Students are represented on the Learning and Teaching Board with eight elected students and fortnightly meetings being conducted. Students confirmed they had been briefed in their role as representatives by ICRGU and the University Students' Union.

How effectively do Navitas and ICRGU assure themselves that students are supported effectively?

20 Personal support for students takes the form of initial programme induction, information available through the student handbooks and student portal, routine one-to-one sessions between staff and students and, where students are identified as needing it, through the Navitas Students in Jeopardy scheme. The Students in Jeopardy scheme has been further developed by Navitas UK over the last year and is widely seen as an effective mechanism of supporting students who have been identified as potentially being at risk of not being successful on the course. Students confirmed they were able to access staff by email and by making appointments. In practice, the small student numbers coupled with the approachability of both teaching and administrative staff made seeking support quick and easy to achieve.

How effectively does ICRGU manage the recruitment and admission of students?

21 ICRGU has an Admissions Officer who receives student applications. Those that meet standard entry requirements are processed at this level and offers made. Non-standard applicants are referred to ICRGU's Principal and Director who may discuss them with the University's International Office. Most students had come to ICRGU via agents appointed by the Navitas Group and were satisfied with the support these agents provided.

What are the arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

22 ICRGU staff development workshops take place at least once a semester, and staff are additionally able to access staff development activities offered by the University through its Department for the Enhancement of Learning Teaching and Assessment (DELTA). Other opportunities for training and conference attendance are considered by the management.

How effectively do Navitas and ICRGU ensure that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes?

23 Learning resources are detailed at programme approval and recorded in the definitive module documents. By scrutiny of student feedback and regular contact with students, staff are able to identify any problems that arise. The students whom the review team met confirmed resources were appropriate for their needs.

How effectively does ICRGU's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides at this college?

24 In relation to pre-entry information, students said they had found this complete and accurate. It had frequently been provided by Navitas' in-country agents. Agents were appointed by the Navitas Group, but agents who actively recruited for ICRGU have a closer relationship. Students were also satisfied with the quality and accuracy of on-course information provided via student handbooks and the student portal, though they were keen to point out that staff were very approachable and accessible, so that information requests could be quickly resolved.

How effective are ICRGU's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing at this college?

25 Public information is available in hard copy and web formats. Both are subject to rigorous checking and signing off by Navitas and by the University.

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