



Navitas UK Holdings Ltd

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

May 2012

Annex 5: International College Wales, Swansea

Amended judgement

The report on the Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight (ECREO) was published in August 2012. Since that date the review team can now confirm that the institution, working in partnership with the student body, has satisfactorily addressed the review team's initial recommendations through the action planning process.

In particular, those recommendations that led to the initial judgement of limited confidence in the soundness of the provider's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its international collaborative provision, and that limited reliance could be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about its international collaborative provision have been satisfactorily addressed.

In October 2012 the judgement in the soundness of the provider's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its international collaborative provision was amended to **confidence** and the conclusion on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about its international collaborative provision was amended to **reliance**.

Introduction and background

Navitas UK Holdings Ltd (Navitas) signed a Recognition and Articulation Agreement with Swansea University (the University) in November 2007 to set up the International College Wales, Swansea (ICWS). The first student intake was in September 2008. In the academic year 2010-11, there are 557 students at the College, with approximately 19 teaching staff and 15 administrative staff.

The pathways offered are:

- University Foundation in Business and Economics
- University Foundation in Engineering
- University Foundation in Technology
- University Foundation in Law
- University Foundation in Science
- University Foundation in Mathematics
- University Foundation in Politics and International Relations (including Media Studies)

- First Year Degree in Business
- First Year Degree in Economics
- First Year Degree in Engineering
- First Year Degree in Technology
- First Year Degree in Computer Science
- First Year Degree in Genetics
- First Year Degree in Psychology
- First Year Degree in Science
- First Year Degree in Sports Science
- First Year Degree in Mathematics
- First Year Degree in Media Studies
- First Year Degree in Politics and International Relations

- Pre-Master's in Management
- Pre-Master's in Engineering
- Pre-Master's in Health Science (including Child Development)

A copy of the Recognition and Articulation Agreement was seen by the review team and considered appropriate. The Agreement is reviewed regularly by Navitas 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 for the on-campus students at International College Wales, Swansea are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of the provider and the partner higher education institution (HEI). The team considers that there can be **limited confidence** in the academic standards for the programme in the international collaborative provision.

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 Wales, Swansea is assured and enhanced appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of the provider and the partner higher education institution (HEI).

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 Wales, Swansea is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

The review team considers that **reliance cannot** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information produced by international collaborative partners of International College Wales, Swansea, nor in the control that was exercised in checking the operational publicity material used, especially the web-based material.

Good practice

The review noted the features of good practice as detailed in the main report are evident at this college.

Detailed findings

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

1 Navitas aims to engage in long-term sustainable partnerships and to this end commissioned consultants to suggest potential partners. Some universities, including Swansea University, also approached Navitas directly. As a result of the selection and approval process a Recognition and Articulation Agreement (RAA) is in place between International College Wales, Swansea and the University. The review team concluded that Navitas has effective processes for the selection and approval of UK university partnership arrangements.

International partnership arrangements

2 The review team learnt that ICWS had entered into a collaboration with an international partner to allow the partner to deliver part of Navitas' pathway programme for entry to a degree programme at the University. Navitas refers to this collaborative provision as a Transnational Education-University Transfer programme and the arrangement was the only international provision that had been entered into, although active discussions had taken place with another potential partner. At the time of the review, this arrangement was in the process of being terminated.

3 In the absence of a Navitas UK framework for collaborative partnerships of its own programmes, to proceed with the approval of an international collaborative partnership, staff at ICWS sought, and followed, advice from Navitas in Australia on how to proceed. The approval visit consisted of a single member of college staff, the College Director and Principal, with no externality in the process. During the approval process, Navitas developed a procedure for the approval of collaborative partnership arrangements. A Collaborative Provision Committee was established with membership which included senior staff from the University, and that committee considered the proposal and the intended publicity material. Hence, the Collaborative Provision Committee should have been fully aware of the expectation of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*), Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributive learning (including e-learning), through the University's involvement. However, the Navitas procedure, written specifically for Transnational Education-University Transfer Programme arrangements, does not reflect the *Code of practice, Section 2*.

4 Strategic approval of this international partnership by Navitas was given in April 2009, followed by a formal agreement between ICWS and the international partner in November 2009. The international collaborative partnership was debated at the College's Collaborative Provision Committee meetings on 27 May 2011 and 8 December 2011. The Collaborative Provision Committee had representation from The University.

5 The Strategic Approval Form summarises methods by which ICWS and Navitas satisfy themselves that standards and quality are being maintained; these are annual monitoring, periodic review and annual audit. The details of how these processes would work for a collaborative partner are included in the Navitas' procedures and regulations, but the operational integration into mainstream consideration as an academic, rather than managerial, activity was not clear to the review team.

6 The Collaborative Provision Committee learnt in December 2011 that the majority of teaching and assessment at the international collaborative partner was in Spanish. This contravened the terms of the contract. Documents requested from the partner by ICWS

had not been supplied, and concern was expressed over the assessment procedures employed by the international partner.

7 Academic staff the review team met are unaware of the international collaborative partnership, and had not been involved in the moderation of any student assessments. The subject area represented by at least one of the staff members met by the team was aligned with the provision in the international collaborative partnership, so the review team would have expected the staff member to be aware of any academic debate, had the provision been integrated and aligned with the on-campus activity. It was unclear to the team how assessments, written in Spanish, had been scrutinised and moderated by ICWS, although it was clear that this issue had been identified during the following visit to the collaborative partner and was being actively addressed.

8 The review team learnt that ICWS had subsequently terminated the relationship with the international collaborative partner. However, the methods of partner approval and the way in which the international collaborative partner supported the approach to monitoring of assessment are viewed by the review team as inadequate to secure standards and quality.

9 ICWS uses the standard governance structure as detailed in the main report, that is, a Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board with supporting subcommittees. Staff are fully aware of the Quality Handbook and its policies and procedures. The College Director and Principal and Director of Academic and Student Services are part of the senior management team of ICWS. Staff use standard monitoring reports, informed by the management information system, to manage the academic health of ICWS.

10 The review team learnt that students who enrol directly with the University and leave after satisfactorily completing 120 credits at level 4 are entitled to a Certificate of Higher Education. However, students who follow an integrated programme of university modules supplemented by College modules, and those on the Standard Delivery Model (that is, those enrolled through ICWS and who also complete the same programme), would not be entitled to a Certificate of Higher Education.

11 ICWS students also receive a statement of their achievement at ICWS. This takes the form of a Confirmation of Attainment statement. ICWS does not make any awards and so does not award certificates. The review team learnt that the transcript produced by the partner University upon completion of studies does not show details of the credit gained during the ICWS managed part of the pathway. The review team regarded that ICWS had appropriate structures in place to manage the quality of learning opportunities and standards.

12 Principles for the approval of new pathways are detailed in the Quality Handbook. These are used by International College Wales, Swansea. Each programme is monitored through an annual report. The international collaboration recruited from September 2010. ICWS received no annual monitoring documentation and the College Academic Board agreed this would be followed though by a scheduled visit to the international partner. The small cohorts recruited (a single student in the first intake) meant that detailed consideration to the activity was undertaken during the visit, albeit not in the formal process and timing defined by ICWS.

13 Periodic review of all provision follows the procedures as specified by the partner university. The review team concluded that the provider had effective mechanisms for approval and monitoring of on-campus provision and that periodic review processes are governed by the partner university.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

14 ICWS utilises the standard Navitas process of having module assessment boards followed by progression boards. University link tutors are also members of these boards. The assessment regulations are developed by Navitas and staff are made aware of assessment regulations and amendments by the Director of Academic and Student Services.

15 Students at ICWS who the review team met are clear about the assessment and progression regulations. Students also reported receiving speedy and thorough feedback with one-to-one feedback where appropriate. The team concluded that the assessment of students at ICWS is robust, with the exception of the international collaboration arrangements.

How effectively are UK external reference points used in the management of academic standards?

16 Reference is made during programme approval to subject benchmark statements and the *Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). Procedures and policies of Navitas are informed by the Academic Infrastructure, and the review team concluded that effective use was made of external reference points.

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

17 For the standard delivery model comprising a programme which is delivered only by ICWS, examining and moderation are carried out either by staff from ICWS or by the University depending on the stage of the programme or the subject area. For integrated programmes in which The University teaches the majority of the programme, the standard examining and moderation protocols of the University are used.

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

18 ICWS produces regular reports on admissions, progression and completion. Tracer studies are carried out in which the progress and achievement of ICWS students, having transferred fully to Swansea University, are monitored and compared with students directly recruited by The University.

19 Module level data is recorded in annual monitoring reports. The review team considered that there was effective and frequent use of data, with the tracer studies contributing significantly to this.

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

20 Enhancement is clearly in an early stage of development, being described as a 'continuous process'. ICWS has a Quality Improvement Plan in the form of a list of routine activities that need to be undertaken and the current status of relevant actions.

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

21 The Academic Infrastructure, the FHEQ and subject benchmark statements are used as reference points in the development of curriculum.

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

22 Students have access to the facilities of the University and are enrolled as students of the University. Some of ICWS teaching staff are also teaching staff at the partner University with many years of teaching experience. The ICWS implements the system of teaching observations required by Navitas. All teaching staff are observed by a senior member of staff with peer observation also taking place.

23 Students the review team met reported that they have easy and quick access to both academic and support staff and felt that the learning resources are of a high standard.

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

24 ICWS gathers student feedback at the end of the delivery of each module. Through close and frequent contact with students, staff are able to gather feedback continually.

25 Student representatives are volunteers and are briefed by the Director of Academic and Student Services on their role and provided with appropriate reading material. However, there is no formal training of student representatives. The review team considered that the formal training of student representatives would further assist them in their role and contribute to a more consistent approach across the Navitas group of colleges.

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

26 The review team learnt from meeting staff and students that the staff have a supportive and caring relationship with their students. Students who the team met reported that all staff are approachable, friendly, accessible and helpful, and staff operate an open-door policy. All students receive an induction at the start of their studies. They have access to a student portal and are provided with a hard copy of the Student Handbook.

27 Student attendance is monitored and absences are investigated so that appropriate support can be put in place. The Students in Jeopardy Programme is designed to identify and support students who may need additional support. The team viewed the supportive structures and approach of staff as a key strength of ICWS.

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

28 ICWS recruits and admits students according to the processes required by Navitas. The review team learnt that most students are recruited through agents. Agents are selected according to a Navitas process, and students the team met reported that the information they received from agents was accurate and helpful.

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

29 Although Navitas does not currently have a central Staff Development Policy for academic staff, the review team noted that all staff are able to benefit from the staff development opportunities of the partner University. The review team also viewed the team approach adopted by staff as being supportive of each other.

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

30 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 ascertain if problems are arising.

31 ICWS students have access to the resources of the University. This includes access to the University's virtual learning environment.

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

32 Students at ICWS reported accurate and complete information about college and pathway descriptions. College publicity material is signed off by the Director of Marketing, The University prior to publication.

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

33 There is a Navitas sign-off process in place to ensure the accuracy of its public information. This is rigorous for college-based provision. The review team saw publicity material, with proofs approved by both ICWS and the University, produced by the international collaborative partner. The published material contained the phrase 'Swansea University UK: Fully taught in Mexico'. In reality, the international collaborative partner is responsible for teaching only one semester of the business pathway. The team formed the view that the publicity material was misleading and so reliance cannot be placed on the information produced by international partners of ICWS, nor in the control that was exercised over checking the operational publicity material actually used, especially the web-based material.

RG 980e 08/12

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2012

ISBN 978 1 84979 636 1

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC03778