



Educational Oversight for Exceptional Arrangements: report of the monitoring visit of INTO Queen's LLP trading as INTO Queen's University Belfast, February 2020

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that INTO Queen's University Belfast (INTO Queen's) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the November 2018 [Educational Oversight for Exceptional Arrangements Review](#).

Changes since the last QAA review

2 There are currently 386 enrolled students with 20 full-time and 18 part-time teaching staff. This is a 24% increase in the number of students since the 2018 review. There has been an increase of 21% in staffing, driven by the growth in Academic English student numbers and additional part-time staff to cover specialist modules due to the restructuring of the Programme Management team. The awarding body remains Queen's University Belfast and there have been no changes to the programmes offered or to the premises at Lennoxvale. A new Centre Director was appointed in May 2019 and a new Academic Director in October 2019. The increase in student and staff numbers, together with newly-appointed Centre and Academic Directors, prompted a monitoring visit in February 2020.

3 In 2018-19, the average achievement for all Level 4 and above students (a total of 190 students) was 94% (178 students). Seven intakes across four programmes obtained a 100% pass rate: International Foundation Programme Engineering and Science Accelerated; International Foundation Programme Architecture (September and January); International Year One Accounting (September); Graduate Diploma (all September and January pathways). The average percentage pass rate across all Level 3 programmes (allowing entry to specified degrees) was 85% (89 students).

4 INTO closely monitors the performance of students on their programmes and those who progress to Queen's University. This is achieved through a number of annual reports and discussion at the Programme Coordination Committees, the Academic Management Meeting, the Academic Planning Day and the Academic Sub Group. INTO offers additional support to all students currently enrolled on programmes at the Centre. In addition, feedback on the performance and experience of progressing students is used to review programmes and make adjustments to improve student preparation for future studies at a higher level.

5 The role of the Academic Support Manager has been redeveloped as an Academic Quality and Planning Manager (AQPM) and was appointed in September 2019. The AQPM has oversight of the academic standards and quality assurance for INTO Queen's and supports the Academic Director in ensuring consistency in learning, teaching and assessment across all programmes.

Findings from the monitoring visit

6 INTO Queen's is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision. The review team considered the INTO Action Plan developed in response to the 2018 report and evidence relating to the educational provision at INTO Queen's, and met students and staff during the visit.

7 The 2018 report made two advisable recommendations. The first was to ensure that quoracy for deliberative committees is clearly defined. The second was to develop and publish a learning teaching and assessment policy to assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is consistent, to ensure that existing good practice is further enhanced, and to enable international students to achieve their full potential. The 2018 report also made one desirable recommendation that INTO Queen's develop its strategy for improving student engagement to ensure the student body is fully involved in all quality processes.

8 INTO Queen's has reviewed and updated the terms of reference of its deliberative committees and quoracy is now clearly defined and reflects the requirements of the University. These changes were considered and approved by INTO Queen's Academic Sub Group (ASG). The ASG also reviewed and approved changes to the membership of these committees. Quoracy is monitored and recorded during committee meetings and if a meeting is not quorate, any formal decisions are deferred until a subsequent quorate meeting is arranged.

9 The action plan November 2018 stated that an INTO Queen's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy would be approved and implemented by September 2019. A draft version of this policy has been produced but it has not yet been fully considered and approved. The policy has been designed to align with the INTO priorities for teaching staff, the University Education Strategy and relevant sections of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). Feedback has been obtained following its presentation at INTO Academic Directors Forums, and from ASG and teaching staff. It is proposed that the policy, once approved, will be used in conjunction with INTO Queen's Quality Assurance Manual to enhance the educational provision at INTO Queen's. The revised policy will be discussed with students before it is formally approved and implemented at the start of the academic year 2020-21. All new staff will receive the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy as part of their induction. The effectiveness of the new policy will need to be assessed in future annual monitoring.

10 Since the 2018 review visit, the structure of student engagement within the Centre has been reviewed and amended. The Staff Student Consultative Committee has been reformed as the International Student Representative Committee (ISRC) and comprises student representatives and one member of staff. Issues raised at this meeting are fed into programme coordination meetings where there is further student representation except for reserved items.

11 To recruit new representatives, INTO Queen's has produced a video where former student representatives are interviewed. Starting in 2019-20, INTO Queen's also introduced a 'You said, we did' report for students to highlight the value of being involved as student representatives and the actions that have resulted from their feedback. Students and staff met by the team were able to give examples of where issues raised by students have received a positive response by INTO Queen's. There is a need for further monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of student engagement through these revised mechanisms.

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

12 It is recognised by senior staff at INTO Queen's that the Quality Code usefully informs all aspects of its provision and a detailed mapping of the provision against the Quality Code has been completed. Though teaching and support staff are not required to understand the Code in detail, they are required to understand how their own roles apply to internal quality assurance processes that are mapped to the Quality Code.

13 To meet this requirement, the Academic Director has commenced the process of disseminating this information more clearly among all staff, in specific presentations and meetings, with further training sessions planned for the future. Teaching and support staff met by the team were able to articulate how the Quality Code is embedded into the processes of INTO Queen's and how it informs their practice.

Background to the monitoring visit

14 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.

15 The monitoring visit was carried out by Professor Graham Romp, reviewer and Dr Margaret Johnson, QAA Officer on 11 February 2020.

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