

Annex 1: Kaplan International College Bournemouth

Introduction and background

Kaplan International College Bournemouth (KICB) currently differs from other KIC pathway colleges in that, while relationships with Bournemouth University are close and of increasing significance, it is not a fully embedded organisation. This college is, in fact, two business units: pathways and English Language Training. It offers closely integrated programmes in a range of academic subject areas and in general English. This meets the needs of a variety of students. A number of successful students pass from English Language Training to pathway programmes, and subsequently on to higher education programmes at Bournemouth University, but such students may also move on to a wide range of programmes at other universities, supported in this by KIC's University Placement Service, which has its origins in KICB. In 2010-11, the pathways college unit enrolled around 280 students; 1,135 students enrolled in the English Language Training unit at KICB. On average, students on general English programmes study at the college for six weeks.

KICB offers the following pathway programmes and awards:

Programme	Level	Award
Bournemouth University International Foundation Certificate	FHEQ 3	Bournemouth University
Certificate of Higher Education in Business and Management	FHEQ 4	University of Wales
Pre-Master's	FHEQ 6	Kaplan International Colleges
Pre-Sessional Study Skills Programme		Bournemouth University

The English Language Teaching unit accommodates all the pre-sessional English programmes.

Key findings

Academic standards

There can be **confidence** that academic standards at Kaplan International College Bournemouth are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of KIC and those of the validating universities for this College's programmes.

Quality of learning opportunities

There can be **confidence** that the quality of learning opportunities at Kaplan International College Bournemouth is assured and enhanced appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of KIC and of the validating universities for this College's programmes.

Public information

Reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that KIC is responsible for publishing about itself, its embedded colleges, and the programmes which they deliver.

Good practice

The review team noted the following features of good practice at KICB:

- the constructive student engagement with the College's quality assurance processes (paragraph 11)
- the effective cross-fertilisation between the general English and the academic pathway programmes (paragraph 12)
- the quality of pastoral and academic support provided to students (paragraph 12)
- the role of KIC's University Placement Service at KICB in assisting the progression of students to higher education level study (paragraph 13).

Recommendations

The review team makes the following recommendations in relation to this College:

The team considers that it is **advisable** for KICB to:

- provide a dimension of external assurance for the Pre-Master's programme, in accordance with KIC's revised Academic Standards and Quality Manual (paragraph 2)
- put in place effective arrangements for the monitoring of the quality of feedback given to students on their assessed work (paragraph 4).

The team considers that it would be **desirable** for KICB to:

- promote more actively to KICB's staff the role of the KIC's Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ) (paragraph 15).

Detailed findings

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

1 The local model for managing academic standards at Kaplan International College Bournemouth (KICB) differs from that at other KIC colleges. Two of the pathway programmes are subject to external validation, the Bournemouth University International Foundation Certificate (BUIFC) validated by Bournemouth University and the Diploma in Business and Management (CertHE), currently validated by the University of Wales. In addition to the general quality assurance framework of KIC, reports and procedures associated with the maintenance of academic standards are therefore framed by the requirements and expectations of the two validating universities. The team found that KICB implemented these procedures in timely and appropriate manner, through communication with and reports to the universities. Following a decision by the University of Wales to withdraw from its validation activities, the CertHE will cease to be validated by that University by the end of 2014. The arrangements which follow will depend on strategic discussions currently under way.

2 One pathway programme, the Pre-Master's, falls outside this framework, with successful students receiving a KIC Award only. Because of the possible changes to KICB's relationship with Bournemouth University, systems in support of the programme's academic standards do not currently fully meet the provisions of KIC's revised Academic Standards and Quality Manual. One important area for attention is the appointment of an external examiner for this programme. This is of greater concern given the level of study for which the programme is designed. KIC was aware of this weakness and it was intended to address it as a matter of priority. The review team confirmed that it was advisable for KIC and KICB to provide a dimension of external assurance for the Pre-Master's programme, in accordance with KIC's revised Academic Standards and Quality Manual.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

3 Assessments for the two validated pathway programmes are subject to appropriate assessment procedure agreed with the universities. The Pre-Master's assessments are managed exclusively by KICB.

4 The review team noted that external examiners had identified instances of a mismatch between assessment feedback to students and the grades awarded on the University of Wales Diploma Programme. Detailed advice to internal markers appears to be less than adequate and, in the sample of work reviewed, the quality of feedback to students on assessment was considered by the review team to fall short of the expectations of KIC's Academic Standards and Quality Manual. KICB reported that University of Wales had implemented training to staff to address this issue. The team judged that it was advisable that KIC and KICB put in place effective arrangements for the monitoring of the quality of feedback given to students on their assessed work.

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

5 The BUIFC and the CertHE are monitored by the validating universities against the external reference points of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The review team found that there was a lack of clear referencing for the Pre-Master's.

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

6 The validating universities appoint external examiners for the KICB programmes and there is evidence of moderation and double marking. Not all staff were familiar with the external examiners' reports, but issues raised and the responses to these are noted in annual programme reports. As already noted, no external examiners are currently appointed for the Pre-Master's.

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

7 Statistical information on student performance, with appropriate comment, is included in annual programme reports. KICB recognises that the small numbers of students on some student cohorts make statistical analysis difficult. KICB also reported that the Data Protection Act has impeded access to progression data for its alumni once they embark on their university studies, a situation complicated by the fact that KICB students progress to a wider range of universities than those in other KIC colleges.

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

8 The students' written submission prepared for this review and their comments to the QAA review team suggests that learning opportunities at KICB are well managed and effective. The College's Structured Study Centre is well used and provides particularly strong support for language students, but also opportunities for pathway programme students to consolidate their English language. The College has also negotiated access for students to Bournemouth University facilities. However, the use of KIC's virtual learning environment is relatively limited in the student learning experience.

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

9 The validation by Bournemouth University and the University of Wales of KICB programmes ensures that external reference points are appropriately accommodated within these curricula.

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

10 KICB follows KIC's expectations for appropriate processes in support of the recruitment, induction, development and appraisal of staff. Similarly, processes are in place for the collection of feedback from students on their learning experience, which, in turn, informs annual programme reports and impacts on the quality of teaching and learning.

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

11 In accordance with the expectations of the KIC quality assurance framework, there are clear systems for gathering student feedback, particularly through an effective system of student representatives. Responses and consequent action by KICB are well documented and referenced appropriately in annual programme reports. Opportunities that are available for the training of student representatives at both Bournemouth University and the University of Wales have been taken up by KICB students. The student engagement with quality assurance at KICB represents good practice.

How effectively do KIC and KICB assure themselves that students are supported effectively?

12 KIC's strong emphasis on effective student services and tutorial support for students is well demonstrated within KICB. Students showed a high level of satisfaction with the support that they received. The cross-fertilisation between the general English and pathway programmes is well managed and welcomed by students.

13 There is particularly clear evidence at KICB of the effectiveness of KIC's University Placement Service in assisting the progression of students to university study.

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

14 The recruitment and admission of students is managed centrally by KIC, including applications to validated programmes. KICB and Bournemouth University work together regularly in recruitment activities.

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

15 KIC supports staff development at KICB through funding study for further qualifications and by encouraging cross-KIC development activities, most evident at KICB within the areas of administration and student services. Also locally, staff are able to take advantage of staff development opportunities at Bournemouth University and, for language staff, at the International Teaching and Training Centre (ITTC). However, there appeared to be no systematic programme within KICB in support of learning and teaching, with relatively little emphasis on scholarship or pedagogy. Discussions with staff suggested to the team that there was a relatively low level of engagement with the cross-network support provided by KIC's Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ). The review team judged it desirable that KIC promotes more actively to KICB's staff the role of KIC's CLIQ.

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

16 There is well resourced study accommodation occupied by KICB, and this is supplemented by access for the BUIFC students to the full range of Bournemouth University learning resources and non-borrowing access to library facilities there for other KICB students. Specific independent study facilities have been established for English language study, and the Learning Outside the Classroom initiatives complement classroom work and were appreciated by students.

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

17 Student information includes course handbooks, study guides and general information about KICB and its facilities. The information is clearly presented and the students met by the review team were content with its accuracy.

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

18 Public information in KIC is managed centrally by a professional team. There is a careful approach to web design and management and to the publication of hard copy of material. Because of the nature of the business and the partnership arrangements, all published material has to be seen and approved by the partner university and by local college staff. Systems are in place to ensure that published material is formally signed off by the Head of Pathways and the Principal, and by the Managing Director of KIC Pathways and Languages in the London office.

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