

Annex 4: Kaplan International College London

Introduction and background

Kaplan International College London (KICL) was established in June 2008 when an articulation agreement was signed with City University; an agreement was signed in 2010 with University of Westminster and in 2011 with Cranfield University. In September 2008, KICL opened at Camomile Street, in the City of London. It is a college within the KIC pathways framework, with a location in central London. Having three partner universities, the quality assurance systems at KICL differ in some respects from those of the other embedded colleges. All students join a programme specified as a pathway to only one of the partner institutions, depending on their entry qualifications. Where it becomes apparent during the course that a student is unlikely to meet the entry requirements for their chosen university, they will be counselled to transfer to an alternative programme. Otherwise, students achieving the required grades at KICL for entry to their specified pathway institution progress to the chosen partner university within this network. In 2010-11, KICL enrolled around 450 students.

| Programme | Level |
|---|--------|
| Foundation Certificate in Business, Law and Social Sciences | FHEQ 3 |
| Foundation Certificate in Science and Engineering | FHEQ 3 |
| Graduate Diploma in Business, Law and Social Sciences | FHEQ 6 |
| Graduate Diploma in Science and Engineering | FHEQ 6 |

Key findings

Academic standards

There can be **confidence** that academic standards at Kaplan International College London are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of KIC and the College's partner universities.

Quality of learning opportunities

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

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 this College:

- the effective management of the student experience, tailoring support to the needs of the student (paragraphs 12, 13, 14)
- the supportive work of the KIC University Placement Service (paragraph 14)
- the recognition of the diverse background of students and KICL's positive response to this diversity (paragraph 15)

- the quality of support for KICL staff at all levels (paragraph 17)
- the positive arrangements for all KICL students to have access to the learning facilities of City University (paragraph 19)
- the use of KIC's virtual learning environment in support of student learning (paragraph 20).

Recommendations

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

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

- ensure that there is provision in all programmes for an external scrutiny of examination questions and summative assignments, before these are used in student assessment (paragraph 7).

The team considers that it is **desirable** for KICL to:

- make the most appropriate use of the appointed external examiners' participation in examination boards (paragraph 7).

Detailed findings

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

1 The committee structure at KICL is less formal than those that are found in other KIC embedded colleges, principally because KICL works with three distinct partners, each of which has its own manner of operating. There is normally an annual review meeting with each partner which is the equivalent to a Joint Academic Board in a fully embedded college. Meetings with City University representatives are called by request of either partner. With the University of Westminster there is an annual meeting with regular catch-ups; Cranfield has academic meetings (but it should be noted that KICL is in the very early stages of this partnership). For the first time this year, the annual programme reports fed into the production of the Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes Report which is considered by the Academic Planning and Quality Committee.

2 Annual monitoring processes are well implemented and evidence showed them to be effective. The procedures are relatively new, although their routes are well defined. KIC's periodic programme review procedure is being introduced, but has not yet taken place.

3 KICL staff who were interviewed by the review team were unclear about the ultimate locus of responsibility for the assurance of standards; some saw such responsibility as resting at college level or with the university partner.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

Assessment of students

4 Assessments are set by module coordinators and scrutinised by module teams. They are not sent to external examiners. Final approval is from the Programme Leader. Students are aware of the assessment requirements and received feedback on assignments in a timely fashion. The review team considered this an effective process.

Certificates and transcripts

5 Certificates are not issued by KIC. Transcripts are issued by KICL; there is a lack of clarity over the transcript's references to 'awarding body' (KIC) and 'awarding institution'.

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

6 The KIC Quality Assurance Framework and supporting Academic Standards and Quality Manual provided by KIC centrally reflect appropriate sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*). In addition, provision at KICL has been mapped against the *Code of practice* and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Subject benchmark statements or A-level requirements are also used, as appropriate. Good use was being made of appropriate external reference points.

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

7 The marking of summative work is moderated appropriately. An external input is that provided by the appointment of external examiners. External examiners do not see assignments and examination questions before they are taken by the students. The review team noted that there were cases where external examiners had not been present at examination boards. External examiners verify the standard of student work. Their reports feed into the annual programme reports. The reports are used to generate good practice. The Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ) would provide support to the college if any reports were unfavourable.

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

8 Well developed monitoring systems are in place, which make provision to personal tutors of timely data on student attendance and performance. KICL identifies students who might be at risk and intervenes to counsel them. Student advisers make excellent use of student data in support of student progression.

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

9 KICL works effectively within the KIC Quality Assurance Framework to carry out monitoring and review of the programmes. The study experience of students is reviewed through a range of measures, including comprehensive student feedback reported through to College, University and central KIC bodies.

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

10 See paragraph 6.

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

11 KIC has a range of processes for monitoring the quality of learning opportunities, including the annual review process which reports on progression and completion figures and the use of external examiners to comment on the quality as well as the standard of student work. Locally, assurance is provided primarily through student evaluations, focus groups and informal contact.

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

12 Comprehensive student feedback processes are in place for regular evaluation of the student experience. Evidence derived from students seen during the scrutiny suggests KICL takes appropriate action in response to student feedback. Students met by the visiting reviewers reported little need to depend upon formal mechanisms for highlighting concerns or making complaints, as they had plenty of opportunities to raise issues with staff on an informal basis. They found staff approachable and considered that their feedback was responded to appropriately and in a timely manner.

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

13 All students have a named tutor and the review team found an excellent standard of support in every respect. Academic and pastoral staff work together very effectively to provide holistic support. KICL makes excellent use of timely electronic reports on attendance and performance within one-to-one personal tutorials. Staff with responsibility for student support appeared to have a high level of awareness of good practice and to implement this and disseminate among colleagues.

14 KICL makes good use of the University Placement Service to ensure that those who complete its courses but fail to make a sufficiently high grade to progress to the university of their choice have progression opportunities to other higher education institutions. These opportunities were much appreciated by the students.

15 KICL provides a welcoming environment for its diverse student population and students that the team met appreciated the inclusive culture of KICL. They spoke highly of the help they received with orientation when they first arrived in London and practical steps taken to support them, such as the welcome kits provided in their accommodation and a quiet room which may be used for prayer, on the college premises. The demands of the diverse background of students at KICL are met through a variety of support mechanisms, including, for instance, an insistence on spoken English in the classroom, optional extra study sessions to improve particular elements of learning, careful instruction about the avoidance of plagiarism, and a quiet room for Muslim students.

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

16 This is managed centrally by KIC; the team saw evidence of appropriate communication between KICL and the centre.

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

17 Effective processes are in place for the recruitment and induction of staff. Annual appraisal is in place. Staff reported sharing of good practice with their equivalents in other colleges in the network. The review team found support for both administrative and support staff to be of a generally excellent standard, with staff well managed and encouraged in their professional development. Staff are encouraged to maintain currency of scholarship within their disciplines. Some staff already have, or are working towards, PhDs and a seminar series provides opportunities for staff to share scholarship.

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

18 KIC and KICL regularly review the quality and availability of learning resources through the use of student feedback, and in the evaluations made by programme committees, and the annual programme reports.

19 As well as the provision of excellent premises, all KICL students have easy access to world class facilities at nearby City University. Students were enthusiastic in their comments about the relationship with City University, and the meeting with the City representative confirmed that students were treated as City students, including those who would eventually move on to the other universities.

20 Tutors reported College encouragement to make proactive use of the KIC virtual learning environment in support of student learning. For instance, student handbooks and module details are posted, lecture slides are provided a week in advance to assist preparation, and weekly quizzes help with exam preparation. Students acknowledged in their meeting with the team that local use of the virtual learning environment is a valued preparation for the learning experience at their future universities. The review team considered that the interactive use of the virtual learning environment was a feature of good practice at KICL.

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

21 Students commented positively on the accuracy of information they were given, both in printed documentation and online. If anything, they felt that the reality when they arrived was even better than they were expecting.

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

22 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 local College Director and by the Managing Director of KIC in the London office. There were no adverse comments from staff or students in this area.

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