



Educational Oversight for embedded colleges: report of the monitoring visit of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd, June 2017

Kaplan International College London

1 Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the monitoring team concludes that Kaplan International College London (KICL) is making commendable progress with implementing the action plan following the June 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 There has been significant growth in student numbers (27.4 per cent), attributed to various factors including additional pathways, embedding of recent partnerships with the University of Birmingham and the University of York, and the implementation of a new partnership with Aston University. Successful launch of new programmes this year includes the pre-doctorate and an International Year One for the University of Westminster. As a result, additional sessional staff have been recruited and, from next year, the College plans to recruit to six posts (three new and three vacancies) to provide support across all provision.

3 Teaching space is at 85 per cent of the timetable capacity, with access to other Kaplan Financial teaching facilities, which is five minutes away, if required. To accommodate future growth, Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd (KIC) investment is planned next year, possibly by acquiring all accommodation within the current building to provide extra capacity. While all KICL students have access to learning resources at City University, only a small number make use of the facilities, which will be addressed by the College.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The College has completed the recommendation identified at the 2016 Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) in relation to the governance arrangements. Formal systems have now been established for new partnerships, and existing arrangements have been refreshed and are working well. The first meetings of the Joint Management Boards have been held at the University of Birmingham and Aston University, which included high participation of University staff and enabled productive discussion between institutions. Agreed governance arrangements with the University of York involved an on-campus Pathway Management Board to oversee the joint activities between KICL and the University. The first meeting was held in March 2017, which received an update on the external examiners appointed by the College and the approved articulation register. As noted in the Governance Statement, KICL will keep the operation of the governance arrangements under review, ensuring that terms of reference and membership are regularly updated. During meetings with

three University partners, the monitoring team was advised that the minutes of the KICL JMB meetings were reported to the University's own formal senior committees, who would also review the effectiveness of the governance arrangements.

5 KICL has continued to build on the three areas of good practice identified in the 2016 review visit relating to high quality pastoral and academic support, its proactive approach to identifying student needs and supporting students, and the comprehensive use of management information to track individual students and engage them in their learning. In developing a more holistic approach to student support, two successful schemes were piloted during 2016. The Penn-Resilience Programme was introduced to help students develop skills to deal with emotional and stressful situations, supplemented by exam stress workshops and academic counselling sessions. The College also introduced supplementary blended learning materials from Khan Academy for all Science and Engineering modules. Both schemes had received positive feedback and will continue to be monitored to assess impact upon attendance and performance.

6 Following a review by the Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ), the College had implemented its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS), supported by key priorities and an Action Plan for staff development activities to foster student-centred practices. Staff have attended training sessions to encourage students to complete KapPACK, the KIC graduate attributes reward scheme, which was implemented this year through the tutorial system and was made available on the virtual learning environment (VLE). Students were required to complete essays and provide evidence against the checklist of attributes, with online badges provided for successful completion. Three students from each cohort were rewarded with a national Red Letter Experience. To date, student feedback on the scheme has been positive and the College is in the process of analysing the outcome of the scheme, noting that tutorials have made a positive impact upon participation rates.

7 The College has continued to enhance opportunities for students to provide feedback through the use of a dedicated email address for student comments, a feedback box in the breakout room and posters, alongside more formal mechanisms through personal tutorials, online module feedback and through student representative meetings. Students were informed and invited to apply for the role of student representative at induction and those selected by staff were required to attend training sessions. Regular meetings with student representatives have been held and representatives are required to attend the Programme Committee Meetings and Enhancement Forums, promote activity days and meet new student intakes. In response to student feedback, the College has restructured the content within the Mathematics modules, which has resulted in notably improved student performance. The representation system would be developed further by the College including the introduction of a handbook for September 2017.

8 The central KIC Admissions Team is responsible for managing student recruitment and admission for all colleges, and involves a network of KIC overseas offices and agents. The KIC Admissions Manual sets out the central admissions process that includes assessing an applicant's eligibility for the different offers available, including those with non-standard entry qualifications. During the meeting with students, the monitoring team was advised that experiences of the admissions process had been positive, noting that staff had been very responsive and supportive throughout the process. Induction week had provided a helpful introduction to the College and the Universities, with trips and social activities arranged to ease the transition to the UK.

9 KICL has adopted the revised template for online programme handbooks, developed by CLIQ to address variation in content between the colleges and provide links to relevant documents stored on the VLE. The impact of the revised handbook has resulted in fewer queries at the KICL Student Services reception desk and staff have received positive feedback on its user-friendly format. Student Services is strengthening the handbook further by providing a paper version of all student information. This is currently in consultation with students in preparation for a September 2017 implementation.

10 A high level of achievement was noted in the data provided by the College for 2016 cohorts, in which 85 per cent of all students achieved the KIC Award, of whom 75 percent progressed to partner University study, with a further 13 per cent accepting unconditional offers from other UK higher education institutions. The College closely monitors its student progression and retention data, and actions to improve student progression and achievement are identified in the Annual Programme Reports and reflected in the College Action Plan. Of particular note was the Cross-College Review of Language for Study 3 (LS3), which resulted in a revised curriculum for academic year 2016-17 in order to secure better outcomes. KICL also introduced additional reading and listening practice materials and mock exams in response to students' request for additional exam practice. This has had significant impact upon the exam outcomes, with a success rate of the reading exam at 99.5 per cent of students passing first time in May 2017 compared with 76.5 per cent in May 2016, and with 100 per cent of students scoring 55 or higher in the listening exam. As a consequence, the College had received excellent student feedback.

11 The College has proactively implemented a number of new initiatives to improve student success, focusing on the January start Foundation Certificate (the three-term programme) and the autumn start Preparatory English modules on the Foundation Certificate programmes. The College's Action Plan detailed the improved identification of individual students' support requirements, additional support classes, and examination and interview preparation. While it was too soon to determine how successful this overall strategy has been in improving outcomes, the College's interview preparations had already been effective in increasing the number of successful interviews undertaken for entry to Westminster for certain degree pathways.

4 The embedded colleges' use of external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

12 KIC undertakes an annual review and updating of the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM) to ensure alignment with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). As evidenced within the Action Plan, the College continues to make effective use of a range of external reference points through explicit mapping of the actions against the relevant sections of the Quality Code. The development of its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) was informed by a range of external reference points including the KIC UK Pathways Learning and Teaching Framework, Quality Code, UK Professional Standards Framework and its higher education partnerships. In line with the Action Plan within the LTAS, College staff had attended web conferences for blended learning and external conferences both within the UK and overseas, and had then presented and shared their learning at the College Development Day and to other KIC colleges through the Best Practice Day 2016.

13 KIC has updated the Complaints Process in line with the expectations of the Quality Code in response to the KIC recommendation set at the last review visit, to ensure that students

receive written confirmation that internal complaints and/or appeals procedures have been completed and what independent recourse options are available. The revised complaints procedure was rolled out to all Colleges during 2016-17, including the implementation of the procedure to record informal complaints, with regular reporting to the CEMB/Director of Colleges. The College's complaints procedure has been publicised to staff and students using posters and through the VLE, and students confirmed that they were aware of the procedures for raising complaints/appeals.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

14 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's and its embedded colleges' 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 and its embedded colleges 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 Cameron Waitt, QAA Officer, and Alison Jones, QAA Reviewer, on 22 June 2017.

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