



# Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd

June 2016

## Contents

<b>About this review .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Key findings.....</b>	<b>2</b>
QAA's judgements about Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd.....	2
Good practice .....	2
Recommendations .....	2
Theme: Digital Literacy .....	2
Financial sustainability, management and governance .....	3
<b>About Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Explanation of the findings about Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd.....</b>	<b>6</b>
1 Judgement: The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards by the provider .....	7
2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities.....	21
3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities .....	41
4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities .....	44
5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacy .....	47
<b>Glossary.....</b>	<b>48</b>

## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd. The review took place from 14 to 30 June 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Alison Jones
- Professor Graham Romp.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<sup>1</sup> setting out what all UK [higher education providers](#) expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - The setting and maintenance of academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) there is also a check on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG). This check has the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure of their education provider.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

In reviewing Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [themes](#) for the academic year 2015-16 are Digital Literacy and Student Employability,<sup>2</sup> and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>3</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges).<sup>4</sup> For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code)

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106)

<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges): [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx)

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd (KIC).

- The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities is **commended**.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities is **commended**.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd:

- the supportive and personalised advice and guidance that applicants receive to ensure they are registered on the most appropriate course with suitable progression opportunities (Expectation B2)
- the extensive and detailed training provided to admission staff and agents to aid student recruitment (Expectation B2)
- the wide range of KIC-led staff development opportunities which enables the sharing of best practice in supporting international students (Expectation B3 and Enhancement)
- the quality of published pre-arrival information that enables students to make well informed decisions about their choice of programmes (Expectation C)
- the rigorous and systematic processes for managing student-facing information across the college network and university partners which ensures it is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy (Expectation C)
- the systematic identification and promotion of opportunities for embedding enhancement initiatives across the network to improve the quality of student learning (Enhancement).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd.

By January 2017:

- formalise governance arrangements with the University of York and the University of Birmingham for the effective oversight of academic standards and learning opportunities (Expectation A2.1)
- ensure that students receive written confirmation that internal complaints and/or appeals procedures have been completed and what independent recourse options are available (Expectation B9).

### Theme: Digital Literacy

At KIC level there are two strategies that promote digital literacy: a Blended Learning Strategy which focuses on engaging learning experiences for students, and the Learning and Teaching Framework which addresses student digital literacy development. Central

resources have been provided to support blended learning and digital literacy initiatives across the colleges. There is a Blended Learning Working Group which shares good practice and drives blended learning innovations at college level. There is access to funding to resource level digital literacy and blended learning innovations through the Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund.

## **Financial sustainability, management and governance**

There were no material issues identified at Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd during the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Higher Education Review](#) (Embedded Colleges).

## **About Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd**

Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd (KIC) is part of Kaplan Inc, a major global private provider of education, and a subsidiary of Graham Holdings Company. KIC was established in 2005 with the aim of developing a network of international pathway colleges which would provide a range of entry and exit points for international students wishing to enter UK higher education. In 2009, the KIC Pathways and Kaplan International English divisions were merged to create a single business unit known collectively as Kaplan International Colleges. In 2014, the English language training colleges became Kaplan International English which differentiates them from the provision of KIC UK Pathway colleges which is the focus of the review.

KIC aims to deliver world-leading pathway programmes designed specifically to meet the needs of international students primarily based from outside the EU. KIC programmes prepare international students to succeed at university and provides a way for universities to ensure the quality of students entering undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. Academic programmes are designed in close collaboration with partner universities. Programmes comprise Language for Study, Skills for Study and academic subject modules to combine the development discipline specific abilities and skills, transferable skills and English language proficiency.

KIC has existing partnerships in the UK with the University of Brighton, Bournemouth University, the University of Glasgow, the University of Liverpool, Nottingham Trent University and the University of the West of England, where it operates embedded colleges on each of the campuses. Additionally, KIC operates a further college in London which provides pathways to more than one partner institution. Kaplan International College London provides pathways to the University of Birmingham, Cranfield University, City University London, the University of Westminster and the University of York. In 2015-16, partnership agreements were signed with the University of York and the University of Nottingham, with the first intake of students due to start in 2016-17. In 2014-15, a total of around 4,500 students enrolled with KIC colleges.

Colleges offer a range of programmes such as Foundation Certificate, International Year One, Pre-Master's and Pre-Doctorate. Subject areas range from arts, computing, design and media, business, law and social sciences, hospitality and tourism, and science and engineering. Depending on their entry level of English, students join programmes for a variety of different durations and study appropriate combinations of Language for Study, Skills for Study and academic subject modules.

On successful completion of their studies at the required academic and English exit levels, students are guaranteed an unconditional offer of progression to a degree at the relevant

partner university. Where students have successfully completed the KIC programme, but not necessarily qualified for direct progression to the partner institution, students are able to access alternative offers through KIC's University Placement Service. Awards are conferred by KIC and recognised for entry purposes by partner universities under the terms of a cooperation agreement or articulation agreement with partners.

KIC is a network of colleges with broadly similar structures, working within a common framework and guided by centralised management and administration functions. KIC's headquarters are in central London. These offices provide management and administrative services responsible for strategic direction, recruitment and admissions, marketing and sales, web management, and university placement. The highest management body within KIC is the Senior Management Team, which has overall responsibility for the company's strategic direction. This group is supported by the College Executive Management Board whose membership includes the directors of all the KIC colleges. KIC's senior academic body is the Academic Planning and Quality Committee which is responsible for the oversight of academic standards and quality. In each of the embedded colleges, management responsibility rests with the College Director.

KIC has established a Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ), which is based in Nottingham, with virtual team presence across five colleges, and, together with colleges, has responsibility across all the KIC colleges for academic development and enhancement and for coordinating quality assurance.

KIC underwent Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight (ECREO) in March 2012 and gained positive judgements for provider's management of its responsibilities for the academic standards of awards, its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities, and the reliance that can be placed on the information that the provider produces about the learning opportunities it offers through the embedded colleges.

The ECREO report of 2012 identified eight areas of good practice that have been maintained and developed.

The provider has fully addressed the three advisable recommendations made in the 2012 report:

- Review the design and content of the transcripts issued by KIC, so as to ensure that there is no confusion regarding the ultimate responsibility for the KIC award.

Transcripts have been amended and are now clear in regards to the responsibility of the KIC award.

- Provide a dimension of external assurance for the Pre-Master's programme offered at Kaplan International College Bournemouth in accordance with KIC's revised Academic Standards and Quality Manual.

External examiners were promptly appointed to the Pre-Master's programmes at Kaplan International College Bournemouth and a centralised database has been introduced to review and maintain external examiner coverage across the colleges.

- 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.

## Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd

The scrutiny of examination papers has been enhanced across the colleges and examiners now have access to and provide feedback on the majority of summative assessments.

KIC also responded to the four desirable recommendations raised in the 2012 QAA report and all areas have been addressed.

For the purposes of the Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd, the following embedded colleges within the network have undergone review in June 2016:

University of Brighton International College  
Glasgow International College  
Liverpool International College  
Kaplan International College London

## Explanation of the findings about Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

# 1 Judgement: The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards by the provider

**Expectation (A1):** In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:

**a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* are met by:**

- positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications
- ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications
- naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications
- awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes

**b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics**

**c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework**

**d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards***

## Findings

1.1 KIC offers programmes that comprise Language for Study, Skills for Study and academic subject modules which upon successful completion at a specified level the student is guaranteed progression to an undergraduate or postgraduate degree at the relevant partner university, as specified in the terms of a cooperation agreement or articulation agreement with partners. The only exception to this is the Pre-Doctorate programme offered at Kaplan International College London (KICL) which does not offer guaranteed progression upon successful completion. The awards, and the programmes which lead to them, are specific to each college and are determined by the detailed negotiation on student learning outcomes, which takes place between the college and the partner university.

1.2 KIC sets out the programme level intended learning outcomes of its awards in its Qualifications Framework which is itself informed by the FHEQ. This framework is used as a reference point by all those involved in the process of product, programme and module design and approval. KIC awards are conferred independently of the requirements for articulation to the partner university and through the KIC Qualifications Framework are aligned with relevant external reference points, including Ofqual's Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), the FHEQ and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

1.3 KIC's Pre-Master's programmes are designed to support students to develop necessary academic and language skills so that they may progress to UK higher education



at FHEQ level 7/SCQF level 11. Given that these programmes do not seek to enhance students' subject-level knowledge these programmes are aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) with the appropriate reference point, CEFR B2, is used for these programmes.

1.4 Programmes are also developed in line with appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements, as noted within the programme specifications.

1.5 The KIC Award is not explicitly credit rated but KIC has adopted a credit point framework for all programmes and modules, which correspond to that used within UK higher education.

1.6 Students who successfully complete their programme of study receive a transcript of their performance and an award certificate using a standard centralised template.

1.7 KIC has clear regulations and appropriate policies and procedures which would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.8 The review team scrutinised KIC's processes and their effectiveness through consideration of evidence provided in documented quality assurance procedures, approval and re-approval reports, programme and module documentation and meetings with staff and students.

1.9 KICs quality assurance arrangements make full use of external reference points and there is clear and consistent evidence that qualification learning outcomes align with the relevant quality frameworks.

1.10 Programme specifications viewed by the review team confirm that learning outcomes for the awards are consistent with the relevant external qualification and KIC's own Qualifications Framework. The level of each programme and the appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements are referenced within the programme specification. Programme specifications set out the volume of study for each award in terms of credit and notional learning hours. Module learning hours and assessment requirements are set out in the approved module descriptors.

1.11 KIC ensures that its awards are mapped against relevant national benchmarks and it implements and monitors its procedures effectively. The review team concludes that Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards**

**Findings**

1.12 Ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of KIC programmes lies with its Senior Management Team (SMT). KIC's senior academic body is the Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC) which has devolved responsibility for the governance of academic standards and quality. The APQC is responsible for the setting and monitoring of academic policies and academic standards, including the governance of the KIC quality assurance framework, the approval of new programmes and modules, major changes to existing programmes and modules, the approval of academic regulations, and the receipt of reports and surveys relating to academic standards and quality.

1.13 KIC academic policies and procedures concerning the award of credit and qualifications are outlined in detail within its Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM). Responsibility for implementing these rests with the colleges, with support provided by KIC Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ).

1.14 The ASQM sets out in more detail the series of policies and procedures, aligned with the QAF, which colleges need to adhere to in order to ensure academic standards and quality. In response to rapid growth of KIC colleges and programmes the provider has progressively adopted a more devolved approach to the management of its embedded colleges, with significant aspects of decision making and quality assurance now taking place at the local college level. Operational management of academic standards and quality takes place within a federal structure, with responsibilities lying at both the central and college level. At college level, the management of academic standards is the responsibility of the College Director, the Academic Director, and the programme teams. Programme Committees are established for all programmes within each college. All KIC colleges work closely with the partner university in the quality management of their programmes. Joint Academic Boards (JABs), or equivalent, are also typically convened between a college and the partner university and allow a joint review of academic standards.

1.15 The ASQM specifies that the Joint Academic Board (JAB) or equivalent is the senior advisory board for the Kaplan College. It plays a key role in ensuring that the college's academic standards are appropriate for the purpose of progression to the host university. Where a JAB operates as part of the partnership agreement, it is convened jointly between the college and the host university/universities. Colleges negotiate with the host university the terms of reference of their JAB.

1.16 Where KIC Colleges have articulation agreements with more than one host university, as is the case at KIC London, the ASQM specifies that the college and the host(s) will identify alternative means of fulfilling the function of the JAB.

1.17 KIC has developed comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations and has designed an appropriate quality assurance committee structure that would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.18 The review team scrutinised KIC processes and their effectiveness through consideration of the documented quality assurance procedures, formal agreements with partner universities, minutes of meetings, external examiner reports and programme specifications. The team also met staff at provider and colleges levels, including senior management, teaching and support staff.

1.19 For established programmes at the colleges that were reviewed there is extensive evidence that the KIC quality assurance frameworks and regulations are fully implemented. This includes the effective implementation of formal committees at college and provider level that operate according to clear terms of reference within an overall quality assurance governance structures. These arrangements allow the provider to have effective oversight of academic standards and ensures that decisions relating to the maintenance of academic standards are formally agreed and recognised at the appropriate level and with the partner university.

1.20 However, for two recent additional articulation agreements at KICL with the University of York and the University of Birmingham , formal committees designed to undertake the role of the JAB's in ensuring that the academic standards of its programmes are appropriate for the purpose of progression to the host university had not been convened at the time of the review visit. Instead the review team were informed that operational meetings had been held between the staff at KICL and representatives from each of the partner universities. Given the key role of the JABs or equivalent in ensuring the maintenance of academic standards and that students have been recruited on to KICL programmes associated with these progression agreements since the start of the 2015-16 academic year, the review team **recommends** that, by January 2017, KIC formalises governance arrangements with the University of York and the University of Birmingham for the effective oversight of academic standards and learning opportunities.

1.21 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the level of risk is moderate due to identified weaknesses in the implementation of its quality assurance governance structures.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Moderate**

**Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards**

**Findings**

1.22 KIC has developed standard templates for programme and module specifications to be used at college level. The programme level template requires programme teams to indicate the relevant FHEQ or SCQF level and Subject Benchmark Statements used to inform the design of the programme. The module specification template requires programme teams to specify the level and volume of credit, indicative content, module learning outcomes, learning and teaching methods and the assessment methodology. These specifications are to be formally approved and updated to reflect agreed amendments. The programme and module specifications act as summary documents with more detailed information contained in module guides which are issued to students.

1.23 Partner universities approve and sign cooperation and articulation agreements which confirm the programme and the level, according to appropriate external reference points, at which it is delivered.

1.24 The provider's requirements are appropriately designed and are sufficiently robust, and its processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.25 The review team scrutinised KIC's processes and their effectiveness through consideration of evidence provided in documented quality assurance procedures, programme specifications, module descriptors, student handbooks and meetings with staff and students in the colleges visited by the team.

1.26 The programme and module specifications viewed by the review team contained the required definitive information as required by the provider. These are formally approved in line with the provider requirements and updated when changes are formally approved via APQC. The approved documentation was used by staff within colleges to inform the delivery and assessment of the programmes and students were issued with module guides that were consistent with formally approved documentation.

1.27 Following rapid growth of its colleges and programmes, and the move to a more devolved academic structure, KIC has recently audited its programme specifications to ensure that they comply with good practice and all programme specifications are now stored centrally on KIC's intranet. The provider also maintains a Higher Education Course Management (HECM) database that records the specific entry and progression requirements students need to attain to progress to a particular partner university programme. This database is updated by colleges and feeds into the Course Finder on KIC's website and electronic administration system.

1.28 The review team found that KIC has robust processes to ensure the maintenance of definitive records for all programmes of study and for individual student records. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.29 KIC has a clear process for the approval of taught programmes which are defined in the Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM). The approval processes for new products or programmes require the academic and business cases to be considered as distinct parts of the development process. The business rationale for new products or programmes is first considered by the New Product Development and Approval Group (NPDAG), in liaison with internal and external stakeholders, including consideration of any compliance implications prior to full academic approval.

1.30 The Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC) has oversight of all academic provision and undertakes academic approval of new and significantly amended modules and programmes. Academic approval by the relevant partner university is secured through the JAB or equivalent which ensures that the new product or programme prepares students appropriately for study at the University.

1.31 The Business Approval Group for Programme Developments (BAGPD) reviews proposals where there are wider business implications arising from significant or minor modifications to existing programmes and modules, prior to consideration of the programme modification through KIC's approval processes.

1.32 The ASQM sets out clear parameters for the approval of significant modifications by the College Senior Management Team, with responsibility for the approval of minor modifications devolved to the College Programme Committees, in consultation with College Senior Management Team. This enables flexibility within the process for minor modifications to be made as required to maintain programme currency and appropriate progression to University processes.

1.33 The design of the processes for programme approval would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.34 The review team considered a range of documentation pertaining to programme approval, including relevant quality assurance processes, programme and module specifications and committee minutes. The team also met staff responsible for the oversight and operation of the processes within KIC.

1.35 KIC processes for programme and product approval draw effectively upon the UK Quality Code, with systematic references to the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements.

1.36 The evidence considered by the review team confirms that KIC approval processes effectively and consistently ensure that the proposed learning outcomes are aligned with the relevant qualification descriptor in the FHEQ, SCQF and CEFR, with appropriate consideration being made of Subject Benchmark Statements. The approval process provides effective assurance that the proposed assessment methodology adequately tests the intended learning outcomes. The programme specifications and module specifications

are rigorously scrutinised through the approval process and become the definitive record of the programme stored and shared via KI Connect.

1.37 Evidence scrutinised by the review team confirms that the KIC approval processes provide a rigorous and consistent check that programmes meet or exceed the UK threshold academic standards.

1.38 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low because KIC implements rigorous processes for the approval of taught programmes to ensure that academic standards are appropriately set.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:**

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.39 KIC's programme and module learning outcomes are agreed as part of a formal approval process which ensures that KIC awards reference the appropriate standards and benchmarks as set out in the Qualifications Framework . The KIC Quality Assurance Framework provides clear guidance to College staff when devising and updating programme and module learning outcomes .

1.40 The Academic Standard and Quality Manual (ASQM) sets out KIC's assessment principles including the responsibility of College level Programme Committees for ensuring that an effective assessment strategy is in place for all programmes that meet the KIC aims and principles of assessment and supports the Kaplan International UK Pathways Learning and Teaching Framework. Grade descriptors are used to define success and extent to which learning outcomes are met. Programme Committees ensure that assessments are designed and considered in the overall context of the programme and module learning outcomes and include an appropriate volume and balance of assessment methods. The Annual Programme Report (APR) is completed by the Programme Leader, in conjunction with the Programme Committee before final approval is given by the Senior College Management Team. It is then received by the Collegiate Board of Studies, the External Examiner and CLIQ. The APRs inform the Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes (ASQP) Report which is considered by KIC ASQC.

1.41 The KIC external examiner report template requires commentary on the appropriateness of the learning outcomes to the level of the award and the appropriateness of the assessment to the programme and module outcomes. Assessment Boards confirm students' marks and whether they have met the University progression requirements and those for the KIC Award.

1.42 Colleges are effectively supported in the assessment process by CLIQ with supplementary written guidance such as the KIC Assessment Development Guide and the Guidelines for Establishing Alternative Assessment Arrangements for Disabled Students .

1.43 The review team found that the design of the processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.44 The review team considered a range of documentation including programme committee minutes, APR reports, programme and module specifications and external examiner reports.

1.45 The review team met staff who were involved in providing support for programme approval, setting and marking of assessments, and in producing annual programme reports.

1.46 The review team found that KIC has a clear process for defining and setting learning outcomes on programme approval and for transferring those outcomes into assessment tasks and criteria. This process takes into account UK threshold standards and the standards set by KIC and its partner universities. The process is well embedded and reasonably understood by staff and students. External input into the enhancement of learning outcomes, and the assessment process was clearly embedded within the College processes.

1.47 Programme specifications seen by the review team all included appropriate learning outcomes. APR reports and minutes of Programme Committees and APQC undertook effective consideration of the equivalency of assessment methods and consistency of marking standards. External examiner reports noted that there was a good range of assessment methods used on many programmes and confirmed that Assessment Boards operate securely and effectively. There was no evidence of any significant concerns within the external examiner reports regarding standards that had not been addressed.

1.48 KIC staff advised that support for College staff is provided by CLIQ through targeted training that includes developing assessments in subject areas and standardisation of marking for English language.

1.49 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low because appropriate rules, policies and processes are in place and are appropriately communicated and applied.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**



**Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

## Findings

1.50 KIC has devolved responsibility to Colleges for the monitoring and review of programmes to ensure threshold standards are met as outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework. .

1.51 Colleges undertake ongoing monitoring and review activities as well as annual review and periodic programme review (PPR). Using the standard KIC template, Programme Leaders have responsibility for completing the Annual Programme Report (APR), in conjunction with the Programme Committee focusing upon performance and data analysis, and highlighting good practice for wider dissemination and an action plan for resolving issues identified by the Programme Committee. Joint Academic Boards are responsible for considering APRs and reporting back to the College.

1.52 CLIQ produces an Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes Report (ASQP) which summarises academic performance of all KIC Colleges for monitoring by APQC. Good practice is elicited for dissemination across Colleges, identifying areas of quality enhancement to be addressed at cross-college level.

1.53 PPR takes place every five years and draws upon APRs and other monitoring outcomes to enable Colleges to take a holistic view of its provision, ensuring programmes remain valid and fit for purpose, and meet both internal and external requirements. The outcome of the process is the Periodic Programme Review Report (PPRR) which includes an action plan which is followed up by Programme Committees. PPR may be replaced by periodic review undertaken by or jointly with the College's host University.

1.54 The review team found that the design of the processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.55 The review team considered a range of documentation including Programme Committee minutes, Joint Academic Board minutes, APR reports, PPRR reports and APQC minutes. The review team met staff involved in supporting programme monitoring and review activities within the Colleges.

1.56 The review team found that Colleges effectively draw upon a wide range of information including data on student performance and achievement within its monitoring and review activities. Formal agreements now reflect the requirement for partner universities to provide data to colleges regarding student performance and achievement to inform College's curriculum developments. The review team noted that the University of Brighton International College was working with the University of Brighton to develop a more structured approach to sharing KIC alumni data which is being shared with other Colleges as part of KIC enhancement initiatives.

1.57 KIC's monitoring and review processes enables rigorous and systematic assurance that academic standards are being achieved and maintained. Embedded processes are in place within the Colleges that provide assurances to KIC that programmes are delivered as

approved and the validity of programmes is reviewed and enhanced. In addition, KIC processes enable the consistency of standards to be maintained across the network of Colleges while continuing to meet the needs of the partner universities.

1.58 KIC also has processes in place to review and enhance its monitoring and review processes and for disseminating good practice across the network of Colleges. For example, following a review of the KIC Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) in 2011, a five yearly Periodic Programme Review of all KIC Colleges was implemented. CLIQ has also streamlined and improved the use of data for the Academic Standards and Quality of Programme (ASQP) report in 2014-15 by providing combined academic data within a short summary for appending to the College annual report annual shared with university partners. KIC acknowledged the difficulties in pulling together meaningful data within a tabular format and, while good progress had been made with the ASQP report, further work is required to produce a similar summary report for College use.

1.59 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low because appropriate rules, policies and processes are in place and are appropriately communicated and applied.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:**

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.60 The KIC Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) sets out the requirements for external examiners to be appointed by Colleges to each award bearing programme, or cognate group of programmes in line with University level agreed procedures. In addition, an external examiner is appointed by KIC to the credit bearing Languages for Study module operating across the network of Colleges. There are varied levels of involvement by university partners within the appointment process, whereby some universities approve the appointment and others act as a critical friend. Approval is undertaken through the Joint Academic Board where required.

1.61 Feedback from external examiners is used to inform the Annual Programme Reports (APRs) produced by Programme Leaders at College level and the overarching institutional level Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes (ASQP) report. Periodic Programme Review also draws upon the feedback provided through external examiner reports.

1.62 The arrangements for using external and independent expertise in the setting and maintenance of academic standards would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.63 The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing external examiner reports, APRs, Programme Committee minutes and in discussions with staff. The review team found evidence that consideration of external examiner reports was reflected in APRs and Programme Committee minutes, together with the responses to external examiners and the summary provided to students.

1.64 Written external reports seen by the review team were completed in full, noting strengths and raising any concerns. The reports deal appropriately and robustly with matters relating to standards, with examples of recommendations being followed up by the Colleges. There is oversight of externality provided with annual report of the Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes Report (ASQP) that includes a summary of feedback and key points arising from external examiners reports from each College.

1.65 A standard KIC pro forma requests all external examiners to comment on comparability of academic standards of KIC programmes to those of a similar level at other institutions.

1.66 The review team were advised by KIC Senior Managers as to the current challenges of involving external reviewers within the academic review stages of programme development due to commercial confidentiality. They confirmed that the views of external examiners are currently sought to inform new programme developments and major modifications, as well as the views of academic staff at the host University. KIC is investigating ways in which external reviewers may be involved in the design stages of programme development with a view to implementing this by the end of 2016.

1.67 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low because appropriate rules, policies and processes are in place and are appropriately communicated and applied.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards by the provider: Summary of findings

1.68 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.69 All Expectations in this area are met. They are all low risk except in one case which is moderate and reflects a weakness in the implementation of the provider's governance arrangements at college level.

1.70 KIC ensures that its awards are aligned against relevant external reference points and establishes appropriate learning outcomes and volume of study for its programmes. There are comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern the award of qualifications and credit, and effective oversight of academic standards with its established partner universities.

1.71 There is one recommendation in this area, which is to strengthen governance arrangements with two university partners where there are more recent articulation agreements. There appropriate arrangements in place for providing, using and maintaining definitive programme information. There is a clear process for the approval of new and amended programmes and alignment with UK threshold academic standards. Academic approval by the relevant partner university is secured to ensure students are appropriately prepared for study at the university. Processes in place for the monitoring and review of programmes provide rigorous and systematic assurance that academic standards are achieved and maintained across the network of colleges. Appropriate use is made of external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards.

1.72 The review team concludes that the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards by KIC **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes**

### **Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval**

#### **Findings**

2.1 KIC Senior Management Team (SMT) has strategic oversight for programme development at provider level. KIC determines guidelines and procedures for academic standards and quality assurance with responsibility for implementation by the colleges supported by CLIQ. The College Academic Director has responsibility for management of academic standards and quality and reports on outcomes to KIC.

2.2 Initial proposals may be put forward by KIC, CLIQ, the College Academic Director or by a Programme Committee in liaison with the partner University for consideration by NPDAG or BAGPD for modifications to programmes that have business implications.

2.3 Full consideration of all aspects of learning opportunities to be provided is taken at the stages of design and approval of programmes. CLIQ undertakes a central role, acting as a 'hub' within the network of colleges to ensure a common KIC identity and set of standards is achieved across the colleges.

2.4 With support from CLIQ, colleges adhere to KIC defined procedures for undertaking programme design and approval which follow the clear stages outlined in Chapter two of the AQSM. Colleges have responsibility for the design and development of programmes and modules with support from CLIQ and other KIC internal teams as required.

2.5 KIC provides a standard set of documentation requirements to colleges for the approval process that include programme and module specifications using a standard template. Once initial planning approval has been granted by NPDAG and BAGPD, colleges have responsibility for maintaining the proposal documentation throughout the approval process, ensuring that it is updated to reflect any required amendments as appropriate.

2.6 The Joint Academic Board (JAB) or equivalent is responsible for securing university partner approval. Membership and remits of JABs vary across network and some colleges have joint subcommittees which report to JAB.

2.7 A Programme Committee is convened for each programme delivered, which includes student representation, and reports to the College Senior Management Team.

2.8 The Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC), chaired by the KIC Director of Student Learning monitors and reviews academic standards and quality and is responsible for approving new programmes or products in line with the KIC Quality Assurance Framework. Representation on APQC includes senior academic staff from colleges in addition to KIC senior managers. Additional members of staff may be asked to join APQC meetings for specific agenda items.

2.9 Academic approval at College level is achieved through the Joint Academic Board involving the University partner. APQC, as the senior body for all KIC academic affairs, takes final decision on programme and module approval and signification modifications.

2.10 The review team found that the arrangements in place for programme approval at College level would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.11 The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures, documentation relating to programme design, development and approval, and through meetings with staff and students. The review team scrutinised programme and module specifications, and minutes of Programme Committees, NPDA, BAGPD, JAB and APQC.

2.12 The evidence reviewed confirms that the KIC design and approval processes are systematically and consistently implemented by KIC and its Colleges. KIC's ASQM provides comprehensive information and advice to colleges on course development and approval, including clear criteria against which proposals are considered during the approval process.

2.13 In adhering to the requirements of KIC Quality Assurance Framework, including the Qualifications Framework, KIC colleges make rigorous and systematic use of the external benchmarks and the FHEQ in the design and approval of new programmes. Programme Committees and Joint Academic Boards, or their equivalent, undertake full consideration of all aspects of learning opportunities to be provided to students as part of the design and approval stages. The review team was advised that, for the new articulation arrangements with the University of York and the University of Birmingham, a formal JAB had not yet been established, although operational meetings were undertaken with the University partners (see Expectation A2.1).

2.14 The Review Team was advised that two new routes had been established in 2015 following a review of KIC processes; one for new programme development and approval, and one for existing programmes. These new routes have enabled KIC to respond quickly to market needs while maintaining rigour in the development process. As a result of the approval structure, the pre-doctorate programme at KICL was one of the new products developed rapidly by KIC during 2015 in response to market need.

2.15 The review team also noted the work currently being undertaken by KIC to provide systematic inclusion of external reviewers at early stages of development for September 2016.

2.16 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low because KIC implements effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission***

**Findings**

2.17 Student recruitment and admission for all KIC colleges is managed centrally at the provider's central offices in London where admissions staff work to a detailed procedural manual.

2.18 Admission requirements are determined by Kaplan taking into consideration the learning gain required by students in order to achieve the progression threshold onto the relevant university programme.

2.19 Students typically apply for entry to a particular college with a view to progressing to that college's university partner with a specific study plan in mind. All student applications received are recorded electronically on Kaplan's central record system. Information is made available to students in various prospectuses and online, and applicants are contacted by admissions staff on a regular basis to provide applicants with relevant information and help them to make an informed decisions. Applications are checked centrally to ensure prospective students meet the agreed entry requirements that include English language requirements and often specific subject requirements.

2.20 Applicants are also invited to disclose special educational needs at the application stage so that reasonable adjustments can be made if necessary. Where such adjustments are required to support a student in their learning this information is conveyed to the relevant university partner.

2.21 If accepted students are sent a detailed offer letter that confirms the nature of the offer made and the progression requirements needed to progress to their preferred university programme. All successful applicants are sent a pre-arrival guide to help them prepare for their study in the UK.

2.22 Admissions staff receive regular updates and comprehensive training to ensure they are up to date with programme information. KIC also provides in-country and UK-based training for agents used in the marketing of courses and student recruitment. Detailed records of all training events and attendees are kept and monitored by admissions staff centrally.

2.23 Kaplan regularly conducts surveys to obtain student feedback on the application and admissions process and makes improvements based on this feedback. The central marketing and recruitment team make regular visits to each of the colleges so that they can give potential students first-hand details of what the experience at a particular college will be like.

2.24 The detailed admissions manual along with the training and support provided to relevant staff and agents would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.25 The review team explored KIC's approach to the recruitment, selection and admission of students by viewing documentation, including the admissions manual, prospectuses, offer letters and pre-arrival information provided in hard copy and online. In



addition, the review team met staff and students at provider and college levels and considered progression data associated with each of the reviewed colleges.

2.26 The documentation examined by the review team demonstrated that KIC has clear procedures in relation to the recruitment, selection and admission of students to their programmes of study. These procedures are made clear to staff and potential students and embedded within a clearly defined organisational structure.

2.27 Students met by the review team consistently praised the admissions support and information that they received from Kaplan staff. All students met by the team stated that they were fully supported throughout the decision making and application process and that they received regular and helpful contact from the Admissions Team. The supportive and personalised advice and guidance that applicants receive to ensure they are registered on the most appropriate course with suitable progression opportunities is **good practice**.

2.28 Admission staff met by the review team were fully aware of KIC admission processes and were able to explain the various ways in which they and agents are supported and trained in their role. Admissions staff receive frequent product update training from colleges to ensure they have the most accurate and complete information on programmes, and can advise potential applicants accordingly. This extends to staff in KIC's overseas offices. The extensive and detailed training provided to admission staff and agents to aid student recruitment is **good practice**.

2.29 The high rates of progression from KIC programmes confirms that the implementation of its recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures enable those students who are able to benefit from their intended programme of study to do so.

2.30 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B3): Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.**

### **Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching***

#### **Findings**

2.31 KIC's Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC) has ultimate responsibility for assuring the quality of the learning opportunities available to students across colleges. The Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ) is responsible for the management of learning opportunities including the support for curriculum development and effective student learning across KIC programmes. The provider has developed a Learning and Teaching Framework which is to be used by colleges to produce their own, context-specific Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS), and related College Action Plans.

2.32 At College level, the promotion, monitoring and development of the quality of learning opportunities is the responsibility of Programme Committees, which report to the college Senior Management Team.

2.33 KIC has a range of processes for monitoring the quality of learning and teaching, including the annual monitoring process. Consideration of student feedback on the quality of teaching is included in annual reports.

2.34 Students are encouraged to participate in both formal and non-formal learning opportunities with colleges typically offering a range of enrichment activities outside the classroom. At some colleges arrangements are in place for students to participate in guest lectures and seminars taught by staff from the partner university.

2.35 Handbooks, guides or virtual training are produced by colleges for teaching staff, and virtual resources have been developed centrally to support staff in their learning and teaching. KIC has established a Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund (LTIF), administered by CLIQ that promotes learning and teaching through the support of projects relating to curriculum, materials and assessment, student support and technology.

2.36 Staff induction and further aspects of staff support and development, such as attendance at learning and teaching conferences is devolved to colleges. Colleges also offer a range of internal events including seminars, development and training sessions, conferences, and virtual training, aimed at the development and sharing good practice in learning and teaching. Support is made available to staff to seek HEA Fellowship status.

2.37 The KIC strategies and support provided to colleges and staff would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.38 The review team examined documentary evidence relating to the provider's overall strategy and support of learning opportunities for KIC students and examined how effectively these have been implemented within the individual colleges reviewed. As part of this process the review team met staff at both provider and college levels as well as students and recent alumni within the colleges reviewed.

2.39 All colleges produce detailed action plans that are reviewed and updated every three months. These are effectively used to monitor and enhance learning opportunities for

KIC students. At the time of the review, colleges were at different stages of producing and implementing their own context-specific Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, and this is area for further development and oversight by the provider.

2.40 Colleges typically provide a highly personalised approach to learning and teaching with each student allocated a personal tutor that they are required to meet with on a regular basis. Colleges seek to replicate learning and teaching methods that students will encounter when they progress to the University, including the use of lectures, seminars and the VLE. There is also an emphasis on supporting student's transition to university with an increased focus on independent learning as the student progresses through the Kaplan programme. Students have access to a wide range of learning resources provided by the associated embedded university or partner.

2.41 Students consistently valued the high quality learning opportunities made available to them, and especially the support and guidance provided to them in a range of different learning contexts. Students typically praised the personalised approach to learning and teaching, including the support provided by their Personal Tutor. Students positively evaluated the quality of feedback provided to them for both formative and summative assessments, and confirmed that feedback is consistently provided within the stated policy of ten working days. Alumni students of the colleges stated that they had been well prepared for their future study at their chosen university.

2.42 Student feedback on learning and teaching is sought through various mechanisms including module questionnaires, student reps and student/staff consultative committees. KIC colleges also use staff feedback on modules, elicited regularly through formal module feedback questionnaires. Staff and students at the colleges were able to highlight ways in which learning opportunities had been enhanced as a result of student and staff feedback.

2.43 KIC recognises the need to continue to develop staff induction and training and, in particular, ensures that all teaching staff are supported to effectively teach international students in transition. Colleges operate two complementary learning and teaching observation schemes, one undertaken by peers and the other linked to the formal annual performance appraisal. Staff development activity is also typically undertaken with partner universities. The wide range of KIC-led staff development opportunities which enables the sharing of best practice in supporting international students is **good practice**.

2.44 The provider has developed an overall framework that supports high quality learning opportunities and has effective mechanisms to evaluate and enhance these opportunities so that students can achieve their progression ambitions. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement**

**Findings**

2.45 The management of student support at provider level is undertaken by the College Executive Management Board (CEMB) which reports to the SMT. There are designated senior staff in each of the colleges responsible for the student services function and these staff hold regular meetings chaired by one of the College Directors and report to the CEMB.

2.46 The Student Services teams within colleges provide students with personal support, advice and guidance, and act as a point of referral for students who require more specialist support. Typically interim student progression meetings are also held where marks and attendance to date are reviewed and students requiring additional help are identified. Where required students undertake additional support classes to support their development. The JAB (Joint Academic Board) or equivalent assures the quality of KIC's learning opportunities on behalf of the partner university in order to ensure a smooth transition of students from the college programmes to the related degree programme.

2.47 KIC has produced a set of Graduate Outcomes that articulate the skills and qualities students can expect to have obtained upon successful completion of their programme of study. All students who successfully complete the KIC award but do not meet the progression requirements of the particular partner institution are supported by the KIC University Placement Service to identify an alternative progression route.

2.48 The provider has in place comprehensive systems to monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources to support students, including a three-monthly review of College Action plans and Annual Programme Reports. There are centralised processes for approving annual budgets and considering requests for additional resources related to enhancing student learning opportunities. Contracts with partners specify the learning resources that KIC students can access at the university.

2.49 The review team found that there are appropriate processes in place and comprehensive central oversight to enable this Expectation to be met.

2.50 The review team investigated KIC's policies and regulations on enabling student development and achievement through meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, professional and support staff, and students. It also considered a range of documentation supplied by KIC, including policies and procedures, committee minutes, and student handbooks.

2.51 In all colleges visited, professional and academic staff work effectively as a team to provide comprehensive student support tailored to the needs of the students. Support is provided at the different stages of the student journey with pre-arrival briefings, induction sessions and one-to-one academic support via meetings with personal and/or module tutors. Student attendance is monitored carefully and reported centrally to ensure UKVI compliance and monitor student progress so that timely intervention can be provide if required.

2.52 Academic guidance and personal support for students is provided through the tutorial system. Tutorials are delivered by Learning Support Tutors (called Personal Tutors in some colleges) on a one-to-one or group basis. This system provides students with an opportunity to meet with a Personal Tutor to review academic progress, identify areas of concern and agree on points of action to address these. Tutors work closely with other

support providers, such as Student Services, to ensure that students with specific personal or pastoral support needs are identified and appropriate support provided.

2.53 The provider closely monitors and evaluates data relating to student performance and progression and has effective processes for reviewing and approving resources to support high quality learning opportunities.

2.54 The provider operates centralised processes that support services for students and has mechanisms to ensure colleges effectively evaluate and enhance students' academic, personal and professional development. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.55 KIC encourages staff and students at college level to engage in discussions to bring about enhancement of the educational experience. Each college provides a Student Charter that demonstrates the range of opportunities available to students to engage in their learning.

2.56 Chapter nine of the ASQM sets out clear guidance to the College regarding the requirement for the principles and purpose of student feedback as an essential component in evaluating the quality of student learning opportunities, and to inform ongoing improvements. The College decides on how best to elicit formal student feedback that reflects the nature of its student body, ensuring that the outcomes are then reflected within the annual and periodic reporting processes. Mechanisms include an arrival questionnaire, module and end of programme feedback questionnaires, student discussion groups, elected and appointed student representatives, student/staff consultative committees, feedback boxes and opinion polls. Student membership is now included on Programme Committees.

2.57 Student representatives are elected and briefed by the colleges on their role and expectations at student representative meetings, student forums, Enhancement Forums and Programme Committees. The Programme Leader or nominee is required to provide advice and support to students on their role and expectations and that their views are recorded within the minutes.

2.58 The arrangements in place for student engagement at provider level would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.59 The review team tested the nature of student engagement by examining evidence of the different mechanisms in place. This was followed up by meetings with both staff and students in the colleges to clarify the extent to which these mechanisms are widespread and operating effectively.

2.60 The review team found evidence that KIC proactively engages with students' feedback and has well-established processes within colleges to measure student satisfaction levels. A summary of feedback elicited from the End of Programme survey received across all KIC colleges is considered by the CEMB and SMT.

2.61 A working group, chaired by the Director of Colleges, with representatives from Colleges, CLIQ and other KIC teams, was assembled in 2015 to review the feedback sought from students on their overall experience. The aim of the review was to redesign the End of Programme survey to be used with students from April 2016. The outcome of the review has provided closer alignment of the KIC survey to the National Student Survey (NSS). The review team was advised that further work is being undertaken.

2.62 The CEMB off site meeting in July 2015 identified an inconsistent approach for anonymous and ad hoc opportunities for students to feed back across colleges. The action plan from CEMB included requirements for all colleges to have a method for anonymous feedback in to be established by September 2015, which has been actioned.

2.63 As part of KIC Year of Service, CEMB has also established a Parent Event and Parent Ambassador discussion board to enhance engagement with parents, particularly of those students who are under 18 years of age when they join the college.

2.64 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low because the KIC takes deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning**

**Findings**

2.65 APQC is responsible for ensuring academic standards are set and maintained and CLIQ provides KIC support and guidance to colleges for effective operation of assessment processes. KIC QAF, ASQM, Grade Descriptors, KI UK Pathways Learning and Teaching Framework, module and programme specifications, and the KIC Assessment Development Guide are cited as the policies, regulations and procedures that underpin academic standards alongside external reference points (RQF, FHEQ, SCQF and CEFR).

2.66 Members of college staff with responsibility for producing assessment undergo review for competence in line with the KIC assessment development guide. KIC ensure competence of teaching staff in assessment process at appointment and through staff induction, training, particularly for international students in transition.

2.67 Programme and module specifications articulate the assessment strategies approved for each programme and module.

2.68 Responsibility for the development of all module formative and summative assessments has been delegated to colleges, with the exception of the summative assessments for the Language for Study 3 module which remain centrally managed by the KIC Learning Measurement and Evaluation Team. The Colleges draw upon the KIC Assessment Development Guide produced by the KIC Learning Measurement and Evaluation Team. The Guide outlines the fundamental principles of underpinning the development of assessment strategies to enable the achievement of aims and objectives of KIC's assessment. Module Coordinators design assessment requirements in line with the Alignment Validity Reliability Effects Practicality Standards (AVREPS) framework to ensure that assessments are fit for purpose, reliable and valid. KIC guidance is also available to colleges in making reasonable adjustments to assessments for students with protected characteristics.

2.69 With respect to marking of assessed work, detailed guidance on the use of assessment criteria/marketing schemes, standardisation of marking and internal moderation is provided in the AVREPS. Assessments are marked anonymously (with the exception of spoken assessments) and internal moderation comprises double or second marking in line with KIC guidance.

2.70 All assessments are conducted in English and are designed with opportunities to provide early formative feedback to students and written feedback is provided on assessment within ten working days following submission. A sliding scale is used for penalties awarded to students for the late submission of work after the agreed deadline, without evidence of extenuating/mitigating circumstances.

2.71 Limited opportunities exist for the application of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) within KIC awards, with a formal process in place only for recognition of IELTS qualifications to allow exemption from the study of the Language for Study generic module where this is permitted by the partner University. The Secure English Language Test (SELT) Confirmation



Panel considers applications for RPL, provided on a standard KIC template, and reports outcomes to APQC.

2.72 The process for Exceptional Extenuating Circumstances (EECs) is defined in the ASQM and are dealt with in colleges by an EECs Panel convened prior to the Board and which approves or rejects the formal request. The EECs Panel then submits the approved requests with a recommendation for action to the Assessment Board which makes the final decision.

2.73 Programme and Module Handbooks provide information to students on assessment, for example, the Exceptional and Extenuating Circumstances procedure.

2.74 Oversight of the assessment process within the College is the responsibility of the Programme Committee which ensures that effective programme assessment strategies are in place. The Programme Committee also approves minor changes to summative module assessments before they are introduced.

2.75 Ongoing monitoring of assessment results is managed through Programme Committees which take action to enhance the processes through module and programme review and in response to feedback from external examiners and students.

2.76 The college holds an Assessment Board each term, which includes the attendance by the external examiner once a year, where decisions are made on progression and conferment of KIC awards. Information on the responsibilities of the Assessment Board is provided within the ASQM, together with standard templates for agendas and minutes to record decisions.

2.77 Interim student progression meetings are held to monitor student progress and identify any support needs. Outcomes may be identified either for individual students or groups, for example, additional support has been provided for those students who do not achieve the threshold in pre-sessional English along with a dedicated member of staff to help then integrate into the academic programme.

2.78 Assessment Board decisions are communicated to students after the Boards in line with agreed timescales set in the academic calendar. Students are issued with their transcript and results shared with agents, parents and guardians. A KIC certificate is presented to students upon satisfactory achievement or completion of their KIC programme at the College graduation ceremony.

2.79 The arrangements in place for assessment at KIC level would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.80 The review team considered documents relevant to assessment and external examiner reports and spoke to staff with oversight of the assessment process. The review team saw a range of programme and module specifications and Student Handbooks that included appropriate assessment information.

2.81 Programme Committee minutes, annual programme reports and examples of data made available for assessment boards demonstrated an appropriate approach to assessment that was in line with KIC requirements.

2.82 External examiner reports scrutinised by the review team were positive about the assessment process and noted examples of good practice in assessment design.

2.83 Colleges provide assessment information to students during induction which is supported by written guidance provided by the KIC Assessment Team, such as on academic

misconduct . Individual feedback is provided to students on assessment through tutorials which students found beneficial in helping them to improve for the next assessment and enhancing their skills. Students access module information through the VLE and are able to submit assessments electronically and receive feedback which helps to prepare them for transition to the University.

2.84 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low because the KIC operates equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning. These processes enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## **Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.**

### **Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

#### **Findings**

2.85 Chapter six of the Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM) sets out the KIC principles, purposes and requirements for external examiners. The colleges must appoint at least one external examiner to each award-bearing programme or cognate group of programmes. There is a KIC-appointed external examiner appointed to the Language for Study 3 module.

2.86 The criteria and process by which the colleges nominate and appoint their external examiners are set out in the ASQM, with the expectation that colleges adhere to criteria specified by the host university in addition to KIC requirements. The colleges notify CLIQ prior to the formal confirmation of a new external examiner appointment, so that CLIQ may advise the college of any potential conflicts of interest. CLIQ maintains a central register of all external examiner appointed at the colleges. Formal approval of a new appointment or extension to an appointment is undertaken by the Joint Academic Board.

2.87 Once appointed, external examiners receive a comprehensive set of information from the College Programme Leader and Academic Director including programme and module specifications, the External Examiner Handbook, previous external examiner reports and the recent Annual Programme Report. The external examiner is required to review an agreed sample of assessed work and attend at least one Assessment Board and sign the results sheet endorsing the work of the Board.

2.88 External examiners complete an annual report using a standard KIC template normally within two weeks of the completion of the final Assessment Board. Within the report, external examiners comment upon the standards and quality of programmes, as determined by student performance, and appropriateness of the assessment process to judge the achievement of learning outcomes. The report also asks external examiners to identify areas of good practice and suggestions for enhancement. Part two of the report template allows for the external examiner to submit a confidential report to the KIC Director of Student Learning on any issues which are particularly important or sensitive.

2.89 The external examiner is expected to comment on academic standards including comparability of the college's programmes with those of a similar level offered by other institutions. Comment is also invited on the appropriateness of the programme learning outcomes and associated modules to the level of the award, the suitability of the assessment methods in measuring achievement against module learning outcomes and the standards and consistency of internal marking.

2.90 The Programme Handbook includes information on the external examiner for students. In line with KIC guidance on Sharing External Examiners' Report Findings with Students, colleges are required to consider the most appropriate way to share the findings with their students.

2.91 The review team finds the provider's arrangements in place for external examining would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.92 The review team considered documents relevant to external examiners and spoke to staff and to students. The review team saw a range of external examiner reports,

Programme Committee minutes, Annual Programme Reports and APQC minutes that included appropriate oversight of the external examiner process.

2.93 The review team scrutinised a range of external examiner reports which were clear and informative and reasonably detailed, showing appropriate consideration of relevant issues. The reports provided positive feedback with some issues raised for further enhancements by the Programme Committee.

2.94 KIC has responded to the advisable recommendation made in the previous QAA review report regarding external scrutiny of summative assessments before they are used, which has now been reflected in the responsibilities of external examiners outlined in the ASQM and External Examiner Handbook. With respect to the desirable recommendation for KIC to consider fuller use of external examiners, the review team was advised that external examiner feedback and good practice was highlighted and shared across Colleges through APQC and ASQP.

2.95 The summary of feedback from external examiners within the ASQP Report is thorough with detailed coverage of issues identified within each college. The report highlights good practice, for example, the quality of learning and teaching which was linked to successful progression. In addition, the report highlights recommendations to be followed up such as improving the tracking of KIC students at partner universities. KIC accepts that there have been issues with obtaining data from partner universities which is being addressed, with better data now provided and formal requirements included in the written agreements with the universities.

2.96 The review team saw evidence of external examiners' comments being identified and followed up through responses by colleges within the report template and through the Annual Programme Reports and College Action Plans. External examiners is a standing item on the agenda of APQC that provides effective KIC oversight of the process.

2.97 The review team was advised by students that they were clear about the role of external examiners and that the recommendations were discussed at Programme Committees. There was evidence of issues arising from external examiner reports being discussed at Programme Committees.

2.98 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low because the provider has appropriate policies and processes in place which are appropriately communicated and applied.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review**

**Findings**

2.99 APQC is the senior KIC committee responsible for monitoring and academic review of programmes and modules. Outcomes of monitoring and review are actioned at both provider and college levels. The Quality Assurance Framework sets out the processes by which monitoring and review is undertaken on an annual and periodic basis.

2.100 The Programme Committee monitors and reviews programmes on an ongoing and annual basis. The Annual Programme Report (APR) allows the College to ensure that the learning opportunities to remain appropriate, drawing upon feedback from students, staff and external examiners. Recommendations arising from APRs are recorded within the College Action Plan. College action plans are reviewed by the College on a regular basis and support is provided by CLIQ with development of its action plan.

2.101 The Joint Academic Board ensures that the host University requirements are met through monitoring and review of programmes.

2.102 The College APRs inform the development of the ASQP report, providing APQC with opportunity to conduct systematic review of appropriateness of learning opportunities across all KIC programmes. KIC annual curriculum review introduced the ASQP report to reflect KIC's devolved approach to give greater academic responsibility to the college. Recommendations from the ASQP report are added to the KIC Quality Enhancement Plan to reflect cross-college initiatives. The QEP is reviewed regularly and is standing agenda item for discussion at the APQC.

2.103 Colleges undergo Periodic Programme Review (PPR) every five years and the outcomes are considered by APQC and JAB or equivalent. The college's Periodic Programme Review Report (PPRR) follows a standard template and includes action plans for further enhancements identified as an outcome of the process. The Programme Committee is responsible for ensuring that the recommendations are followed up appropriately and reported to the College's Senior Management Team.

2.104 Externality within KIC's monitoring and review processes is achieved through external examiners, FHEQ and other reference points, Subject Benchmark Statements and staff from partner universities.

2.105 Student involvement in monitoring and review is undertaken through formal and informal mechanisms. Formal mechanisms used at the colleges include end of module feedback forms, student focus groups as well as other formal questionnaires regarding individual activities and learning experiences. Teaching staff also contribute to monitoring and review by completing surveys at end of each module. Formal feedback from staff is used to inform annual programme reports which are discussed at Programme Committees.

2.106 There is a KIC defined process in place for KIC course closure, with a two year lead-time for University partners to provide notice of withdrawal of any progression routes.

2.107 An electronic record system was introduced in colleges to provide accessibility of reliable data following pilot in May 2012. The new Student Information Systems Team oversees the development of software with focus in 2014-15 on provision of reports to inform

the business. Examples of reports are now built and in regular use are the Assessment Board report and Combined Exits report. These reports are reviewed and adjusted to meet changing business needs.

2.108 The review team found that the arrangements in place for programme monitoring and review would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.109 The review team scrutinised KIC processes and their effectiveness through consideration of evidence provided in documented quality assurance procedures, annual programme reports produced by colleges, documentation relating to periodic review, and minutes of meetings. The review team also met KIC staff responsible for supporting programme monitoring and review.

2.110 The evidence considered by the review team confirms that, in general, the monitoring and review processes for KIC programmes are rigorously and consistently applied to maintain standards and enhance learning opportunities. KIC makes effective use of external reference points and draws upon external expertise from external examiners and staff at University partners. While the review team found effective operation of the Joint Academic Boards across the Colleges, it noted that the new articulation arrangements at KICL for the University of York and the University of Birmingham had not yet established a formal JAB, or an equivalent, although informal discussions were being held with the respective university partners (see Expectation A2.1).

2.111 There is evidence of systematic involvement of students within the annual monitoring and periodic review processes through the membership of student representatives at Programme Committees which receive and consider the outcomes of the processes.

2.112 CLIQ evaluates the monitoring and review processes periodically which has led to enhancements being made such as the updates to KI Connect to enable colleges to share and use student performance data and identify areas for development. Following the introduction of KIC's requirement for five yearly periodic reviews, CLIQ undertook a systematic review throughout all KIC Colleges in 2011-12 involving stakeholders, resulting in revised curriculum structures implemented from 2013 across the majority of colleges.

2.113 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met. The associated level of risk is low because the provider has in place effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of courses.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.**

### **Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints**

#### **Findings**

2.114 The Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM) details the policies and procedures relating to academic appeals and complaints, including those against admission decisions. These policies and procedures are communicated to students in the Programme Handbooks, Student Handbooks and on the VLE.

2.115 Students are able to raise an informal complaint with any member of staff. If unresolved, the student can submit a formal complaint to Student Services. This will initially be considered by the Head of Student Services. If it is not resolved at that stage it will be referred to the College Director for final consideration.

2.116 Complaints relating to academic provision are considered by the Programme Committee who will consider if improvements can be made to enhance the student experience. Outcomes of formal complaints are collated and reviewed on an annual basis by the college Senior Management Team.

2.117 There is a separate procedure for students who wish to submit an appeal against an assessment decision. Such appeals are initially considered by the College Director, who in consultation with the Chair of the Assessment Board, can offer an informal settlement if the appeal is upheld. A formal Academic Appeals Panel is convened where an informal settlement is not possible.

2.118 The detailed the policies and procedures relating to academic appeals and complaints would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.119 The review team examined the appeals and complaints processes within the ASQM and student facing documentation. The team also met staff and students at college level to evaluate their effectiveness.

2.120 Staff and students at the colleges were aware of the complaints and appeals processes, and these processes were communicated to students at induction and in student handbooks. There is a strong emphasis on seeking to resolve any issues as quickly as possible, often before a formal complaint or appeal is submitted. Where formal complaints and appeals were submitted these were considered in line with the published procedures. Staff and students were able to identify where improvements had been made as a result of complaints and appeals.

2.121 The provider does not currently offer guidance to colleges about issuing letters of completion to students when these formal processes have been completed. This may potentially result in students being unclear about the status of their complaint or appeal and unclear about the possibility of any independent recourse. The review team therefore **recommends** that, by January 2017, KIC ensures that students receive written confirmation that internal complaints and/or appeals procedures have been completed and what independent recourse options are available.

2.122 The provider has designed fair, accessible and timely processes handling academic appeals and student complaints and has sufficient oversight to ensure that these processes are being implemented correctly and contribute to the enhancement of student learning

opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**



## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.123 In reaching its judgement about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.124 All of the nine Expectations in this area have been met and the level of risk in all cases is low. There are three instances of good practice. Two of these relate to Expectation B2 and are: the supportive and personalised advice and guidance that applicants receive, and the extensive and detailed training provided to admission staff and agents that aid student recruitment. The third area of good practice, Expectation B3, is the wide range of provider-led staff development opportunities that supports international students.

2.125 KIC implements effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes. There are clear and embedded procedures in relation to the recruitment, selection and admission of students to their programmes of study. For the support of high quality learning opportunities, the provider has developed an overall framework and has effective mechanisms to evaluate and enhance these opportunities so that students can achieve their progression ambitions.

2.126 There is overall management of student support at provider level and mechanisms to ensure colleges effectively evaluate and enhance students' academic, personal and professional development. KIC takes deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. KIC operates equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enables student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the programme. In terms of external examining, KIC has appropriate policies and processes in place which are appropriately communicated and applied to ensure the scrupulous use of external examiners.

2.127 KIC has in place effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of courses. The processes for handling academic appeals and student complaints are designed to be fair, accessible and timely, and KIC has sufficient oversight to ensure that these processes are being implemented correctly. The review team makes one recommendation under Expectation B9 which is to issue formal competition letters when an internal complaint and/or appeals procedure has been completed.

2.128 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at KIC **meets** UK expectations.

### 3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

**Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.**

#### **Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision**

##### **Findings**

3.1 KIC provides public information on its colleges and programmes online and in hard-copy prospectuses. KIC also produces promotional leaflets and pre-arrival guides. A market-facing summary of all KIC programmes available is regularly published for use by recruitment and admissions teams in overseas locations.

3.2 Public information in KIC is managed centrally by the provider. There are clear processes in place that require that published material is formally signed off by the local college director, the Managing Director or the Director of Colleges at provider level and by the partner university.

3.3 Each college prospectus and website is produced and designed in close consultation with the relevant partner university, using a joint logo where applicable. Student feedback is solicited on the prospectuses and the websites via a centralised student survey completed by students after they have arrived at the college. Social media channels are maintained by college staff and are monitored and audited by the central Content and Marketing team.

3.4 Pre-arrival guides for students are produced by Marketing in liaison with colleges who check all information prior to publication. Programme handbooks are made available to students and provide comprehensive study-related information. These are produced by colleges and approved by Programme Committees.

3.5 The policies and procedures in place would enable this Expectation to be met.

3.6 The review team explored KIC's approach to the production of information by viewing a wide range of information including, websites, handbooks, programme and module specifications, transcripts and award certificates. In addition, the team met staff at provider and college levels, students and staff from partner institutions.

3.7 The provider provides extensive support and information prior to their enrolment and arrival at a KIC college. In particular there are detailed and comprehensive pre-arrival communications procedures that give a schedule of personalised communications to be delivered via email and video conference. There is also access to specialised pages on the VLE designed to support students in their decision making process and help them prepare for their time at their embedded college to students. The provider regularly conducts surveys to obtain student feedback on the application and admissions process and makes improvements based on this feedback. The central marketing and recruitment team make regular visits to each of the colleges so that they can give potential students first-hand details of what the experience at a particular college will be like. All students met by the review team found this information to be very useful and supported them in their decision making process and transition to their KIC College. The quality of published pre-arrival information that enables students to make well informed decisions about their choice of programmes is **good practice**.

3.8 KIC has rigorous processes for collating, checking and approval of public information. This includes review and appropriate sign off at provider, college and partner institutions. These processes are rigorously and systematically monitored and KIC undertakes various audits to check that its public information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Staff were able to clearly explain how these processes are implemented and students valued the high quality and accurate information provided to them. The rigorous and systematic processes for managing student-facing information across the college network and university partners which ensures it is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy is **good practice**.

3.9 The progression route management information is maintained in a bespoke KIC system called Higher Education Course Management (HECM). As and when progression routes or requirements are approved this information is updated on HECM. These updates automatically populate the electronic administration system and publically available website content such as the Course Finder.

3.10 Upon completion of their study with KIC students are issued with a transcript that details their achievement and an award certificate using a standard centralised template. Transcripts have a security seal to confirm authenticity and are clear about the ultimate responsibility of the KIC Award.

3.11 The provider has comprehensive processes for managing its public information and operates robust procedures to ensure their effective implementation. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.12 In reaching its judgement about the quality of the information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.13 Expectation C is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area.

3.14 The review team identifies significant good practice in the approach taken by KIC to managing the quality of information about learning opportunities. In particular, the quality of published pre-arrival information that enables students to make well informed decisions about their choice of programmes systematic, and rigorous and systematic processes for managing student-facing information across the college network and university partners.

3.15 In view of the significant good practice in this judgement area, and as there are no recommendations or affirmations, the review team concludes that the quality of the information provided about learning opportunities is **commended**.

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.**

### Findings

4.1 KIC's strategic approach to enhancement is led and driven by the KIC Senior Management Team (SMT) which ensures that both centralised and college-level initiatives lead to improvements in the quality of students' learning experiences. Key projects are sponsored by SMT to ensure timely completion such as the recently revised governance structure for product development by the introduction of the BAGPD and NPdag to ensure better distribution of workload and provide a more efficient process to launch new products.

4.2 The College Executive Management Board (CEMB) normally meets every six weeks to discuss operational matters relating to quality improvements, with an action plan to monitor progress. CEMB provides an effective forum for the sharing of good practice between KIC central staff and staff within the colleges which leads to enhancements.

4.3 The systematic nature of enhancement activities is managed through KIC's committee structure, with oversight taken by the Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC). KIC makes use of the annual monitoring process to determine quality assurance projects arising from ASQP outcomes, drawing together staff from colleges and CLIQ to work on cross-college projects that promote sharing of good practice across the network.

4.4 Complementing existing quality assurance and enhancement processes, the KIC Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) supports KIC's approach to take deliberate steps at institutional level to enhance the students' learning experience. Actions arising out of the ASQP are recorded within the QEP, the progress of which is monitored by the APQC. College Action Plans record evaluation and impact of progress made which are reviewed by the CEMB which meets regularly to discuss operational matters relating to quality improvements.

4.5 The KIC Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ) plays a key central role, acting as the hub within the network of colleges to provide a cohesive approach, common identity and shared set of standards across the colleges. A range of workshops offered by CLIQ's Learning Measurement and Evaluation Team helps to support KIC's QEP. A recent series of workshops focused upon assessment and moderation processes, enabling participants to engage in interactive discussion, tasks and group work which they then cascaded back to staff within their colleges.

4.6 CLIQ administers the KIC Learning Teaching and Innovation Fund (LTIF) that supports staff across the KIC network to undertake projects to enhance the student journey. Funding has been provided, via a bidding process, to support a wide range of projects within colleges that relate to developments in teaching, learning and assessment, student support and new technology as well as attendance at conferences and seminars to share good practice.

4.7 The review team concludes that the policies and procedures of KIC would allow the Expectation on Enhancement to be met.

4.8 The review team tested the systematic nature of enhancement at KIC by examining evidence of the different strategies, initiatives and structures in place. This was followed up

by meetings with both staff and students to clarify the extent to which these are allowing the effective dissemination of good practice.

4.9 There is detailed evidence that the KIC is using a wide range of quality review processes to identify opportunities for enhancement. Initiatives such as Best Practice Week, indicate that KIC is proactive in responding to these opportunities. Best Practice Days hosted at different college locations are complemented by a series of articles, videos and other activities during Best Practice Week for anyone unable to attend the sessions.

4.10 Since the QAA review in 2012, more responsibility for the management of quality and standards has been devolved to the colleges, with central oversight maintained through academic governance and management structures. In support of this more devolved approach, CLIQ has adopted a greater, targeted focus for driving enhancement on behalf of SMT. This leads to the enhancement of learning opportunities across KIC colleges through projects and activities which are progressed through KIC management committees and working groups comprising staff from KIC headquarters and colleges, leading to an improved student experience. The systematic identification and promotion of opportunities for embedding enhancement initiatives across the network to improve the quality of student learning is **good practice**.

4.11 As part of the devolution project, KIC replaced its central LTA strategy by a learning and teaching framework to help support colleges in the development of their own learning and teaching strategies. It is intended to be supportive in the helping colleges to embed the framework themes either in college action plans or mapped on to the template for reporting to APQC.

4.12 The review team noted the highly effective role played by CLIQ which had embedded processes to engage with colleges, such as enhanced college representation on KIC projects and working groups and the establishment of VLE Coordinators, and Language Coordinators within colleges. CLIQ produces regular newsletters to keep college staff informed of new developments, ongoing projects and staff attendance at external conferences.

4.13 Working with CLIQ, colleges have been encouraged to share good practice, such as in the delivery of science and engineering programmes where themes for enhancement have been identified, including improvements to the baseline maths test and the development of a central document store of learning materials for use by maths co-ordinators. A working group comprising both KIC Head Office and college staff is progressing the Year of Service project which aims to define KIC's commitment to all of its customers, including current and prospective students, staff, university partners, to deliver an outstanding service throughout the entire student journey. The wide range of provider-led staff development opportunities which enables the sharing of best practice in supporting international students is good practice (see Expectation B3).

4.14 The review team considers that deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities across the colleges, and noted a number of features of good practice in this Expectation that support enhancement. The team found that the provider actively questions its practices and undertakes systematic initiatives to enhance them. There are no recommendations or affirmations. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.15 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.16 The Expectation is met and the associated risk is low. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area. There are two features of good practice: the systematic identification and promotion of opportunities for embedding enhancement initiatives across the network; and the wide range of KIC-led staff development opportunities which enables the sharing of best practice in supporting international students.

4.17 The strategic approach to enhancement is led and driven by the Senior Management team which ensures that both centralised and college-level initiatives lead to improvements. KIC uses a wide range of quality review processes to identify opportunities for enhancement and colleges are encouraged and supported to share good practice. The Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality plays a pivotal role in supporting both central and college level projects. Integrated initiatives, such as the Year of Service, aim to deliver KIC's commitment to deliver an outstanding service throughout the entire student journey. The needs of students are a clear focus of KIC's approach and the outcomes are also reflected in the good practice identified under Expectations B2 and C. In view of the above and, as there are no recommendations for improvement in this area, the review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at KIC is **commended**.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacy

### Findings

5.1 KIC has developed both a Blended Learning Strategy 2013-17, and a Learning and Teaching Framework that outline key principles relating to embedding technology into learning and teaching. The Blended Learning Strategy which precedes the Framework focuses more on designing engaging learning experiences for students while the more recent Learning and Teaching Framework addresses student digital literacy development more explicitly. In this regard the provider recognises the need to update the Blended Learning Strategy 2013-17 and its KIC Graduate Outcomes to better reflect student digital literacy skills development.

5.2 Key digital literacy skills have been embedded explicitly within the Skills for Study and Language for Study modules taught at all colleges. These skills are further embedded in the academic subject modules where students are required to collaborate electronically to produce work, search online for source material, or submit electronic soft copies of assignments, and receive feedback on these in an electronic form. The colleges visited make extensive use their VLE and educational software to support student learning, often employing technologies used at the partner university to which students intend to progress. Internet-based plagiarism detection software is used to help students develop academic writing skills and to identify potential instances of plagiarism. Students at the colleges benefit from access to required IT equipment and software, and valued the benefits of these technologies to support their learning and development. Within their Action Plans colleges have identified ways in which student's digital literacy skills can be further developed within their programmes.

5.3 Central resources have been provided to support blended learning and digital literacy across the colleges, including two dedicated Learning Technologists within the Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ) who support colleges with digital initiatives. Currently there are different approaches and levels of understanding of student requirements concerning digital literacy needs across the different colleges visited. To share good practice and drive blended learning innovations at college level KIC has established a Blended Learning Working Group. The Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund (LTIF) has also been used to resource local digital literacy and blended learning innovations undertaken within colleges. CLIQ also hosts blended learning themed webinar sessions and has organised a virtual Blended Learning Week for staff to support the sharing of best practice and collaborative problem solving on blended learning issues. These initiatives are highly valued by teaching staff within the colleges. To meet the needs of the relatively high proportion of part-time and sessional staff at KIC, point-of-need training and self-access guides have been made available but it is recognised that this remains an area for ongoing development.



## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 24-27 of the [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\) handbook](#)

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality)

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx)

### Academic standards

The standards set by **degree-awarding bodies** for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

### Award

A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

### Blended learning

Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

### Credit(s)

A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

### Degree-awarding body

A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers or university title).

### Distance learning

A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'.

See also **blended learning**.

### Dual award or double award

The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also **multiple award**.

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

### Embedded college

Colleges, often operating as part of a network, that are embedded on or near the campuses of two or more UK higher education institutions (HEI) and that primarily provide preparatory programmes for higher education

### **Enhancement**

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

### **Expectations**

Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

### **Framework for higher education qualifications**

A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FHEQIS).

### **Good practice**

A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

### **Learning opportunities**

The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

### **Learning outcomes**

What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

### **Operational definition**

A formal definition of a term, establishing exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

### **Programme (of study)**

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

### **Programme specifications**

Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

**Public information**

Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

**Quality Code**

Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of **reference points** for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the **Expectations** that all providers are required to meet.

**Reference points**

Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

**Subject Benchmark Statement**

A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

**Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

**Threshold academic standard**

The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic **award**. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks** and **subject benchmark statements**.

**Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

**Widening participation**

Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

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