



**Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd
(Keele University International
Study Centre)**

Embedded College Review for
Educational Oversight
by the Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

September 2014

Key findings about Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Keele University International Study Centre)

The QAA review team (the team) formed the following judgements about Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Keele University International Study Centre):

- the team has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the academic standards of the awards it offers through its embedded college provision at Keele University International Study Centre (KUISC)
- the team has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for students through KUISC
- the team considers that **reliance can** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers through KUISC.

Recommendations

The team also makes a number of recommendations for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:

- keep under review the implementation and effectiveness of the new quality assurance framework and the use of its new data management system (paragraphs 1.9, 1.26)
- expedite the completion of the Centre Handbook for 2014-15, and its communication to staff and students (paragraph 1.12)
- ensure that all assessments relate to module learning outcomes, and that associated marking criteria align with the University's generic assessment criteria for FHEQ level 4 (paragraph 1.27)
- Inform students, and prospective students, about changes to requirements for progression to Keele University, in a timely fashion (paragraph 1.29)
- complete the process of mapping to demonstrate alignment to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) (paragraph 2.4).

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

- initiate dialogue with the University on the provision of information to KUISC staff and students on the exercise of discretion to allow progression to University programmes when published requirements are not met (paragraph 1.14)
- expedite the introduction of standard assessment regulations covering all the KUISC approved programmes (paragraph 1.15)
- ensure greater clarity in the interpretation and communication of regulations concerning the opportunity for students to retake the year (paragraph 1.30).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (ECREO) conducted by QAA at Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Keele University International Study Centre) (the provider). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students at the Keele University International Study Centre (KUISC). The review was carried out by Professor Gwendolen Bradshaw and Dr Sylvia Hargreaves (reviewers), and Mr Alan Hunt (QAA Officer).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).² Evidence in support of the review included a self-evaluation document (SED), policy and regulation documents, minutes of committee meetings, other documents, and meetings with KUISC staff and representatives of the Keele University, the partner higher education institution.

The review team also considered the provider's use of the relevant external reference points:

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code).

Please note that if you are unfamiliar with any of the terms used in this report you can find them in the [Glossary](#).

KUISC was established by agreement between the provider and the University of Keele in a 'heads of agreement' signed in 2009, followed by a full inter-institutional agreement dated January 2010. The first cohort of students was admitted in September 2009. The original agreement has been reviewed and was renewed in 2013 for a further period to August 2023. In July 2014, the parties agreed a variation to the contract concerning guaranteed admission to a University programme (paragraph 1.29).

KUISC delivers programmes approved by the provider which prepare international students for undergraduate and postgraduate study. At the time of the review no students were present at KUISC because the academic year 2014-15 had not yet started.

At the time of the review KUISC offered the following higher education programmes:

- International Year One (Business and Management, Media, Computing, International Relations and Politics)
- Pre-Master's (Business and Management, Computing, Physiotherapy).

The provider's stated responsibilities

The provider has responsibility for the academic standards and quality of the programmes listed above. They are supported in this by the University, which applies the quality assurance mechanisms set out in the Quality Handbook, agreed between the University and KUISC, to assure itself that the programmes provide students with an appropriate foundation to succeed in their destination programmes at the university.

KUISC's submission for the June 2014 review lists specific areas of operational responsibility that are shared between the University and KUISC, including curriculum

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx

² <http://pub.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=66>

development, management of assessment boards and staff development, and other areas, such as student recruitment and setting assessments, which are the responsibility of the provider and KUISC.

Recent developments

Following the QAA review conducted in June 2014, the provider has put in place an interim centre and regional management team comprising an acting Head of Centre and an interim Regional Director (paragraph 1.2); approved proposals for the design of a new quality assurance and enhancement framework covering the entire ISC network (paragraphs 1.5-1.6); and introduced a new student data management system (paragraph 1.24).

Students' contribution to the review

The review team did not have the opportunity to meet students at this visit, which was undertaken before students arrived at KUISC for the start of the academic year.

Detailed findings about Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd Keele University International Study Centre

1 Academic standards

How effectively does KUISC fulfill its responsibilities for the management of academic standards?

1.1 In June 2014 the QAA review team considered it advisable for the provider to strengthen the use of reporting mechanisms so that Bellerby's Educational Services (BES) Ltd is made aware, in a timely fashion, of standards and quality issues in Keele University International Study Centre (KUISC). The provider responded swiftly and decisively, taking immediate action to provide secure quality management at KUISC on an interim basis and, for the longer term, through a review of the quality assurance and enhancement framework across the International Study Centre (ISC) network, leading to proposals for a new provider quality framework.

1.2 Interim senior management arrangements are currently in place and will remain so until permanent appointments have been completed (paragraph 1.8). They comprise leadership by an acting Head of Centre who has been Head of another ISC for several years; the appointment of an interim Regional Director with experience of higher education and quality assurance and enhancement; and the appointment of an external consultant with extensive quality assurance and enhancement experience to advise on quality improvements.

1.3 Following a review of the academic cycle, proposals were developed for the design of a new quality assurance and enhancement framework covering the entire network of ISCs and comprising a new committee and reporting structure and the creation of new quality assurance and enhancement posts, which are to be implemented during the 2014-15 academic year. A firm review date is still to be determined. If implemented and operated as intended, these arrangements should provide an effective framework for maintaining academic standards.

1.4 Under the new framework, the existing provider-level Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (AQAEC) will report to the newly constituted provider-level Enhancement, Quality and Compliance Board. An enhanced reporting structure between ISCs, the regional structure and AQAEC is to be introduced. ISC Quality Assurance and Enhancement Groups (QAEGs) meet quarterly, with each reporting to an associated Regional Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (Regional QAEG), which will in turn report to the provider through AQAEC. This system is designed to enhance formal ongoing review and reporting; standardise reporting; set minimum standards of operating meetings through templates for agenda and minute taking; and share best practice across the network. If implemented and operated as intended, these arrangements should provide an effective framework for maintaining academic standards.

1.5 QAEGs will focus primarily on the implementation of the ISC action plan, which will follow the provider's set format, addressing actions arising from QAA reviews, actions required by the provider and actions determined through the ISC's own quality systems. Plans will be live documents, used by the ISC to manage enhancements identified through sharing best practice via the new regional structure; they will be presented at the quarterly meetings of the Regional QAEGs, considered twice-yearly at Steering Groups (or equivalent) and reviewed annually, with completed actions being archived. If implemented and operated as intended these action planning arrangements should provide an effective

vehicle for ensuring provider oversight of UKISC quality assurance and enhancement and, in particular, for identifying any problem areas.

1.6 Ongoing monitoring will be supplemented by a new protocol for the escalation of concerns, designed to ensure that issues presenting, or potentially presenting, a risk to standards or quality are reported by the Head of Centre to the provider, addressed and resolved as a matter of urgency. If implemented and operated effectively, the protocol would be likely to achieve its aims.

1.7 A new Centre Review process, still to be finalised and formally approved, is designed to operate as an annual process (or will be undertaken at more or less frequent intervals on the basis of a risk assessment of individual ISCs by AQAEC) to provide assurance to the provider that each ISC is effectively managing academic standards and managing and enhancing student learning opportunities. The outcomes are reported in a standard reporting template, including a Centre Review Action Plan, for consideration at provider level by AQAEC. The draft Centre Review process was applied in an abridged form in September 2014, in a review of KUIISC. Conducted by a panel chaired by an external consultant and including a member from a UK Higher Education Institution, the review focused on the matters arising from the QAA report of June 2014. If implemented as intended, the process should achieve its aims.

1.8 At the time of this review the provider was still reviewing its staffing structure in relation to learning and teaching, and quality assurance and enhancement. It anticipated that a new post or posts will be announced in 2015.

1.9 The new committee, reporting and review framework is currently being put in place, with implementation planned over the course of 2014-15. It is therefore not possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation process, nor of the framework, in practice. However, the review team formed the view that, if implemented and operated as intended, the new quality framework should ensure that Bellerby's Educational Services Ltd is made aware, in a timely fashion, of standards and quality issues in KUIISC. It is **advisable** for Bellerby's Educational Services Ltd (KUIISC) to keep under review the implementation and effectiveness of the new quality assurance framework.

1.10 Teaching staff attended a staff development briefing about the new framework. They found this useful and considered that greater clarity had been brought to quality assurance arrangements.

1.11 Progress has been made towards the completion of the Provider Quality Assurance Handbook. This will comprise a range of approved policies and procedures setting out minimum expectations of KUIISC staff. Framed in terms of broad principles and in line with the UKQC, the minimum requirements are intended to articulate with Higher Education Institution policies and procedures. The Handbook will incorporate the policy and position statements that have already been produced at provider senior management level to address issues arising at KUIISC, including the position statements on academic misconduct and the production of records of results.

1.12 Senior Managers explained that the KUIISC Centre Handbook for 2014-15, which will include details of ISC-level quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms, is not yet finalised but will be completed and available to staff and students by the end of October. In the interim, the Student Handbook is being used as the definitive source of quality assurance information for both students and staff. Senior managers stated that the current ISC Assessment Regulations, which will be incorporated into the Centre Handbook, have been signed off and will be accessible to staff and students online before students arrive at KUIISC in September to start their programmes. It is **advisable** for Bellerby's Educational Services

Ltd (KUISC) to expedite the completion of the Centre Handbook for 2014-15, and its communication to staff and students.

How effectively does KUISC manage the assessment of students?

1.13 As noted in paragraph 1.12, the 2014-15 ISC Assessment Regulations are in place, and will be available online to staff and students before the start of the academic year. The Student Handbook sets out some of the regulations, including the progression requirements. Access to the more detailed ISC Assessment Regulations online will ensure that students have full information, notably on matters such as the permitted number of resits and the opportunity, in the event of failure, to reapply to the Head of Centre to repeat the programme the following year.

1.14 Under the ISC Assessment Regulations, the Programme Assessment Board, which is chaired by a University senior manager, has a discretion to permit students who have not met the progression requirements to progress to their chosen degree programme at the University, without further assessment. Decisions are informed by the judgment and guidance of the receiving University School(s), through the University link tutors, and each University School applies its own criteria to reach its judgment. Currently, these criteria are not communicated within KUISC. It would be **desirable** for the provider to initiate dialogue with the University on the provision of information to KUISC staff and students on the exercise of discretion to allow progression to University programmes when published requirements are not met.

1.15 The provider is considering introducing standard assessment regulations covering all the ISC approved programmes. It would be **desirable** for the provider to expedite this development.

1.16 In June 2014 the QAA review team considered it advisable for the provider to ensure that Module Assessment Boards are fully, clearly and accurately minuted. The KUISC Examinations Officer, who acts as secretary to the boards, undertook training on minute taking provided by the interim Regional Director before the June examination boards and will undertake further training throughout 2014-15. The most recent sets of Module Assessment Board (MAB) and Programme Assessment Board (PAB) minutes provide clear and logically structured records of board deliberations and decisions.

1.17 Revised ISC procedures for the conduct of MABs and PABs have been developed. The procedures include standardised agendas, terms of reference, membership and quoracy provisions. Candidate anonymity is maintained in discussions at MABs, and from 2014-15 onwards will be required in all minutes of MABs and PABs. There is an expectation that all tutors attend MABs or, if they cannot attend, submit a note confirming grades and offering any comments.

1.18 Although the revised procedures were still in draft at the date of the June and August/September MABs and PABs, most aspects of the revised procedures informed the conduct of these boards, notably the use of the standardised agendas and staff attendance. The August/September boards maintained the anonymity of candidates. Most of the teaching staff whom the review team met had attended the MABs, which they described as 'more focused' than had previously been the case. The new procedures, which have been considered by the Joint Board of Studies but not yet formally and finally approved, are to be implemented in full from and including the December 2014 MABs and PABs. The KUISC Examinations Officer has received training on the procedures.

1.19 In June 2014 the QAA review team considered it essential for KUISC to ensure that all Academic Progress Reports for students are accurate and complete, and that systems are in

place to manage these reports securely and consistently. KUISC conducted a review of Academic Progress Report (APR) production, led by the acting Head of Centre. Its purpose was to review the accuracy of the APR templates which gave cause for concern; to review the accuracy of information contained in subsequent APRs; to establish whether any students had been disadvantaged as a result of being given inaccurate or incomplete information; and to review the processes used to produce the reports. The review findings were reported in August 2014.

1.20 The review report records a thorough and detailed review. It concludes that, despite errors in the results template and the further problem of some students being given inaccurate advice on progression requirements for English and Skills for University Study (ESUS) 2, no students were disadvantaged as a result of the errors. KUISC and University senior managers expressed confidence in the rigour of the review and the validity of its findings. The review team found that the staff whom they met at this review visit have a clear understanding of the progression requirements.

1.21 The results template was revised to ensure its accuracy, further adjustments having since been made to the scope and presentation of the content, as evidenced by the most recent templates, used in June and August 2014. Sample Final Result Reports available to the review team were clearly presented.

1.22 Following scrutiny of APR production, storage and version control, KUISC put in place secure interim processes for the June MABs and PABs. Improvements were made to the processes for the August/September MABs and the September PABs. For the December 2014 boards and beyond, KUISC will use the commercially hosted data management system (see paragraph 1.23).

1.23 The provider subscribes to a commercially hosted, password protected student data management system accessed and operated by KUISC staff, which currently provides facilities for timetabling, recording student attendance, recording and processing student results and generating the Records of Termly Results issued to students. The provider carried out due diligence checks on the host company, together with investigations to assure itself of the security of the system, its back-up and disaster recovery features, its resilience against hardware and communications failures and its compliance with data protection legislation. Following introduction of the system at Bellerby's Colleges and at one of its ISCs, the provider is in the process of introducing the system across all the ISCs, including KUISC.

1.24 Currently, one member of the KUISC administrative staff has received training in the operation of the system with respect to the recording of student marks, the associated servicing of examination boards and the production of Records of Results for issue to students. A second administrator is to receive similar training and a member of the provider's technical staff would be available to step in and operate the system in the event of an emergency. While some operational problems had occurred during the initial use of the system within Bellerby's, senior managers and the provider's technical staff expressed confidence in the provider's ability to deal effectively with any future problems and stated that ongoing technical support will be available from the provider. If implemented and operated as intended, these arrangements should be effective in ensuring that Academic Progress Reports for students are accurate and complete, and that systems are in place to manage these reports securely and consistently.

1.25 Teaching staff are aware of the new system and training on its use is planned. KUISC will wish to ensure double checking at the manual stage of the process, when marks are inputted into the system from student scripts. The provider has produced a policy position statement on the Record of Results, with which KUISC procedures are aligned. The review

team formed the view that KUISC has systems in place to ensure that all Records of Results for students are accurate, complete and managed securely and consistently.

1.26 The data management system has already been used by KUISC to produce the 2014-15 timetable, with the help and support of a member of staff from another ISC with relevant experience. The student attendance recording facility is also in place for 2014-15 and staff have received appropriate training. It is **advisable** for Bellerby's Educational Services Ltd (KUISC) to keep under review the implementation and effectiveness of its new data management system.

1.27 Following amendments to the progression requirements for 2013-14, KUISC adopted the University's generic assessment criteria for FHEQ level 4. Module leaders undertook work to put in place assessment criteria for individual assessment briefs, seeking to ensure alignment to the generic criteria. Although module-level assessment criteria were, generally, in place during 2013-14, a review by the Head of Centre revealed that more work is required to ensure that all assessments relate to module learning outcomes, and that their associated marking criteria align with the University generic criteria. A programme of staff development is planned to support staff in this task, which is to be completed before any assessment briefs are distributed to students in 2014-15. It is **advisable** for Bellerby's Educational Services Ltd (KUISC) to ensure that all assessments relate to module learning outcomes, and that associated marking criteria align with the University's generic assessment criteria for FHEQ level 4.

1.28 In July 2014, KUISC and the University agreed a variation to the 2013 inter-institutional agreement relating to University progression requirements. Appendix 2 of the agreement was amended to provide that criteria for progression are agreed by the Joint Board of Studies; exceptionally, progression criteria 'will be reviewed by the University and any change will be agreed by the parties'.

1.29 The introduction of revised Year 1 progression requirements is to be considered by the Steering Group in October 2014. See also paragraph 3.5.

1.30 In response to a recommendation of the QAA June 2014 review concerning the clarity and consistency of terms defining student achievement, KUISC has produced a revised Glossary of Terms, which is included in the Student Handbook. The meaning of 'pass' and 'fail' is now clear. However, with respect to programme failure, a recent PAB pass list is confusing in that it records, as distinct outcomes, 'fail' and 'fail/will be offered to repeat a year' whereas the KUISC Assessment Regulations allow all students who fail the opportunity to apply to re-take the year. Moreover, under the current documented regulations, the decision as to whether a student making an application in this situation is to be offered a place is at the discretion of the Head of Centre. It would be **desirable** for the provider to ensure greater clarity in the interpretation and communication of regulations concerning the opportunity for students retake the year.

1.31 A further recommendation regarding the clarity of regulations concerning the termination of study and their communication to staff and students has been satisfactorily addressed. The relevant provisions are now clear and are communicated to staff and students via the Student Handbook and the KUISC Assessment Regulations.

1.32 The principles contained in the provider policy position statement on Academic Misconduct have been incorporated into a new KUISC Academic Misconduct Procedure, which is being implemented correctly. KUISC has recognised and is to review the position with regard to a perceived conflict of interest arising from the Head of Centre's involvement in the Academic Appeals Procedure and his/her position as Chair of the MAB.

How effectively are UK external reference points used in the management of academic standards?

1.33 A recent review of the Provider Quality Assurance Framework has resulted in the approval of a range of initiatives by the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. These include a number of new publications including a Provider Quality Handbook and a Centre Handbook incorporating revised academic policy and position statements. These publications, informed by the Quality Code will provide clear direction to staff by highlighting minimum expectations required by BES Ltd (see also paragraph 1.11).

1.34 As outlined above, a new quality assurance and enhancement framework has been developed and is being implemented across the ISC network. Evidence of the effectiveness of the new arrangements is beginning to emerge at KUISC with teaching staff demonstrating a clear and confident understanding of the new structures.

1.35 The new Centre Review process, outlined in paragraph 1.7, has been developed to provide assurances that International Study Centres are effectively managing academic standards, quality and published information. Centre review panels include external membership and will consider the use being made of external reference points.

How effectively does KUISC use external examining, moderation, or verification to assure academic standards?

1.36 Reporting in June 2014, the QAA review team found that these aspects of the assurance of academic standards were working effectively at KUISC. The current review team found no evidence that this position had changed.

How effectively does KUISC use statistical information to monitor and assure academic standards?

1.37 Reporting in June 2014, the QAA review team found that these aspects of the assurance of academic standards were working effectively at KUISC. The current review team found no evidence that this position had changed.

<p>The review team has confidence in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers through embedded college provision.</p>

2 Quality of learning opportunities

How effectively does KUISC fulfill its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 KUISC has benefited from a comprehensive review of quality assurance structures and processes which has been undertaken across the BES Ltd network of International Study Centres. New quality assurance structures and processes have been approved by the Joint Steering Committee. The revisions being introduced are intended to ensure greater consistency across the network while also placing a strong emphasis on partnerships with Universities. KUISC's HEI partner confirmed the close and effective partnership working arrangements.

2.2 While the Head of Centre is responsible for leading the Centre on the University campus, a new role of Director of Quality is being introduced with responsibility for ensuring full compliance with Higher Education Partners by assisting in the management of the

relationships with Higher Education Institutions. The Director of Quality will also assist the Head of Centre in developing and managing the Centre Quality Officer. This role is currently being undertaken on an 'acting' basis.

2.3 Governance arrangements have been strengthened, an example being the introduction of the Centre Review process. Centre Review, an evidence-based process, replaces the previous approach to annual monitoring. This new process considers all aspects of the management of the student experience and will be implemented on the basis of perceived risk thus permitting a review to be initiated in a more timely fashion. Recent changes to the governance structure will be reviewed in June 2015.

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

2.4 Terms of reference for the Joint Steering Committee confirm that it provides a forum for overseeing reports and reviews from external agencies and professional bodies. An interim review of KUISC mapping to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) has been undertaken by the Acting Regional Director. The review recommended a number of actions including the identification of an appropriate methodology for mapping to ensure a consistent approach. Although not directly involved in mapping activity, teaching staff confirmed that they are benefiting from staff development focused on the Quality Code. When completed, the mapping will be submitted to the Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee for approval. It is **advisable** that KUISC complete the process of mapping to demonstrate alignment to the Quality Code.

2.5 The newly developed role of Director of Quality will have responsibility for ensuring full compliance with the Quality Code. External examiners continue to play an important role in reinforcing the use of external reference points.

How effectively does KUISC assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

2.6 The Joint Steering Committee provides a forum for the sharing of good practice between KUISC and Keele University while the Joint Board of Studies has responsibility for monitoring the quality of student learning opportunities and is chaired by the Head of Governance and Quality Assurance at Keele University. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group is a key forum where KUISC staff and students agree programme level enhancements. All teaching staff are members of the Quality Assurance Enhancement Group. The Curriculum Committee has responsibility for overseeing the audit of peer review processes in teaching and learning. KUISC staff work closely with University Link Tutors in the design and delivery of modules.

2.7 A training needs analysis has been undertaken to facilitate the further development of technology enhanced learning. An e-champion has been identified to provide academic leadership in this area. Staff are to be provided with a new Centre Handbook which will include a dedicated chapter on the Centre's approach to quality assurance and enhancement.

How effectively does KUISC make use of student feedback to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

2.8 Student representatives are recruited via Personal Tutor Groups and participate in the academic governance of KUISC. Student representatives attend Centre Board meetings, and as a result of the recent changes to the BES Ltd academic infrastructure they will attend the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group in 2014-15. The approach to student

representation continues to evolve with discussions across the network of International Study Centres and Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement* of the Quality Code being used to inform its development. The Staff Student Liaison Committee is currently chaired by the Head of Centre, however there are plans to provide training for students to enable them to take over this role.

2.9 The Annual Monitoring Report places an emphasis on the evaluation of feedback from students about the quality of their learning experience including the quality of teaching and their experience of assessment. The review team heard that enhancements to the implementation of the Student Satisfaction Survey are being considered by the acting Head of Centre in consultation with the student body in order to maximise levels of student engagement.

How effectively does KUISC assure itself that students are supported effectively?

2.10 Academic and pastoral support for students was recognised as an area of good practice in the June 2014 QAA Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight Report. To further enhance this area KUISC has developed a Student Support and Engagement Action Plan which includes a training plan for staff around student support. A Pastoral Co-ordinator has been identified and a Personal Tutoring Pack has been developed to guide and support staff. The Student Handbook provides students with comprehensive information about support available. Class sizes are deliberately small to facilitate individualised support. The ethos of providing frequent formative feedback is embedded in programme delivery. The Keele Operational Group which meets twice a year provides a forum for discussing non-academic matters related to student support.

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

2.11 Clear structures are in place enabling KUISC to manage the recruitment and admission of students. It is the responsibility of the Joint Board of Studies to monitor admissions and recruitment and to consider the implications for the promotion and design of programmes. The Keele Operational Group has responsibility for considering and resolving operational issues related to the admission of students. The Joint Steering Committee has responsibility for receiving reports from the Sales and Marketing Group which relate to recruitment and enrolments.

How effective are KUISC's arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

2.12 The support for teaching staff and the wide range of opportunities for pedagogical development available to them was recognised as an area of good practice in the June 2014 QAA Review Report. The revised terms of reference for the Joint Board of Studies includes a responsibility to identify and plan appropriate staff development for KUISC tutors. Staff confirmed that they have greater clarity about the new quality assurance structures and that relevant continuing professional development is being made available to enable them to engage with the revised processes and systems being implemented. A Director of Quality, shortly to be appointed by the provider (see paragraph 1.9), will play a role in developing quality-related training materials and sessions across the network of ISCs.

How effectively does KUISC ensure that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes?

2.13 As noted in the June 2014 QAA Review Report the review team concluded that the learning resources available to students at KUISC were sufficiently adequate to enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The Keele Operational Group has clearly defined responsibilities in relation to the resources available to students including the provision of space. The Group also receives feedback from the Staff Student Liaison Committee relating to operational areas and facilities. University staff confirmed that students were part of the University community.

The review team has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for students through embedded colleges.

3 Information about learning opportunities

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

3.1 BES Ltd intends to produce a Provider Quality Handbook which will set out minimum standards which KUISC will be required to meet. KUISC in collaboration with the University is in the process of publishing additional guidance for staff in the form of a Centre Handbook and a Quality Handbook. Protocols have been introduced which clarify the role of the Head of Centre in relation to the accuracy of information. The review team noted that the published membership of committees does not always accurately reflect the intended membership.

3.2 A comprehensive Student Handbook has been developed providing a single source of information for students. In complying with the University requirements related to published information KUISC has secured University endorsement for sections of the Student Handbook. The Student Handbook sets out some of the KUISC Assessment Regulations. Students have access to the full regulations online. The Handbook will be made available on the virtual learning environment (see paragraph 1.13). Some omissions and discrepancies related to the use of academic framework terminology were noted by the review team and assurances were provided by KUISC that these would be addressed in a final edition of the Handbook. The regulations relating to the termination of study have been clarified and opportunities for progression to Keele University published on the KUISC webpage.

3.3 KUISC has undertaken a review of its webpage to ensure the accurate publication of information for prospective students. The review team noted that information related to a relevant professional, statutory and regulatory body was absent from the website. As part of KUISC's response to one of the advisable recommendations following the last QAA review, a revised glossary of terms has been published to ensure greater clarity and consistency in the use of terminology related to student achievement.

How effective are KUISC's arrangements for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy?

3.4 Clear processes are in place to ensure that information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The recent implementation of the abridged Centre Review process conducted at KUSIC recommended the delivery of a staff briefing session in relation to

published information. The Keele Operational Group has responsibility in relation to the provision of pre-arrival information.

3.5 The review team learned that changes to progression arrangements were being considered (paragraph 1.29). It is **advisable** that KUISC inform students, and prospective students, about changes to requirements for progression to Keele University, in a timely fashion.

The team concludes that **reliance can** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers through embedded colleges.

4 Action plan³

KUISC action plan relating to Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight in September 2014						
Advisable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it is advisable for KUISC to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> keep under review the implementation and effectiveness of the new quality assurance framework and the use of its new data management system (paragraph 1.9) 	The new quality framework has been built to ensure that Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (the provider) is made aware, in a timely fashion, of standards and quality issues in KUISC and other ISCs in the network	Enhanced governance structure to be fully implemented, with quarterly committee and quality group meetings providing a coherent framework of communication at local, regional and national levels. This requires completion of the following: terms of reference for each committee: governance organogram, template agendas, minutes structure. The new structure will feed directly into the UK HE newly established UK HE Enhancement, Quality	<p>Implementation from 27/9/14 (start of term)</p> <p>Full implementation during the 2014-15 academic year in accordance with the meetings schedule</p>	Head of Centre	Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (AQAEC) via Regional Director and Regional Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (RQAEG)	Via Centre governance structure, that is Annual Monitoring Report and Action Plan produced by Head of Centre (with input from key stakeholders) which is reviewed and approved by Course Committee. This is then received by the Joint Board of Studies

³ The provider has been required to develop this action plan to follow up on good practice and address any recommendations arising from the review. QAA monitors progress against the action plan, in conjunction with the partner higher education institution.

		<p>and Compliance Board (EQCB)</p> <p>Protocol for escalation of urgent issues directly to provider to be produced and circulated</p>				<p>EQCB minutes</p> <p>Report on the effectiveness of the new governance and reporting structure, Head of Quality, summer 2015</p> <p>Escalation protocol</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> expedite the completion of the Centre Handbook for 2014-15, and its communication to staff and students (paragraph 1.12) 	<p>Review the use of terms which define student achievement, and ensure that they are used and explained clearly and consistently in all appropriate documentation</p>	<p>Keele ISC update of all documentation, including public facing, to ensure consistency with Glossary on terminology</p> <p>New handbook to be developed and approved by external consultant</p> <p>Presented to November Joint Board of Studies for discussion</p> <p>Endorsed by Keele University</p>	<p>30 November 2014</p>	<p>Head of Centre</p>	<p>AQAEC via Regional Director and RQAEG</p>	<p>Via Centre governance structure, that is Annual Monitoring Report and Action Plan produced by Head of Centre (with input from key stakeholders) which is reviewed and approved by Course Committee. This is then received by the Joint Board of Studies</p>

						Evidence of this process will be found in the minutes of the relevant meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that all assessments relate to module learning outcomes, and that associated marking criteria align with the University's generic assessment criteria for FHEQ level 4 (paragraph 1.27) 	Effective implementation of the generic mark scheme allowing for consistent and transparent feedback to students	<p>Review the use of the generic mark criteria at the September joint Board of Studies, one year after its introduction</p> <p>Curriculum Committee will focus on this and subject teachers will undergo further staff development Each module teacher should develop a standard assessment criteria grid for each module which embeds the Generic Assessment Criteria for Level 4 with the individual module learning outcomes OR where the generic L4 criteria does not easily fit with the subject matter, develop assessment criteria in conjunction with other relevant sources eg, KU first year assessment criteria and Link Tutor input</p>	<p>30 September 2014</p> <p>31 October 2014</p> <p>Before assessments are issued to students (i.e. by the end of week 3 in each term)</p>	<p>Head of Centre</p> <p>Head of Centre and Subject teachers</p> <p>Subject teachers</p>	<p>AQAEC via Regional Director and RQAEG</p>	<p>Via Centre governance structure i.e. Annual Monitoring Report and Action Plan produced by Head of Centre (with input from key stakeholders) which is reviewed and approved by Course Committee. This is then received by the Joint Board of Studies(JBS). Evidence of this process will be found in the minutes of the relevant meetings</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inform students, and prospective students, about changes to requirements for progression to Keele University, in a timely fashion (paragraph 1.29) 	<p>Ensure that prospective students are given accurate information about HE provision at the ISC. In particular that they are given timely information about any changes to progression rules</p>	<p>On and off-line materials to include information about the possibility of first and second year progression- and that this depends on student performance.</p> <p>Students will be informed that full details of this will be given to them during their induction</p> <p>Any changes to the progression rules will be agreed by Joint Steering Committee in time for the relevant Student and Centre Handbook, Assessment Regulations and any other materials to be updated before the start of term</p>	<p>From October 2014 (website) and January 2015 (Prospectus)</p> <p>March 2015</p>	<p>Head of Centre</p> <p>Head of Centre</p> <p>Head of Centre/ Keele University</p>	<p>AQAEC via Regional Director and RQAEG</p>	<p>Reviewed annually by Joint Board of Studies on behalf of the Joint Steering Committee. Evidence of this process will be found in the minutes of the Joint Board of Studies meetings</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> complete the process of mapping to demonstrate alignment to the Quality Code (paragraph 2.4) 	<p>Align ISC processes to the indicators of sound practice within the Quality Code</p>	<p>Mapping (and the implementation of any changes) will take place on a priority basis with the aim of having the biggest impact on the quality of the student experience. The full mapping exercise will be completed by August 2015</p>	<p>August 2015</p>	<p>Head of Centre and Regional Director</p>	<p>AQAEC via Regional Director and RQAEG</p>	<p>Via Centre governance structure i.e. Annual Monitoring Report and Action Plan produced by Head of Centre (with input from key stakeholders)</p>

		AQAEC will provide a steer regarding the timetable for mapping Centre policies, processes and procedures over the rest of 2014/15 and a rolling programme of Quality Code review for subsequent academic years	January 2015			which is reviewed and approved by Course Committee. This is then received by the Joint Board of Studies. Evidence of this process will be found in the minutes of the relevant meetings
Desirable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date/s	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it would be desirable for KUISC to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> initiate dialogue with the University on the provision of information to KUISC staff and students on the exercise of discretion to allow progression to University 	That all potential progression criteria are communicated transparently to students (this related specifically to when Link Tutors are exercising academic judgement at the Programme Assessment Board). The students concerned are those who have failed to meet the	Discussion and agreement at Steering Committee about how best to implement this	March 2015 Joint Steering Committee meeting	Director and Principal and Keele University	AQAEC via Regional Director and RQAEG	Via Centre governance structure i.e. Annual Monitoring Report and Action Plan produced by Head of Centre (with input from key stakeholders)

<p>programmes when published requirements are not met (paragraph 1.14)</p>	<p>progression requirements to Year 1 and/or Year 2</p>					<p>which is reviewed and approved by Course Committee. This is then received by the Joint Board of Studies. Evidence of this process will be found in the minutes of the relevant meetings</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> expedite the introduction of standard assessment regulations covering all the ISC approved programmes (paragraph 1.15) 	<p>That all centres delivering Study-Group-approved programmes of study have in place for 2015-16 a set of assessment regulations approved by AQAEC. These regulations will be identical, where appropriate, and will meet a number of minimum expectations required by the Provider</p>	<p>Draft a set of generic assessment regulations suitable for adoption and adaptation, where appropriate, for ISCs delivering approved provision. 2. Secure AQAEC approval of these regulations. 3. Distribute regulations and a Provider statement on implementation via RQAEG</p>	<p>31 July 2015</p>	<p>Head of Quality/ Director of Teaching and Learning (tbc)</p>	<p>AQAEC</p>	<p>Assessment Regulations 2015/16 document; AQAEC and RQAEG minutes</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure greater clarity in the interpretation and communication of regulations concerning the opportunity for students to retake the year (paragraph 1.30). 	<p>That the potential for students to repeat their programme is clearly communicated to students</p>	<p>The decision to allow a student to return to repeat their programme is a complex one relating to: how they have engaged with their programme; their financial circumstance; and their eligibility for continued Tier 4 sponsorship</p> <p>Consequently these decisions are very individualised and do not form part of the terms of reference of a PAB</p> <p>The following actions will be taken to ensure that the circumstances are clearly explained to existing ISC students in the 2014-15 academic year and then to all new students arriving in subsequent years:</p> <p>Personal tutors will again brief their tutees on the progression rules (including the possibility of restarting).</p> <p>All students at risk of not meeting the progression</p>	<p>Jan/Feb 2015</p> <p>February 2015</p>	<p>Personal tutors</p> <p>Personal Tutors</p>	<p>AQAEC via Regional Director and RQAEG</p>	<p>Via Centre governance structure i.e Annual Monitoring Report and Action Plan produced by Head of Centre (with input from key stakeholders) which is reviewed and approved by Course Committee. This is then received by the Joint Board of Studies. Evidence of this process will be found in the minutes of the relevant meetings</p>
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		<p>criteria for year 1 or 2 will have a detailed Individual Recovery Plan and an assigned tutor</p> <p>When it becomes evident that a student is very unlikely to meet these criteria (following the termly MABs) the Head of Centre will individually review the students status</p> <p>Student and Centre Handbooks will be updated to include reference of repeating the year</p>	<p>June/August 2015 (i.e. before the end of the student's programme)</p> <p>September 2015</p>	<p>Head of Centre</p> <p>Head of Centre</p>		
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About QAA

QAA is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

QAA's aims are to:

- meet students' needs and be valued by them
- safeguard standards in an increasingly diverse UK and international context
- drive improvements in UK higher education
- improve public understanding of higher education standards and quality.
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QAA conducts reviews of higher education institutions and publishes reports on the findings. QAA also publishes a range of guidance documents to help safeguard standards and improve quality.

More information about the work of QAA is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk.

More detail about Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook⁴](#)

academic quality A comprehensive term referring to how, and how well, higher education providers manage teaching and learning opportunities to help students progress and succeed.

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

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).

awarding organisation An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

differentiated judgements In a review for educational oversight, separate judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate awarding bodies.

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 QAA's audit and review processes.

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*.

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 review processes.

highly trusted sponsor An organisation that the UK government trusts to admit migrant students from overseas, according to Tier 4 of UK Visas and Immigration points-based immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must undergo a successful review by QAA.

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.

⁴ <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx>

partner higher education institution A body with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

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.

provider(s) (of higher education) Organisations that deliver higher education. In the UK they may be a degree-awarding body or another organisation that offers programmes of higher education on behalf of degree-awarding bodies or awarding organisations. In the context of ECREO, the term means an independent college.

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

reference points Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured. Internal reference points may be used by providers for purposes of self-regulation; external ones are used and accepted throughout the higher education community for the checking of standards and quality.

quality See **academic quality**.

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.

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.

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 for higher education qualifications** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**. See also **academic standards**.

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

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