



Educational Oversight for Embedded Colleges: report of the monitoring visit of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Study Group), October 2018

Keele University International Study Centre

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the monitoring team concludes that Keele University International Study Centre (the Centre) is making commendable progress with implementing the action plan following the October 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#).

Changes since the last QAA review

2 There have been no material changes since the last review in October 2016. There were 34 students at the time of the review. For 2017-18, 94 per cent of the students completed their programmes. A new International Year One programme in Business was introduced.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The Higher Education Review carried out in October 2016 noted three features of good practice each of which has led to a series of further enhancements and actions noted in the Centre Action Plan (CAP) and completed and evaluated in the two years since the review. There was one affirmation which has been actioned. The Centre is especially proactive in working with other centres and with its university partner in order to improve the student experience.

4 Good practice was noted in 'the application of good practice shared across the Study Group network to enhance the appraisal process and develop peer observation'. This has been further enhanced with all tutors participating in peer observation within the Centre and, increasingly, with departments such as the Keele Management School in the partner university. New appraisal documentation has been put in place to facilitate more in-depth reflection on the part of the tutor with cross-pathway observations whenever possible. Cross-centre observations have also taken place with the Liverpool John Moores University centre.

5 The second point of good practice was 'the whole centre approach to teaching and learning which is designed to ensure that every student has an equitable, challenging and enriching experience'. This has been further developed by the implementation and review of the Centre's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The review used evaluations by tutors of their practice and also feedback from students via the Staff Student Liaison Committee and Student Focus Groups set up to allow all students, not just the student representatives, a voice. A number of further initiatives have been overseen by the Curriculum Committee which acts as a development forum. These include progress in using the virtual learning environment,

reaching Study Group's level 1 which ensures consistency of basic e-learning material across modules, and moving further to develop a range of electronic resources. Flipped Learning approaches have been trialled with students and appropriate resources identified. Another project seeking to enhance students' skills in preparation for flipped learning activities has been initiated. The network wide Career Ahead Initiative has been implemented with 100 per cent of students completing the employability skills questionnaire and innovative activities such as a 'Model United Nations' event and the introduction of a student produced e-zine 'Little Steps' requiring development of a range of skills in cross-pathway and cross-cohort groups The 'Model United Nations' event is set for further development in the current academic year with a proposal to stage a cross-centre international relations events for students in the northern centres.

6 The success of these initiatives is demonstrated by student outcomes with over 90 per cent of entrants completing their programmes in each of the last three years and over 90 per cent of completers then progressing to register with the partner university (96 per cent in 2017-18).

7 The third point of good practice was 'the effective operations in place to engage students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experiences'. The Centre has continued to be proactive in recruiting student representatives and these are now provided with a handbook to explain their role, as well as a training event. Students are also invited to take part in focus groups on particular topics. Examples were given of responses to issues arising from student feedback. Lead Student Representatives are elected from among, and by, their peers and represent the Centre's students at the provider's cross-centre Student Council. Information from the Student Council is fed back by the Lead Student Representatives to the Staff Student Liaison Committee and to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG). The role of Link Student was introduced in September 2017 to allow alumni to engage with new cohorts of students. A role description is available and Link Students have participated in induction events and given talks about their experiences in transitioning to the University.

8 The 2016 review made one affirmation concerning the 'steps being taken in partnership with the University with regard to tackling students' progress over their degree courses'. It was agreed at the Joint Board of Studies that such data would be generated through a suite of reports to which a restricted number of authorised users at the Centre would have access. These reports allow the Centre to access alumni performance on modules and final degree performance. It is still too early to evaluate the impact of systematic use of this data on Centre practice, but initial results suggest ex-Centre students outperform other international students. In addition, Link Tutors report to the Joint Board of Studies on any issues which may impact on student performance at the partner university.

9 The majority of admissions to Study Group Centres are carried out centrally by Study Group. The UK and Europe Admissions Centre is split between Singapore and Brighton and Hove. The latter picks up all applications from the place confirmation stage. The last academic year saw an enhancement-led review of sales, marketing and admissions. The Centre is involved in making decisions about exceptional cases such as candidates considered to be borderline in meeting requirements for a programme or those who have special needs. In such cases, the decision rests with the Head of Centre who will consult with staff such as the Head of Curriculum and the Head of English. The partner university may also be consulted. The success of such students is tracked by the Centre, tailored support is provided and they tend to do well although more progress to Year 1 than to Year 2.

10 The Centre uses the partner university's process and form for annual monitoring, but this has been mapped against Study Group requirements to ensure that these are fully met. The report draws on module reports, external examiner reports and student feedback and includes a review of the Centre Action Plan. The completed report is discussed by QAEG and by the Joint Board of Studies with the partner university. The final draft is presented to Study Group's Regional Quality and Academic Enhancement Group (RQAEG) where it is subject to peer review. Staff reported that the review process had been helpful in gaining insight into how to enhance the use of data and to produce more consistent data. A summary of the regional AMRs is presented to the provider's Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee (AQAE) and matters arising from this inform the provider's Annual Monitoring Report. Issues identified and actions to be taken are incorporated into the Centre Action Plan (CAP).

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

11 The quality assurance processes used by the Centre are specified by Study Group and are based on the UK Quality Code of Higher Education. Examples of this are the use of external examiners for all programmes, the programme approval process and the annual monitoring process. In addition, students are involved in quality assurance and enhancement with student representatives in place and meeting as the Staff Student Liaison Committee and attending, and sharing the chairing of, non-confidential items at the Centre's QAEG committee.

12 Programme and module development is benchmarked against *The Framework for Higher Education* (FHEQ) for programmes set at Levels 4-6 such as International Year One and the Pre-Masters Programme and against the Regulated Qualifications Programme (RQF) for the International Foundation Year which is set at Level 3. Programme and module specifications use the appropriate qualifications descriptors in stating learning outcomes and, where appropriate, Subject Benchmark Statements are used in developing the curriculum and referred to in programme and module specifications. English language modules are benchmarked against the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Background to the monitoring visit

13 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's and its embedded colleges' continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider and its embedded colleges of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

14 The monitoring visit was carried out by Ms Sarah James, QAA Officer, and Professor Gaynor Taylor, QAA Reviewer, on 18 October 2018.

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