Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd

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

July 2014

Annex 1: Bournemouth University International College (BUINTCOL)

Introduction and background

Bournemouth University International College (BUINTCOL) became an embedded college of Bournemouth University (the University) in August 2013 at which time a cooperation agreement was signed between Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd (KIC) and the University. At this time, Kaplan International College Bournemouth (KICB) became a separate entity, delivering general English language provision. BUINTCOL delivers academic programmes at foundation, certificate, international year one and pre-master's levels alongside English language support. Additionally, there is a preparation course for students who already hold offers from the University to study on a degree programme.

It is only since BUINTCOL became an embedded college that it has made conditional offers to students regarding subsequent progression to the University. At the time of the review visit, the majority of students had been made such a conditional offer. In addition to these students a minority of students are enrolled on a Multi-partner Progression Pathway programme (MPP). These students do not receive a conditional offer to progress to the University but are instead supported by BUINTCOL and centrally by KIC to progress to either Bournemouth University or another university. This MPP arrangement will only continue for an agreed maximum number of students studying on a Foundation Certificate programme in 2014-15.

BUINTCOL also moved into new premises on the University's city campus in the summer of 2013. KIC is currently building alternative, purpose-built premises incorporating teaching space, accommodation and social facilities and plan to move into this new accommodation in September 2015. There were 99 students studying at the College at the time of the review.

Key findings

Academic standards

There can be **confidence** that academic standards at BUINTCOL are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd.

Quality of learning opportunities

There can be **confidence** that the quality of learning opportunities at BUINTCOL is assured and enhanced appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd.

Information about learning opportunities

Reliance can be placed on the information that BUINTCOL produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

The review team noted the following features of **good practice** at BUINTCOL:

- the effective use of processes to ensure consistency of marking within module teams (paragraph 10)
- the use of KIC grade descriptors to inform high quality and consistent feedback, aligned to the marking criteria (paragraph 20)
- the holistic support for students in adapting to living and studying in the UK (paragraph 21)
- staff are actively encouraged to participate in development and there are clear mechanisms for sharing learning across the College (paragraph 25).

Recommendations

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

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

- review the academic adviser system so that a greater number of students access and benefit from it (paragraph 18)
- review the title of foundation programmes to ensure they accurately reflect academic content (paragraph 33).

Detailed findings

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

1   The Senior Management Team at KIC is supported by the College Executive Management Board (CEMB) whose membership includes directors of all KIC colleges. KIC's senior academic body is the Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC) which is responsible for the governance of academic standards and quality across the college network.

2   The KIC Senior Management Team has ultimate responsibility for the academic standards of their programmes. Local responsibility for the oversight of academic standards and quality assurance of BUINTCOL programmes is delegated to the Joint Academic Board (JAB) and assessment boards, both of which have membership from the College and the University. Responsibilities for these bodies are clear, and exercised diligently. Assessment boards are chaired by a programme leader from a different discipline. There are also programme committees with student representation for each BUINTCOL programme.

3   BUINTCOL has effective procedures for ensuring the appropriate maintenance of academic standards, which are consistent with the KIC Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM).

How effective is the management of student assessment?

4   BUINTCOL delivers centrally approved KIC programmes which incorporate local variations to reflect the nature of the programmes at the University to which students may progress. BUINTCOL has adopted the standard KIC assessment regulations across these programmes. More accessible summary versions of these assessment regulations are made available to students in the student and programme handbooks. Students are made aware of how they can access the complete set of regulations.

5   BUINTCOL staff produce all assessments except for summative assessments on credit-bearing English language exit assessments, which are produced centrally by KIC. Students reported that they are provided with very clear and standardised information on their assessment tasks, including the provision of detailed assessment criteria. Teaching staff reported that these assessment criteria have been developed with reference to the KIC grade descriptors. Staff are less aware of the KIC graduate outcomes.

6   At the time of the review visit, students had not taken their final examinations and there was no agreed mechanism for how students may review their scripts if required. Staff advised that a process was being considered for this, and that BUINTCOL is likely to follow the practice of another KIC college whereby students are permitted to review their examination script in the presence of an academic tutor to see how marks have been awarded and obtain personalised feedback.

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

7   The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) has been used by KIC to inform the recent updating of the QAF and ASQM. Strategic use has been made of the Quality Code by the Senior Management Team and this has informed particular aspects of BUINTCOL provision, including its Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy and assessment design. Other staff demonstrated less awareness of the Quality Code, but there are mechanisms in place to further inform all staff and sessional teachers on how the Quality Code can be used to enhance teaching and learning.

8   KIC makes use of other external reference points in the design, monitoring and review of BUINTCOL programmes, including *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), subject benchmark statements, AS/A Level standards and the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching and assessment*.

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

9   Systematic use is made of subject specialist external examiners, who are appointed to all BUINTCOL programmes. They approve assessment briefs, can meet staff and students, review marked assessments, attend final assessment boards and produce a written report.

10   BUINTCOL has effective processes to ensure consistency of marking within module teams, which is **good practice**. Staff also share good practice related to assessment design and feedback, including the use of standardisation (whereby module teams, prior to marking,

agree a common understanding of the assessment criteria), sample double marking, and moderation and oversight by external examiners.

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

11   BUINTCOL uses the KIC student record system to record recruitment, student attendance and performance and this data is considered by the programme committees. These committees are also responsible for drafting an Annual Programme Report, which is approved by the JAB. BUINTCOL will also be able to receive performance data on students who have progressed from KICB from 2015-16 and there are arrangements in place to allow the University to feed back information to the College about how BUINTCOL students perform compared to other student groups on the same University programme. This is recognised to be a key performance indicator, that will be used by BUINTCOL to review its future provision. KIC produces an Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes report (ASQP), which draws on information from the APRs and is considered by APQC.

There can be **confidence** that academic standards at BUINTCOL are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd.

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

12   BUINTCOL makes good use of guidance and policies set out centrally by KIC, in local processes and documentation. The Senior Management Team is effective in cascading and embedding these in local processes. BUINTCOL has added its own list of desirable actions to those arising from the last QAA visit to its action plan with clear timelines for progression and processes for evaluation.

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

13   The Quality Code is embedded in BUINTCOL practice through its use of the KIC QAF and ASQM and there is a clear awareness of it among the senior staff. Various chapters of the Quality Code have been used to inform the development of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

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

14   BUINTCOL is teaching to the new curriculum and it is operating effectively under the Director of Studies. Appropriate methods of learning and teaching are applied, enabling students to meet the learning outcomes. There is a strong emphasis on active learning and on the application of theory to practice.

15   BUINTCOL staff are open to innovating in learning and teaching in order to enhance provision. Students and alumni can articulate how their learning at Kaplan prepared them for their degree programme. BUINTCOL continues to ensure the cross-fertilisation of language and academic skills and this is facilitated by the structure of the new curriculum. It responds carefully to student feedback in reviewing and enhancing provision.

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

16   There are robust mechanisms for obtaining feedback from students, and alumni, include student surveys, leaver surveys, student representation at programme committee meetings and an active student representative system. Student representatives were supported by BUINTCOL staff to prepare a student submission, for which they surveyed students, obtaining feedback useful to BUINTCOL. Students appreciated being part of an embedded college and the access to the University's facilities and staff.

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

17   Each student has a named member of staff as their personal tutor with whom they meet initially in a group and then regularly for one-to-one tutorials in order to monitor and support their academic progress, with handbooks setting out clear expectations of students and tutors. There are suggested topics for tutorials throughout the year, and meetings will be recorded and stored on a new student record system.

18   Some students spoke highly of the support they receive from their personal tutor: others, who did not have a member of staff who taught them as their personal tutor, were less clear about the benefits and how to access their personal tutor. It is **advisable** to review the academic adviser system so that a greater number of students access and benefit from it.

19   BUINTCOL puts in place specific support mechanisms for students aged under 18 and for the assessment of students with disabilities.

20   BUINTCOL has implemented effective mechanisms for providing feedback to students using marking criteria aligned to the KIC grade descriptors in a systematic way through the use of feedback sheets. Students praised the quality of feedback they receive on their assessed work for its clarity, developmental value and supportive nature. The use of KIC grade descriptors to inform high quality and consistent feedback, aligned to the marking criteria is **good practice**.

21   Students receive high quality support in their integration into studying and living in the UK, which complements the support for academic development. Induction for students is strong and addresses issues of cultural difference that may confuse students early on in their studies. Students spoke highly of the support that they receive in adapting to the UK context and value the study skills, language support and pastoral care that they receive. The holistic support for students in adapting to living and studying in the UK is **good practice**.

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

22   Recruitment and admissions policy and processes are managed by KIC's central marketing, sales and admissions teams. Most students are recruited direct to BUINTCOL but some students are admitted through a careful selection process via a KIC Language School. The majority of students who join BUINTCOL plan to progress to Bournemouth University, but a small group of students in 2014-15 are on the multi-progression pathway and will apply to the institutions of their choice via UCAS. Students are closely counselled on the appropriate pathway for them.

23   The team noted that programme titles in the prospectus for 2013-14 did not in some cases reflect the programme content, and the Student Submission noted some concerns

that some students' expectations of course content were not fully met. (See recommendation in paragraph 33.)

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

24   BUINTCOL operates clear systems for the appointment, induction, appraisal and performance management of both teaching and support staff. It encourages and supports staff in their own development, aligning development opportunities to strategic priorities. With the transfer of BUINTCOL to the new premises, an induction for staff to the new campus was carried out in September 2013.

25   New developments are supported by robust staff training and development programmes, with effective cascading of learning from KIC central workshops across BUINTCOL. Assessment principles, procedures and regulations clearly reference external frameworks and those of KIC. Staff have access to professional development opportunities within BUINTCOL, through the KIC network and the University and there are mechanisms for cascading external learning into BUINTCOL formally through workshops and informally. Staff are actively encouraged to participate in development and there are clear mechanisms for sharing learning across BUINTCOL, which is **good practice**.

26   The peer observation scheme includes observation of teaching by support as well as teaching staff in order that the former can better understand the student experience. Most support staff are international and most academic staff have English language teaching qualifications, helping to ensure that student support and delivery of teaching is appropriate to the international cohort.

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

27   The move to the new building has provided BUINTCOL with more space and high quality facilities. BUINTCOL has optimised its resources to bring together academic and social curricula.

28   Students have access to some of the University's facilities and are directed to those most relevant to them. In addition to access to the main University library, students have access to a library and computer room at BUINTCOL. Resources are carefully monitored and regularly reviewed with the University.

29   Although students did report variable levels of contact with the University, these had improved during the year and students have opportunities to visit University departments and to meet University staff.

30   The virtual learning environment is used extensively and BUINTCOL has appointed an experienced member of teaching staff as the virtual learning environment's champion to support both students and staff in their use of e-learning resources.

There can be **confidence** that the quality of learning opportunities at BUINTCOL is assured and enhanced appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd.

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

31 Students receive programme information through BUINTCOL website and prospectus, and through agents in their home country. Students reported that the information they received before they arrived was generally accurate and helpful.

32 Agents are trained and regularly updated by KIC. However, some students reported that the pre-arrival information they received from agents was not always up to date and that it referred to the previous college structure and programmes. The correct information was made available prior to arrival but students stated that this had only happened after they had arranged their finances with their sponsors and applied for their visas.

33 The team identified a number of minor errors in published information, relating to programme titles and module content, and to progression routes. These errors had arisen as BUINTCOL had only recruited to one of three possible pathways in the first year of a new programme, but the online prospectus had not been amended to make available progression routes clear. The generic programme titles do not make clear whether students have studied modules in all subject areas, although the modules students have taken appear on their transcripts. Given the importance of the programme title to students and other stakeholders and to avoid confusion it is **advisable** that BUINTCOL reviews the title of foundation programmes to ensure they accurately reflect academic content.

How effective are BUINTCOL's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing?

34 BUINTCOL prospectuses and websites are produced in consultation with the University and approved centrally by KIC. The University also undertakes an annual audit of material which relates to its provision.

35 Student, programme and module handbooks are updated annually. Students are invited to complete a post-arrival survey about the accuracy and usefulness of information, which is used to evaluate and review the quality of published information.

Reliance can be placed on the information that BUINTCOL produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Action plan[1]

KIC BUINTCOL action plan relating to the Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight in July 2014						
Good practice	**Intended outcomes**	**Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes**	**Target date(s)**	**Action by**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation (process or evidence)**
The review team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within KIC:						
• the effective use of processes to ensure consistency of marking within module teams (paragraph 10)	The high standard of feedback given to students to be maintained or to improve, and to stay consistent with National Qualification Framework levels	Ensure processes are embedded at BUINTCOL in 2014-15, and are perceived as a standard part of each tutor's role	31 Aug 2015	Director of Studies	Director of Student Learning and Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality	Schedule of standardisation sessions during 2014-15
		Explore with the Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (through the Academic Planning and Quality Committee) how best to share good practice across network, for example at KIC Best Practice Day in 2014-15	31 Oct 2014	Director of Studies		Samples of standardised work Materials used to share good practice Revised job descriptions for new teaching posts
		Introduce practice of termly scheduling of standardisation meetings from autumn term	31 Oct 2014	Director of Studies		

		2014				
• the use of KIC grade descriptors to inform high quality and consistent feedback, aligned to the marking criteria (paragraph 20)	The high standard of feedback given to students to be maintained or to improve, and to stay consistent with NQF levels	Ensure KIC grade descriptors are used to inform quality and consistency of feedback across all applicable programmes/ curricula and for any new modules during 2014-15	31 Aug 2015	Director of Studies	Director of Student Learning and Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality	Samples of feedback across a range of programmes
		Ensure teaching staff perceive this as a standard part of their role	31 Oct 2014	Director of Studies		Materials used to share good practice
		Explore with Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (through Academic Planning and Quality Committee) how best to share good practice across network, for example KIC Best Practice Day in 2014-15.	31 Oct 2014	Director of Studies		Revised job descriptions for new teaching posts
• the holistic support for students in adapting to living and studying in the UK (paragraph 21)	Expected that this will enhance student engagement leading to greater satisfaction and motivation, good attendance levels, higher retention and pass/ progression rates, and high registration rates at the University Aim that all staff and	Explore through Student Services network how best to share good practice across network, for example KIC Best Practice Day in 2014-15 Further action to include: review of induction programme for Sept 2014 and Jan 2015; introduction/embedding of the Student Management	31 Dec 2014 12 Sep and 31 Dec 2014 31 Aug 2015	Manager of Student Services Manager of Student Services Programme Leader	Director of Colleges	Feedback to be sought through student Leavers' Survey and through Staff Survey in summer 2015 Materials used to share good practice

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	students are aware of our holistic approach to learning; staff to be encouraged to seek out opportunities to enhance students' learning and make explicit links to the graduate outcomes	Database; increase in number of alumni as Student Helpers from Sept 2014; development of comprehensive programme of support activities	31 Dec 2014 31 Dec 2014 and 30 April 2015	Manager of Student Services Manager of Student Services		Revised induction programmes Schedule of student support activities through 2014-15
• staff are actively encouraged to participate in development and there are clear mechanisms for sharing learning across BUINTCOL (paragraph 25).	Expected that students will recognise that staff are appropriately prepared for their roles as reflected in feedback in summer 2015 Staff to feel they have opportunities for development in their specific role, and more holistically as a member of the College team	Explore with HR how best we could share good practice across network, for example KIC Best Practice Day in 2014-15 Further action to include: cross-college peer observation opportunities to be repeated and extended from autumn term 2014; more subject/role-related development to be provided, for example through existing/bespoke University training opportunities; more staff to attend the University's Festival of Learning sessions in spring 2015	31 Oct 2014 31 Oct 2014 31 Aug 2015 31 May 2014	College Director (CD) Director of Studies Director of Studies/ Manager Ops Director of Studies/ Manager Ops	Director of Colleges, Director of Student Learning	Training records for academic and non-academic staff during 2014-15 College Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy Materials used to share good practice Staff survey in summer 2015

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 KIC to:						
• review the academic adviser system so that a greater number of students access and benefit from it (paragraph 18)	Aim that more students will access and perceive benefit from the system which is intended to support students in optimising their performance and identify any non-academic issues to be followed up It will also provide an identified individual for students to go to with issues and formal communication channel for them to use	Working Group to be set up in Oct 2014 Trialling of new approach to allocation of students to Academic Advisors (tutors) during 2014-15 Tutorial system to be proactively monitored through new Student Management Database, including take-up of tutorials and quality of tutor comments Tutorial handbook to be reviewed Other action to be identified by working group in autumn term 2014-15	10 Oct 2014 15 Sept 2014 31 Aug 2015 31 Oct 2014 31 Dec 2014	Programme Leader Programme Leader Programme Leader Programme Leader Programme Leader	Director Of Colleges	Comparable evidence from student feedback in summer 2014 and summer 2015 (student submission to QAA, leavers' feedback, programme and module feedback) Materials used to raise awareness of the tutorial system in 2014-15; revised tutorial handbook; sample notes from SMD; introductory group tutorial materials used in Sept 2014 and Jan 2015
• review the title of foundation	Revised titles of the Foundation Certificate	Options to be considered by KHIE senior management in	31 Oct 2015	CD	Director of Colleges,	Revised hard-copy and

programmes to ensure they accurately reflect academic content (paragraph 33).	and Pre Masters Business Law and Finance programmes to give greater clarity regarding the programme content	Sept/Oct 2014 Anticipated that amendments will be made in preparation for start of 2015-16 academic year	31 August 2015	CD	Director of Recruitment	electronic marketing collateral; revised transcripts and certificates; revised programme specifications and handbooks, and so on