



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

University of Brighton International College

June 2016

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at University of Brighton International College. The review took place on 15 to 16 June 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Alison Jones
- Professor Graham Romp.

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

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

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

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

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

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

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

² Higher Education Review themes: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106.

³ QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

⁴ Higher Education Review (Embedded College): www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about University of Brighton International College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at the University of Brighton International College.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is **commended**.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at the University of Brighton International College:

- the close working relationship with the partner university, which enables highly effective and regular processes for developing, monitoring and reviewing programmes (Expectations B1 and B8)
- the high quality pastoral and academic support that enables students to achieve success (Expectation B3)
- the proactive approach to identifying student needs and supporting students to enable them to progress to their preferred university (Expectation B4)
- the use of alumni to support students in their learning and development, which effectively prepares them for progression to university (Expectations B4 and B5).

Enhancement of student learning opportunities

University of Brighton International College Directors are members of the College Executive Management Board (CEMB), which meets regularly and provides a forum for sharing best practice and discussion of matters relating to quality improvements. These matters are captured within College action plans. There are examples of good practice at the College being identified by CEMB and best practice for other colleges being adopted by the College. An enhancement initiative of note at the College is the PASS scheme (Peer Assisted Study Sessions), where alumni students at the University of Brighton mentor College students.

Theme: Digital Literacy

The College has used the Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd-level Blended Learning Strategy and Learning and Teaching Framework to inform the development of its own action plan and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, and has sought to embed blended learning into the planning and delivery of the curriculum. The College has a VLE (virtual learning environment) Coordinator who supports staff in the use of blended learning, and staff at the College have access to Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd-level events and resources to enhance digital literacy.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

There were no material issues identified at the University of Brighton International College during the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

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

About University of Brighton International College

The University of Brighton International College (the College) was established in 2011. It is an embedded College within the Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd (KIC) pathways framework, within a partnership with the University of Brighton. Students achieving the agreed requirements proceed directly to a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered by the University. The College's first intakes of students were in 2011-12. The College offers foundation certificate, International Year One and pre-master's programmes across a range of disciplines. For the academic year 2014-15, a total of around 360 students were enrolled at the College.

The College was reviewed as part of the Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight of KIC in March 2012. The College has undergone annual monitoring in 2013 and 2015 and on both occasions was found to be making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision. The 2013 annual monitoring review concluded that the 2012 report advisable recommendation relating to the role of external examiners had been addressed effectively, and that there was evidence of major progress with regard to the desirable recommendation for greater engagement with University staff and departments. The College continued to keep its action plan under review and develop previously identified features of good practice.

Explanation of the findings about University of Brighton International College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the provider

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Findings

1.1 The College offers foundation certificate, International Year One and pre-master's programmes across a range of disciplines. The foundation certificate programme is aligned to level 3 of the Regulated Qualifications Framework and the International Year One programme is aligned to level 4 of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). This permits successful students to progress on to levels 4 and 5 of specified programmes at the University of Brighton. The International Year One programmes are closely mapped to the equivalent programmes at the University. The pre-master's programmes are designed to support students to progress to postgraduate programmes at the University and are aligned with level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. All programmes are aligned to KIC's own Qualifications Framework.

1.2 Programmes are developed in line with standard KIC procedures as outlined in the Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM), which would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.3 The review team considered a range of documentation relating to academic standards, including the College's programme and module specifications, transcripts and award certificates, and met staff responsible for the oversight of academic standards at KIC level and within the College.

1.4 The evidence provided to the review team demonstrates that KIC's quality assurance arrangements in setting academic standards are consistently implemented and make full use of external reference points. There is clear and consistent evidence that qualification learning outcomes align with the relevant quality frameworks and Subject Benchmark Statements, and that students successfully passing these awards at the required level are guaranteed a place on their intended programme of study at the appropriate level. Students who successfully complete their programme of study at the College receive a transcript of their performance and an award certificate using the standard KIC template; both are clear about the ultimate responsibility for the KIC award.

1.5 The review team found that the College programmes are appropriately aligned to relevant external frameworks and Subject Benchmark Statements. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.6 Ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of KIC programmes lies centrally with its Senior Management Team (SMT). KIC's senior academic body is the Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC), which has devolved responsibility for the governance of academic standards and quality. KIC academic policies and procedures concerning the award of credit and qualifications are outlined in detail within its Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and ASQM.

1.7 The Joint Academic Board (JAB) is the senior academic advisory board for the partnership having oversight of the assurance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The JAB has representatives from both the University of Brighton and the College. The operational management of academic standards is the responsibility of the College Director, the Academic Director, and individual programme teams. Programme Committees operate for all programmes within the College and include student representation. The policies, procedures and reporting lines in place would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.8 The review team scrutinised College processes and their effectiveness through consideration of the documented quality assurance procedures, formal agreements with the University of Brighton, minutes of meetings, external examiner reports and programme specifications. The team also met senior management, teaching and support staff, and students at the College.

1.9 The College implements the policies and procedures contained in the ASQM. This includes the effective implementation of formal committees that operate according to clear terms of reference. These arrangements allow management at both the College and KIC level to have effective oversight of academic standards. In particular, the committee structure allows the College to work closely and effectively with its partner university in the quality management of programmes. The JAB plays an important role in ensuring that academic standards are set and maintained appropriately for the purpose of progression to the partner university.

1.10 The review team found that the College implements transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations that enable effective oversight of academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.11 The College is required to maintain definitive programme specifications using a standard template. This template requires the level of each programme; the intended learning outcomes; programme structure; and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) to be specified. These need to be formally approved and updated when changes are agreed by the APQC. Module handbooks are developed at the College to be issued to students and must be consistent with these definitive documents. Once approved, the programme specifications are stored centrally by KIC. The JAB is responsible for ensuring that the articulation agreements with the University of Brighton are an accurate and up-to-date record of entry and progression requirements. These are maintained centrally on the KIC Higher Education Course Management database. The design of these arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

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

1.13 The programme and module specifications viewed by the review team contained the required definitive information as required by KIC. These had been formally approved in line with KIC's requirements and updated when changes had been formally approved. The approved documentation was used by staff within the College to inform the delivery and assessment of the programmes, and students were issued with module handbooks that were consistent with formally approved documentation.

1.14 The review team found that the College fully implements KIC's requirements to ensure the maintenance of definitive records for all programmes of study and for individual student records. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.15 The College follows KIC's processes for the design and approval of modules, programmes and new pathways as outlined in the ASQM. KIC and College governance committees share responsibility for the design and approval of new products and programmes as outlined in the ASQM and the QAF.

1.16 The design of the process for programme approval would allow the Expectation to be met.

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

1.18 In adhering to the requirements of the KIC QAF, including the Qualifications Framework, KIC colleges make rigorous and systematic use of external benchmarks and the FHEQ in the design and approval of new programmes. JABs oversee all aspects of learning opportunities to be provided to students.

1.19 The review team found that there are effective processes in place for the approval of taught programmes, which enable the College to ensure academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification, and are in accordance with KIC academic frameworks and regulations. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.20 The ASQM sets out KIC's assessment principles, including the responsibility of College-level Programme Committees, for ensuring that an effective assessment strategy is in place for all programmes that meet KIC aims and principles of assessment and supports the KIC UK Pathways Learning and Teaching Framework.

1.21 Grade descriptors are used by the College to define success and the extent to which learning outcomes are met. Programme Committees ensure that assessments are designed and considered in the overall context of the programme and module learning outcomes, and include an appropriate volume and balance of assessment methods. The Annual Programme Report (APR) is completed by the Programme Leader, in conjunction with the Programme Committee, before final approval is given by the College SMT. It is then received by the JAB, the external examiner and the Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ). APRs inform the Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes (ASQP) Report, which is considered by the APQC.

1.22 The College is effectively supported in the assessment process by CLIQ, with supplementary written guidance such as the KIC Assessment Development Guide and the Guidelines for Establishing Alternative Assessment Arrangements for Disabled Students. Support is also provided by CLIQ through targeted training for College staff, which includes developing assessment in subject areas and standardisation of marking for English language.

1.23 The design of the process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.24 The review team considered a range of documentation, including programme committee minutes, APRs, programme and module specifications, and external examiner reports. The review team met staff who were involved in programme approval, setting and marking of assessments, and in producing APRs. The review team also met students to hear about their experience of the assessment process.

1.25 Students confirmed that they receive information on their learning outcomes and assessment requirements from tutors in class and the VLE, which they found to be helpful. Feedback on assessment was timely and the marking criteria are helpful. They advised that the College is very strict on deadlines, operating a sliding scale of penalties for late submission, and they were aware of the process for extenuating/mitigating circumstances.

1.26 The review team found that KIC processes for the assessment of learning outcomes are appropriately communicated and applied at the College. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

1.27 The College has devolved responsibility for the monitoring and review of programmes to ensure academic standards are met as outlined in the QAF.

1.28 The College undertakes ongoing monitoring and review activities, as well as annual review and periodic programme review (PPR). Using the standard KIC template, Programme Leaders have responsibility for completing the APR, in conjunction with the Programme Committee, focusing upon performance and data analysis, and highlighting good practice for wider dissemination and an action plan for resolving issues identified. JABs operated with the partner university is responsible for considering APRs and reporting back to the College.

1.29 PPR takes place every five years and draws upon APRs and other monitoring outcomes to enable colleges to take a holistic view of their provision, ensuring programmes remain valid and fit for purpose, and meet both internal and external requirements. The outcome of the process is the PPR report, which includes an action plan that is followed up by Programme Committees and the CLIQ. The CLIQ undertook a systematic periodic review of all KIC colleges in 2011-12 involving stakeholders, resulting in revised curriculum structures implemented from 2013 across the majority of colleges. In line with KIC's five-year review schedule, the College is undergoing PPR during 2015-16 with the involvement of the University of Brighton.

1.30 These processes would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.31 The review team considered a range of documentation, including Programme Committee minutes, JAB minutes, APRs, PPR reports and APQC minutes. The team met College staff involved in programme monitoring and review activities, including Programme Leaders and the Academic Director. The review team also met student representatives who were members of Programme Committees.

1.32 The College effectively draws upon a wide range of information, including data on student performance and achievement within its monitoring and review activities. There is an effective partnership between the College and the University.

1.33 The review team was advised that College staff have been extensively involved in the recent PPR process, attending team meetings to reflect upon feedback and discuss changes to be implemented. Meetings had taken place among University staff to discuss various curriculum issues, delivery of tutorials and core materials used in programmes, to ascertain where improvements may be made, which had informed discussions at SMT.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

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

Findings

1.35 The College follows the KIC QAF, which sets out the requirements for the appointment of external examiners to each award-bearing programme, or cognate group of programmes in line with University of Brighton-level agreed procedures. In addition, an external examiner is appointed by KIC to the credit-bearing Language for Study module operating across the network of Colleges. The College also draws upon the expertise and support from the University to ensure that the programmes remain aligned with their progression routes and exploit opportunities to enhance the students' learning experience.

1.36 Feedback from external examiners is used to inform the APRs produced by Programme Leaders at College-level and the overarching institutional-level ASQP report. PPR also draws upon the feedback provided through external examiner reports.

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

1.38 The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing external examiner reports, APRs, the PPR report and Programme Committee minutes, and in discussions with staff and students.

1.39 The review team found evidence that consideration of external examiner reports was reflected in APRs and Programme Committee minutes, together with the responses to external examiners and the summary provided to students.

1.40 The College-written external reports seen by the review team were completed in full, noting strengths and raising any concerns. The report dealt appropriately and robustly with matters relating to standards, with examples of recommendations being followed up by the College through the APR and Programme Committees. Students confirmed awareness of the external examiner process and advised that the external examiner reports were considered at the College Programme Committees.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the provider: Summary of findings

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

1.43 All seven of the Expectations for this judgement area are met and the associated level of risk is low in each case. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area.

1.44 The College has rigorous policies and procedures for maintaining academic standards, which are in accordance with KIC's academic frameworks and regulations. The College works effectively with its partner university in the quality management of programmes.

1.45 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval

Findings

2.1 The College adheres to KIC-defined procedures for undertaking programme design and approval, which follow the clear stages outlined in chapter 2 of the AQSM. The College has devolved responsibility for the design and development of programmes and modules, with support from the CLIQ and other KIC internal teams as required.

2.2 KIC provides a standard set of documentation requirements to the College for the approval process that include programme and module specifications using a standard template. Once initial planning approval has been granted by the New Product Development and Approval Group (NPDAG) and the Business Approval Group for Programme Developments (BAGPD), the College has responsibility for maintaining the proposal documentation throughout the approval process, ensuring that it is updated to reflect any required amendments as appropriate.

2.3 A Programme Committee is convened by the College for each programme delivered, which includes student representation, and this reports to the College SMT.

2.4 The design of the arrangements in place for programme design, development and approval at the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

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

2.6 The review team found that the College is provided with detailed guidance on the development, approval and amendment of programmes and modules through support from the CLIQ and ASQM. The development of new programmes and pathways draws explicitly upon the Quality Code and external frameworks, which is reflected within programme specifications. College staff demonstrated a sound understanding of the programme approval process. They provided clear articulation as to how programme alignment is achieved to external benchmarks, such as the FHEQ, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and Subject Benchmark Statements, in addition to KIC's own internal reference points and relevant university requirements, particularly where the university partner is involved in delivery.

2.7 College staff confirmed their involvement in the new programme for Art, Design and Media. Representatives from the University of Brighton confirmed that Art, Design and Media had been a significant development for the partnership, involving discussions to agree appropriate progression opportunities where appropriate. The review team noted that, as part of enhancements to programme design, International Year One year 1 Hospitality students are taught together with first-year University students at Eastbourne to support student transition to University studies. The close working relationship with the partner

university, which enables highly effective and regular processes for developing, monitoring and reviewing programmes, is **good practice**.

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

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education

Findings

2.9 Student recruitment and admission into the College is managed centrally by KIC, where admissions staff work to a detailed procedural manual. Admission requirements are determined centrally by KIC, taking into consideration the learning gain required by students in order to achieve the progression threshold onto the relevant University of Brighton programme. Applicants are also invited to disclose special educational needs at the application stage so that reasonable adjustments at the College and subsequently at the University can be made if necessary.

2.10 The detailed admissions manual, along with the training and support provided to relevant staff and agents, would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team explored KIC's approach to the recruitment, selection and admission of students by viewing documentation, including the admissions manual, prospectuses, offer letters and pre-arrival information provided in hard copy and online. In addition, the review team met staff and students at the College.

2.11 Staff at the College were clear on the admission processes and students were very positive about the admissions process and valued the pre-arrival information and support provided to inform decision-making and aid transition into the UK and the College. If accepted onto a programme, students are sent a detailed offer letter that confirms the nature of the offer made and the requirements needed to progress to their preferred university programme.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching

Findings

2.13 KIC's APQC has ultimate responsibility for assuring the quality of the learning opportunities available to students across colleges. The CLIQ is responsible for the management of learning opportunities, including the support for curriculum development and effective student learning across KIC programmes. KIC has developed a Learning and Teaching Framework, which has been used by the College to produce its own, context-specific LTAS, and College action plan.

2.14 The promotion, monitoring and development of the quality of learning opportunities at the College is the responsibility of Programme Committees, which report to the SMT. The SMT maintains a detailed action plan that is reviewed and updated every three months.

2.15 The design of the College's policies and processes to ensure high quality learning and teaching would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team examined documentary evidence relating to the College's overall approach to learning and teaching and met staff, students and recent alumni at the College.

2.16 The LTAS at the College has been developed in consultation with both staff and students through the Programme Committees and has been informed by the University of Brighton's strategy. The review team identified that the College action plan and its LTAS are effectively used to monitor and enhance learning opportunities for College students. The College provides a highly personalised approach to learning and teaching, with each student allocated a personal tutor that they meet with on a regular basis. Students are encouraged to participate in both formal and non-formal learning opportunities offering a range of enrichment activities. Students participate in guest lectures and seminars taught by staff from the University, and have access to University resources.

2.17 Students the review team met at the College consistently valued the high quality learning opportunities made available to them, and especially the support and guidance provided in a range of different learning contexts. Students typically praised the personalised approach to learning and teaching. Students positively evaluated the quality of feedback provided to them for both formative and summative assessments. The high quality pastoral and academic support that enables students to achieve success is **good practice**.

2.18 The College operates a detailed staff induction programme that includes regular teaching observations. The College offers a range of internal staff development events, including seminars and training sessions aimed at the development and sharing of good practice in learning and teaching. Support is made available to staff to seek Higher Education Academy Fellowship status.

2.19 The College has developed an overall framework and processes that support high quality learning opportunities and has effective mechanisms to evaluate and enhance these opportunities so that students can achieve success. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.20 All students at the College are required to meet regularly with a personal tutor, who provides personal and academic support beyond that offered within classes. The Student Services Team at the College provides additional personal support, advice and guidance, and acts as a point of referral for students who require more specialist support.

2.21 The provision of a range of different processes designed to support student development and achievement would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team investigated the effectiveness of these processes at the College through meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, professional and support staff, and students, and through consideration of a range of documentation, including the College action plan, committee minutes, and student handbooks.

2.22 At induction students undertake appropriate diagnostic testing in English, maths and science and statistics, and the College closely monitors student attendance and performance through interim assessment boards and the extensive use of formative assessment. The College has developed an effective cause for concern process, which identifies students at risk of non-progression and enables additional support to be provided if necessary. Students at the College highly valued the pastoral and academic support provided to them by both academic and support staff, and acknowledged that additional support was readily available. The proactive approach to identifying student needs and supporting students to enable them to progress to their preferred university is **good practice**.

2.23 The College makes extensive use of alumni who have previously progressed to the University of Brighton within induction and other timetabled sessions to provide additional support to students and aid transition. The College encourages alumni involvement on its Programme Committees; at the time of the review visit the College was considering having an alumni presence on the JAB. In partnership with the University, the College also operates a PASS scheme, where alumni students at the University mentor college students. The use of alumni to support students in their learning and development, which effectively prepares them for progression to university, is **good practice**.

2.24 The College systematically reviews the provision of extracurricular activities such as all pre-arrival activities, induction and welcome events, personal tutor meetings and social activities, and staff and students were able to identify instances where enhancements had been made.

2.25 The College has in place, and regularly evaluates, extensive processes that support high quality learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.26 College staff and students are encouraged to engage in discussions to bring about enhancement of the educational experience. The College Student Charter demonstrates the range of opportunities available to students to engage in their learning.

2.27 Chapter 9 of the ASQM sets out clear guidance to the College regarding the requirement for the principles and purpose of student feedback as an essential component in evaluating the quality of student learning opportunities, and to inform ongoing improvements. The College is able to decide on how best to elicit formal student feedback that reflects the nature of its student body, ensuring that the outcomes are then reflected within the annual and periodic reporting processes. Mechanisms include an arrival questionnaire, module and end-of-programme feedback questionnaires, student discussion groups, meetings with elected student representatives, and feedback boxes. Student membership is now included on Programme Committees.

2.28 The design of the arrangements for student engagement at the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

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

2.30 Student representatives who met the review team advised that they operated effectively, providing a two-way service as a messenger between students and the College. Students could volunteer for the role or elections were held if there was more than one volunteer, and advice and training was provided by the College.

2.31 Students also confirmed the effectiveness of the PASS scheme, which engages alumni to act as mentors for current students and had been highlighted as good practice within an external examiner's report. Positive feedback has been received from students regarding the support provided by PASS mentors to them during their programme. The PASS scheme, organised by the University of Brighton, has been extended to other programmes and enables PASS leaders to submit a portfolio of evidence in order to attain an additional 10 credits for their University programme, through completion of the PASS module at the University. The PASS scheme is highlighted as an instance of **good practice** within Expectation B4.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

Findings

2.33 The College follows KIC policies and regulations for assessment as set out in the ASQM. The ASQM provides comprehensive information on KIC assessment processes and regulations, including internal and external moderation, marking and feedback. Chapter 12 of the ASQM also sets out the minimum requirements for successful completion of modules and programmes, and how individual module marks are awarded and the calculation of the final programme average mark.

2.34 The College also provides assessment information to students during induction, which is supported by written guidance provided by the CLIQ such as on academic misconduct. Individual feedback on assessments is provided to students through tutorials, which students found beneficial in helping them to improve for the next assessment as well as enhancing their skills.

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

2.36 The design of the arrangements for the assessment of students would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.37 The review team considered documents relevant to assessment and external examiner reports, and spoke to staff and students with regard to assessment. The review team saw a range of programme and module specifications and student handbooks that included appropriate assessment information.

2.38 Programme Committee minutes, APRs and examples of data made available for assessment boards demonstrated an appropriate approach to assessment that was in line with KIC requirements. The review team noted that ongoing monitoring of assessment results is managed through the Programme Committee, which takes action to enhance the processes through module and programme review and in response to feedback from external examiners.

2.39 External examiner reports scrutinised by the review team were positive about the assessment process, citing examples of good practice, for instance, in the way

standardisation meetings are used to ensure parity of assessment across pathways and between different assessors.

2.40 College assessments are designed to align with learning outcomes, which are inclusive and culturally responsive, varied, foster reliable marking, and are in line with those used at the University of Brighton. For example, assessments draw upon real-world scenarios, which reflect those used by the University in order to help support students' transition to university.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.42 The criteria and process by which the College nominates and appoints its external examiners are set out in the ASQM, with the expectation that the College adheres to criteria specified by the University of Brighton in addition to KIC requirements. The College has liaised with the CLIQ prior to the formal confirmation of a new external examiner appointment, to ensure there are no potential conflicts of interest. CLIQ maintains a central register of all external examiners appointed at colleges. Formal approval of a new appointment or extension to an appointment is undertaken by JAB.

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

2.44 External examiners complete an annual report using a standard KIC template within two weeks of the completion of the final Assessment Board. Within the report, external examiners comment upon the standards and quality of programmes, as determined by student performance, and appropriateness of the assessment process to judge the achievement of learning outcomes. The report also asks external examiners to identify areas of good practice and suggestions for enhancement. Part 2 of the report template allows for the external examiner to submit a confidential report to the KIC Director of Student Learning on any issues that are particularly important or sensitive.

2.45 The Programme Handbook includes information on the external examiner for students. In line with KIC guidance, the College is required to consider the most appropriate way to share the external examiner's findings with students.

2.46 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.47 The review team considered documents relevant to external examiners and spoke to staff and to students. The review team saw a range of external examiner reports, programme committee minutes, APRs and APQC minutes that included appropriate oversight of the external examiner process.

2.48 The review team saw evidence of external examiners' comments being identified and followed up through responses by the College within the report template and through the APRs and College action plans. The review team noted that the College had proactively enhanced the external examiner process at the College, hosting an interim visit from an external examiner that resulted in suggested future enhancements, such as creating a 'Kaplan journal' of exemplars/models of excellent student work to show to students undertaking their assignments.

2.49 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the College has in place effective, regular and systematic processes for external examiners.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.50 The College's Programme Committees monitor and review programmes on an ongoing and annual basis. APRs allow the College to ensure that the learning opportunities remain appropriate, drawing upon feedback from students, staff and external examiners. Recommendations arising from APRs are recorded within the College action plan. College action plans are reviewed by the College on a regular basis and support is provided by the CLIQ with development of its action plan.

2.51 The JAB ensures that University of Brighton requirements are met through monitoring and review of programmes.

2.52 The College APRs inform the development of the ASQP report, providing the APQC with the opportunity to conduct a systematic review of appropriateness of learning opportunities across all KIC programmes.

2.53 Colleges undergo PPR every five years and the outcomes are considered by the APQC and JAB. The College's PPR report follows a standard template and includes action plans for further enhancements identified as an outcome of the process. The Programme Committee is responsible for ensuring that the recommendations are followed up appropriately and reported to the College's SMT.

2.54 The arrangements in place for programme monitoring and review would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.55 The evidence considered by the review team confirms that the monitoring and review processes for College programmes are rigorously and consistently applied to maintain standards and enhance learning opportunities. The College makes effective use of external reference points and draws upon external expertise from external examiners and staff at the University.

2.56 The review team noted that the College and University share a positive and established relationship that has enabled full progression data to be shared with the College on awards, success and classification of alumni, including master's, and exit withdrawal data, compared to non-College students. As a result, the College is able to effectively review individual performance at module level and exam boards, and then track progress at the University to see how students are performing at module and programme level. Progression data is closely monitored by the JAB. The review team considers the College's close working relationship with its partner university which enables highly effective and regular processes for developing, monitoring and reviewing programmes to be **good practice**.

2.57 The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, as the College has in place effective, regular and systematic processes for the monitoring and review of programmes.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.58 The College adheres to KIC policies and procedures relating to academic appeals and complaints, including those against admission decisions as specified in the ASQM, which would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.59 The review team examined Programme Handbooks issued to students and met staff and students to evaluate their effectiveness.

2.60 The appeals and complaints policies and procedures are communicated to students in the Programme Handbooks, Student Handbooks and on the VLE. Staff and students were aware of the relevant complaints and appeal processes, and there was a clear emphasis at the College on seeking to resolve issues as soon as possible.

2.61 Formal and informal complaints are reviewed by the SMT to identify trends and make improvements. Students at the College were able to identify where enhancements had been made to learning opportunities as a result of informal complaints being made known to College staff.

2.62 KIC has designed fair, accessible and timely processes for handling academic appeals and student complaints, and these are clearly communicated to students and effectively implemented at College level. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

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

2.64 All the Expectations in this area are met with low levels of associated risk.

2.65 The review team identified significant good practice in the approach taken by the College to managing the quality of student learning opportunities. In particular, the team identified as good practice the close working relationship with the partner university, which enables highly effective and regular processes for developing, monitoring and reviewing programmes; the high quality of pastoral and academic support that enables students to achieve success; the proactive approach to identifying student needs and supporting students to enable them to progress to their preferred university; and the use of alumni to support students in their learning and development, which effectively prepares them for progression to university.

2.66 In view of the significant good practice in this judgement area and as there are no recommendations or affirmations, the review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College is **commended**.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

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

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 Public information is managed centrally by KIC. There are clear processes in place that require that published material is formally signed off by the College Director, the Managing Director or the Director of Colleges (at KIC level) and by the University of Brighton.

3.2 The design of the policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team explored the College's contribution to the production of information by viewing websites, handbooks, programme and module specifications, transcripts and award certificates. In addition, the review team met College staff and students, and staff from the University.

3.3 Staff at the College were able to clearly explain how the processes for approving public information are implemented. Students valued the high quality and accurate information provided to them. There is a close working relationship with the University, formalised through the JAB, to ensure that information about programmes is reliable and accurate.

3.4 The College prospectus and website is produced and designed in close consultation with the University, using a joint logo. Pre-arrival guides for students are produced by the marketing department in liaison with the College, which checks all information prior to publication. Programme Handbooks are made available to students and provide comprehensive study-related information. These are approved by the Academic Director at the College.

3.5 Consistent with KIC requirements, students from the College are issued with a transcript that details their achievement and, where appropriate, an award certificate using a standard centralised template. Transcripts have a security seal to confirm authenticity and are clear about the ultimate responsibility for the KIC award.

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

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

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

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

3.8 Expectation C is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area. KIC has comprehensive processes for managing its public information and operates robust procedures to ensure their effective implementation at College level. The College contributes effectively to the production of information and there is a close working relationship with the partner university to ensure that programme information is reliable and accurate.

3.9 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

4 Commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities

Findings

- 4.1 The College action plan records recommendations arising from APRs to enable effective evaluation and impact of progress made.
- 4.2 The CEMB normally meets every six weeks to discuss operational matters relating to quality improvements, with an action plan to monitor progress. The CEMB reviews the College action plans and provides an effective forum for sharing of good practice between KIC central staff and staff within the College, which leads to enhancement. The College Director is a member of the CEMB and examples of improvements were described as improvements in service levels for sponsors, parents and guardians, which were included within College action plans for implementation.
- 4.3 The College action plan has adopted best practice from Liverpool International College of sharing of good news stories, to provide positive messages through monthly updates available online for access by agents, offices overseas and parents.
- 4.4 The CEMB identified the formal training provided by the College for student representatives as good practice, which includes handbook and formal induction sessions by the Head of Student and Academic Services, the Academic Director, and other members of staff, which has been promoted as a model of good practice to other colleges.
- 4.5 Other enhancement initiatives at the College include the PASS scheme, which enables alumni to support College induction activity, activities during the year and at results day to share their experiences regarding transition with the University of Brighton. Positive feedback has been received from College students and alumni regarding their experience of the scheme.
- 4.6 Future enhancements planned by the College include greater student involvement in the Programme Committee meetings and programme changes.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacy

Findings

5.1 KIC has developed both a Blended Learning Strategy 2013-17, and a Learning and Teaching Framework that outline key principles relating to embedding technology into learning and teaching. The College has used these documents to inform the development of its own action plan and LTAS, and to enhance the digital literacy skills of its staff and students.

5.2 As specified within its action plan, the College has sought to embed blended learning into the planning and delivery of the curriculum. The VLE Coordinator at the College actively supports staff in the use of blended learning to enhance learning, teaching and assessment. Staff and students at the College were able to identify various ways in which IT is used to support learning and teaching.

5.3 Central resources have been provided to support blended learning and digital literacy across the colleges, including two dedicated Learning Technologists within the CLIQ who support colleges with digital initiatives. To share good practice and drive blended learning innovations at college level, KIC has established a Blended Learning Working Group. The Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund has also been used to resource local digital literacy and blended learning innovations undertaken within colleges. Staff at the College found KIC-level events and resources to enhance digital literacy useful and gave examples of how they have enhanced their blended learning provision - although it is acknowledged that there is further work to do to enhance staff and student knowledge and skills related to digital literacy.

Glossary

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

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

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

Academic standards

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

Award

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

Blended learning

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

Credit(s)

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

Degree-awarding body

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

Distance learning

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

See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

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

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Embedded college

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

Enhancement

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

Expectations

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

Flexible and distributed learning

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

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study,

containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

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

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

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