



Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd

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

July 2014

Annex 2: University of the West of England, Bristol's International College (UWEBIC)

Introduction and background

University of the West of England, Bristol's International College (UWEBIC) is part of the Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd (KIC) network of pathway colleges across the UK. It is embedded on the campus of the University of the West of England, Bristol (the University). UWEBIC opened in 2012, and delivers the following programmes: foundation certificates in business, law and social sciences and in science and engineering; international year one programmes in business and in engineering, and pre-master's in business, law and social sciences and in science and engineering. There were 205 students studying at the UWEBIC at the time of the review.

UWEBIC is responsible for developing the pathway programmes in partnership with KIC and the University. Students at this College receive both a KIC and a UWE award, which is made according to an agreed set of variant academic regulations.

UWEBIC students provided a video submission for the team, and the team met students during the review visit.

Key findings

Academic standards

There can be **confidence** that academic standards at UWEBIC 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 UWEBIC is assured and enhanced appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd, and the University of the West of England, Bristol.

Information about learning opportunities

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

Good practice

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

- the University award, made in addition to the KIC award, recognises students achievement and facilitates students' progression (paragraph 3)
- the approach to peer assisted learning supports student progression (paragraph 18)
- the use of personal tutorials to link pastoral and academic support (paragraph 26)
- the range of development opportunities and effective use of the KIC network for staff development (paragraph 30).

Recommendations

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

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

- provide clear access for students to the full academic regulations (paragraph 6)
- engage strategically with the Quality Code and further promote staff awareness of how it can be used to enhance the provision (paragraph 9)
- develop a more strategic approach to continuous improvement and enhancement (paragraph 17).

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

- review processes for providing students with feedback on individual exam performance (paragraph 8)
- continue discussions with the University regarding production of data on student performance (paragraph 14)
- take steps to further promote student engagement in quality assurance processes (paragraph 22).

Detailed findings

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

1 The highest management body of KIC is the Senior Management Team which 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 At UWEBIC there are two boards with membership from KIC, UWEBIC and the University. These are the Joint Academic Management Board (JAMB) and the Joint Strategic Management Board (JSMB). There are also programme committees for each UWEBIC programme, which include student representation.

3 Unique to this KIC college, students successfully completing these programmes obtain both a KIC award and a University award. The KIC Senior Management Team and the University have ultimate responsibility for the academic standards of their own awards and these are managed through the JAMB and assessment boards. The University's award in addition to the KIC award recognises students' achievement and facilitates progression, and is **good practice**.

4 UWEBIC has effective procedures for ensuring the appropriate maintenance of academic standards and that these are consistent with the KIC Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM). University assessment boards are chaired by a programme leader from a different discipline, and attended by the external examiners. A University representative attends assessment boards at which credit for its awards is considered.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

5 UWEBIC operates under a set of variant academic regulations which have been agreed between KIC and the University. These regulations are based on the principles contained within the ASQM, but with amendments and adaptations agreed by KIC and the University that reflect the nature of the partnership. Initially these variant regulations specified that where a student was required to resit a failed assessment the mark would be capped at the pass mark. In response to advice from the Chief External Examiner this regulation has recently been changed so that resitting students now have the opportunity to achieve more than the pass mark, in order to progress to their chosen programme of study at the University.

6 Summary versions of the variant assessment regulations are made available within the student and programme handbooks. The complete set of formal assessment regulations is located on the University's website, but this location is not signposted in either the student or programme handbooks. It is **advisable** for UWEBIC to provide clear access for students to the full academic regulations.

7 UWEBIC staff produce all assessments except for one English language assessment which is produced centrally by KIC. Students reported that they are provided with clear information on their assessment tasks, including the provision of assessment criteria. Teaching staff reported that these assessment criteria have been developed with reference to the KIC grade descriptors, but there was less use made of the KIC graduate outcomes.

8 UWEBIC has a clear process whereby students can submit an academic appeal against an assessment grade if they can evidence that a material error has been made. However, students are not permitted to review their exam scripts and so they are unable to fully understand how an examination mark has been reached, or how to improve their performance. It would be **desirable** for UWEBIC to review processes for providing students with feedback on individual exam performance.

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

9 The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) has been used by KIC to inform the development of the QAF and ASQM. However, staff at UWEBIC were not fully aware of the Quality Code or how it can be used at programme level to enhance quality. It is **advisable** for UWEBIC to engage strategically with the Quality Code and further promote staff awareness of how it can be used to enhance the provision.

10 Other external reference points used in the design, monitoring and review of UWEBIC programmes include *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, assessment*. Greater engagement with external reference points will be valuable in the planned development and articulation of a formal strategy for learning, teaching and assessment (see paragraph 17).

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

11 Subject specialist external examiners are appointed to all UWEBIC programmes. These approve assessment briefs, meet staff and students, attend assessment boards and provide UWEBIC with a written report. In accordance with the University's requirements, a Chief External Examiner is also appointed to oversee the probity of assessment across all UWEBIC programmes. The appointment of a Chief External Examiner is unique to this KIC college and initially there was some confusion in UWEBIC about the nature of this role. UWEBIC is still developing its use of external examiners but there is now a greater understanding of their role. A clearer reporting mechanism has recently been devised in collaboration with the University to ensure that responses to comments specifically made by the Chief External Examiner are recorded and monitored by the JAMB and programme committees.

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

12 UWEBIC maintains a record of recruitment, student attendance and performance and this data is considered by the programme committees. These committees are then responsible for drafting an annual programme report (APR) which is approved by the JAMB. At provider level, an Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes report (ASQP) is produced by KIC's Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ) which draws on information from the APRs and is considered by APQC.

13 UWEBIC recognises that the performance of students who have progressed to the University is a key performance indicator. At present such data is provided informally by the University's link tutors but there is ongoing discussion with the University to formalise the provision of this information. It would be **desirable** for UWEBIC to continue discussions with the University regarding production of data on student performance.

There can be **confidence** that academic standards at UWEBIC 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?

14 The management and enhancement of learning opportunities is central to UWEBIC and network mission and the team saw much evidence of deliberate steps taken to enhance learning opportunities. This was particularly notable with regard to mathematics teaching where a clear plan with short, medium and long term goals has been established to improve assessment outcomes, and also in other areas, such as induction, where UWEBIC has an action plan in response to student feedback.

15 UWEBIC acknowledges the need to develop and articulate a clear strategy for learning, teaching and assessment as it moves beyond start-up stage over the next few years. The resources and expertise through the KIC network, including through CLIQ, should be valuable in developing a more integrated and strategic approach. It is **advisable** for UWEBIC to develop a more strategic approach to continuous improvement and enhancement.

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

16 See paragraphs 9-10.

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

17 There is no overarching learning, teaching and assessment strategy to maintain oversight and consistency of teaching and learning but UWEBIC is planning to develop a formal strategy over the next 12 months. However, the pedagogical approach is appropriate to the context of an international college with lots of support for students through small classes and a joined-up approach between classes and personal tutorials.

18 There are good links with the University's teaching staff, formally through the link tutor roles but also through the high proportion of sessional staff at UWEBIC who also work within the University. Students are encouraged to feel part of the University from the time of their arrival and this is facilitated through access to campus resources and interactions with their targeted department, for example, through taster days. The Peer Assisted Learning scheme that has been established, bringing UWEBIC alumni now studying at the University back into UWEBIC as mentors to current students, is effective both in supporting students in their studies and in encouraging progression to the University. The approach to peer assisted learning supports student progression and is **good practice**.

19 The students the team met were very happy with the quality of learning and teaching although they did raise concerns about consistency and continuity in the event of staff changes. Students were also concerned about the balance of the level of demand of the modules, which increased in the second term for students on two-term programmes. Students were happy with the virtual learning environment, which includes interactive elements such as the use of online quizzes for students to check their learning. Staff are exploring ways to make more use of interactive learning tools within the virtual learning environment and the KIC blended learning strategy should be of value in enhancing UWEBIC's provision.

20 There are mechanisms for good practice to be shared both within UWEBIC and across the KIC network, for example through work shadowing at other KIC colleges and the KIC Best Practice Day. However, staff note that this requires individual initiative, but there are plans to develop more formal mechanisms (see paragraph 17). UWEBIC staff have associate staff status, giving them access to e-resources and staff development opportunities at the University. Some also teach there and the link tutor system provides good links at programme and departmental level.

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

21 UWEBIC takes deliberate steps to ensure student participation in quality assurance through focus groups, surveys and a student representative system. UWEBIC has effective mechanisms for the consideration of and response to student feedback. Informal feedback is also important and both staff and students value the open door policy which facilitates quick responses to students' concerns. Training and support is provided to student representatives, who have a clear understanding of their role.

22 Staff reported that it had not been possible to get students to attend programme meetings and UWEBIC is encouraged to make this an explicit expectation of student representatives' duties. Closer working with the University's Students' Union is also

encouraged to enable students to have fuller access to its provision of advice, guidance and other resources. It would be **desirable** for UWEBIC to take steps to further promote student engagement in quality assurance processes.

23 UWEBIC encourages students to resolve concerns informally where possible, and this is facilitated by ready access to programme leaders and the Student Office. There are clear complaints procedures and these are set out in the Student and Programme handbooks. Academic appeals are dealt with under University regulations and the process is set out in the Student Handbook.

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

24 UWEBIC articulates an ethos of respect for students, evidenced by how staff engage with and support them. Students spoke very highly of support to familiarise them with expectations of studying in UK higher education. Students could articulate clearly what was expected of them and how they were supported in managing the transfer to UK styles of learning, particularly the emphasis on active learning and independent study.

25 There are clear guidelines for support for those aged under 18. Attendance monitoring is used as an early warning system and the biweekly personal tutorial meetings enable staff to be alert to any personal issues affecting a student's ability to study. The personal tutorials are an effective means of drawing together holistic personal and academic support and to enable students to reflect on and manage their learning across the programme. The use of personal tutorials to link pastoral and academic support is **good practice**.

26 Student services are very supportive and responsive and the accessibility of programme leaders is also very good and appreciated by the students. Students who do not meet the progression requirements for the University are supported through the University Placement Service to find an alternative university.

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

27 Recruitment and admissions policy and processes are managed by KIC's central marketing, sales and admissions teams. UWEBIC demonstrates commitment to diversity of students and attracts students from a wide range of nationalities, benefiting the student experience and life at UWEBIC.

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

28 UWEBIC makes appointments based on criteria set in the agreement with the University but the latter does not confirm appointment. Many tutors also work there or at other universities.

29 Staff have an annual appraisal. Peer observations of teaching are conducted every other term and more frequently for staff on probation. Staff have access to both University staff development activities, and those through the KIC network. Permanent and sessional staff are both well supported. Staff have access to a range of development opportunities, such as funding through the KIC Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund to which UWEBIC has recently made a successful bid.

30 Processes for staff induction are clearly set out, including for sessional staff and new members of staff have access to good levels of support both within UWEBIC and

through the KIC network, with staff actively encouraged to connect with their opposite numbers in other colleges. The range of development opportunities and effective use of the KIC network for staff development is **good practice**.

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

31 Students can access all university-wide resources with special negotiations to access some subject-specific resources such as some licenced software. UWEBIC and the University jointly manage resource provision to ensure equitable access to resources such as laboratories. The way in which UWEBIC students' access to limited resources, such as laboratory space, is negotiated and managed demonstrates a partnership approach.

32 The University's commitment to UWEBIC means that UWEBIC's provision is integrated into development plans for the campus.

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

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

33 Student, programme and module handbooks provide clear and comprehensive study-related information. Students are invited to complete a post-arrival survey about the accuracy and usefulness of information. They reported that the information they received before arrival was accurate and helpful. Agents are trained and regularly updated by KIC.

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

34 UWEBIC prospectuses and websites are produced in consultation with the University and approved centrally by KIC, ensuring information published by UWEBIC is accurate and complete. The University also signs off a sample of publicity materials and provides guidance on the use of its logo. Use of its brand and logo in KIC material is covered by the Cooperation of Agreement. Programme handbooks are updated annually.

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

Action plan¹

UWEBIC 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 UWEBIC:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the University award, made in addition to the KIC award, recognises students achievement and facilitates students' progression (paragraph 3) 	The impact of this is expected to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduce regulatory links with the host university allow UWEBIC to interact further with KIC network provide UWEBIC with more freedom in academic and regulatory judgement improve student access to central KIC processes 	The KIC/UWE award is due to be phased out at the end of the 2014-15 academic year Close links to remain and be developed with the host university More flexibility at a UWEBIC level due to adoption of KIC academic regulations allows more interaction with other colleges within the KIC network	Continuous	College Senior Management Team and link tutors	Director of Colleges	Report of UWE Corporate and Academic Services on proposed move to single KIC award Joint Strategic Management Board minutes Joint Academic Management Board minutes College Executive Management

¹ Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd has been required to develop this action plan to follow up on good practice and address any recommendations arising from the review. QAA monitors progress against the action plan, in conjunction with the partner higher education institution.

						Board minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the approach to peer assisted learning supports student progression (paragraph 18) 	The expected impact is that there will be an improvement in student results in modules that use peer assisted learning	<p>To continue to use peer assisted learning in the FC017 - Foundation Mathematics module</p> <p>To develop peer assisted learning for other UWEBIC modules such as: Applied Mathematics (for Jan 2015) and Physical Sciences (for Jan 2015)</p> <p>To share best practice with other KIC colleges</p>	End of June 2015	Programme leaders	<p>Director of Student Learning</p> <p>Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality</p>	<p>Annual programme reports 2013-14</p> <p>Minutes from Student Focus Groups</p> <p>Programme Committee minutes</p> <p>Student outcome results</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the use of personal tutorials to link pastoral and academic support (paragraph 26) 	Impact is believed to be improvement of the impact of tutorials on students	<p>Further development of the tutorial system with the development of a Tutorial Referral System (will allow referral to subject-specific staff to help with the student's academic needs)</p> <p>Improvement in the tutorial provision for students under the age of 18</p>	End of January 2015	Tutorial Team	<p>Director of Student Learning</p> <p>Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality</p>	<p>Tutorial Survey results</p> <p>Student Focus Group minutes</p> <p>Tutorial referral forms</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the range of development opportunities and effective use of the KIC network for staff development (paragraph 30). 	It is expected that these developments will enable sharing of good practice which will enhance the quality of teaching at UWEBIC	<p>To develop a local training programme for academic year 2014-15</p> <p>To encourage staff to participate in best practice and training opportunities locally and across the KIC network (training, peer</p>	End of June 2015 (a training programme for 2014-15 is in place)	Academic Management Team	<p>Director of Student Learning</p> <p>Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality</p>	<p>Staff Surveys</p> <p>Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality feedback</p> <p>UWEBIC training and development</p>

		observations, college visits, workshop attendance)				plan
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 UWEBIC to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide clear access for students to the full academic regulations (paragraph 6) 	<p>Expected impact is that students will have a better understanding of the regulations that govern their programme</p> <p>Students will be better informed of the processes that affect them and how they can submit evidence and enquiries if they encounter academic issues</p>	<p>Provide links on the virtual learning environment and in programme handbooks to the Academic Regulations</p> <p>To host Regulation Workshops with students during the course of their programme</p> <p>To provide a glossary of regulatory terms to students across a variety of platforms</p>	Completed	Academic Management Team and Manager of Student Services	<p>Director of Student Learning</p> <p>Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality</p>	<p>Student programme and module surveys</p> <p>Student focus group minutes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage strategically with the Quality Code and further promote staff awareness of how it can be used to enhance the provision 	Increased staff knowledge and awareness of the Quality Code and its importance in the day-to-day procedures of UWEBIC and the KIC network	<p>To incorporate Quality Code awareness into the training and development programme for staff, particularly awareness in student participation and external examiners</p> <p>To encourage good practice by increasing</p>	End of June 2015	College Director	QAA Project Team	<p>Training and development plan</p> <p>Staff continuing professional development records</p>

(paragraph 9)		<p>UWEBIC's peer-to-peer observation provision</p> <p>To continue to encourage staff participation in training provided by other KIC colleges who have developed expertise in specific topics within the Quality Code</p>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a more strategic approach to continuous improvement and enhancement (paragraph 17). 	<p>Impacts of a developed learning, teaching and assessment strategy are expected to be:</p> <p>Improved student attainment</p> <p>Improved guidelines for teaching practices and assessment production</p>	<p>To review UWEBICs current specific academic strategies, for example the maths strategy and review the effectiveness of these strategies</p> <p>To begin to collate UWEBIC's current strategies into a formal learning, teaching and assessment strategy</p> <p>To 'adopt and adapt' the learning, teaching and assessment strategy being developed by the Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality to produce a UWEBIC-specific learning, teaching and assessment strategy</p>	End of July 2015	College Director and Senior Academic Management Team	<p>Director of Student Learning</p> <p>Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality</p>	<p>Learning, teaching and assessment strategy document</p> <p>Annual Programme Reports</p> <p>Student outcome reports</p>

Desirable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it would be desirable for UWEBIC to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review processes for providing students with feedback on individual exam performance (paragraph 8) 	<p>Expected impact is an improvement in student attainment in summative assessments</p> <p>Other impacts are:</p> <p>Positive student feedback from the reviewed policies</p> <p>A more robust assessment procedure which allows students to have a better understanding of how and when assessment feedback will be delivered to them</p>	<p>Discuss with other KIC colleges the assessment feedback provision they currently provide to students</p> <p>Ensure that all students receive assessment feedback in a timely fashion of 10 working days</p> <p>Develop individual feedback for written assessments and general feedback for examinations highlighting the areas of good and under-performance</p> <p>Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality to produce guidelines for assessment feedback to be disseminated across the KIC network</p> <p>Develop a proactive rather</p>	End December 2014	Senior Management Team	<p>Director of Student Learning</p> <p>Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality</p>	<p>Minutes from student focus groups</p> <p>Assessment feedback forms</p> <p>Student module and programme survey results</p> <p>Improvement in student attainment in both first sit (proactive responses) and resit (reactive responses) assessments</p>

		<p>than reactive response to assessment attainment</p> <p>Provide students with access to the necessary skills to perform well in examinations and coursework</p>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue discussions with the University regarding production of data on student performance (paragraph 14) 	<p>Analysis of student performance data will provide valuable information for the development of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy</p> <p>The data will provide UWEBIC with the ability to more closely align UWEBIC modules with that which is required at UWE especially for international year one</p>	<p>To continue to collaborate with the University on the production of the student data</p> <p>To incorporate the data into a suitable format (into UWEBIC's Annual Programme Reviews) and to ensure that this data is reviewed by UWEBIC's academic management groups (Joint Academic Management Board and Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality)</p> <p>To develop an official process to further analyse this data</p>	End of June 2015	<p>UWEBIC programme leaders and College Director</p> <p>UWE link tutors and Business Intelligence Unit</p>	Director of Colleges	<p>Annual Programme Reviews</p> <p>Joint Academic Management Board minutes</p> <p>Data provided by the University</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> take steps to further promote student engagement in quality assurance processes 	Impact is greater student involvement in UWEBIC quality and development processes which will aid retention and progression	<p>To discuss with other KIC colleges how they engage students in quality assurance processes</p> <p>To develop a strategy to ensure that student</p>	January 2015	UWEBIC programme leaders and Student Services	QAA Project Team	<p>Student module and programme surveys</p> <p>Focus group minutes</p>

<p>(paragraph 22).</p>		<p>representation is present on UWEBIC's programme committees</p> <p>To ensure that UWEBIC reiterates its belief that students are an important part of quality assurance and positively encourages student to participate in these practices</p> <p>To develop a 'pathway engagement forum' for students to discuss their programme with the College Director and programme leaders</p>				<p>Programme Committee minutes</p> <p>Annual Programme Reviews</p>
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© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2014
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Email enquiries@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

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