



Educational Oversight for embedded colleges: report of the monitoring visit of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Study Group), May 2017

Kingston University London International Study Centre

Section 1: Outcome of the monitoring visit

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

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 Overall student numbers at this Centre in 2016-17 have reduced by just over 15 per cent compared with 2015-16. Staff numbers have remained stable, although the Centre does have a new Regional Director following changes made at provider level. Programmes offered previously have continued to run, with the addition of an International Year One (IY1) short course.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The reviewer found that the recommendation made to KULISC had been implemented fully and has led to a range of improvements in the Centre's management of its higher education provision, better supporting students towards achieving their goal of progression to the partner university. Change stemming from the two affirmations also contributed to implementation of the recommendation (paragraphs 4-9). Many of the changes made show highly effective engagement with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Such engagement is also demonstrated by the annual monitoring process, the reports from both the partner university's Internal Subject Review (ISR) and the provider's Centre Review (paragraphs 13-15), and the mechanisms for student engagement (paragraphs 12-13). Good practice concerning the provision of information to external examiners has been extended (paragraph 10). The processes for ensuring that information offered about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy remain unchanged and are appropriate.

4 The recommendation, example of good practice and affirmations were added to the Centre Action Plan and reviewed and discussed regularly at Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG) meetings.

5 The Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of May 2016 made one recommendation, to 'analyse the reasons for non-progression to better inform appropriate student support mechanisms'. The Centre has carried out a detailed analysis of the reasons for students failing to progress to the partner university, considering which modules had marks out

of line with the majority; relationships between attendance and success; and why a number of those students who achieved the progression grades for the partner university then chose not to transfer to their intended course.

6 Feedback on individual modules was received from students and external examiners, leading to change and revalidation where possible. For example, a meeting of the Staff Student Committee in 2015 raised issues about the relevance of a module to a particular pathway and this was reflected in the annual Module Enhancement Plan. The module was redesigned and revalidated while retaining the appropriate standards, and the early module review for the current year shows a positive response from students. In another example, external examiners had expressed concern about the difficulty of one component of assessment. This was recorded and discussed in the Module Enhancement Plan and again change has been implemented. In cases where module change is not possible, additional classes have been offered to students.

7 The full implementation of the provider's software 'Progresso' has allowed detailed tracking of the attendance and academic performance of individual students. Attendance is closely monitored with weekly checks and intervention, including one-to-one meetings with the staff member responsible for student welfare in cases where attendance drops below 90 per cent. Such meetings are logged in a weekly spreadsheet with a termly final report produced. Any welfare issues which arise are recorded in a safeguarding log, meeting the provider's safeguarding requirements. Progresso provides the data for the red/amber/green system used to track student academic progress (this approach was the subject of an affirmation in the Higher Education Review - Embedded Colleges). Individual status reports are communicated to staff by email. The reports are discussed in QAEG meetings at the start of the year and mid and end points of each term, and indicate where extra support classes are needed. Students are also counselled on their progress in newly introduced group tutorials. IY1 ratings are discussed in weekly team meetings.

8 While it will not be possible to fully evaluate the effect of the changes described until all courses have been examined, the reviewer noted that 100 per cent of students completing the new IY1 programme had achieved progression grades. Staff also indicated that a number of students on other courses who had been rated red (i.e. in danger of failing to progress) earlier in the year were now rated amber or green.

9 In order to strengthen further the relationships with the university partner and encourage more students who achieve the required grades to transfer to the University, a number of initiatives have started. These include the involvement of University colleagues in the induction programme, a range of activities and visits during the year and a PALs system where KULISC alumni interact with, and support, the new cohort from induction onwards. PALs fulfil both an academic and pastoral function. This year PALs have been restricted to Business pathways, but if an end-of-year evaluation shows the scheme to have been successful, it will be widened. Students who met the reviewer commented favourably on the PALs initiative.

10 The second affirmation in the Higher Education Review referred to the establishment of an Operations Group involving both Centre and University staff in oversight of the Centre's programmes. This group is now active and the Head of Centre has been invited to attend other University committees, further strengthening the relationship.

11 The Higher Education Review of KULISC noted a point of good practice in the extensive level of information provided to external examiners. The Centre has built further on

this by introducing 'virtual' module boxes which will allow examiners access to scanned copies of a sample of assessments prior to their arrival for the assessment board.

12 All admissions to KULISC are handled by the provider's admissions teams in Brighton and Singapore. The Head of Centre is approached with respect to applicants whose qualifications are borderline and they will consult the Centre's tutors when making a decision on these cases. The Centre has started to track the performance of borderline applicants who have been accepted and this is expected to provide data to refine future decision making.

13 An Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), using the provider's template, is submitted to the Regional Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (RQAEG) by the end of the calendar year. RQAEG discusses all AMRs for the region, providing an element of peer review by other Heads of Centre. A report summarising any issues or good practice in the region is then taken to the provider's central Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (AQAEG). The AMR report is also presented to the partner university in March. The report is generated by a process which begins with Module Enhancement plans (MEPS) which contain module data and tutor reviews. MEPs feed into Course Enhancement Plans (CEPs) and these, together with any themes arising from module reviews or from external examiners, are brought together in the AMR. The AMR is then used to identify Centre progress with respect to actions identified the previous year and to note actions to be taken in the coming year. The AMR allows a detailed comparison of progression data, including retention and student outcomes from the past academic year. Actions from the AMR are monitored through the Centre Action Plan. Staff gave examples of change emanating from the AMR. The process using the new form is sound and ensures that Centre, partner university and provider have oversight of quality and standards in the programmes offered.

14 In addition to the AMR process, KULISC receives Internal Subject Reviews from its partner university and Centre Reviews from the provider. Since the Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges), the Centre has had a Centre Review and a one-year follow-up on the Internal Subject Review held in 2015. Actions are included in the Centre Action Plan as soon as they are available.

15 The AMR for 2015-16 included full student performance data for both 2014-15 and 2015-16, showing improved performance in 2015-16. For the September intake 80 per cent of students completing their course were offered progression to the partner university and 75 per cent of those offered progression enrolled with the partner university. Corresponding figures for the January intake were 87 per cent and 85 per cent.

Section 4: The embedded colleges' use of external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

16 As indicated in section 3 above, KULISC has made good progress in seeking to meet UK expectations for higher education. Annual monitoring meets the expectation and the Internal Subject Review, Centre Review and the IY1 Validation reports demonstrate that expectations are met and show that courses are operating at the expected level and standards. The reviewer noted also the introduction of a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and staff development around feedback to students.

17 Student engagement centres around the class representative system. Student representatives are elected by their cohort and offered training by Kingston University. They meet together as the Student Staff Liaison Committee and students who met the

reviewer were able to give examples of change resulting from their input. Students are also members of the Board of Studies and of QAEG. The early part of the current academic year had seen little student engagement with these committees, but students have attended more recently and informed the reviewer that they found the business interesting, and both students and staff felt they had made a contribution. Students also have the opportunity to feed back on their experience via focus groups and questionnaires.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

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

19 The monitoring visit was carried out by Cameron Waitt, QAA Officer, and Professor Gaynor Taylor, QAA Reviewer, on 16 May 2017

QAA1916 - R8232 - Jul 17

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