



**Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd
(Leeds International Study Centre)**

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

February 2015

Key findings about Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Leeds International Study Centre)

The QAA review team (the team) formed the following judgements about Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Leeds International Study Centre).

There can be **confidence** that academic standards at the embedded college are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd.

There can be **confidence** that the quality of the learning opportunities at the embedded college is assured and enhanced appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd.

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

Recommendations

The team makes a number of recommendations for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:

- implement fully the quality management framework and evaluate and report on its effectiveness at the end of the 2014-15 academic year (paragraph 1.3)
- ensure that external examiners have access to a sufficient range of assessed student work (paragraph 1.12)
- implement the actions designed to address student progression issues identified in 2013-14 and evaluate and report on their effectiveness (paragraph 1.13)
- review and report on the effectiveness of its staffing policy and its appraisal, peer review and teaching observation process to ensure the quality of learning and teaching (paragraph 2.20).

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

- continue to implement its module review process and evaluate and report on its effectiveness (paragraph 1.4)
- expedite the consolidation of the Centre management team through the appointment of a permanent Head of Centre and Deputy Head of Centre (paragraph 2.7)
- continue to implement its staff development framework and evaluate and report on its effectiveness (paragraph 2.46).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (ECREO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (BES) Leeds International Study Centre (LISC). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that BES delivers on behalf of the University of Leeds and Leeds Beckett University. The review was carried out by Professor Brian Anderton and Dr Sylvia Hargreaves (reviewers) and Mr Philip Markey (QAA Officer).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).² Evidence in support of the review included: external examiner reports, annual reviews, student evaluations; contracts with the two universities, team meetings and examination board minutes, meetings with senior staff, teaching and support staff and students.

The review team also considered the provider's use of the relevant external reference points:

- UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code)
- *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- Subject Benchmark Statements
- Association for Certified Chartered Accountants (ACCA)
- English and Skills for University Study (ESUS)
- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR).

Please note that if you are unfamiliar with any of the terms used in this report you can find them in the [Glossary](#).

Leeds International Study Centre (LISC) is one of the embedded colleges of Bellerbys Educational Services (part of Study Group UK-EU Higher Education Division). Its embedded colleges are known as International Study Centres. LISC is located in accommodation of Leeds Beckett University, with its first intake in January 2013. LISC has student progression arrangements with Leeds Beckett University and the University of Leeds. There are 102 full-time international students.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their partner University:

University of Leeds and Leeds Beckett University

- International Foundation Year in Business, Law and Social Science (48)
- International Foundation Year in Science, Engineering and Computing (54).

Leeds Beckett University

- Pre-Masters in Business (suspended 2014-15)
- International Year (Year 1) in Business and Management (suspended 2014-15).

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-

² www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=66

The provider's stated responsibilities

BES has sole responsibility for the maintenance of standards and the management and enhancement of quality on its programmes offered through LISC.

Recent developments

The provision in 2014-15 comprises the International Foundation Year in Business, Law and Social Sciences and the International Foundation Year in Science, Engineering and Computing, both of which articulate into programmes at both Leeds Beckett University and University of Leeds. In addition, there is a Pre-Masters in Business and an International Year 1 in Business and Management both of which are designed to articulate into programmes at Leeds Beckett University, but both of which have been suspended for 2014-15.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. A student written submission was made available to the review team shortly before the review visit commenced. Preparation of the submission had been coordinated by student representatives. In the case of students on the International Foundation Year in Business, Law and Social Sciences, 'verbal interactive sessions' were used to identify student views. In the case of students on the International Foundation Year in Science, Engineering and Computing, surveys were conducted to elicit student views. The outcomes were used to write a short submission organised in terms of a rank-order of the 'pros' and the 'cons' of LISC from a student perspective. The review team also held a meeting with students and student representatives during the review visit.

Detailed findings about Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Leeds International Study Centre)

1 Academic standards

How effectively does Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Leeds International Study Centre) fulfill its responsibilities for the management of academic standards?

1.1 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (BES) is in partnership with two separate universities: Leeds Beckett University through a contract dated 12 November 2012, and the University of Leeds through a contract dated 8 February 2013. Students may progress to either university on successful completion of specified pre-university preparatory programmes at LISC. Following a previous recommendation to align published information on progression to degree study with the contractual provisions, the two universities have executed variations to the contracts confirming that students who achieve the level of performance specified for progression are guaranteed a place on their chosen degree programme at their chosen university.

1.2 BES is responsible for the management of academic standards and quality. LISC had developed a framework to secure academic standards consisting of a Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG), a Steering Group and an Academic Management Board. However, this quality management framework did not operate as BES envisaged during 2013-14. The LISC QAEG had been merged with the Centre Management Group, and minutes of the joint meetings held during 2013 show an emphasis on operational management issues with limited consideration of quality assurance and academic standards. Academic Management Board lacked a regular calendar of meetings, and the meeting scheduled in June 2014 was inquorate and was abandoned. Senior managers from LISC confirmed that the formal framework for the management of academic standards and quality had not worked as they would have wished during 2013-14, although they believed that the quality of the student learning experience had been maintained.

1.3 At the commencement of 2014-15, LISC introduced a new quality management framework which is being rolled out across BES's network of international study centres (ISC). This consists of the relaunched QAEG with responsibility for oversight of all matters of quality assurance and enhancement for LISC, through management of the LISC Centre Action Plan and through production of the Annual Monitoring Report. The LISC QAEG reports to a new Regional Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (RQAEG) chaired by the Regional Director, which in turn reports to BES's Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (AQAEC) chaired by the Director and Principal of the ISC network. A new LISC Teaching Review and Content Development Committee (TRCDC) has been introduced in 2015, meeting annually, and providing an opportunity for staff to feed back on the content, structure and development of the programme and to review student feedback from module evaluations and other sources. LISC believes this revised quality management framework has enhanced the oversight of standards and quality. In addition, the Head of Centre is both responsible and accountable for identifying and reporting issues that present or potentially present a risk to standards or quality. Reporting is conducted through monthly Centre management meetings between the Regional Director and Head of Centre, while a new escalation protocol allows for speedy reporting through to the Director and Principal and the Head of Quality of Study Group. BES has initiated for 2014-15 a risk-based peer Centre Review process to check on the security of academic standards and improvements in quality of learning opportunities within each Centre. LISC is scheduled to undergo a full Centre Review during 2015. These revised arrangements have the potential to provide a sound framework for the maintenance of academic standards. However, it is **advisable** that BES

should continue to implement fully the quality management framework, and evaluate and report on its effectiveness at the end of 2014-15.

1.4 There is a Centre Handbook which sits alongside the Student Handbook, Staff Handbook and programme specifications, and is informed by BES's policies and procedures, including those outlined in the ISC Provider Quality Handbook. Programmes are centrally approved within the framework of BES's Programme Approval Process. There are also processes defined for minor and major revisions to programmes, with the latter potentially triggering a full re-approval event. Periodic review of an approved programme must take place in the academic year prior to the end of the approval period for the programme, though this point has not yet been reached at LISC. Partner universities do not validate the LISC programmes, but are asked to endorse the programmes post-approval by BES, and as required by BES's programme approval process. Representatives of the partner universities told the review team they had undertaken a curriculum matching exercise to evaluate the appropriateness of the LISC programmes to articulate into university programmes. The Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) process provides the opportunity for reflection on the performance of the Centre. The AMR for 2013-14, written by the Acting Head of Centre, was an extensive and evaluative document written to the standard Study Group pro forma. From 2014-15, the process will be enhanced by the completion of module reviews trialled in 2013-14, but not fully implemented because of the large turnover of staff at the end of 2013-14. The AMR reports go through the academic committee structure of BES, and the university partners are also aware of them through the Steering Group. It would be **desirable** for BES to continue to implement its module review process, and evaluate and report on its effectiveness.

How effectively does Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Leeds International Study Centre) manage the assessment of students?

1.5 The Centre Handbook states that examinations may be supplied by BES, or be written by LISC tutors. However, the review team was told that all summative assessments relating to academic subjects are now set by LISC academic staff, with feedback provided by the external examiners. The Head of Centre signs off examination papers to ensure module tutors have responded appropriately to the external examiners' comments. The central bank of assessments and marking schemes, which was the subject of an advisable recommendation in the 2013 ECREO report, is no longer used. The English and Skills for University Study (ESUS) syllabus is common to all ISCs, is written by the Heads of English, and managed within LISC by the Head of English.

1.6 Assessment of academic subjects and English is managed through the approved Assessment Regulations and the agreed ESUS framework. LISC's approach to the management of assessment and its regulation is set out in the Centre Handbook and the Student Handbook. The assessment regulations are approved by BES and receive endorsement from the partner universities. LISC has amended its assessment regulations to respond to recommendations in the previous review, and also to deal with an anomaly that students were being failed and being required to withdraw at the end of the first term, without being given a re-assessment opportunity. However, the proposed changes had not been approved when submitted to RQAEG in late 2014. Subsequently, the Interim Regional Director/Acting Head of Centre had redrafted the relevant sections of the assessment regulations, and these changes had been approved on chair's action by BES-level AQAEC. The change had also been taken to the Academic Management Board (AMB) and endorsed by the university partners. A revised Student Handbook incorporating these amended regulations was being circulated to students at the time of the review visit, and one of the group tutorial sessions was being devoted to explaining the changes. The change in assessment regulations was being backdated to the commencement of 2014-15, since LISC

believed the changes were not detrimental to students and, in some ways, beneficial. The review team concurred with this view.

1.7 Guidance to students in understanding expectations for each assessment, other than examinations, is provided through assessment criteria. Where a module has an examination, students have a mock exam on which feedback is provided. Students confirmed these arrangements, although mock examinations were said not to apply on the International Foundation Year in Business, Law and Social Sciences. They said there was clear guidance on assessment requirements and they were aware of the assessment regulations in their Student Handbook. In relation to feedback on assessed work, students confirmed they received detailed written feedback which enabled them to understand what was required to gain higher marks, and coursework was normally returned within one week.

1.8 All marking of coursework assignments and examinations is conducted by LISC tutors using the published marking schemes. First marking is carried out by the module tutor, followed by internal moderation by a second tutor operating within defined rules on sample size. During 2014-15, a new template is being developed to support internal moderation. This will form part of the evidence base for Module Review. Where more than one marker is involved in the first marking, there is a process of standardisation set out in the Assessment Regulations.

1.9 Results of assessments are submitted to Module Assessment Boards (MABs) which confirm the accuracy of marks for each module, and Programme Assessment Boards (PABs) the role of which is to confirm the profile of marks for each student and confirm whether a student has met the requirements for progression. These Boards are supported by a Personal Mitigating Circumstances Panel and Academic Misconduct Panel. During 2014, BES undertook a detailed review of assessment board practices across the ISC network which resulted in updated terms of reference for MABs and PABs, and the use of a standard template for agenda and minute taking. All minutes from both MABs and PABs are anonymised using candidate numbers instead of names. Following each Board, a record of results is issued to the student showing the marks achieved for that term. There is no other certification of results.

How effectively are UK external reference points used in the management of academic standards?

1.10 LISC has used the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) in the design of its programme structure, and *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) to ensure learning outcomes are set at the appropriate level. There are programme specifications which confirm the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements have been used in writing programmes at levels 4 and 6 and the relevant sections of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) to inform programmes at level 3. Learning outcomes for ESUS modules have been developed in line with the Common European Framework (CEFR) global descriptors with assessment tasks designed in relation to the B1 and B2 descriptors presented in CEFR. Marking schemes for the modules are informed by International English Language Testing System (IELTS) marking criteria and CEFR descriptors. Teaching and support staff whom the review team met showed limited awareness of the Quality Code, but they were aware of the Centre Handbook through which the Quality Code and other external reference points are operationalised for LISC.

How effectively does Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Leeds International Study Centre) use external examining, moderation, or verification to assure academic standards?

1.11 LISC has procedures, detailed in its Centre Handbook, relating to the appointment and duties of its external examiners. LISC now has a team of three external examiners: one each for ESUS; Business, Law and Social Science; and Science, Engineering and Computing. The latter position was not appointed until December 2014. However, LISC put in place sensible interim scrutiny and verification arrangements for assessed work in Science, Engineering and Computing until the external examiner was appointed, as well as arrangements to engage with the new external examiner as soon as practicable. The new Science, Engineering and Computing external examiner undertook retrospective scrutiny of student assessed work relating to the year before his appointment, and confirmed standards had been appropriately set. BES has now instituted a central register of external examiners across the ISC network, and this will enable the need to replace external examiners to be identified in a timely way. It will also enable BES to ensure ISCs do not appoint external examiners who are based in a university with which BES has a relationship.

1.12 External examiners attend the PABs and submit reports to LISC using a standard report template. The comments made by external examiners in both the PABs and in their reports are generally positive, supporting the view that academic standards are being set appropriately, and that the assessment of students is being conducted effectively. However, the review team notes that the external examiners for 2013-14 indicated that they had not received sufficient scripts to enable them to make a sound judgement on the achievement of academic standards. The review team was told that external examiners would be invited to attend LISC ahead of the PABs to give them access to all assessed work. It is **advisable** that BES should ensure that external examiners have access to a sufficient range of assessed student work. The Head of Centre prepares a written response to the points raised by external examiners in their reports. The external examiner reports and Head of Centre responses are shared with the teaching team at staff meetings, with BES through LISC's reporting of QAEG at RQAEG, and with the university partners through the Academic Management Board. Students indicated that external examiners reports are not made available on the virtual learning environment (VLE), and that only those student representatives who are members of QAEG had access to the reports and the Head of Centre's responses. Matters arising from external examiner reports are considered by QAEG and, where applicable, issues are included in the LISC's Centre Action Plan and monitored by the Regional Director in monthly management meetings.

How effectively does Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and Leeds International Study Centre use statistical information to monitor and assure academic standards?

1.13 The key issue faced by LISC during 2013-14 (its first full year of operation) was the poor rate of progression achieved by students. An internal review resulted in the Head of Centre drawing up an action plan, but this has been superseded by a paper on progression initiatives presented by the Interim Regional Director to the Steering Group in December 2014. Central to this is the recognition of the need to have more effective and timely data on student performance and progress. The intention is to introduce and prioritise regular and systematic evaluation of key data metrics which will include a monthly 'at risk' register where students who are under-performing or have poor attendance and are deemed to be at risk of withdrawing or not meeting progression requirements are identified. Mid-term reviews of all students will support the production of the risk register; with entry profiling of new students to identify the potentially weaker students and apply interventions from early in the term. The ability of LISC to have more effective and timely data, in order to identify students at risk, is enhanced by the recent introduction of BES's new student records system. It is **advisable**

that BES should implement the actions designed to address student progression issues identified in 2013-14, and evaluate and report on their effectiveness.

1.14 LISC is only in its second year of operation, so data on its alumni is limited to those who progressed from the academic year 2012-13 to Leeds Beckett University in September 2013. Each of the university partners has systems in place to track students through their institution, and confirmed their willingness to make such data available to LISC. AMB is currently discussing ways of making sure that the data collected from each partner university is consistent and comparable.

The review team has **confidence** in LISC's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

How effectively does the Leeds ISC fulfill its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 The QAEG, chaired by the Head of Centre (or nominee), with membership comprising the key members of LISC academic and support staff, is charged with oversight of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of the quality of the student experience, including monitoring the Action Plan and Annual Monitoring Report. Its terms of reference include receipt of course committee (or equivalent) minutes and, from January 2015, student input through student representative membership.

2.2 The LISC quality committee framework provides for Management Group (Head of Centre, Regional Director and Marketing Manager, meeting monthly), the Staff Team meetings, the termly staff-student meetings and the termly TRCDC to report to QAEG, which is required to meet quarterly.

2.3 The RQAEG receives and discusses LISC Action Plans and, where available, draft Annual Monitoring Reports from the various Centres. LISC considers the AMR to be one of the 'fundamental precepts' in its approach to managing the quality of learning opportunities. The LISC AMR for 2013-14 is a comprehensive, analytical and evaluative document, drawing on a wide range of evidence, including student data, external examiner reports, student feedback and the minutes of TRCDC, Staff Team, staff-student and Steering Group meetings. The AMR tracks actions from the previous year and sets out the action plan for the next cycle. Formal module reviews, which have been piloted during the course of 2013-14, will further inform the AMR once they are fully introduced this academic year.

2.4 The LISC QAEG, which originally comprised the management team, met throughout 2012-13 to monitor the Action Plan. Thereafter, formal meetings were not resumed until November 2014, following reconstitution of QAEG in accordance with its current terms of reference.

2.5 Due to the quality management framework having been in operation in its revised form only since the beginning of the current academic year, it is not possible to form a view of its overall effectiveness in practice, over time. Nonetheless, meeting minutes for the current academic year indicate that the management and enhancement of learning opportunities are appropriately addressed through consideration of the Centre Action Plan, together with a range of associated matters, including student academic and pastoral support, assessment, feedback from students, resources for learning, and staff appointment and development.

2.6 One of the core elements of LISC's strategy for 2014-15 is the enhancement of its partnership and collaboration with its partner universities. With respect to formal, institutional oversight of academic standards and quality, enhancement of the partnership is focused on strengthening the operation of the AMB, the key academic committee where university partners are able to consider the academic management of the Centre.

2.7 The Head of LISC resigned her post and left LISC in January 2015. The interim Regional Director, who is soon to transfer responsibilities to a recently appointed permanent Regional Partnerships Director, has taken on the acting Head of Centre role. At the time of the review visit, the appointment of an interim Head of Centre was imminent; the appointment of a permanent Head of Centre was expected to be completed after three months; and the recruitment to a new Deputy Head of Centre post was to be initiated in March 2015. It would be **desirable** for BES to expedite the consolidation of the Centre management team through the appointment of a permanent Head of Centre and Deputy Head of Centre.

2.8 The review team concludes that the revised quality framework, if operated as required, together with the consolidation of the LISC management team, should provide for the effective management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities (see paragraph 1.3).

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

2.9 BES-led benchmarking of its Quality Handbook is expected to be further progressed in 2014-15 through key projects to ensure mapping of policy and practice against the Quality Code.

2.10 At LISC level, Subject Benchmark Statements are used at the appropriate level and referenced in programme specifications.

2.11 The learning outcomes for the ESUS modules have been developed in line with the CEFR global descriptors. Marking schemes for the units are informed by the IELTS marking criteria and CEFR descriptors.

2.12 Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) professional body reference points inform curriculum development for the International Foundation Year. When running, the International Year 1 curriculum will need to comply with the ACCA syllabus, in line with Leeds Beckett's gold status with this professional body.

2.13 The review team considers that LISC uses external reference points effectively in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities.

How effectively does LISC assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

2.14 Student progression rates to the respective Universities in 2013-14 fell below expectations, and student withdrawal rates were disappointingly high. Among the underlying causes, LISC identified issues with teaching staff recruitment, suitability (in some cases) and retention, and the quality of English and maths teaching. In 2013-14, some students reported their concerns about changes in teaching staff, sometimes mid-way through a module.

2.15 A detailed plan of action to address these issues, which was presented to Steering Group in December 2014, and which incorporated, expanded and replaced an earlier action plan, is now being progressed through the Action Plan. The plan for improving student performance and retention is well considered and comprehensive, covering staff recruitment,

qualifications, performance, development and peer support; learning and teaching enhancements, including the introduction of an 'assessment for learning' culture, individual learning plans for all students, with a focus on 'at risk' students; use of data metrics to include a monthly 'at risk' register of students deemed to be at risk of withdrawing or not meeting progression requirements; and a particular focus on ESUS and maths delivery.

2.16 Many of these actions are already underway. With a view to providing a better learning experience for students and giving teaching staff a greater sense of belonging, LISC took steps during 2013-14 to consolidate the profile of teaching staff away from a large number of small fractional posts to a smaller number of staff with larger fractional appointments and higher teaching loads. This approach is being maintained in the current year, and the full-time staffing base has also been extended, with the appointment of a full-time Head of Maths.

2.17 A significant proportion of the teaching staff either commenced appointment at the beginning of the current academic year or have joined LISC more recently. In this context in particular, LISC has adopted a strategic, planned approach to staff development and review (see paragraphs 2.20 and 2.45). If effective in its implementation, LISC's approach should ensure that the quality of student learning opportunities is maintained and enhanced.

2.18 LISC aims to enhance the academic team by raising the average level of the qualification base so that the minimum expectation is that teaching staff have a relevant teaching qualification and master's level qualification/experience. LISC plans to audit this through annual updating of CVs and targeted staff development through the appraisal system. This initiative is well underway. Many current teaching staff are qualified at least to master's level and almost all have either teaching experience or teaching qualifications, or both.

2.19 Systems for maintaining and enhancing the quality of teaching continue to be developed. In 2013-14 staff performance monitoring and development was undertaken through appraisal of the Head of Centre, carried out by the Regional Director, and appraisal of LISC administrative and management staff by the Head of Centre. Lesson observations are carried out by the Head of Centre.

2.20 A peer review and staff appraisal process is to be implemented during 2014-15. Processes, templates and schedules for are in place; and these items are incorporated into the Staff Development Framework 2015 and Staff Development Plan for 2014-15. All new teaching and support staff are allocated a 'buddy' and a mentor, an arrangement that is already working and clearly valued by staff. It is **advisable** for BES to keep under review and report on the effectiveness of its staffing policy and its appraisal, peer review and teaching observation process to ensure the quality of learning and teaching.

2.21 In response to high failure rates in English in 2013-14, LISC identified strategies to improve student learning and achievement. The new appointment to the Head of English post is expected to provide the necessary leadership, skills and experience. Strategies include improved staff awareness of IELTS requirements and appropriate pedagogic approaches, with links to other subject areas. LISC is addressing individual student needs across all discipline areas, particularly with respect to 'at risk' students, through work already in progress to improve ongoing student performance tracking; extra teaching is provided, where the need is identified. Teaching and learning is being enhanced through more extensive use of the VLE, and LISC has appointed a VLE 'champion' to promote this work and provide support and training for staff.

2.22 LISC considers rigorous module review to be one of the fundamental precepts underlying its approach to the management of student learning opportunities. Module reviews were piloted during 2013-14, with full introduction commencing this academic year.

Following the identification of areas for development during the pilot, actions have been progressed, including the provision of VLE training for staff and the development of a module review template requiring comment on a range of matters, including student achievement, module delivery and management, analysis of student feedback and plans for development.

2.23 A clear and comprehensive module review process is now in place; implementation has begun, with module reviews for term 1 of 2014-15 completed and an initial analysis for this period produced.

2.24 LISC has identified a range of issues concerning staffing and the quality of teaching and learning which, during 2013-14, contributed significantly to poor student retention, achievement and progression rates. The review team concludes that strategies to address these issues - for appropriate staffing; teaching observation; the effective appraisal and peer review of academic staff; and module review - are in place and being implemented. If carried through to successful completion, these steps should allow LISC to assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced.

How effectively does the Bellerbys Educational Services (Leeds ISC) make use of student feedback to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

2.25 LISC gathers student feedback formally through student representation, induction questionnaires, module evaluation questionnaires and summer end-of-cycle questionnaires. More informally, the student voice is heard via access to staff through the operation of an 'open door' policy, and students are encouraged to engage directly with administrative and academic staff.

2.26 Each tutorial group is asked to elect two student representatives during the first four weeks of the year, to represent their peers at the termly staff-student committee meetings. Student representatives whom the team met had been offered and had attended training for their role. LISC has recently established student representation on the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group and Academic Management Board, and students whom the team met confirmed that they had attended the two January 2015 meetings.

2.27 Staff-student meetings work effectively in allowing the student voice to be heard and actions taken in response to be reported to students. The meetings are generally well attended by student representatives and staff. LISC responds appropriately to student views and requests. Examples include exam rescheduling to relieve pressure in exam week; the provision of 'plus' classes in science; the provision of opportunities to meet students studying at the respective universities; and enhancements to and more extensive use of the VLE for teaching and general communication.

2.28 LISC undertakes a thorough analysis of student survey and questionnaire outcomes. Key themes are discussed at TRCDC and reported through the AMR, with actions identified and followed through to the Action Plan. The module review process requires analysis of student module evaluation, together with a responding statement of key points for improvement, key actions to be put in place, a development plan for the next session and actions arising from the previous review. When fully introduced this academic year, the process should extend the use of module evaluation as an effective vehicle for identifying enhancements to student learning opportunities at module level.

2.29 External examiners are encouraged to meet students. Records of student feedback obtained at such meetings are contained in their reports and matters arising are appropriately addressed in the Head of Centre's responses.

2.30 Students confirm that there are frequent opportunities to have their voice heard and that all suggestions are taken into account and amendments often made.

2.31 The review team concludes that LISC makes use of student feedback effectively to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

How effectively does the Bellerbys Educational Services (Leeds ISC) assure itself that students are supported effectively?

2.32 LISC supports students in a variety of ways: through the formal mechanisms of induction, allocated personal tutors and weekly group tutorials; through planned enrichment activities and activities designed to assist students to prepare for progression to the respective Universities; and through informal individual support by academic and administrative staff.

2.33 Student induction comprises a full week of information sessions, activities, and trips, including talks on life and studying in the UK and the programme of study; diagnostic maths and English testing; a meeting with university staff, students and tutors; tours of LISC and the university campuses; and medical and police registration. In their formal feedback on the event, most students said they found induction helpful, and this sentiment was echoed by the students whom the review team met. The students' submission records particularly favourable comment on the city tour.

2.34 Personal tutors mentor students and monitor their progress, with meetings at least once per term. Academic progress is supported by individual study plans, which are updated through the programme, as deemed appropriate. Staff team meetings are used as a forum to identify students whose academic progress gives cause for concern and to plan and monitor remedial action. Weekly group tutorials provide regular support within a formal programme beginning with generic skills' development and moving on to focus on individual development needs. Students confirm that tutors 'genuinely care' about them, encourage students to approach them and do their best to help students achieve their academic goals, in particular providing extra help in English and maths, where needed. In addition to the support provided by LISC, all students have access to the full range of support services offered by Leeds Beckett University.

2.35 Interaction with students and staff of the respective Universities, initially established at induction, continues through the programme with invitations to join activities and trips organised by the university partners; access to the University of Leeds' global café; and LISC alumni visits to weekly group tutorial sessions and attendance at LISC social events.

2.36 Students confirm that LISC helps them settle down comfortably in Leeds and provides them with the 'feel' of university life. They also value the enrichment activities provided by LISC, noting in particular the educational and 'bonding' visits to the Humber Bridge and The Deep leisure attraction.

2.37 The review team concludes that LISC supports students effectively and, through the feedback mechanisms described above, effectively assures itself that it does so.

How effectively does the Bellerbys Educational Services (Leeds ISC) manage the recruitment and admission of students?

2.38 The selection and admission of students is conducted centrally by the BES Admissions Team, overseen by the Director of Admissions, who sits as a member of BES's Senior Management Team. Student enrolments for BES's higher education programmes are processed by the Admissions Centre at Brighton. Caps on students numbers progressing to some of the respective Universities' programmes are managed centrally on admission to LISC, to ensure that maximum numbers are not exceeded and student expectations are met.

2.39 Students confirm that the admissions process is smooth and efficient, and those students who used agents found their services to be helpful and the information they provided to be accurate.

2.40 Senior staff said that admission requirements are kept under review and were reconsidered in the light of the disappointing progression rates at LISC in 2013-14. A comparative analysis of student achievement across the ISC network demonstrated that current entry requirements are sufficiently robust to ensure that students recruited to the higher education programmes have the potential to succeed and progress.

2.41 The review team considers that the recruitment and admission of students is managed effectively.

How effective are the Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Leeds ISC's) arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

2.42 LISC teaching and support staff have undertaken a range of development activities since the establishment of the Centre. These include BES centrally organised events and training, such as the annual Higher Education Teachers' Conference which the Head of Centre and other colleagues attended last year, and website training. Good practice is shared through staff liaison with other centres and colleagues across the network, such as the 2014 Study Group Heads of English Conference and cross-Centre tutor meetings. Staff attend internal staff development provided by LISC, such as VLE training for tutors.

2.43 With the expansion and consolidation of the teaching staff base, BES considers that it is now in a strong position to adopt a more strategic, planned approach to staff development. In progressing this approach, BES has recently developed a Staff Development Framework, which supports the annual LISC Staff Development Plan.

2.44 The Framework seeks to provide a structure ensuring the engagement of all staff, with staff development needs being identified through the quality assurance structures. It incorporates probationary review for new tutors, annual appraisal for all tutors, performance review in the second year of appointment and a buddying and mentoring scheme. In addition to the annual staff development programme, funding for individual staff development, such as fees for higher degree study, are considered on a case-by-case basis. The full range of Leeds Beckett University staff development provision is available to LISC staff. The opportunity to attend University staff development events, which has not generally been taken up by LISC staff to date, are to be more effectively promoted by BES.

2.45 The current staff development plan sets out the programme for 2014-15 and shows completed activity for term 1. It includes BES provision, such as the Higher Education Teachers' Conference, VLE and student database training and sessions on the LISC governance structure, giving effective feedback to students and writing module handbooks.

2.46 The review team considers that LISC's strategic approach is capable of addressing successfully, as BES intends, not only the needs of individual staff but also the challenges presented by the low progression rates, with measurable enhancement of student learning opportunities. At this stage in its implementation, the effectiveness of the strategy is still to be fully tested. It would be **desirable** for LISC to continue to implement its staff development framework and evaluate and report on its effectiveness.

How effectively does the Bellerbys Educational Services (Leeds ISC) ensure that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes?

2.47 All LISC students have access to a range of learning resources at Leeds Beckett University. Under the contractual arrangements, the University provides teaching space and access to laboratory facilities. All students are registered with Leeds Beckett University, giving them access to the University's physical spaces, including the Students' Union. They have full access to and borrowing rights for the University library, including the use of student group library study rooms (bookable online), and help and support from library staff in person and by phone, email and online. Students have access to the University's IT facilities and the LISC space on the University's VLE and have their own University email account.

2.48 Students are generally satisfied with learning resources and clearly valued access to the range of Leeds Beckett University facilities, including the use of University laboratory facilities. The students' submission records some negative comment concerning communication of last-minute classroom changes; insufficient classrooms with appropriate facilities; and, for a small number of students ineffective communication with students regarding administrative matters. Senior staff are aware of these matters. Communications issues are being addressed as the use of the VLE is extended and enhanced. LISC is to be allocated further classroom space in its current building; for the present, the one LISC-dedicated classroom which lacks projection facilities is used, where possible, when these facilities are not required.

2.49 The review team concludes that BES ensures that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

The review team has **confidence** that LISC is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for students.

3 Information about learning opportunities

How effectively does Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Leeds ICS) public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides?

3.1 Through BES's publication and branding team and its Creative Services Department, LISC publishes the LISC prospectus which is reviewed and revised each academic year, and which is a key marketing and recruitment tool for potential students and recruitment agents. The prospectus contains listings of the progression opportunities at both universities, and includes general statements about the need to gain the appropriate academic and English grades with a cross-reference to the LISC website for more detailed information. LISC has a website with details of the academic provision on offer, including progression requirements that students need to achieve in order to transfer to the university partner programmes and, for a number of programmes at the University of Leeds, the cap on the number of students who are able to proceed.

3.2 LISC has obtained variations of contract from each of the partner universities which confirm that students are guaranteed progression to their chosen programme provided they meet the academic and English language requirements. These variations of contract have appropriately addressed the recommendation in the previous review. The central admissions unit is aware of those University of Leeds programmes where there was a cap on numbers

able to proceed, and it liaised with the University to limit the number of offers made to these programmes, to avoid a situation where otherwise eligible students were prevented from progressing by the cap on numbers. The University of Leeds may change its progression requirements 'from time to time'. However, the team was advised that there would be no changes either for current students or students holding an offer from LISC to join the programme at its next entry point. The review team also noted a provision in the main contract with University of Leeds which requires a period of six months' notice to be given before any change may be made.

3.3 Students receive information about the programmes at LISC from in-country agents and by accessing the LISC website. They said the information they had received had been helpful, and they were fully aware of the progression requirements to access their chosen programme of study at their chosen university. This information on progression requirements had been confirmed to them at induction and was also displayed on notice boards around LISC. They were also aware of the cap on numbers allowed to progress to some programmes at the University of Leeds, but said they had been told in their tutorial groups these caps had now been removed. This was confirmed not to be the case.

3.4 At induction, students receive a copy of the Student Handbook, which includes the full LISC Assessment Regulations and Programme Specifications. Students confirmed the Handbook was available in hard copy and on the VLE. LISC is in the process of re-issuing the Student Handbook to incorporate the updated assessment regulations. Students also confirmed they receive a module handbook at the start of each module, which contains the module-level learning outcomes and details of assessment and schemes of work. Copies of key documents are available to students on the VLE.

How effective are Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Leeds ISC's) arrangements for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy?

3.5 The Head of Centre is accountable for the accuracy of the information, for both web-based and hard-copy material, and is supported in this by a proofreading and checking protocol designed to ensure that information is fit for purpose and trustworthy. Final sign-off of public information relating to LISC and its relationship with the two universities lies with the university partners, but the Head of Centre retains accountability to BES for the accuracy of published information and is required to report on the process within the Centre Action Plan. Students confirmed that they had found that information provided to them about LISC prior to admission had been accurate, and was consistent with their subsequent experience as students at LISC.

The team concludes that **reliance can** be placed on the information that LISC produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Action plan³

Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (LISC) action plan relating to Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight February 2015						
Advisable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it is advisable for LISC to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement fully the quality management framework and evaluate and report on its effectiveness at the end of the 2014-15 academic year (paragraph 1.3) 	<p>Quality assurance and academic standards are upheld, processes are fit for purpose and transparent</p> <p>Meetings are regular as per the Calendar of Business, quorate and articulate the management of academic standards in addition to the operational processes of the centre</p>	<p>Uphold the calendar of meetings and committees outlined in the Quality Framework and Calendar of Business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QAEG • Academic management Board • Steering Group • Team Meeting • Centre meeting • Student and Staff meetings <p>Review the Calendar and Quality Framework at the end of the academic year</p>	1 Sept 2015	Head of Centre	Regional Director, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG) and Academic Management Board (AMB)	<p>Full evaluation of framework within the Annual Monitoring Report</p> <p>Minutes of all meetings</p>

³ The provider 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.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that external examiners have access to a sufficient range of assessed student work (paragraph 1.12) 	<p>External examiners are able to assess adequately students' work to inform sound judgements</p>	<p>Samples of work seen by examiners/or examiners before the Programme Assessment Board</p>	<p>11 June 2015</p>	<p>Exams officer</p>	<p>Head of Centre</p>	<p>External examiners' reports show satisfaction with the range of work available</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement the actions designed to address student progression issues identified in 2013-14 and evaluate and report on their effectiveness (paragraph 1.13) 	<p>Student progression statistics show year-on-year improvement</p>	<p>Data used to inform risk register available and used to manage students' attendance and achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce diagnostic test to ensure student needs are being met via additional classes/targeted lessons Attendance process is reviewed and smoothly operationalised with full involvement and support of personal tutors Run attendance campaigns at strategic points in time, including specific tutorial for attendance Students to complete a three-stage process of attendance 	<p>30 June 2015</p>	<p>Head of Centre</p>	<p>Regional Director, QAEG and AMB/PAB (Programme Assessment Board)</p> <p>Regional Director, QAEG and AMB</p>	<p>At-risk registers</p> <p>Student performance and attendance data</p> <p>Tutorial Scheme of Work/ individual tutorial timetables/ individual students records</p> <p>Support class registers</p>

		<p>management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-term reviews inform the at-risk register • Additional support classes and 1:1 interventions available for students • Monitoring of each individual student progress to be completed by centre staff 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review and report on the effectiveness of its staffing policy and its appraisal, peer review and teaching observation process to ensure the quality of learning and teaching (paragraph 2.20). 	<p>Improved performance management at Centre</p> <p>Staff are valued and developed</p> <p>Culture of reflective practice promoted</p> <p>Records available on staff development and Observation of Teaching and Learning practices</p> <p>Improvements in teaching learning and assessment, key themes of good practice and developmental areas identified</p> <p>Training and development reflective of</p>	<p>Each staff member to have a formal observation and feedback by management and key themes of good practice and areas for improvement shared in team meetings</p> <p>Staff to undertake peer observations to share good practice</p> <p>Training and Development reflect Observation of Teaching and Learning findings and development needs</p>	July 2015	Head of Centre	Regional Director, QAEG and AMB	<p>Improvements in Teaching Learning and Assessment as seen in next set of observations</p> <p>Teaching Review and Development Committee minutes</p> <p>QAEG minutes</p>

	Observation of Teaching and Learning findings					
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 LISC to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to implement its module review process and evaluate and report on its effectiveness (paragraph 1.4) 	<p>Module review process informs academic improvements at the centre</p> <p>Module review informs the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and Centre Action Plan</p>	Plan Module review to ensure it is undertaken by staff appropriately, staff are supported with this process to ensure that it is meaningful and a tool to inform improvements	August 2015	Head of Centre (HoC)	Regional Director, QAEG and AMB	AMR and Centre Action Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> expedite the consolidation of the Centre management team through the appointment of a permanent Head of Centre and Deputy Head of Centre (paragraph 2.8) 	Centre has full complement of staff and creates a stable environment for growth and improvement	<p>Head of Centre recruited and in place</p> <p>Deputy Head recruited and in place</p>	June 2015	Regional Director	QAEG and AMB	Centre structure Diagram
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to implement its staff development 	Staff development activity supports the quality of teaching learning and assessment	Staff development opportunities available in response to needs identified via skills audit	August 2015	Head of Centre	Regional Director QAEG, AMB	<p>Staff turnover figures</p> <p>Staff survey</p>

framework and evaluate and report on its effectiveness (paragraph 2.45).	at the centre Staff confidence in delivery Staff reflective of continuous improvement Staff development framework in place	and lesson observations Staff development plan in place				results Number of staff participating in staff development Improvement in student achievement
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About QAA

QAA is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

QAA's aims are to:

- meet students' needs and be valued by them
- safeguard standards in an increasingly diverse UK and international context
- drive improvements in UK higher education
- improve public understanding of higher education standards and quality.
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QAA conducts reviews of higher education institutions and publishes reports on the findings.

QAA also publishes a range of guidance documents to help safeguard standards and improve quality.

More information about the work of QAA is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk.

More detail about Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx.

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook⁴](#)

academic quality A comprehensive term referring to how, and how well, higher education providers manage teaching and learning opportunities to help students progress and succeed.

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

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).

awarding organisation An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

differentiated judgements In a review for educational oversight, separate judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate awarding bodies.

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 QAA's audit and review processes.

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*.

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 review processes.

highly trusted sponsor An organisation that the UK government trusts to admit migrant students from overseas, according to Tier 4 of UK Visas and Immigration's points-based immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must undergo a successful review by QAA.

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.

⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=66

partner higher education institution A body with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

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.

provider(s) (of higher education) Organisations that deliver higher education. In the UK they may be a degree-awarding body or another organisation that offers programmes of higher education on behalf of degree-awarding bodies or awarding organisations. In the context of ECREO, the term means an independent college.

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

reference points Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured. Internal reference points may be used by providers for purposes of self-regulation; external ones are used and accepted throughout the higher education community for the checking of standards and quality.

quality See **academic quality**.

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.

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.

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 for higher education qualifications** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**. See also **academic standards**.

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

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