



## Educational Oversight for Embedded Colleges: report of the monitoring visit of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Study Group), October 2018

### Leeds International Study Centre

#### Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the monitoring team concludes that Leeds International Study Centre (the Centre) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the [previous monitoring visit](#) in 2017.

#### Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 In 2016, the Centre moved to Headingley Carnegie Campus (part of Leeds Beckett University) with over £1 million invested to develop a modern student learning environment. Further investment in 2018 resulted in the second floor of the building being developed with a further four large classrooms, a meeting room and relocated staff office and a student common room. Study Group implemented a revised and enhanced staff infrastructure. There has been a growth in the number of students from 300 in 2017-18 to 395 in 2017-18. The programmes of study now include a new International Year One (IY1) in Biological Sciences. The Centre has a clear set of priorities for the next 12 months.

#### Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The monitoring visit in October 2017 noted that the two recommendations of the 2016 review had been addressed, but a full evaluation of the effectiveness of the actions taken could not be made until the end of the 2017-18 academic year. Evaluation has now been completed. The two affirmations from the review have been further progressed. The first relating to the Centre obtaining student progression data from its university partner remaining incomplete. Such data is now available and enables the Centre to track the success of its students. Secondly, the actions considered in last year's monitoring visit, the Centre has further enhanced the quality of the learning opportunities it offers to its students with the approval and introduction of an International Year One in Biological Sciences. Also, there has been a further review and development of the Academic English Skills (AES) module to include material to stretch and challenge students who arrive at the Centre with good English skills. The Red, Pink, Amber, Green (RPAG) traffic light system for monitoring student progress is now embedded and a new structure for academic and welfare support has been introduced. This enables the Centre to identify students needing support in a more proactive manner.

4 The first recommendation of the 2016 review was that the Centre implement the Progression Improvement Plan (PIP) designed to address low progression rates. Three 'main levers' were put in place to achieve this and are described in the 2017 monitoring report. The

success of these was demonstrated by 97 per cent of students in 2016-17 reaching the threshold standard and 75 per cent of students in 2016-17 being offered a place on their chosen degree (increases of 11 per cent and 17 per cent compared with the 2015-16 figure). Figures for 2017-18 were slightly lower, with 89 per cent meeting the threshold and 70 per cent eligible for progression, but these are still well above those of earlier years.

5 The second recommendation was to provide focused staff development to ensure consistency in internal marking. The 2017 monitoring report notes the steps taken to achieve this and external examiners comments for 2016-17 note, for example, that 'marking is performed methodically, in line with detailed marking schemes and consistently across student groups'.

6 The 2016 review affirmed the steps being taken with the universities to ensure access to degree programme data. Study Group has now worked with the university partners to ensure a data release form has been signed to release all 2017-18 student progression information through each level of their degree. The Centre is more able to monitor student progression in a more rigorous manner.

7 During 2017-18, the Centre has been highly active in further enhancing the quality of its provision. For example, with the RPAG traffic light system for highlighting student progress through the year now fully embedded. This is supported by an increase in formative assessments. A new structure for academic and welfare support has been put in place with two Progression, Welfare and Support Officers (PWSO) appointed to offer support to students rated red by the RPAG process. A revised Personal Tutor Framework Scheme of Work has been introduced. End of year analysis showed this support to be highly effective both in increasing retention and retaining students who were unable to achieve their first-choice destination. The Academic English Skills (AES) module has been rolled out across all programmes including additional material to challenge the most able students. A new addition to the Centre's suit of programmes, an International Year One in Biological Sciences, has been developed and approved with the first students recruited in September 2018.

8 Actions supporting this range of initiatives are recorded in the Centre Action Plan (CAP) and have been completed. The CAP, which is shared with staff and students, is a detailed and informative document which clearly records actions, responsibilities and completions. It is, along with Study Group's action plan, a key feature of the Centre's process for annual monitoring.

9 The majority of admissions to the Centre is carried out by Study Group. The UK and Europe Admissions Centre is split between Singapore, and Brighton and Hove. The latter picks up all applications from the place confirmation stage. The last academic year saw an enhancement-led review of sales, marketing and admissions. The Centre is involved in making decisions about exceptional cases such as candidates considered to be borderline in meeting requirements for a programme or those who have special needs. In such cases, the decision rests with the Head of Centre who will consult the Academic Manager. The success of such students is tracked by Study Group at its Students Outcomes Management Group. From 2018, the Centre will also capture this data and ensure that exceptional and borderline cases are initially flagged as red on the RPAG register, ensuring that they are supported and tracked.

10 The Centre's annual monitoring process is thorough and well-organised. It is effectively supported by Study Group. The requirements for annual monitoring are specified by Study Group and begin with an evaluation of individual modules by tutors using a standard module review form. The process captures several sources to evaluate the provision. Actions resulting

from module review may include proposals to change assessments or learning outcomes. Such proposals are subject to the Centre's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG) and by the Programme Approval and Validation Committee (PAVC). External examiners reports are also included in the annual monitoring report together with a list of actions and an update on the previous year's actions. The report is drawn together by the Head of Centre who also considers student feedback and any issues arising through the Student Liaison Committee. This is initially discussed at the Quality and Academic Enhancement Group (QAEG). It then progresses to the Regional Quality and Academic Enhancement Group (RQAEG). A notable feature of the process is the use of peer assessment across centres organised by Study Group. Staff reported that it is an effective way of sharing good practice and gaining knowledge of other centres in Study Group. A summary of issues from individual reports is forwarded to Study Group's central quality committees. The report is also discussed at the Academic Management Board held jointly with the partner universities. Overall, the annual monitoring process is robust, effective and well-managed.

## **The embedded colleges' use of external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education**

11 The quality assurance processes used by the Centre are specified by Study Group and are based on the UK Quality Code of Higher Education. Examples of this are the use of external examiners for all programmes, the programme approval process and the annual monitoring process. In addition, students are involved in quality assurance and enhancement with student representatives in place and meeting as a student forum and attending the Centre's QAEG Committee. Students have clear information about their assessments and report receiving helpful and timely feedback on these.

12 Programme and module development is benchmarked against *The Framework for Higher Education* (FHEQ) for programmes set at Levels 4-6, such as IY1 and against the Regulated Qualifications Programme (RQF) for the International Foundation Year (IFY) which is set at Level 3. Programme and module specifications use the appropriate qualifications descriptors in stating learning outcomes and, where appropriate, Subject Benchmark Statements are used in developing the curriculum and referred to in programme and module specifications. English language modules are benchmarked against the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

## **Background to the monitoring visit**

13 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's and its embedded colleges' continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. 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.

14 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Philip Markey, QAA Officer, and Professor Gaynor Taylor, QAA Reviewer, on 16 October 2018.

**QAA2303d - R10362 - Jan 18**

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2019  
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB  
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)