

Annex 5: Liverpool International College

Introduction and background

Liverpool International College (LIC) was established in 2007. It is an embedded college within the KIC pathways framework, in a partnership with the University of Liverpool. Students achieving the agreed grades proceed directly to a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered by the University. In 2010-11, around 960 students enrolled at the College.

The College offers the following pathway programmes and awards:

| Programme | Level |
|---|--------|
| Foundation Certificate in Business, Law and Social Sciences | FHEQ 3 |
| Foundation Certificate in Science and Engineering | FHEQ 3 |
| Graduate Diploma in Business, Law and Social Sciences | FHEQ 6 |
| Graduate Diploma in Science and Engineering | FHEQ 6 |

Key findings

Academic standards

There can be **confidence** that academic standards at Liverpool International College are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of KIC and the University of Liverpool.

Quality of learning opportunities

There can be **confidence** that the quality of learning opportunities at Liverpool International College is assured and enhanced appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of KIC and the University of Liverpool.

Public information

Reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that KIC is responsible for publishing about itself, its embedded colleges, and the programmes which they deliver.

Good practice

The review team noted the following features of good practice at this College:

- the use of progression data provided by the University of Liverpool to inform future planning and course development at the College (paragraph 9)
- the use of KIC's virtual learning environment as an educational tool to enhance students' learning (paragraph 12)
- the quality of the staff development support available to staff at all levels, including mentoring and networking opportunities (paragraph 19)
- the positive arrangements for student access to the University of Liverpool's learning facilities (paragraph 23).

Recommendations

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

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

- ensure that there is provision in all programmes for an external scrutiny of examination questions and summative assignments, before these are used in student assessment (paragraph 8).

The team considers that it is **desirable** for LIC to:

- further develop the induction and ongoing staff development programmes to address the particular challenges of teaching overseas students (in addition to the generic cultural awareness training currently offered) (paragraph 20).

Detailed findings

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

1 The written agreement between the partners is fit for purpose and is subject to regular review points over a ten-year period starting in 2007. Additional review points can be triggered by, for example, unusually low progression rates or ongoing complaints from students. Processes are in place for the regular review and updating of articulation lists.

2 The College operates within KIC's Quality Assurance Framework. At the local level and at local level the Joint Academic Advisory Board (JAAB) (chaired by a member of the senior management of the University of Liverpool and comprising representatives of LIC and the University of Liverpool is the senior academic committee of LIC and has overall responsibility for assurance of the academic standards of all programmes and the quality of learning opportunities provided for all students in support of their programmes. The JAAB meets twice yearly to monitor the partnership, giving confidence in the security of academic standards and the development, approval and monitoring of the embedded College's provision. An annual College report is presented to the University by the KIC Director of Colleges and the Managing Director and the LIC College Director, which includes an analysis of progression data.

3 Academic standards are assured and monitored through admissions requirements, course and module design requirements, assessment practice, external examiners and reporting structures, all of which are defined by the KIC Quality Assurance Framework. Its implementation at LIC was confirmed by the review team.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

4 Assessment is managed effectively by the College within the requirements of the KIC Quality Assurance Framework. Students confirmed that they receive timely feedback on assessments.

5 Certificates are not issued by LIC. Transcripts are issued by the College but there is potential ambiguity about the nature of the award, given the prominent location of the University of Liverpool's logo.

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

6 The KIC Quality Assurance Framework and the supporting Academic Standards and Quality Manual provided by KIC centrally both reflect appropriate sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*). In addition, provision at LIC has been mapped against the *Code of practice* and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Subject benchmark statements or A-level requirements are also used, as appropriate. Using these, KIC has established graduate outcomes and programme specifications for each pathway. Appropriate use is made of these reference points in developing new programmes, in consultation with KIC's Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ). The level of LIC programmes within *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) is confirmed on the College's website.

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

7 KIC's processes require assessments to be set at programme level. Module coordinators set assessments, sometimes with advice from subject experts within the KIC network, or from CLIQ as required. Some subject areas have access to a 'bank' of exam questions. LIC staff reported that standardisation meetings are held on a termly basis to review the spread of marks. External examiners' appointments are approved by the JAAB (thus, including the partner university). External examiners are required to attend at least one assessment board per calendar year. External examiners produce a report which goes to the programme team, and which is included in the annual programme report that goes to JAAB.

8 The review team noted that external examiners are not asked to approve the assessment instruments before they are taken by students. The team recommends that KIC ensures that there is provision in all programmes for an external scrutiny of examination questions and summative assignments, before these are used in student assessment.

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

9 LIC receives progression data from University of Liverpool (currently relating to first years, but in future the data will relate to all years). This is used to inform future planning and course development. Within KIC's Quality Assurance Framework, CLIQ receives the annual programme reports from LIC, which include data on student achievement and on progression to the University of Liverpool.

How effectively are responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities fulfilled?

10 KIC has a range of processes for monitoring the quality of learning opportunities, including the annual review process which reports on progression and completion figures and the use of external examiners to comment on the quality as well as the standard of student work. The annual college report, seen by senior managers at KIC as well as by the partner university, includes considerable detail about student support issues, enabling KIC to maintain an overview.

11 LIC has effective arrangements for student access to the University of Liverpool's learning resources. It also meets the standard KIC expectations for small class sizes (8-13) and the regular availability of personal tutors. Students can benefit from the Learning Outside the Classroom initiative.

12 LIC has made effective use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) as an educational tool to enhance students' learning. The designation of one of the support staff team as 'VLE Coordinator' has enabled the promotion and development of the VLE. All students seen by the team were aware of the benefits of the VLE in terms of preparation for classes and revision.

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

13 Provision at LIC is mapped against the *Code of practice* and the Quality Code.

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

14 LIC meets KIC's expectations in terms of recruitment, induction, development and appraisal of staff. Staff are able to bid to KIC's Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund. They are encouraged to maintain the currency of scholarship within their subject area. Student feedback processes feed into annual programme reports, which impact upon the quality of teaching and learning.

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

15 Student feedback is collected through student questionnaires, comments cards, and through the contribution of elected class representatives' contributions to focus groups. A summary report of issues raised is available to students. Students were able to cite examples of improvements resulting from their feedback. Student feedback is managed effectively.

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

16 In line with KIC's requirements, students are supported effectively through weekly group tutorials and one-to-one tutorials with personal tutors who are able to refer the students to other staff for academic advice or pastoral support. LIC support services all benefit from the opportunity to share good practice with colleagues with similar roles within the KIC network.

17 LIC students commented positively on the support provided by the Student Management Office - a recent pilot initiative.

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

18 Recruitment and admissions are managed centrally by KIC. LIC works closely with the University of Liverpool in support of its international strategy, which has led to a diversification into new recruitment markets in Taiwan, Mongolia, Turkey and Kazakhstan.

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

19 KIC provides excellent staff development opportunities for staff at all levels. Secondments in and out of CLIQ and between the partner colleges are encouraged and KIC supports mentoring arrangements and networking opportunities. KIC also offers staff development workshops on generic topics, such as customer contact skills. All staff, including sessional staff, can obtain funding for conference attendance if they are presenting a paper. LIC provides staff development opportunities at local level and LIC staff have access to staff development activities run by the University of Liverpool. The scrutiny team identified the provision of staff development opportunities as an example of good practice.

20 Nevertheless, the team recommended that KIC could further develop the induction and ongoing staff development programmes to address the particular challenges of teaching overseas students (in addition to the generic cultural awareness training currently offered).

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

21 The College regularly reviews the quality and availability of learning resources through the use of student feedback, in the evaluation made by programme committees, the annual programme reports, and through the oversight of the College's provision made by the JAAB.

22 KIC and College expectations are met through service level agreements between the College and the University of Liverpool. Students have access to a range of services and facilities. The College is also able to book teaching space within the University on the same basis as University staff through a central booking system.

23 Learning opportunities are well supported by the College's policies and procedures. Service level agreements with the University of Liverpool enable students to access a range of facilities and services, including libraries, laboratories, teaching spaces, sports facilities and student support services. These facilities were valued by students.

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

24 Provision of public information is managed centrally by KIC. Detailed programme information is available to students in print and on the virtual learning environment. Students at LIC confirmed that the information provided was accurate and easily accessible: student handbooks, programme and module descriptions provided by LIC provide detailed and accurate information. Information provided in programme handbooks provides students with the information they need in order to succeed. Students commended the College for the trustworthiness of its information and for delivering what was promised.

How effective are KIC's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing at this college?

25 Public information in KIC is managed centrally by a professional team. There is a careful approach to web design and management, and to the publication of hard copy of material. Because of the nature of the business and the partnership arrangements, all published material has to be seen and approved by the partner university and by local college staff. Systems are in place to ensure that published material is formally signed off by

the local College Director and by the Managing Director of KIC in the London office.

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