



Educational Oversight for embedded colleges: report of the monitoring visit of Navitas UK Holdings Ltd, May 2018

London Brunel International College

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 London Brunel International College (LBIC) is making acceptable progress with implementing the action plan following the April 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 LBIC underwent a Higher Education Review in April 2016. Since then there have been no changes in premises, ownership or programmes but a new Principal started in April 2017. A Periodic Programme Review that considered all LBIC's programmes was conducted by the University in March 2017. Enrolments grew 19 per cent in January 2018 compared with the same period last year when 139 new students enrolled compared with 117 in 2017, giving a total cohort of 417. First year programmes recruited better and the Pre-Master's programme in 2018, reversing the declining trend of recent years, with a total of 37 students enrolling compared with 28 students in 2017.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The review team considered a range of evidence, including strategic, policy and programme documentation, information on the College's website and on the virtual learning environment (VLE). Meetings were held with senior, teaching and support staff from the College, and a senior member of staff from the University, to discuss progress made during the past two years against the action plan from the April 2016 Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges). The review team also met undergraduate students and alumni who were currently students at the University. The 2016 QAA review identified five instances of good practice. Actions related to a number of these demonstrate the commitment of the College to build on the good practice.

4 The joint College and University Annual Teaching Forum, which promotes common understanding of the objectives and operations of LBIC and the exchange of good practice is still active and provided an opportunity recently to raise awareness of the College with the wider University.

5 The role of the Programme Element Leaders (PELs) in enhancing local ownership of curriculum quality has been further developed and there are now clearly set out expectations and areas of responsibility. In June 2017, the PEL role was further enhanced so expectations, objectives, roles and responsibilities are now clearer. There is now more accountability and ownership of the programme. Newly recruited academics are well inducted to the programme,

guided and supported by PELs and mentored where necessary. This new role has brought better coordination between LBIC and partner schools. Regular PEL meetings with fellow academics ensures best practice is shared.

6 The Special Recognition Awards for students, which recognise and promote core LBIC values including positive student attitudes to study and contributions to the learning environment continue to be awarded and now include more student categories and staff. These awards are popular with students and they recognise a range of attributes and outcomes including attainment and commitment.

7 The effective processes for student engagement at all levels, which ensure that the student voice is heard and responded to are being maintained and students spoke positively of the opportunities they have to provide feedback and of the responsiveness of the College to any issues they raise. There is a close relationship with the Brunel Students' Union, which runs the elections of the representatives (reps) and provides training, and the incoming Students' Union president is an alumnus of the College. The reps access the 'Rep Hub' where they can record the time spent in their role and this is recorded in their Higher Education Achievement Report. Students are active participants in College Enhancement Team meetings, which operates as a subcommittee of the College Learning and Teaching Board. This gives them the opportunity to participate in discussions about annual programme monitoring and to provide feedback on their learning experience.

8 The clear and thorough approach to annual monitoring that involves a range of stakeholders at module, programme and College levels in enhancing the student learning experience is evident. This year the College opted to take part in the University's new 'Enhancement Priority Conversations' as part of the annual monitoring process and these provided opportunity for more qualitative discussions about the operation of programme elements and modules.

9 Acceptable progress in all of the areas of good practice is being made, though the enhancements seen in each of these are modest. The programme element leader role is now well embedded in the College structures and facilitates the development of closer working relationships with the University. The student reps are effective and make a positive contribution in enhancing the learning experience. The use of the reps in the evaluation of the student surveys is a particular strength.

10 The College operates a robust admission process that is overseen by the Director of Admissions and Recruitment Centre, Navitas UK and managed locally by the Director of Marketing and Admissions. The College follows the Navitas UK policy, procedures and regulations for the admission of students, which align with the Quality Code, *Chapter B2*. Local arrangements for admission are agreed between the College, Navitas UK and the University as set out in the Collaborative Operations Manual. All Navitas UK staff, College staff and recruitment agents are required to abide by a Code of Ethics, which aligns with UK Council for International Student Affairs guidelines. Academic and English language admission requirements are published on the LBIC website. The Brunel University Complaints Procedure is available from its website. Formal offers of admission are generated within prescribed criteria agreed with all three parties, and issued centrally by Navitas UK. English entry requirements are set and approved by the University and comply with UKVI's Tier 4 Guidelines. These are set out in the Admissions Policy CPR-QS3. The College and the University work closely together to ensure robust admissions decisions are made. The joint Marketing, Recruitment and Admission Advisory Committee enables the College and the University to work closely together.

International students must meet English language entry requirements, assessed through the use of Home Office approved Secure English Language Tests. Good quality information is provided to students, and a pre-departure guide and webinars have recently been introduced that are well received by students. Discrepancies in course information were identified in the recent periodic review but communication between the College and the University has been strengthened. A buddy scheme is available to new students and students reported favourably on their impact in supporting students to stay on track. Working in partnership with the University and using a risk-based approach, all applicants are assessed to determine their commitment to study. The College is assisted in the management of the compliance regime through the UK's central Admissions and Recruitment Centre (ARC) and compliance team, who monitor changes in the UKVI guidelines, carry out audit checks during the year, and work with source country offices to spread awareness of the robust nature of admission requirements.

11 Navitas UK sets out the policy for the annual monitoring of the College's provision, and this is aligned to the University's procedures as set out in the LBIC CPR QS2: Annual Monitoring document. The College Annual Programme Monitoring Evaluation Report is comprehensive and is managed within a clear timeline. This is discussed at the College Enhancement Team Meeting. The enhancement priority for 2016-17 was combatting plagiarism. More academic workshops have been offered to ensure student awareness of plagiarism and students confirmed they are provided with a range of briefings and information on how to avoid plagiarism. Minor modifications are tracked as part of the annual monitoring process. PELs have a role in the oversight of their programmes and progression data is considered, although challenges in the availability and quality of data are evident. Annual monitoring identified a significant issue of poor attainment in the physics for engineers modules, which was discussed at the foundation engineering annual monitoring review meeting and this was referred to the Principal for further review. There is good evidence of the use of data, including tracer data to underpin the PEL report for the Pre-Master's in Business and Management. Within an annual module review report, a tutor raised significant issues concerning a level 4 placement module, citing poor levels of English as a concern, which is being followed up through a review of the academic English module.

12 In March 2017 all of the provision underwent a periodic review. The conclusion of this review was that while threshold standards are being met, the oversight of academic standards and requirements for appropriate governance and management of academic standards is not consistent across all departments and requires addressing. Significant issues in the level 0 Engineering were identified with a recommendation that there be a full strategic and academic revalidation of this programme in 2016-17. A strategic review of the Foundation Engineering has taken place; several options are being trialled and student outcomes are being monitored. The revalidation has not yet taken place, although a range of actions to improve engineering are being taken, with oversight from the joint Academic Advisory Committee. A number of arrangements are in place to support the relationship between the College and the University including Joint Strategic Management Board meetings and the Academic Advisory Committee, and there are now more formalised contacts between PELs and their liaison contacts. Meetings with support functions are also new and a collaborative partnerships manager is now in place; these actions are leading to improvements in coordination and communication. The team concludes that actions have led to improvement but not all actions are complete. A key example being in Foundation Engineering, where a full strategic and academic revalidation was required by the periodic review.

13 Over the last two years, there has been a decline in the number of Pre-Master's students that has affected the College's overall student numbers. Student numbers across the

remaining courses remain steady. The College has seen a slight decrease in the retention figures. The report to the Academic Advisory Committee identifies that there was a decline in pass rates during 2016-17 for the Foundation in Business. This resulted in an annual monitoring report action plan of the PEL taking closer oversight of the programme and led to an improvement in the pass rate to 86.7 per cent. Engineering was still underperforming, as discussed above. For the third trimester in 2017, performance was tracking about 5 per cent below the Navitas expectation of at least a 90 per cent pass rate. The College is monitoring low performing modules and providing additional tutorials and drop-in classes. They also have a project to track and evaluate any links between attendance and late enrolment.

14 The College does not work to an overarching action plan but manages a number of action plans through the Academic Advisory Committee, the Joint Strategic Management Board, the Marketing, Recruitment and Admission Advisory Committee, the Operations Advisory Committee and the College Enhancement Team. This has the potential to lead to a plethora of action plans. The College reported that they would be open to bringing relevant action plans together to streamline this process.

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

15 The College demonstrates appropriate engagement with relevant external reference points, including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). All College policies are underpinned by the Quality Code. Staff are encouraged to engage with external staff development, such as through the Staff and Educational Development Association and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) through the staff development opportunities provided by the University. A number of teaching staff are enrolled on PhDs and are pursuing HEA fellowship. Brunel workshops are offered to all staff.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

16 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.

17 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Cameron Waitt, QAA Officer and Ms Penny Renwick, QAA Reviewer, on 1 May 2018.

QAA2155c - R10010 - Jul 18

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2018
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050
Web www.qaa.ac.uk