



CEG UFP Ltd

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

December 2014

Annex 5: London FoundationCampus

Introduction and background

The London FoundationCampus (LFoC) was set up in 2010 as a partnership between FoundationCampus and Birkbeck College. The first students commenced in the academic year 2011-12. LFoC is based at Birkbeck's central London premises. There is a progression agreement for undergraduate students in place with Birkbeck. In addition, LFoC has agreements with seven other parts of the University of London: Goldsmiths; Heythrop College; Institute of Education; The Courtauld Institute of Art; Queen Mary; Royal Holloway; and the Royal Veterinary College. These agreements permit LFoC and FoundationCampus to promote the seven institutions through their marketing materials. It also facilitates LFoC students to become aware of the opportunities at these universities. There is no guaranteed progression to these institutions - students must apply competitively through UCAS for undergraduate programmes, and directly for postgraduate programmes.

LFoC offers five programmes at Birkbeck, three of which are covered by this review. All courses recruit in both September and January. The Undergraduate Foundation Programme (UFP), offers five pathways in Business, Economics, Finance and Management; Computing, Engineering and Sciences; Law, Humanities and Social Sciences; Life Sciences; and Media. The Business pathway is the largest while the Media pathway is not currently operating. At the time of the review there were 179 students studying on the UFP and further students are expected to enter in January 2015. Progression figures for 2013-14 show that 74 per cent of students entering the programme, passed it. Thirty per cent of those students passing the programme progressed to a partner institution; 63 per cent progressed to another university.

The International Diploma Programme (IDP) had 26 students at the time of the review. This programme permits students to progress to the second year of a number of defined business-related undergraduate programmes at Birkbeck. Progression figures for 2013-14 show that 19 per cent of students entering the programme passed it. Forty-five per cent of those passing progressed to a partner institution, while 36 per cent progressed to another university.

The Master's Foundation Programme (MFP) offers pathways in Business and Finance; Engineering; Social Sciences and Humanities; and Life Science. At the time of the review there were 29 students on this programme. Progression figures for 2013-14 show that 56 per cent of students entering this programme passed it. Fifty-five per cent of those passing progressed to a partner institution, the remaining 45 per cent progressing to another university. LFoC is also registered as a Centre for the delivery of the University of London International Foundation Programme, and it also offers an English Language Preparation Programme.

Primary responsibility for the management of academic standards, the quality of learning opportunities and public information rests with LFoC, which operates within the centrally administered framework, notably the Academic Quality Assurance Manual. The Centre Head of LFoC is a member of the FoundationCampus Academic Board.

LFoC's operations are underpinned by an agreement with Birkbeck for the provision of premises for teaching and offices, and student access to library, IT and student support facilities. The main points of contact at Birkbeck and other partner institutions are their respective international offices. There is no formal committee structure linking LFoC with its London partners. However, there are regular meetings with the partners, involving both administrative and teaching staff.

The self-evaluation document for this review was written by FoC alone, although it was seen by staff from partner institutions. There was no student submission because the students only joined LFoC in September 2014.

Key findings

Academic standards

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

Quality of learning opportunities

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

Information about learning opportunities

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

Good practice

The review team noted the following **good practice** across CEG UFP Ltd:

- the quality of information and guidance made available to prospective students (paragraph 34).

Recommendations

The review team makes the following recommendations.

It is **advisable** that CEG UFP Ltd:

- make structured and systematic use of student performance and progression data at provider and embedded college levels (paragraph 9).

Detailed findings

How effectively do CEG UFP Ltd and London FoundationCampus fulfil responsibilities for the management of academic standards at this college?

1 CEG UFP Ltd sets the framework through which academic standards are managed, notably through the revised Academic Quality Assurance Manual with oversight provided by Academic Board. CEG UFP Ltd's annual Academic Review methodology is based on a report completed by the Chief Academic Officer. Until recently this has contained statistical information but no detailed consideration of individual centres. However, from December 2014 new Academic Monitoring Reports will be produced containing specific sections on individual centres. CEG UFP Ltd has external examiners who moderate academic standards across the network, and provide external examiner reports.

2 LFoC's partner institutions have opportunities to see the annual monitoring reports but do not contribute directly to them. Some of the partners are monitoring the progress of students from LFoC on their programmes and are providing that information to LFoC.

3 Subject leaders provide strong and effective academic leadership and coordination in teaching, learning and assessment across centres.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

4 Students at LFoC undertake the standard set of assessments which apply to all FoundationCampus centres. For academic subjects, assessments are set by subject leaders and approved by the relevant external examiner. In English, assessments are specific to the centre, although there is consultation about them between English teachers across the network.

5 Students indicated that assessment requirements are general clearly communicated and they understood what is required. Feedback on assessed work is timely and generally it is helpful, although there is some variation.

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

6 The Academic Quality Assurance Manual is the key means by which the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and other external reference points are incorporated in CEG UFP Ltd policy and processes. Staff met by the review team are aware of this. There have been training sessions on the use of the manual across the network.

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

7 CEG UFP Ltd currently has a team of four external examiners appointed from higher education institutions unconnected with CEG. These cover all the individual FoundationCampus centres including London. The reports produced by the external examiners go to the Chief Academic Officer and then to Academic Board. Issues specific to LFoC are notified directly. The Centre Head is a member of the centrally held assessment boards, and as a consequence has access to oral comments made by the external examiners. External examiner reports are available to all staff through the network intranet and the annual Academic Review Report. Students met by the review team are aware of external examiners although they had not seen any of their reports.

8 The Academic Quality Assurance Manual specifies a process for internal moderation of assessment. Staff met by the review team are fully aware of the moderation processes that are used, both within the centre and across centres.

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

9 The self-evaluation document included statistical information on student numbers and progression at LFoC. The same information is incorporated in the Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs) for each programme. Statistics in the self-evaluation document and AMRs indicated how many students withdrew, completed, passed and failed, but did not indicate how many had progressed to university programmes, either with partners or other institutions. The review team was provided with this information when requested. The review team formed the view that the statistical information available is not being used systematically, and recommend as **advisable** that LFoC make structured and systematic use of student performance and progression data.

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

10 CEG UFP Ltd is responsible for the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities at LFoC. Central to discharging this responsibility are processes for annual programme monitoring, periodic review, and programme approval and amendment, set out in the Academic Quality Assurance Manual 2014-15. Since the last review, the local reporting by centres, including LFoC, has been strengthened within the AMR process. The existing monthly business unit meetings, held on a centre basis, have also been strengthened to give greater emphasis to academic matters.

11 Centre heads have delegated responsibility for the management of staff and facilities at the local level. Provision is coordinated across campuses, including LFoC, by a matrix structure of subject and programme leaders. Since the last review a system of termly audit checks on local operations by central CEG UFP Ltd staff has been implemented. Links between LFoC and its eight partner higher education institutions have also been strengthened.

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

12 Staff are made aware of the provision of the Quality Code through central policies and procedures. Actions have been taken to ensure that all staff are familiar with the contents of the Academic Quality Assurance Manual. Senior staff are aware of the centrally coordinated work to map CEG UFP Ltd practice against the expectations of the Quality Code.

13 CEG UFP Ltd provision no longer leads to awards of NCFE and Pearson. At LFoC there is evidence of effective use of external examiners' comments to enhance provision. The review team also noted strengthening ties with partner colleges, at a range of levels and across different functions, which facilitate reflection on the quality of LFoC provision and help to identify opportunities for enhancement.

How effectively do CEG UFP Ltd and London FoundationCampus assure themselves that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

14 Staff vacancies are advertised internally and externally and selection involves interviews and matching candidates against the person specification for the post. New teaching appointments are sometimes made from among sessional staff who have experience of the requirements of CEG UFP Ltd. New staff receive support and mentoring, and new teaching staff are observed during their probationary period. Staff are appraised twice-yearly. A staff handbook is available on the virtual learning environment (VLE).

15 Students who met the review team said that the quality of the teaching they receive is good. Teaching staff receive feedback through end of module questionnaires and through staff/student meetings. Students noted that staff are responsive to issues raised.

16 Subject leaders and programme leaders, some of whom are based at LFoC, play an important role in ensuring that teaching is up to date, appropriate and of high quality. They provide schemes of work, teaching resources and assessments for staff in their area across campuses. Programmes are evaluated annually through the AMRs to which local staff contribute. Evaluation also takes account of external examiners' comments on the quality of work produced by the students.

17 Since the last review the periodic review of the University Foundation Programme (UFP) has been initiated. The review has involved gathering a broad range of views from stakeholders, including the higher education institutions to which LFoC is linked. Termly academic meetings have been set up with Birkbeck and the flow of information from recipient institutions about the preparedness of students completing LondonFoC programmes to progress in their studies has increased.

18 CEG UFP Ltd has developed a new Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and set up a Teaching and Learning Committee to establish priorities for enhancement and to oversee action plans. Staff at LFoC are represented on the new committee.

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

19 LFoC gathers feedback from students using both formal and informal means. Surveys, now online, are conducted post-induction, at the end of each module and at the end of each programme. Some staff conduct informal mid-module feedback surveys. Students also have the opportunity to raise concerns during tutorial meetings, and with support staff in the programme office. Since the last review a new post of Student Recruitment Support Officer (Customer Care) has been created. Similar appointments have been made across campuses and the work of these staff is coordinated and supported centrally. Students commented positively on the new role.

20 Weekly open meetings are held for all students at which issues can be raised and matters relevant to students discussed. In addition, within each programme a number of formal course representatives are chosen from among interested students. These representatives meet regularly with programme staff and attend the termly programme committees. Students agreed that this system is effective and that they received good feedback on the response to student views and any actions taken. Information about student representation is provided in the student handbook. There is no formal training for student representatives but staff provide individual guidance on how to be effective in meetings.

21 Students also have the opportunity to act as ambassadors. Student ambassadors are involved in activities such as campus tours and welcome events.

How effectively do CEG UFP Ltd and London FoundationCampus assure themselves that students are supported effectively?

22 New students receive a pre-arrival handbook and further information over the web to ensure that they arrive prepared for their studies. There is a two week induction on arrival; late students receive an abbreviated version. Students who met the review team said that they had found the induction programme helpful. All students receive programme handbooks with information about their programme and LFoC. Students also found the programme office very helpful in providing information and general advice.

23 Each student is allocated a personal tutor. Group tutorials take place once a week and individual tutorials can be arranged as required. The English language staff act as the personal tutors and follow a centrally developed scheme of work to cover a range of academic and personal topics. Personal tutors have a handbook which sets out the expectations of their role: they play a key role in identifying weaknesses and problems and referring students for additional help. Concerns about individual students are shared with other staff on the staff intranet. Students find the tutorial system supportive and helpful. CEG UFP Ltd is currently reviewing the effectiveness of the personal tutorial system as part of the work of the new Teaching and Learning Committee.

24 Attendance is monitored by the Attendance Officer. Students receive feedback from teaching staff on their work using written pro formas. Academic staff also provide additional feedback and guidance on a one-to-one basis where appropriate. Students receive a termly report on their attendance and performance in each subject. Students have access to anti-plagiarism software via the VLE to reinforce the advice they receive in handbooks and through tutorials and classes about the requirement for good academic conduct.

25 London FoC has two HE Partnership and Progression Coordinators (Postgraduate and External; and Undergraduate and External) who support postgraduate and undergraduate students throughout the process of applying to universities. They organise visits and taster sessions with partner institutions, and provide information and guidance to assist students to research and apply to non-partner institutions. Students found this service helpful.

How effectively does London FoundationCampus manage the recruitment and admission of students?

26 Recruitment and admissions processes are centralised in the CEG UFP Ltd Cambridge offices. Staff at LFoC are involved in decision-making on borderline candidates and students transferring from other FoundationCampus centres. Birkbeck may also be involved in decisions on borderline candidates for the IDP programme where there is guaranteed progression for those that pass at the appropriate level.

27 Admission criteria are set out clearly in CEG UFP Ltd brochures and on the website. Many candidates apply to CEG UFP Ltd through agents. Briefings on the nature of the programmes at LFoC and the requirements for admission and progression are provided for agents.

28 Students who met the review team said that the admissions process had been satisfactory. Senior staff who met the team noted that completion rates on some programmes are lower than desired. They had been in discussion with the central CEG UFP Ltd staff regarding possible links between completion rates and admissions processes.

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

29 Since the previous review CEG UFP Ltd has developed a structured staff development policy for all staff which is in the process of being implemented. Staff who met the review team commented positively on the availability of training and development opportunities. Training has been made widely available for using the VLE; a local staff development day has taken place; and subject leaders have benefited from a cross-campus conference. Birkbeck provides some access to specialist staff training, for example in the field of student mental health.

30 A central continuing professional development (CPD) fund has been established to which staff can apply for support. The fund is overseen by the newly established Learning and Teaching Committee. Central funding is also in place to facilitate membership of academic and professional organisations for key academic staff.

31 Management observation of teaching takes place on a regular basis. Discussion is taking place about setting up a peer observation scheme.

How effectively do CEG UFP Ltd and London FoundationCampus ensure that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes?

32 Birkbeck provides physical learning resources for LFoC, including office space, teaching rooms and access to library and computer facilities. Students who met the review team said that these resources are appropriate and sufficient for their learning needs. Birkbeck has been able to accommodate increasing CEG UFP Ltd student numbers. However, discussions are at an early stage between Birkbeck and CEG UFP Ltd regarding possible new accommodation to accommodate further growth in student numbers.

33 CEG UFP Ltd has invested in a new VLE which students said is widely used by staff and students.

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

34 Information about LFoC and its programmes is published by CEG UFP Ltd in prospectuses and brochures, and on its website. The website has recently been redesigned in response to user feedback in order to provide clearer information in a flexible way. Students who met the review team said that the information they obtained directly or through agents at the application stage is accurate. However, given the complexity and range of choices available to those completing LFoC programmes, students also said that they would have welcomed more detail about the process of progression when applying.

35 Prior to arrival, students receive a handbook containing information about LFoC and student life. On arrival, students receive a programme handbook containing course details, requirements and regulations. Students found these handbooks comprehensive, accurate and helpful.

36 Since the last review visit, CEG UFP Ltd has implemented a new VLE. Both staff and students stated that this provided much improved opportunities for communications and access to programme and campus information.

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

37 The self-evaluation document states that CEG UFP Ltd is responsible for producing all public information on FoundationCampus programmes including prospectuses and website content. It states that all such information is signed off by the University partner. This accords with the agreement between the University and LFoC. These arrangements were confirmed in meetings with both centre and partner staff. Generally, information is both complete and accurate. A number of improvements to the CEG UFP Ltd website have improved navigation and increased the amount of information available.

Action plan¹

London FoundationCampus action plan relating to Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight December 2014						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within LFoC:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality of information and guidance made available to prospective students (paragraph 34). 	High quality information and guidance is available to prospective students	Monitor quality of information via standard methods, and make enhancements where deficiencies are identified	No target date - part of ongoing quality process governing information	Marketing Manager, FoC	Academic Board	Student surveys Agent surveys
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 LoFC to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make structured and systematic use of student performance 	structured and systematic use is made of student performance and progression data,	Build looking at performance data into termly audits	January 2015	Chief Academic Officer	Academic Board	Audit reports

¹ 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.

and progression data at provider and embedded college levels (paragraph 9).	which is used throughout FoC	Continue to request data from university partners	May 2015	Centre Heads, FoC Centres	Academic Board	Evidence of statistical data from university partners on how FoC students are progressing Reports on these data
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QAA1150d - R4463 - Mar 15

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786