

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

December 2013

Annex 2: London South Bank FoundationCampus

Introduction and background

The Cooperation Agreement with the University partner, London South Bank University (the University), dates from April 2008. London South Bank FoundationCampus (LSBFoC) was one of the three original members of the FoundationCampus (FoC) network. LSBFoC has its base on the main campus of the University.

LSBFoC offers the Undergraduate Foundation Programme (UFP), the International Diploma Programme and the Master's Foundation Programme (MFP). Current student numbers are 74 on the UFP, five on the IDP and two on the MFP. There are two full-time, three part-time and nine sessional staff.

LSBFoC operates within the centrally administered framework, notably the FoundationCampus Academic Quality Assurance Manual 2013. The centre head of LSBFoC is a member of the FoC Academic Board, and there is also staff and student representation on the programme committees. Within LSBFoC, there is a staff-student liaison committee. The University partner has no involvement in the committee structure of FoC. The University partner does not receive the FoC annual monitoring review, and it is not involved in the oversight of academic standards. There are regular weekly meetings between the LSBFoC centre head and the LSBU Senior International Officer, as well as an annual review meeting between the University and CEG UFP Ltd (CEG).

The self-evaluation document (SED) was written by the FoC alone, though it was confirmed that the University had seen the document. A student written submission had also been prepared by students from the 2011-12 cohort. Current students had seen the submission, and believed it was a true reflection of LSBFoC. The University had not seen the submission.

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 FoC.

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 FoC.

Public information

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

Good practice

All features of good practice identified in the overall FoC report applied at LSBFoC.

Recommendations

All recommendations identified in the overall FoC report applied at LSBFoC.

Detailed findings

How effectively do FoundationCampus and London South Bank FoundationCampus fulfil responsibilities for the management of academic standards at this college?

1 FoC sets the framework through which academic standards are managed, notably through the FoundationCampus Academic Quality Assurance Manual 2013 and the oversight provided by Academic Board. The FoC annual academic review methodology is based on a report completed by the Chief Academic Officer. While this contains statistical information about the performance of students in each centre, there is no detailed consideration of LSBFoC within it, nor is there any formal process of academic review of LSBFoC. FoC does have a system of external examiners who moderate academic standards across the FoC network and provide external examiner reports. The University receives neither the annual academic monitoring reports nor external examiner reports, and it is not involved in any of the academic committees of FoC. As recommended in the main report, the review team regard it as **desirable** that LSBFoC should encourage its University partner to have greater involvement in monitoring the academic standards of its programmes.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

2 Students at LSBFoC undertake the standard diet of assessments which apply to all FoC centres. Assessments are set by subject leaders and approved by the appropriate external examiner. In the case of academic subjects, assessments are predominantly coursework-based. In the case of English, students do not take the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test, but rather undertake the University's own English testing.

3 Students indicated that assessment requirements were generally clearly communicated, and they understood what was required of them. Feedback on assessed work was timely, and generally it was clear what was required to achieve higher grades. Students had access to their results through their personal page on Magellan, the student intranet, which enabled them to track their progress. They also received information on progression from their personal tutor, which they found helpful.

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

4 Staff were aware of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). They indicated they would look to the centre head for LSBFoC to provide guidance in relation to the requirements of the Quality Code. The centre head was also aware of the

outcomes from the 2012 Review of Educational Oversight on FoundationCampus London. Staff confirmed that they found the FoundationCampus Academic Quality Assurance Manual a helpful reference point and the basis for operational systems with which they worked.

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

5 The review team were told external examiner reports go to the CEG Academic Board, but any issues relating specifically to LSBFoC would be notified directly to the embedded college. Feedback on the dialogue between subject leaders and the external examiners was also available to FoC, while the centre head is a member of the centrally held assessment boards, and hears comments made by the external examiners at these boards. External examiner reports are available on the staff intranet, FOCUS, and are routinely copied to subject leaders. Students do not have access to external examiner reports, except indirectly through their representation on programme committees that receive the annual monitoring reports, which include external examiner reports and a response from the Chief Academic Officer for FoC.

6 The FoundationCampus Academic Quality Assurance Manual specifies a process for internal moderation of assessment outcomes. Staff confirmed that this process took place.

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

7 The SED included statistical information on progression and achievement at LSBFoC, and the same information was incorporated into the annual monitoring reports for each FoC programme. This showed that results for the UFP were lower than in other FoC embedded colleges. This was explained in terms of poor performance in the English language, a matter which had been addressed by the embedded college's staff. The review team concluded that the statistical information available had been used to make an effective response.

8 LSBFoC has information on the performance of its alumni as they progress through their chosen University programme. It recognises the value of access to systematic statistical information on the progression of alumni as a contribution to the enhancement of its teaching and learning.

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

9 The agreement between FoC and the University commits the former to articulating the infrastructure resources required for teaching and learning and the arrangements for supporting students, and the latter to providing these resources. This includes giving LSBFoC students the same access to library, information technology and support services as provided to the University's own students, including membership of the students' union. Students confirmed they had full access to all learning and support facilities of the University.

10 Most teaching is undertaken in accommodation over which LSBFoC has sole control, but specialist teaching facilities such as laboratories are made available as needed through negotiation with the University.

11 Staff at LSBFoC were aware that there is a central project considering the acquisition of a virtual learning environment to be deployed across FoC. They believed this would take place during 2014.

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

12 The review team saw little evidence of the use of external reference points in relation to the management and enhancement of learning opportunities.

How effectively does London South Bank Foundation Campus assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

13 The primary mechanism for assuring the quality of teaching and learning is lesson observation. This is undertaken for all teaching staff annually by the relevant line manager. For newly appointed and inexperienced staff, there is an early opportunity to undertake lesson observation and, if necessary, this may be repeated. There is a six-monthly staff appraisal meeting for all staff, which generates an appraisal report and agreed action plan.

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

14 LSBFoC makes use of the cross-organisation standard online questionnaires administered at the end of induction, at the end of each term relating to modules taught during the term, and on completion of the programme. The results are available at LSBFoC level, and are incorporated into the annual monitoring reports for each programme and discussed at the Academic Board and programme committees. In addition, the personal tutor system was seen to be a very effective mechanism for eliciting student feedback, with students having weekly contact with their personal tutor.

15 LSBFoC operates a student representative system, with representatives drawn from the UFP, the IDP and the MFP. Students who volunteer to be representatives are briefed by the centre head on their role. There are fortnightly meetings between embedded college staff and the student representatives. The students were also aware of the presence of student representatives on the central programme committees. Overall, students were generally positive about the responsiveness of LSBFoC to issues they raise.

How effectively does London South Bank Foundation Campus assure itself that students are supported effectively?

16 Students receive a Student Handbook, Programme Handbook and schemes of work. The Student Handbook is specific to LSBFoC, though it is prepared using central style guidelines. Students confirmed they found the written documentation with which they are provided clear, accurate and helpful.

17 Students are provided with a pack of pre-arrival information covering a range of important matters including accommodation, finance, term dates, advice on Home Office (previously UKBA) procedures, and getting to the campus. LSBFoC operates an induction programme for new students, and this covers not only programme requirements but also an introduction to the University, orientation to the campus, immigration matters and health care. Students viewed this as a good induction process.

18 LSBFoC operates a personal tutor system and students have weekly group tutorials. The quality and consistency of personal tutor support is enhanced by the use of a tutorial scheme of work which incorporates key themes for each session, together with

suggested activities and possible supporting resources. The review team judged this to be a very effective approach. Personal tutors are also available for one-to-one sessions with their tutees, and they are contactable by email. Students confirmed that all these arrangements are in place, and they were very positive about the support they received. The students identified the personal tutoring system as the main route through which they would seek support and guidance on such matters as their academic progress, complaints or academic appeals. As recorded in the main report, overall the team formed the view that the academic and personal support arrangements available to students at LSBFoC constituted **good practice**.

19 Students also benefit from a social programme. They generate ideas for a programme of activities designed to add a dimension of social and cultural development to their academic studies. Students indicated that this programme was appreciated and well supported by the student body.

How effectively does London South Bank Foundation Campus manage the recruitment and admission of students?

20 Student admission enquiries are directed to the central team in Cambridge, except in the case of China where they are handled by the Beijing office. All offers are made by the central team in Cambridge. There are clear criteria for admissions in terms of local and overseas qualifications in a range of countries. These are specified in the embedded college promotional literature. Students who do not meet the standard entry requirements or who have any special circumstances are referred to the embedded college for approval before being accepted. The embedded college may discuss the candidate with staff in the partner university before indicating to the central team whether an offer should be made. Most students indicated they had been recruited via agents working for FoC, and generally they were satisfied with this process.

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

21 LSBFoC employs a combination of full-time, part-time and sessional staff to deliver its programmes. Staff almost always have prior teaching experience, though not necessarily at higher education level. Induction of new staff is by the centre head or the relevant line manager. LSBFoC operates a formal staff mentoring programme. New staff are subject to an early lesson observation by the centre head or deputy head. Subject leaders also play an important role in the induction of new teaching staff. The relevant subject leader, who may well be in a different centre of FoC, makes contact with a new member of the subject teaching team and provides a starter pack through the intranet including teaching materials and resources and diagnostic tests. This is a useful way of ensuring not only that new staff are supported in their subject area, but also that there is consistency of approach in the subject area across the FoC network.

22 There are a number of strands to staff development at LSBFoC: several continuing professional development days are offered each year to staff. Staff also have access to development opportunities provided by the University, although the University staff with whom the review team met were unaware of this. Staff confirmed that they are notified of these opportunities through their membership of the University IT network.

How effectively does London South Bank Foundation Campus ensure that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes?

23 See paragraph 9.

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

24 Students receive information about FoC in general and LSBFoC through agents and through the website and prospectuses. Most students met stated they had been recruited via FoC agents, and generally they had found the information provided by the agents to be helpful and accurate. The website had been used to gain additional information about LSBFoC, and students said they had found it clear and easy to navigate.

25 Information on progression arrangements to the University were generally clear. Students were aware that for one progression route there would be a requirement to present a portfolio.

26 Students receive pre-arrival information which was seen as helpful. They also receive a Student Handbook specific to LSBFoC. This is prepared using FoC style guidelines, but contains locally derived information. Generally, this handbook was seen as useful and effective.

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

27 The SED states that CEG is responsible for producing all public information on FoC programmes, including prospectuses and website content. It states that such information is signed off by the University partner and this accords with the agreement between the University and LSBFoC. Generally, information is complete and accurate and the review team concluded the SED statements were accurate in this regard.

QAA667b - R3488 - Mar 14

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2014
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Email enquiries@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786