

Annex 7: Sheffield International College

Sheffield International College (SIC) was established in 2006. It is an embedded college within the Kaplan International Colleges (KIC) pathways framework, within a partnership with the University of Sheffield. Students achieving the agreed grades proceed directly to a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered by the University. In 2010-11, around 1,100 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 Sheffield International College are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of KIC and the University of Sheffield.

Quality of learning opportunities

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

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 SIC:

- the effective and comprehensive use made of external examiners (paragraph 7)
- the close scrutiny of standards and of the content of curriculum, including analysis of student progression to courses at University of Sheffield (paragraph 2)
- the clearing process with the University of Sheffield (paragraphs 17 and 18)
- the positive arrangements for student access to the University of Sheffield's learning facilities (paragraph 20)
- the valuable experience provided by the College's Learning Outside the Classroom programmes (paragraph 20)
- the supportive work of the University Placement Service (paragraph 16).

Recommendations

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

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

- provide greater clarity regarding the principal locus of responsibility for academic standards (paragraph 3)
- ensure that students are aware of the opportunity to gain feedback on their examinations (paragraph 4).

Detailed findings

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

Written agreement

1 The formal partnership between KIC and the University of Sheffield is fit for purpose and is kept under regular review by the University.

Arrangements for approval, monitoring and periodic review

2 Annual monitoring processes are effective. Draft annual monitoring reports are approved by programme committees, then considered by a Joint Academic Advisory Board (JAAB) and also communicated to KIC's central Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC). Minor and major programme changes are approved by the programme committees, APQC and/or JAAB. Part of the annual programme monitoring involves a consideration of subsequent student performance at the University of Sheffield. Examples were given of programme changes resulting from this consideration. KIC's periodic programme review procedure is being introduced, but has not yet taken place.

3 Some staff met by the review team considered that ultimate responsibility for the assurance of academic standards lay with the University, although they were also clear regarding the role of APQC; some formal clarification by SIC may be appropriate.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

4 Assessments are set by module leaders, scrutinised by module teams, then examination questions are sent to external examiners. Final approval is from the Programme Leader. Students were aware of the assessment requirements and received feedback on assignments in a timely fashion. Feedback on examination performance could be obtained on request.

5 Certificates are not issued by KIC. Transcripts are issued by the College; there is a lack of clarity over the transcript's references to 'awarding body' (KIC) and 'awarding institution' (SIC). The inclusion in the document's title heading of the University of Sheffield adds to the potential confusion.

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 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 SIC 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.

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

7 An external input is provided by the appointment of external examiners. SIC makes particularly effective use of its external examiners by involving them in the scrutiny of assignments and examination questions when these are produced, as well as in the verification of the standard of student work. The University's JAAB also provides accountability external to the College.

8 There is a close relationship between college and university staff, which ensures that curriculum content and level is monitored to ensure good articulation with receiving courses. A systematic up-to-date record of articulations by students is maintained.

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

9 Clear data on student progression is included in annual programme reports. These also include data from the University of Sheffield on students who have progressed. There was evidence of such data being used to improve SIC programmes.

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

10 The agreement with the partner university provides access to a comprehensive range of learning support facilities, such as appropriate teaching accommodation, computers and the university's excellent academic library. In addition, the Learning Outside the Classroom programme of enrichment activities is particularly well run by SIC with a range of opportunities, including volunteering work in the city of Sheffield, as well as trips and sporting activity available.

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

11 External reference points are used as outlined above with regard to the management of academic standards. In using the facilities of the University, the College benefits from the systems for ensuring good management of learning opportunities that have been established by the University.

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

12 KIC has a range of processes for monitoring the quality of learning opportunities, including the annual programme 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.

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

13 There is student representation on each programme committee. Representatives who met with members of the team were very active in seeking student views and were able to report many examples of their feedback leading to improvements in matters ranging from the order in which material was presented in a handbook to assessment of note-taking skills and changes in the attendance policy. Students contributed to all programme issues, including discussion of the draft annual monitoring report. Other student feedback processes were in place.

14 The student written submission from SIC was managed and compiled by the students themselves. Evidence derived from students seen during the scrutiny shows that SIC takes appropriate action in response to student feedback.

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

15 All students have a named tutor and the review team found an excellent standard of support in every respect. The quality of the induction to the programmes at SIC was particularly highlighted by students.

16 The College makes good use of the University Placement Service to ensure that those who complete its courses but fail to make a sufficiently high grade to progress to the University of Sheffield have progression opportunities to other higher education institutions. The College also offers alternative progression routes within the University of Sheffield. These opportunities were appreciated by the students.

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

17 Admissions procedures are managed centrally by KIC. The team found evidence that KIC and the University of Sheffield also work closely in the recruitment of international students, as evidenced through recruitment fairs, training of agents and sharing of office space in Nigeria.

18 Students informed the team that, prior to their recruitment, they had received advice from KIC itself or from agents. For the most part this had been clear and helpful; in one case where there was a reported lack of information from KIC centrally, staff at SIC had been very helpful.

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

19 Effective processes are in place for the recruitment and induction of staff. There are regular staff development events arranged by the College, and staff also have access to the University of Sheffield development events for both academic and administrative support staff. Annual appraisal is in place. Staff reported sharing of good practice with their equivalents in other colleges, but some expressed concern that this opportunity may reduce with the increasing devolution to colleges. A College Learning and Teaching Fund exists in addition to a KIC Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund, which may be used to support staff in scholarly activity.

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

20 The College regularly reviews the quality and availability of learning resources through the use of student feedback, in the evaluation by programme committees, their annual reports, and through the JAAB oversight of the College's provision. The resources provided within the College were judged to be good and fit for purpose. Students also have access to high-quality facilities in the University of Sheffield, including the University library and laboratory facilities. The development of the Learning Outside the Classroom initiative was very prominent at SIC and was appreciated by students.

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

21 Information and communication was generally well managed by the College. The prospectus, website and other aspects of public information relating to the promotion of the College and recruitment of students were primarily the responsibility of KIC at a central level. Students reported that they were satisfied with the information they received, commenting that, rather than overselling the facilities, the website actually did not do full justice to the positive experience of the reality.

22 There was some concern that the level of mathematics required for a particular route had changed from the published requirement, but this had been reported by the students concerned and their input had led to a revision to process in order to ensure that requirements for progression remain fixed, once a student has been accepted onto a course.

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

23 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.

RG 958g 07/12

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© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2012

ISBN 978 1 84979 609 5

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk.

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786