



## Educational Oversight for embedded colleges: report of the monitoring visit of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd, April-May 2018

### University of Brighton 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 Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd (Kaplan) University of Brighton International College (UBIC) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the June 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#).

#### **2 Changes since the last QAA review**

2 The University of Brighton International College (UBIC) was established by Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd (Kaplan) (branded as Kaplan International Pathways) in 2011 in partnership with the University of Brighton (the University). In 2017-18, UBIC enrolled 331 students (data as of 28 February 2018), a decline on 2016-17 numbers, following increases between 2015 and 2016. Kaplan HQ and UBIC identified an increasing difficulty in securing appropriate student accommodation in Brighton. Kaplan is addressing this through the construction of a 450-bed student accommodation unit, opening in 2019. The University is also currently undertaking a major redevelopment of its Moulsecoomb campus where UBIC is based. A new College Director was appointed in October 2017 and a new full-time Programme Manager was appointed in the current academic year.

#### **3 Findings from the monitoring visit**

3 This monitoring visit follows the 2016 Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of UBIC. This review made no recommendations but noted four areas of good practice: the working relationship with its University partner; the high quality academic and pastoral support for students; the proactive approach to identifying student needs; and the use of UBIC alumni to support students in their learning and development. UBIC has sought to enhance its operations in each of these areas working with the University and with its own students. The review team found that UBIC has continued to make progress and enhance its operations in each of these areas.

4 UBIC has developed, maintained, reviewed and enhanced a detailed College action plan, which includes the actions arising from the 2016 review and includes other actions initiated either by UBIC or by Kaplan centrally. The action plan is reviewed at the monthly meetings of the UBIC senior management team (SMT) and is submitted for consideration by the Kaplan Director of Colleges. UBIC's action plan is based around eight key themes which reflect its

ongoing and new priorities: curriculum development; technology enhanced learning; staff engagement; engaging students as partners; enhancement of UBIC spaces; engagement with alumni; student transition; and student support. Each of these eight is divided into a range of specific actions, with a targeted completion date and an evaluation of the expected impact of the outcomes. The action plan also summarises actions completed in the current year, which include a new system for tracking student complaints, progress on the digitisation of assessments, analysis of student feedback on enhancements to the VLE (which were welcomed by students), further staff training on special educational needs and communications with staff on the outcomes of the Kaplan-wide Product Review.

5 In relation to actions identified by UBIC, University Link Tutors work closely with UBIC programme teams, attend Programme Committees and have key roles in introducing UBIC students across all curricula levels and facilities in University departments. Link Tutors, who now work to a common role description agreed by the UBIC Joint Academic Board (JAB), are collectively working together with UBIC staff to enhance the student transition arrangements. The JAB, chaired by a senior member of the University, contributes to the major Kaplan-wide Product Review, which includes all UBIC's programmes and which is a key element of UBIC's current action plan. In enhancing student support, UBIC has revised its tutorial model to schedule groups of three or four students rather than on an individual student basis, in order to provide weekly tutorial provision across all modules, with all these arrangements appreciated by students. Students are aware of specific support for their learning or other needs. UBIC carefully tracks students' attendance and academic performance in all areas the use of diagnostic testing, particularly in Maths and English, and is proactive in identifying potential academic or pastoral issues. A particular priority in 2017-18 is the emphasis on Special Educational Needs (SEN), and the assignment of staff with particular expertise in SEN for tutorial support for students with SEN. UBIC has continued to build on the valuable links between UBIC alumni and its current students, particularly during induction, by attending Programme Committee meetings and participating with University transition events. UBIC is currently consulting with students and staff on piloting a project to involve students as teaching observers.

6 Kaplan operates a central admissions procedure to which UBIC adheres. Students who met with the review team confirmed the key roles of Kaplan in-country agents in advising them of programmes and progression arrangements and the clarity of the application process. A number of students, particularly those attracted to studying specifically in Brighton, enquired directly to UBIC or to the University initially. The content and design of promotional and marketing information, as well as pre-departure and pre-arrival materials, whether online or in hard copy form, is also the responsibility of Kaplan HQ. UBIC provides local contextual information on its programmes and the broader environment and, with the university, supplies details for the UBIC-specific Prospectus. UBIC students who met the review team commented on the high quality, appropriateness and reliability of Kaplan's promotional materials, both online and in print, particularly those that related directly and exclusively to UBIC. Students welcomed the detailed and comprehensive induction week at UBIC, particularly the opportunity to learn more about the progression arrangements to University programmes from Link Tutors and the support from UBIC alumni.

7 Annual programme monitoring is undertaken by UBIC, which follows prescribed Kaplan procedures and uses Kaplan templates for the annual programme reports (APRs) and for the Annual College Report. The APRs are completed by the Programme Leaders, in conjunction with the Programme Committee. Final approval for the APRs is given by the SMT and then received by the JAB, external examiners and by the Kaplan Centre for Learning, Innovation and Quality (CLIQ). SMT compiles the Annual College Report, which is submitted to the UBIC Joint

Strategic Management Board (JSMB) and the Kaplan Director of Colleges. As well as involvement in Programme Committees, students contribute to annual quality monitoring by submitting individual module and overall student experience questionnaires which are considered by teaching staff and by the SMT. Students also participate in staff-student consultative committees and receive feedback from these. Similarly, staff have the opportunity to feedback to academic managers on their own modules. The review team found that UBIC adheres to the Annual Programme Monitoring and Annual Reporting procedures as prescribed by Kaplan.

8 Overall, 85 per cent of students starting programmes at UBIC completed their programmes in 2016-17, with 95 per cent of those students receiving an unconditional offer from the University. As a precursor for discussions at the JAB in July, the University produces raw data on the performance, retention and progression of UBIC alumni compared with such data for the University's Home/EU students and international direct entry students. The results are discussed in detail between UBIC and University Link Tutors at their twice annual meetings.

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

9 UBIC is highly effective in its use of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). UBIC follows the Kaplan Quality Assurance Framework and the linked Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM), these are mapped and reviewed annually by CLIQ against the Quality Code, and are under the authority of the Kaplan Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC). In addition, UBIC works closely with the University, whose own programmes reflect the Quality Code. New programmes, and those currently under revision through the Kaplan product review, are considered in detail by Link Tutors and by JAB before submission to the Kaplan SMT. The main elements of UBIC's action plan are directly referenced to related Chapters of the Quality Code. In particular, UBIC has used the Quality Code to inform its arrangements for student support and student representation, particularly in its programme quality assurance arrangements.

#### **5 Background to the monitoring visit**

10 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.

11 The monitoring visit was carried out by Ms Sarah James, QAA Officer, and Professor Peter Bush, QAA Reviewer, on 9 May 2018.

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