Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (Study Group UK)

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

June 2015

Annex 10: University of Surrey International Study Centre

Introduction and background

Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (BES) originally entered into a contractual relationship with the University of Surrey (the University) and established the University of Surrey International Study Centre (SISC) in 2007. The current contract governing the relationship between the University and BES was signed on 4 October 2013, and it sets out the respective responsibilities of SISC and the University. The University is responsible for the academic quality and academic standards of the programme. BES (through SISC) is required to deliver the programme and the pathways in accordance with the programme specification, and 'will use best endeavours to comply with established quality assurance procedures'. BES (through SISC) is responsible for the preparation of all marketing materials, but will submit materials to the University for approval.

SISC offers the International Foundation Year (IFY) (Level 3) in two pathways: Business, Economics, Law and Politics (BELP); and Engineering, Sciences, and Mathematics (ESCM) with intakes in September and February. These allow students to progress to a wide range of receiving programmes at the University subject to successful completion of the programme together with meeting the specified threshold of English language competence. Progression requires an overall average of 65 per cent in academic subjects, with no individual unit mark less than 55 per cent, and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) overall score of 6.5. The English Language Preparation Programme is also offered. The IFY is a validated programme of the University, originally revalidated in 2013 for two years with a full revalidation scheduled for August 2015. At the time of the 2012 QAA ECREO report, there was also a Pre-Master's (Economics) programme, which is no longer offered.

Student numbers on the IFY programme have shown a generally upward trend over the last four years (though dipping slightly in 2013-14) and in 2014-15 there are 368 students (2011-12, 264 students). The BELP pathway is larger (210 students in 2014-15). Students are drawn from a diverse range of countries. Hong Kong Chinese are the most numerous group in 2014-15 (64 students) and a number of other countries recruit into double figures: China, Egypt, Kuwait, Nigeria and Russia. There are also 19 UK students and 10 UK nationals (Overseas). Although a significant majority, students of Chinese ethnicity are seen as under-represented relative to other ISCs, and SISC and the University are considering a venture to recruit more students through a shared admissions office in China. Staffing in 2014-15 comprises the Head of Centre, 18 teaching staff, four managers, an Academic and Welfare Officer, and two administrators. Staff numbers, in terms of permanent and full-time equivalents, have grown since 2013. The Head of Centre is a new appointment in September 2014, though the new Head is not new to BES, having previously been Head

of the Royal Holloway ISC. The appointment of a Deputy Head of Centre is also anticipated by September 2015.

The review was supported by the SISC self-evaluation document. There was no student submission but the review team met students at the visit and their views were helpful in confirming the review team's understanding and providing a student perspective on the quality of learning opportunities offered by the ISC.

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 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and of the University of Surrey.

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 Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and of the University of Surrey.

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 features of **good practice** at University of Surrey ISC:

- the availability, analysis and use of progression data to monitor comparative student performance, which has enabled ongoing review and modification of policies and practices based on this analysis (paragraph 15)
- the effective partnership working between University of Surrey ISC (SISC) and the University of Surrey (the University) which promotes an integrated student experience and supports students in their transition to the University (paragraph 41)
- the continued development of the virtual learning environment to support students prior to entry and during their programme (paragraph 42).

Recommendations

The review team makes the following recommendations in relation to this Centre.

The team considers that it is **advisable** for University of Surrey ISC to:

- ensure staff resource planning is sufficiently flexible to enable the Centre to respond promptly to increasing student numbers (paragraph 9)
- ensure that procedures relating to assessment feedback deadlines are clearly communicated to students and staff and ensure adherence to those deadlines (paragraph 9).

The team considers that it would be **desirable** for University of Surrey ISC to:

- develop an approach to the appointment of new external examiners to promote continuity in oversight of assessment (paragraph 12)
- formalise an approach to the peer observation of teaching and learning (paragraph 25)
- work with its University partner to strengthen liaison at subject level (paragraph 40)
- ensure that all offer letters clearly specify the course to which students will progress and the conditions of that progression (paragraph 44).

Detailed findings

How effectively do Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and the University of Surrey ISC fulfil responsibilities for the management of academic standards at this college?

1   The contract between Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (BES) and the University of Surrey (the University) sets out the respective responsibilities of the University of Surrey International Study Centre (SISC) and the University. The University is responsible for the academic quality and academic standards of the programme. BES (through SISC) is required to deliver the programme and the pathways in accordance with the Programme Specification, and University quality assurance procedures.

2   BES has enhanced its oversight of the maintenance of standards and quality at SISC by the introduction of its new governance structure, with a quality reporting line from the SISC Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG) to the Regional Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (RQAEG) chaired by the Regional Director, which in turn reports to the BES Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (AQAEC) chaired by the Director and Principal of the ISC network (and the Director of Learning and Teaching from July 2015). BES believes this new structure gives it greater oversight of all areas of quality assurance at the local level. Communication between the various levels is facilitated by representation on the RQAEG from the ISCs, while RQAEG receives the minutes for information from AQAEC, and similarly QAEG receives the minutes from RQAEG. In practice, the Head of Centre for SISC sits on both the RQAEG and the AQAEC. SISC has also recently been subject to BES's procedure for periodic Centre Review, which enables BES to assure itself each ISC is effectively managing academic standards, managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities and publishing reliable information. At the time of the review visit, the report from the Centre Review of SISC was available in draft form. The process involves a member of staff from another ISC, staff from BES's head office, and an external chair or panel member. The Centre Review report is informative, and presents a rigorous and evidence-based review process, including identifying areas of good practice and recommendations for action by SISC.

3   The governance structure also includes two joint bodies, the Liaison Committee chaired by a member of the University's executive and the Board of Studies chaired by the Dean from one of the University faculties which receives students from SISC. The Liaison Committee's responsibilities include: setting the minimum and maximum numbers of students; setting the minimum levels of staffing required to run the programme; setting the admission requirements, including the minimum English language criteria; setting the progression requirements from the programme to a Receiving Programme Area; receiving and discussing annual evaluative reports, including the Annual Monitoring Report; and ensuring that SISC maintains the quality of learning opportunities agreed in the contract. The Board of Studies' responsibilities include: providing quarterly reports to the Liaison Committee on student recruitment, progression, student outcomes and withdrawals; staffing for the programmes; the learning environment available to SISC-based students; and liaison

between the programmes operated by SISC and the University. The IFY Board of Studies is also responsible for annually approving the Programme Handbook. The Board of Studies reports annually to the Liaison Committee. There is also a joint Operational Working Group which exists to discuss operational issues concerning SISC.

4   The Quality Handbook defines the process of annual programme review with an annual report compiled by the Head of Centre, submitted to the Board of Studies for comment and to the Liaison Committee for approval. The format is determined by the University and seeks to establish areas of best practice and action points for the academic year. The University's Learning and Teaching Committee oversees the partnership with SISC, and it receives and considers the annual report from SISC in a manner similar to that it uses in considering annual monitoring reports from the University's faculties.

5   The procedures for programme approval and periodic review are those of the University, since the programme is validated provision of the University. The review team sought to understand the rationale for the outcome of the revalidation held in 2013 which was that the IFY programme should be 'held under review', with a full revalidation scheduled for August 2015. It was explained that, in 2013, there had been a move from an approved programme to a validated programme of the University, and that the University wished to see a shortened period of validation with a further review in two years. This subsequent review is planned for September 2015, and it is anticipated the IFY at SISC would then move to the University's normal quinquennial review timescale. At the time of the 2012 QAA ECREO report, there was also a Pre-Master's (Economics) programme. The review team confirmed that this was no longer a current programme.

6   Overall, the review team formed the view that BES and SISC effectively fulfil their responsibilities for the management of academic standards on behalf of the University, which retains overall responsibility for academic standards.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

7   SISC has appointed an Academic Officer with responsibility for interpreting the operation of the University's framework of regulations and procedures, and with a principal duty to maintain relationships with the University, becoming a point of contact for its Academic Registry, and ensuring adherence to University regulations. This includes oversight of the assessment process. All assessments are written by the subject specialist staff or heads of department, and submitted to the Academic Officer. The Academic Officer is responsible for liaising with the moderators and, where revisions to assessments are required, ensuring these are tracked through. Assessments are moderated internally before being taken by students, with end of semester assessments also being sent to the external examiner for checking. Students said they generally found the assessment briefs they were given were clear, and staff would go through the requirements of an assessment during the taught sessions.

8   SISC undertakes marking and moderation of assessments in accordance with the University's Code of Practice for assessment and feedback, and there are policies on standardisation, first marking, double marking and moderation. Enhancements to the assessment process have included ensuring that summative assessments are anonymised, that the checking and collation of marks is centralised, and that final marks are accurate and held securely. Students must submit work within given deadlines, in hard copy for academic subjects and electronically through plagiarism detection software for English and Study Skills. SISC intends to evaluate the use of the software with a view to extending its use to all essay-based assessments from September 2015, and students on the BELP pathway indicated they were already submitting assessed work electronically.

9   Students are able to submit drafts of their assignments for comment prior to the submission deadline, but only in English and Study Skills. Students receive feedback through class tutors, feedback forms for coursework, and via end of semester reports, and they told the review team that feedback was increasingly given in electronic format. Feedback on examination assessments is given individually to students by their personal tutor on the ESCM pathway, and as generic feedback to the group in BELP. Arrangements for the return of work with feedback had changed during the course of 2014-15. Originally, and as laid down in the Programme Handbook, students should normally receive feedback on their marked assessments within 10 days. In early 2015, SISC adopted the University's Code of Practice for assessment and feedback, under which the timeframe for the return of marked work is three weeks. This had been agreed at QAEG and reported back to the Liaison Committee in March 2015. Staff whom the review team met believed this change had been communicated to students, but were not able to identify either the exact timing or the nature of the communication to students. The review team asked why this change had been made mid-year, rather than waiting for the new academic year. They were told SISC believed it was in the interests of students to operate within a framework which aligned with the University's own regulations, though it did have the effect of lengthening the period of time before students received feedback on their assessed work. Students were aware of the revised timeframe for the return of assessed work, but said that in practice even the extended three-week period was quite often not met, particularly in the second semester where they understood that the admission of a second cohort of students had created workload pressures. Senior staff concurred that there had been occasions where the meeting of deadlines for the return of assessed work had been challenging, particularly in the context of increased student numbers and the admission of a second cohort during the year, though the intention was that students should always receive feedback on their previous assessment before the next assessment was due for submission. The review team accordingly considered it **advisable** that SISC should ensure that staff resource planning is sufficiently flexible to enable the Centre to respond promptly to increasing student numbers. The review team also noted that one of the recommendations from the recent Centre Review process included a recommendation that SISC should develop a Centre assessment feedback strategy. The review team therefore considered it **advisable** for SISC to ensure that procedures relating to assessment feedback deadlines are clearly communicated to students and staff, and to ensure adherence to those deadlines.

10   The Board of Examiners determines whether students have 'progressed' or 'not progressed'. Progression requires an overall average of 65 per cent in academic subjects, with no individual unit mark less than 55 per cent, and IELTS score of 6.5. In some cases students are also interviewed as part of the progression process and, in the case of Hospitality Management degrees at the University, the interview is used to regulate the number of students progressing to the limited number of places available. The Board has terms of reference detailed in the Quality Handbook, is chaired by a senior faculty member from the University, and includes both SISC and University staff as well as external examiners. All assessment results are stored centrally to feed into the student transcripts, which are formally approved and stamped by the University after the Board of Examiners' meeting. Since IFY is a validated programme of the University, the University's assessment regulations apply. Regulations governing academic misconduct and extenuating circumstances are also those of the University, but implemented by SISC.

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

11   As SISC operates a programme validated by the University, it operates within the framework of the University's academic regulations and policies, and therefore indirectly has its management of academic standards informed by external reference points. These include the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), together with the

Qualifications and Credit Framework Levels 3 and 4 award descriptors for the receiving programmes at the University, Subject Benchmark Statements, and the Common European Framework (CEFR) global descriptors for the English language aspects of the programme. Centrally, BES is also engaged in projects designed to embed the Quality Code and to develop a more consistent approach to the Quality Code across the Study Group centres. The UK Professional Standards Framework had been used by the Head of Centre to develop the new staff appraisal suite of policies.

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

12   SISC recommends external examiners for appointment, and the University formally appoints them. External examiners are covered by the University's Code of Practice for external examining. External examiners are appointed for four years and 2014-15 is the final year of appointment for the current examiners. The review team was told that SISC was currently seeking replacement external examiners to nominate to the University. The review team asked whether SISC had considered staggering the termination of external examiner appointments in order to provide a degree of continuity in the external examining team. SISC indicated it would give consideration to this, though its implementation with the current team of external examiners would need University approval for the extension of the term of office of at least one of the current examiners. It would be **desirable** for SISC to develop an approach to the appointment of new external examiners to promote continuity in oversight of assessment.

13   External examiners formally report to the University. There are reports available for all three external examiners for 2013-14, and in all cases externals are very positive about academic standards on the programmes. Responses to their comments are formulated by the Head of Centre. The responses also form part of the Annual Report which goes to the Board of Studies and Liaison Committee, as well as to QAEG. Staff meet external examiners at the Examination Board, and hear their verbal comments. Staff are aware of the principal aspects of the external examiners' reports through the responses to them by the Head of Centre incorporated in the Annual Report. However, BES wants its staff to have access to the full external examiner reports, and intends to introduce a system of annual module reports which would include relevant aspects of the external examiners' reports and responses to these reports. Students are aware of the existence of external examiners but said they had not seen their reports. The two student representatives on the Board of Studies have the opportunity to consider the Annual Report by the Board. The University does publish the external examiners' reports, and SISC intends to make them available to all students on its virtual learning environment (VLE), subject to University approval.

14   Marking, double marking and moderation are aligned with the University's Code of Practice for assessment and feedback. The external examiner report for BELP noted significant improvement in moderation processes, and the better evidencing of moderation and double marking in 2013-14, compared to earlier years.

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

15   All SISC students are dual-registered as Year 0 students on the University student records system. SISC is responsible for managing the integrity of assessment data which is given to the University at the end of each semester to upload to its student records system. Comprehensive information concerning the progress and achievement of SISC students on their subsequent University programme is presented to and analysed at the Board of Studies, enabling the progress of SISC students to be monitored against other students. Such data may be used to inform future entry criteria to the IFY, the progression tariff to the

University, unit content at revalidation of the IFY, and determining appropriate levels of support to ease student transition into the University. Both the University staff met by the review team and SISC were able to give examples of the effective use of the analysis of progression data to shape policy. The review team regards as **good practice** the availability, analysis and use of progression data to monitor comparative student performance, which has enabled ongoing review and modification of policies and practices based on this analysis.

16   Student data is used through the year to monitor individual student progress and to identify students at risk using a red/amber/green (RAG) traffic light system to classify student progress, and to implement appropriate intervention strategies. SISC has also developed a predictive model, based on data relating to past student performance, which enables it to identify the profiles of students likely to be at risk, and to anticipate the need to support them. SISC and the Liaison Committee also use this data to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention strategies: additional support classes; increased level of one-to-one tutorial support; counselling and advice; and student-led study groups. The Annual Programme Review is the key document used to collate data and inform both the University and BES, while the Centre Action Plan is the key driver for reviewing statistical information.

17   SISC plans to introduce a cloud-based management information system with effect from the end of the calendar year 2015. It is anticipated that this will enhance the effectiveness of the data being collated and will replace the current 'multi-faceted way in which information is collected'.

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

18   The University provides the framework for managing and enhancing quality, including for programme validation, annual programme review, the appointment of external examiners and the identification of link tutors from University faculties.

19   The new governance arrangements introduced by BES (see paragraphs 2 and 3) include a periodic Centre Review giving BES greater oversight of quality in the individual centres.

20   The recent introduction of a new approach to appraisal (see paragraph 24), the engagement of students via the Student Forum (see paragraph 26) and the comprehensive support offered to students (see paragraphs 29 to 34) all contribute to ensuring the effective management and enhancement of quality. The Centre itself recognises the need for further work in areas such as continuing professional development.

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

21   The validation of SISC programmes by the University ensures that learning outcomes and their level are set appropriately for students who will progress to specific courses within the University. Learning outcomes for English and Study Skills units have been developed in line with the CEFR global descriptors.

22   Alignment with the Quality Code has primarily been achieved by alignment with the University's regulatory framework which itself aligns with the Quality Code. However, the review team was informed that BES has initiated a number of projects aimed at embedding the Quality Code across its centres; the first is focusing on the use of external examiners.

How effectively do Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and the University of Surrey ISC assure themselves that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

23   The appointment procedure for staff applying for substantive posts has recently been formalised with interview panels using standard questions for each shortlisted candidate, and applicants being asked to give a short demonstration of teaching. Vacancies are advertised in national papers to help attract higher calibre applicants. A more informal procedure has been used for sessional staff appointed on zero hours contracts.

24   A new appraisal process has been introduced with all staff appraised by the Head of Centre or Head of Department. The process involves a self-evaluation, consideration of teaching preparation, observation of teaching, and a skills audit.

25   The team was informed that peer review of teaching and learning is encouraged, but that there is no formal SISC policy. It would therefore be **desirable** for SISC to formalise an approach to the peer observation of teaching and learning.

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

26   The role of student representative is introduced during the induction week and students who wish to become representatives are briefed by the Head of Centre on what is entailed. Some representatives had also attended the training session organised by the Students' Union at the University. Each teaching group has two representatives. All the representatives (34 at the time of the review) meet the Head of Centre, the Centre Administrator and the Academic Officer each semester at the Student Forum. Issues raised there, and the initial staff responses, are formally minuted. The minutes are circulated to all staff and students via email and it is intended that from September 2015 they will be published on the VLE. Staff provided examples of changes to the induction week and to the English programme which had arisen from feedback at the Student Forum. One student representative from the Forum is chosen to sit on the Board of Studies.

27   Students have other opportunities to increase their planning and organisational skills by joining the Social Committee, which organises social events and trips, the Marketing Committee which works with SISC to produce marketing materials, and Building Futures which organises fundraising for BES's educational projects in developing regions. Students who met the review team were aware of these initiatives, although not involved in them.

28   Feedback is sought from students after induction and at the end of each unit. In addition, SISC has started to trial a survey, based on the National Student Survey, which seeks to capture feedback at four key points in the year. All feedback is then considered in the Annual Programme Review. Students confirmed that modules and courses have changed as a result of their feedback.

How effectively do Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and the University of Surrey ISC assure themselves that students are supported effectively?

29   New students are provided with pre-arrival information and contact via SISC's VLE. During the induction week, Centre alumni who had been student representatives are invited to events and prove a useful source of informal support.

30   Students are provided with a Programme Handbook which offers general advice as well as details of the programme.

31   All students have a personal tutor and there is a formal meeting in semester one to discuss assessment results. There are three other formal sessions, but students can request a meeting at any time. Students can also approach the Academic and Welfare Officer and the related team, and may use or be referred to the University's student services, including counselling at the University's Centre for Wellbeing and additional learning support at SPLASH (Student Personal Learning and Support Hub). Staff with concerns about a student complete a Cause for Concern form which is submitted to the Academic and Welfare Officer who arranges to meet the student and is responsible for signposting them to the appropriate support.

32   As noted in paragraph 16, SISC operates a RAG system to identify students at risk of academic failure. Students at risk then receive extra support via additional small group classes, revision sessions, workshops and one-to-one meetings. The recently introduced Student Predictive Progression Analysis uses early assessment results to predict final grades and the likelihood of progression. Students highlighted as unlikely to make the required grades can then be advised and provided with extra support.

33   Students reported that they receive clear guidelines for assessment and also have specific requirements explained to them during lessons. Some issues, such as correct referencing, had been initially challenging for students, but had been addressed during the Study Skills Unit. As noted at paragraph 8, plagiarism-detection software is available and students may use it as a development tool when submitting draft assignments in the early part of the course.

34   In preparing for the transition to the University, students can attend introductory and teaching sessions from University staff and have the opportunity to visit University departments. Students who fail to meet the required grades for progression to the University of Surrey can be referred to Study Group advisers who will suggest alternatives and support the necessary applications through the UCAS clearing system.

How effectively does the University of Surrey ISC manage the recruitment and admission of students?

35   Entry criteria are agreed with the University partner, but selection and admission of students is carried out centrally by the Admissions Centre at BES's Head Office. There is a set of detailed recruitment procedures used by the admissions team to ensure that only students who match the criteria and demonstrate a genuine intention to study are made an offer.

36   Prior to arrival in the UK, students are issued with a username and password for the VLE system allowing them to both access information and contact SISC staff about accommodation and travel.

37   An induction week takes place at the start of each programme, introducing new students to SISC and University facilities, offering the opportunity to open a bank account, register with relevant authorities, where necessary, and register with the University Health Centre. Late arrivals have access to materials online. Students felt the induction was comprehensive, introducing their academic programme and providing opportunities to socialise.

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

38   Professional development opportunities are identified as part of the appraisal process and are financially supported by BES.

39   BES runs an annual Teachers' Conference and this has been well attended by SISC staff. Other central support has been provided by BES's IT training team, which has delivered sessions to promote innovation in teaching and learning.

40   SISC senior staff noted that the Centre would welcome more opportunity for staff development with the University and plans to engage further with University staff in this regard. The Centre Action Plan sets out SISC's aim to promote engagement with the University at subject level particularly via link tutors. The review team heard that at present link tutors attend assessment boards but otherwise have limited engagement with SISC. SISC believes that better use could be made of link tutors to include cross-institutional peer observation and enhanced support for the transition of students to the University. Accordingly, it would be **desirable** for SISC to work with its University partner to strengthen liaison at subject level.

How effectively do Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd and the University of Surrey ISC ensure that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes?

41   SISC is situated at the centre of the University of Surrey's campus. Students are considered students of the University and have access to all its facilities including study support, healthcare and sports. Those who met the reviewers were particularly enthusiastic about the University Library where they have superior borrowing rights to those extended to University undergraduates. Engineering students use the University's laboratory facilities. Students saw the educational, physical and cultural integration of the Study Centre and the University as a major strength of SISC. In the light of this and evidence of SISC students' access to University resources, the review team concludes that the effective partnership working between SISC and the University, which promotes an integrated student experience and supports students in their transition to the University, is **good practice**.

42   Students were positive about the VLE, which holds lecture notes and presentations, assignment briefs, and module handouts. This and the inclusion of pre-arrival information for new students enables the review team to identify the continued development of the VLE to support students prior to entry and during their programme as **good practice**.

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

43   Through BES's publication and branding team and its Creative Services Department, SISC publishes its prospectus, which is reviewed and revised each academic year, and which is a key marketing and recruitment tool for potential students and recruitment agents. SISC has a website with details of the academic provision on offer, including progression requirements that students need to achieve in order to transfer to the University. Students met by the review team had heard about SISC and the IFY programme through a variety of mechanisms, with a minority having been recruited via agents. They indicated that the information they had received prior to entry to the programme had been both effective and accurate. Some students had used the pre-entry information pages on the SISC VLE and found them useful, while one student had found central admissions staff at the BES head office in Brighton helpful.

44   The review team did note one anomaly relating to information given to students in their offer letters. For all programmes at the University to which students hoped to progress, the offer letter included the name of the degree programme at the University to which the student aspired to progress. Progression is clearly stated to be subject to satisfactorily meeting the specified academic and English language competency requirements. However,

in the case of offer letters to students aspiring to progress to degrees at the University in Hospitality Management, the offer letter is only for progression to the generality of degree programmes at the University, without the desired progression route being identified in the letter. The review team understood this to be the result of the limited number of places available on Hospitality Management degree programmes, and the need not only to meet the academic and English language progression requirements, but also to be successful in a competitive interview process through which the limited places are allocated. However, the review team formed the view that this additional progression hurdle could be communicated to students in a customised offer letter. Accordingly, it would be **desirable** for SISC to ensure that all offer letters clearly specify the course to which students will progress and the conditions of that progression.

45   At induction, students receive a copy of the Student Handbook, which includes the Assessment Regulations and Programme Specifications. At the start of each module, students are given a Module Handbook which contains the module-level learning outcomes, details of assessment and schemes of work. Copies of key documents are available to students on the VLE. Students confirmed the efficacy of these arrangements.

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

46   Under the contract with the University, BES (through SISC) is responsible for the preparation of all marketing materials, but will submit materials to the University for approval. Articulation routes are agreed each year with the University, but the effect of any agreed changes would have a two-year lead-in period, so that neither existing IFY students nor students going through the admissions process would be disadvantaged by any change. In order to ensure effective scrutiny of marketing and other information, a rigorous proofreading and checking protocol is in place, with the Head of Centre accountable for accuracy of information, both for web-based and hard copy formats.

Action plan[1]

University of Surrey ISC - Action plan relating to Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight, June 2015						
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 and/or beyond the Centre:						
• the availability, analysis and use of progression data to monitor comparative student performance, which has enabled ongoing review and modification of policies and practices based on this analysis (paragraph 15)	a) Enhance this good practice through the sharing of the process and its outcomes across the ISC network b) Begin to use the data to inform entry requirements and the specific support available to individual students	a) Present analysis and process to Regional Quality Assurance Enhancement Group b) Carry out a full review of entry requirements using the tracking data from previous cycles c) Use prior knowledge of data patterns to identify weaker and more able students on entry to the ISC in September 2015	a) Regional Quality Assurance Enhancement Group Quarter 1, 2016 b) 18 December 2015 c) 9 October 2015 and 12 February 2016 (respectively)	Head of Centre, Head of Department and tutors	Regional Quality Assurance Enhancement Group Liaison Committee Quality Assurance Enhancement Group	Minutes from Regional Quality Assurance Enhancement Group Minutes from Liaison Committee Minutes from Quality Assurance Enhancement Group

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[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 February 2016, so as to appropriately support their individual learning needs d) Monitor performance of students in Year 1 of their UG degree at module level, to inform the content and development of units at IFY level	d) 1 September 2016			Performance data from Higher Education Institution Management Information System
• effective partnership working between University of Surrey ISC (SISC) and the University of Surrey (the University), which promotes an integrated student experience and supports students in their transition to the University (paragraph 41)	Enhance the relationship, building on current good practice	a) Heads of Department to be targeted with improving the relationship with their Link Tutor b) Head of Centre to continue to develop the partnership with key Senior Leaders from the Higher Education Institution, through fortnightly meetings with the Business Development Manager, attendance at the Associate Deans Teaching and Learning Committee and via the	a) 11 December 2015 b) 17 June 2016	Head of Centre and Head of English/ Head of Department/ Administration Manager	Quality Assurance Enhancement Group	Evidence of peer observation between Heads of Department and Link Tutors Minutes from meetings with the Higher Education Institution Senior Leadership Team

		development of a Partnership Strategy				
• the continued development of the VLE to support students prior to entry and during their programme (paragraph 42).	a) Enhance the pre-arrival section of Study Smart and ensure that external examiner reports are placed on the VLE b) Enact a consistency review of the VLE and set expectations of its use with new starters	a) Include filmed lecture tasters from key academic staff b) Place all external examiner reports from 2014-15 cycle on the VLE c) Audit each course page of the VLE to ensure consistency, setting individual staff targets, where necessary d) Set expectations with new staff during their induction week	a) 8 January 2016 b) 25 September 2015 c) 1 November 2015 d) 25 September 2015	Academic Officer and tutors Academic Officer and Head of Department Head of Department	Quality Assurance Enhancement Group Student Forum Staff Induction Week	Minutes of the Quality Assurance Enhancement Group and minutes of the first Student Forum of 2015-16 and VLE
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 the Centre to:						
• ensure staff resource planning is sufficiently flexible to enable the Centre to respond promptly to	Staffing is at a level required to support and sustain growth, while maintaining Centre processes and deadlines to enhance the student experience	a) Create a staffing proposal to include headcount, permanent vs temporary and skill mix for the budget round 2016 b) Develop a staffing strategy to support	a) 15 September 2015 b) 29 January 2016	Head of Centre and Regional Director Head of Centre and Head of Department and	Regional Director/Chief Operating Officer Regional Director	Student feedback in 2015-16 Strategy document and progress review

increasing student numbers (paragraph 9)		growth for 2016 and beyond		Administration Manager		
• ensure that procedures relating to assessment feedback deadlines are clearly communicated to students and staff and ensuring adherence to those deadlines (paragraph 9).	To form part of a holistic review of feedback in Centre and to be reflected in the Centre Handbook and Student Handbook, prior to the start of the 2015-16 academic year	a) Develop a Centre Assessment Feedback Strategy	a) 25 September 2015	Head of Centre with Head of Departments	Academic Quality Assurance Enhancement Committee	Student feedback on assessment Strategy document
Desirable	**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 would be **desirable** for the Centre to:						
• develop an approach to the appointment of new external examiners to promote continuity in oversight of	Extend the contract of one current external examiner for an additional year	a) Seek approval from Academic Quality Assurance Enhancement Committee b) Offer the extension to current examiner for English and Study Skills	a) 3 September 2015 b) 4 September 2015	Head of Centre	Academic Quality Assurance Enhancement Committee and Quality Assurance Enhancement Group	Minutes of Academic Quality Assurance Enhancement Committee External examiners

assessment (paragraph 12)		c) Extend the contract for a period of 1 year, ending in September 2016	c) 11 September 2015			contract extension
• formalise an approach to the peer observation of teaching and learning (paragraph 25)	All teaching staff to be engaged in a formalised approach to peer observation of teaching and learning	a) Seek examples of good practice from across the network b) Create a policy to formalise the Surrey ISC approach c) Communicate the policy to all teaching staff d) Set expectations with all teaching staff e) Evaluate the usefulness of the new approach via a questionnaire with all staff f) Review the approach as necessary	a) 30 October 2015 b) 30 November 2015 c) 18 December 2015 d) 18 December 2015 e) 30 June 2016 f) 31 August 2016	Head of Centre Head of Centre Head of Department Head of Department Tutors/Head of Department Head of Centre	Quality Assurance Enhancement Group	Formal policy and observation form templates Minutes from Quality Assurance Enhancement Group Evaluation Questionnaire
• work with its University partner to strengthen liaison at subject level (paragraph 40)	Enhance the relationship, building on current good practice	a) Heads of Department to be targeted with improving the relationship with their Link Tutor b) Head of Centre to continue to develop the partnership with key senior leaders from the University to support and	a) 11 December 2015 b) 17 June 2015	Head of Centre and Head of English/Head of Department/ Administration Manager	Quality Assurance Enhancement Group	Evidence of peer observation between Heads of Department and Link Tutors Minutes from meetings with the University

		facilitate the liaison at subject level				Senior Leadership Team
• ensure that all offer letters clearly specify the course to which students will progress and the conditions of that progression (paragraph 44).	All offer letters clearly specify the course to which students will progress and the conditions of that progression for the February 2016 intake and beyond.	a) Notify the Admissions Team of this desirable action b) Audit all offer letters to identify inconsistencies c) Draft a consistent template for all SISC offer letters d) Seek sign-off from the University and AQAEC e) Ensure all applicants for February 2016 receive a consistent offer	a) 31 August 2015 b) 30 September 2015 c) 31 October 2015 d) 13 November 2015 e) 26 February 2016	Head of Centre Admissions Centre Manager Admissions Centre Manager Head of Centre Admissions Centre	Academic Quality Assurance Enhancement Committee	New offer letter template Minutes from Academic Quality Assurance Enhancement Committee