



Educational Oversight for Embedded Colleges: report of the monitoring visit of Bellerby Educational Services Ltd (Study Group), October 2018

University of Surrey International Study Centre

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the monitoring team concludes that the University of Surrey International Study Centre (the Centre) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the October 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#).

Changes since the last QAA review

2 There have been no material changes since the last review in October 2016. The Centre conducted a Centre Review in October 2017. This enabled the Centre to focus effectively on key issues, such as the development of a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. There were 188 students at the time of the review. In 2016-17, 96 per cent of students completed their programme and in 2017-18, the percentage rose to 98 per cent.

3 An Extended Foundation programme covering three semesters, with an entrance requirement of 5.5 has been put in place to mitigate the risk of students with lower levels of English not completing their programmes. The Centre has been working with the University to create a new role to enhance the student transition process and has introduced an Engagement Day.

Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) carried out in October 2016, noted three features of good practice each of which has led to a series of actions, noted in the Centre Action Plan (CAP) and completed and evaluated in the two years since the review. The Centre has further enhanced the quality of the learning opportunities it offers in introducing new curriculum in English and a new Pre-Master's Programme and in meeting Study Group's guidelines with respect to the implementation of a Learning and Teaching Strategy and extending the use of the virtual learning environment. The review team also noted strengthening collaboration with the partner university and increasing collaboration within the regional cluster of international study centres.

5 In 2016, good practice was noted in 'the use of detailed data analysis to inform programme development' - this has continued and deepened, for example, an initial decision to raise English requirements for one pathway was reversed when further analysis showed that the support offered to students was key to their success rather than the entry requirements. A second example of data analysis showed discrepancy between predicted and actual grades in

one pathway, this led to a survey of formative assessment and the arrangement of a Formative Assessment Workshop to support the relevant teaching team in implementing comprehensive formative assessment across all units. This was completed in time for the current academic year and will be evaluated at the end of that year. Unit evaluation forms now show pass rates for the previous year enabling some longitudinal comparisons to be made.

6 A second point of good practice referred to 'the comprehensive and integrated support that enables students to develop their academic and personal potential'. Since the review the personal tutorial system has been enhanced, includes one-to-one meetings and follows a formal Scheme of Work. In addition, a dedicated, full-time Welfare Officer has been appointed. This area will be further enhanced in the current academic year by the introduction of a Student Support Lead who will lead a Progression Support Team, coordinating personal tutors and managing the Welfare Officer. Staff development is in place for this team. The Red, Pink, Amber, Green (RPAG) traffic light system is now fully integrated, enabling students to be offered additional support where necessary. Students who met with the review team confirmed that they had personal tutors and that they met as a group on a weekly basis. They were clear who to approach for support and aware of the additional support provided should they be in danger of failing to progress to their chosen university course. Overall progression rates have risen with these initiatives in place.

7 The third point of good practice referred to the 'use of alumni as Ambassadors to support students during their programme and after progression to their partner university'. This has continued and the role has been given more structure with the introduction of a job. The review team met with a current Ambassador who explained that any alumnus can become an Ambassador although generally it tended to be those who had been student representatives during their time at the Centre.

8 In addition to building on existing good practice, the Centre has been proactive in enhancing its provision in a number of ways. The Academic English Skills module has been revised in order to stretch and challenge students who arrive with a high level of English; a new Pre-Masters programme has been validated and introduced; the Learning and Teaching Strategy introduced in 2016 has been implemented and is currently being reviewed and revised; the Centre has achieved Study Group's Level 1 for its virtual learning provision, assuring consistency across modules, and is now implementing Level 2; and considerable progress has been made in working with the partner university to ensure students are introduced to their future departments as soon as possible. It is particularly commendable to see the Centre collaborating with other centres in the region and nationally, for example, a joint induction for all new members of staff in the region and research collaboration with the Royal Holloway Centre following Study Group's Learning and Teaching Conference.

9 The majority of admissions to Study Group Centres are carried out centrally by the provider. The UK and Europe Admissions Centre is split between Singapore, and Brighton and Hove. The latter picks up all applications from the place confirmation stage. The last academic year saw an enhancement-led review of sales, marketing and admissions. The Centre is involved in reporting changes to programmes or to entry requirements which are managed through Study Group's Programme Approval and Validation Committee (PAVC) and in making decisions about exceptional cases such as candidates considered to be borderline in meeting requirements for a programme or those who have special needs. In such cases, the decision rests with the Head of Centre who will take advice from the Welfare Officer and Learning Needs Centre at the University with respect to special needs. There are also conversations with the receiving department. The success of such students is tracked by Study Group at its Students'

Outcomes Management Group. Currently there is no indication that students accepted in this way perform worse than others.

10 The requirements for annual monitoring are specified by Study Group and begin with evaluation of individual units by tutors using a standard unit evaluation form. As noted above, this now includes student success data covering two years allowing longitudinal evaluation at the Unit Assessment Board for any difference in achievement. Actions resulting from unit assessment may include proposals to change assessments or learning outcomes - such proposals are subject to the Centre's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG) and then Study Group's Programme Approval and Validation Committee (PAVC). External examiners' reports are also included in the Annual Monitoring Report together with a list of actions and an update on the previous year's actions. The report is drawn together by the Head of Centre and initially discussed at the QAEG. It then progresses to the Regional Quality and Academic Enhancement Group (RQAEG) where it is subjected to peer assessment. A summary of issues from individual reports is forwarded to Study Group's central quality committees. The report is also discussed at the Academic Management Board held jointly with the partner university.

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

11 The quality assurance processes used by the Centre are specified by the provider and are based on the UK Quality Code of Higher Education - examples of this are the use of external examiners for all programmes, the programme approval process and the annual monitoring process. In addition, students are involved in quality assurance and enhancement with student representatives in place and meeting as a student forum and attending the Centre's QAEG committee. Students have clear information about their assessments and report receiving helpful and timely feedback on these.

12 Programme and module development is benchmarked against *The Framework for Higher Education* (FHEQ) for programmes set at Levels 4-6 such as International Year One and the Pre-Masters Programme and against the Regulated Qualifications Programme (RQF) for the International Foundation Year which is set at Level 3. Programme and module specifications use the appropriate qualifications descriptors in stating learning outcomes and, where appropriate, Subject Benchmark Statements are used in developing the curriculum and referred to in programme and module specifications. English language modules are benchmarked against the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Background to the monitoring visit

13 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.

14 The monitoring visit was carried out by Ms Sarah James, QAA Officer, and Professor Gaynor Taylor, QAA Reviewer, on 2 October 2018.

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