Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Bournemouth University International College

April 2018

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd, Bournemouth University International College. The review took place from 24 to 25 April 2018 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

Ms Brenda Eade
Mrs Catherine Fairhurst.

Key findings

Judgements

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision.

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the College **meets** UK expectations.
The quality of student learning opportunities is **commended**.
The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice**.

The extensive range of staff development opportunities, which includes the Kaplan-led training programme, access to University staff development activities and the College's weekly Friday sessions for both full-time and sessional staff (Expectation B3).
Student involvement in external business activities in the local community (such as the Big Pitch) which enriches their learning opportunities, is linked to the development of their personal portfolio (KapPACK) and supports students to become independent learners (Expectation B3).

Recommendations

The QAA review team made no recommendations.

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team did not affirm any actions already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

The financial sustainability, management and governance check has been satisfactorily completed.

About the provider

Bournemouth University International College (the College) is an embedded College which is part of the Kaplan International Colleges

1.3 To test the operation of these arrangements the review team scrutinised a range of documentation relating to academic standards and quality assurance, including the QAF, the ASQM, programme documentation (programme and module specifications) and an example of a programme approval process. The team also met staff from the College, the University and Kaplan International Pathways.

1.4 The review team found that the Pathway Specifications define the content and structure of each programme and the volume of credit awarded, and link to the relevant qualifications frameworks. The Foundation Certificate programmes are mapped to level 3 of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). They have a credit volume of 80 credits. The International Year One programmes are mapped to level 4 of the FHEQ and have a credit volume of 120 credits. The pre-master's programmes are mapped to level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and have a credit volume of 80 credits.

1.5 The programmes are designed by the College in conjunction with Bournemouth University. They are validated through the processes defined by Kaplan International Pathways in the ASQM. The Joint Academic Board (JAB) is responsible for the final approval of programmes. This ensures that they provide access to the designated undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at the University as set out in the agreements between the College and the University.

1.6 The Multi-Progression Pathway programmes provide an opportunity for students to progress to Bournemouth University or other university pathways on a negotiated basis.

1.7 Changes to the programme specifications and module content, including assessment, are overseen by CLIQ, approved by the Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC) and then confirmed by the JAB. Staff at the College and University indicated that the programmes are constantly reviewed to ensure that the learning outcomes map to the programmes offered by the University, and this was evident from the minutes of the JAB.

1.8 The recently introduced Kaplan International Pathways Specification Management System provides an effective and secure system for maintaining up-to-date programme specifications and for tracking any changes to them.

1.10 The review team concludes that the programmes are aligned to the relevant framework, that qualifications are set at the appropriate level, and that learning outcomes reflect the descriptors for that level and take account of QAA Subject Benchmark Statements. Kaplan International Pathways awards qualifications to indicate the achievement of programme learning outcomes. Kaplan International Pathways has comprehensive and detailed processes for securing academic standards, which the College adheres to. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

1.16 The JSMB between the Kapan International Pathways college and Bournemouth University is responsible for reviewing the performance of the College, developing the relationship between the University and Kaplan International Pathways and planning the strategic direction of the College. It receives reports from JAB and has overall responsibility for risk management and the operation of the College.

1.17 JAB has oversight of standards and monitors the progression of students from the College onto the relevant University programmes. It is chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University.

1.18 The Academic Liaison Forum (ALF) has been set up specifically to report to JAB on issues relating to the progression of students to the University and to provide a wider and more informal forum for University and College staff to discuss transition and progression issues. It oversees activities that are designed to help students from the College integrate into the relevant department in the University and monitors the performance of students once they have progressed to the University.

1.19 The SMT monitors the performance of the College, including standards and quality, at the operational level.

1.20 The Programme Committees, which have a standard agenda, consider the APRs and monitor programme action plans. They discuss operational issues relating to the College pathways including matters that have been raised by students who attend the meeting. They also consider the notes of the student representative meetings. Issues discussed feed into APRs and the College action plan. The minutes of Programme Committee meetings provide details of those present, review matters raised at previous meetings and include an action plan.

1.21 External examiners' reports confirm that academic standards are equivalent to those of programmes at the same level in other higher education institutions.

1.22 The review team concludes that the College has effective management and committee structures, which enable staff and students to participate in the governance of the College. The regulations provided by Kaplan International Pathways together with the monitoring of standards by external examiners and JAB ensure that the College has transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks for the award of academic credit and qualifications. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

Quality Code, *Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards*

Findings

1.23 Kaplan International Pathways has developed templates for programme and module specifications that enable definitive information to be recorded for each award including the programme structure, indicative content and assessment. These are aligned to Kaplan International Pathways' Qualifications Framework, which maps to the relevant UK qualifications frameworks, and are used for the purpose of the award of credit and qualifications as defined in the programme specifications. Kaplan International Pathways has a detailed system for the approval and amendment of programmes which is set out in the ASQM.

1.24 The arrangements in place, including templates and systems for recording programme content, and the approval and amendment of programmes, which are provided by Kaplan International Pathways, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.25 The review team tested the operation of these arrangements through scrutiny of a range of documentation relating to the award of qualifications to students including programme and module specifications, transcripts and records of changes to programmes. The review team also met staff from the College, Kaplan International Pathways and the University.

1.26 The review team found that the programme specifications for the College are clearly set out on the Kaplan International Pathways templates, make reference to the UK Quality Code, and are mapped to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements for the University pathway to which they provide progression. Programme specifications set out the learning outcomes for the programme and for the constituent modules and specify the means by which these are delivered and assessed.

1.27 The College has clearly defined agreements with the University that enable students to progress to the designated University programme upon successful completion of their pathway. College programmes are developed in consultation with the University through JAB. All new programmes and any changes to programmes are approved by APQC and JAB. Minor modifications are approved by the Programme Committee in consultation with SMT.

1.28 Kaplan International Pathways has recently audited its programme specifications and these are now stored on the intranet - KI Connect. This provides secure storage and central access to definitive programme documents.

1.29 Overall responsibility for the award of credit and qualifications rests with Kaplan International Pathways. Records of study/transcripts, confirming the achievement of the learning outcomes for the programme and listing the modules studied, are given to students upon successful completion of their programme.

1.25 The review team concludes that Kaplan International Pathways has detailed systems for making awards to students following successful achievement of the learning

Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of t

level that meets UK threshold standards and are in accordance with relevant academic frameworks and regulations. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:

the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of

1.44 The external examiners' reports all confirm that

Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by th

host University are being maintained. The College effectively draws upon a wide range of information including data on student performance and achievement within its monitoring and review activities. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-

1.63 The review team concludes that there are appropriate procedures for the use of external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards for the College's programmes. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the provider: Summary of findings

1.64 In reaching its judgement, the review team considered its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.65 All Expectations in this area are met and the associated level of risk is low in all cases.

1.66 The College has appropriate procedures for assuring academic standards, which are aligned with Kaplan International Pathways' policies and procedures. There are effective arrangements in place for the management of the quality of programlac0(r)-3(ad(l)5(eg)-7(e)]1e)3(a)-5o wr

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2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their

the process is enhanced by the close communication with the University. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

making decisions about the suitability of a student to study at the College. This is clearly set out in the Admissions Manual. External reference is made to

Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.47 The College is responsible for student engagement based on Kaplan International Pathways' policies detailed in the ASQM. Colleges appoint and train Lead Student Representatives to gather views of other students and disseminate information. A summary of the findings of student feedback is included in the APR, which is considered by the Programme Committee. The colleges use various methods for eliciting student opinion including focus groups, formal staff and student forums, use of student representatives on Programme Committees, student representatives' feedback to senior management, feedback boxes, and email surveys and questionnaires. This feedback is reviewed and acted upon through the APRs. The Terms of Reference of the Programme Committee include a student member. Feedback methods are reviewed regularly, for example questions were adjusted after consultation with alumni.

2.48 These arrangements would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.49 The review team tested the operation of these arrangements through scrutiny of documentation,

deliberate steps to engage all students individually and collectively as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their education experience. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

Quality Code, *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning*

Findings

2.54 Kaplan International Pathways' ASQM describes the assessment principles together with the regulations, moderation processes, assignment submission, marking procedures and feedback mechanisms. It specifies the minimum requirements for successful completion of modules and programmes, and how individual module marks are awarded and aggregated at programme and module levels. There are standardised templates for Assessment Board agendas and minutes. CLIQ provides support for colleges in implementing these assessment processes, for example it has produced an Assessment Development Guide and disseminates information to colleges through the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Newsletter. Kaplan International Pathways provides extensive development on student assessment for college teaching staff to ensure that student performance is equitably judged.

2.55 The arrangements in place, including Kaplan International Pathways' academic rules, regulations and procedures,

2.70 The College formally considers the external examiners' reports through the annual monitoring procedure and the University through JAB.

2.71 The review team concludes that the College follows Kaplan International Pathways' procedures and makes scrupulous use of external examiners. The College uses their reports to ensure comparability of student learning. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.

Quality Code, *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review*

Findings

2.72 Kaplan International Pathways' ASQM provides the framework for the systematic monitoring and review of programmes for assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. This is as that for setting and maintaining academic standards in Expectation A3.3. The APQC has strategic oversight of the outcomes of all colleges' programme monitoring and reviews to ensure the enhancement and the parity of student experience. At the colleges,

2.76 Regular oversight by Kaplan International Pathways and the University ensures the

2.85 Students can make a complaint by discussing their concerns informally with their tutors, or can go directly to College Services. Formal complaints are made via an online form, which is sent directly to the Head of Student Services. As associate members of the University, students are able to use the services offered by the Students' Union to support their complaint or appeal.

2.86 The review team concludes that the College makes effective use of the central procedures for the handling and resolution of academic appeals and complaints about the quality of learning opportunities. Students confirm that these procedures are fair and accessible and responses are timely. Oversight by JAB provides an external reference point for decisions about complaints. It also provides an opportunity for enhancement of the learning opportunities to be implemented in response to the outcomes of complaints and appeals. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.87 In reaching its judgement, the review team considered its findings against the criteria

the handbooks, but receive details of the course structure during induction and can access module guides on the VLE.

3.11 The handbooks are produced by the College using the Kaplan International Pathways template and are checked for accuracy by the College Director and then by CLIQ to ensure that they align with the information contained in the programme specifications. Staff confirmed they have an input into the content of the handbooks - for example reading lists.

3.12 On completion of their pathway programme students receive a transcript from Kaplan International Pathways setting out the modules they have studied.

3.13 Feedback from students about the information they receive from the College is collected through the Arrival Survey, student experience survey and the Module Questionnaire. The accuracy and appropriateness of information provided by the College is also discussed at meetings with students.

3.14 Students who met the review team confirmed that they received detailed and helpful information about their course.

3.15 The review team concludes that the College has effective systems in place to ensure that the information provided to its intended audiences is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The University and Kaplan International Pathways maintain oversight of the information provided by the College. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.16 In reaching its judgement, the review team considered its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.17 The Expectation in this judgement area is met, and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations, affirmations or identified areas of good practice.

3.18 Published information for the College is produced in accordance with Kaplan International Pathways' procedures that involve a staged process for production and approval, and provide standard templates for documentation. The College works with the University and Kaplan International Pathways on the production and approval of information, and Kaplan International Pathways and the University maintain oversight. At the time of the visit, Kaplan International Pathways was engaged in a review that aimed to ensure improved links between its various information systems including a course information library.

3.19 Students indicated that the information they received prior to joining had been accurate and had assisted them in decision-making. The College has processes in place for evaluating the effectiveness of published information, and student views are considered as part of this.

3.20 The review team found that

4 Commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunitiesCommentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunitiesCommentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 24-27 of the Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) handbook.

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer Glossary on es 24

term in our review processes.

Expectations
Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

Flexible and distributed learning
A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations. See also **distance learning**.

Framework
A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

Framework for higher education qualifications
A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS).

Good practice
A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

Learning opportunities
The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

Learning outcomes
What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

Multiple awards
An arrangement where three or more **degree-awarding bodies** together provide a single jointly delivered **programme** (or programmes) leading to a separate **award** (and separate certification) of each awarding body. The arrangement is the same as for **dual/double awards**, but with three or more awarding bodies being involved.

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Quality Code
Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of **reference points** for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the **Expectations** that all providers are required to meet.

Reference points
Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

Self-evaluation document
A report submitted by a higher education provider, assessing its own performance, to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

Subject Benchmark Statement
A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or **e**

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