



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd, Glasgow International College

February 2021

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Glasgow International College. The review took place from 16 to 18 February 2021 and was conducted by a team of five reviewers, as follows:

- Alison Jones
- Simeon London
- Professor Graham Romp
- Elizabeth Shackels
- Abraham Baldry (Student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provision and to make judgements as to whether or not academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations (and the associated Core and Common practices) are the statements in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)¹ setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves.

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 on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations meets UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities meets UK expectations.

Good practice

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

- The appointment of the Learning Advisor to provide individual and personal academic and pastoral support to students on a regular basis.(Q9)

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following recommendations .

By September 2021:

- It is advisable that all Glasgow International College takes steps to further promote the Kaplan UK Pathways E-Safety Policy to ensure students are aware of its requirements. (Q4)

About the provider

Kaplan International Pathways is part of Kaplan International, which is in turn part of Kaplan, Inc, and a subsidiary of Graham Holdings Company (formerly known as the Washington Post Company). Kaplan annually provides education and career services to approximately one million students in more than 100 countries worldwide.

Glasgow International College (GIC; the College) offers a range of programmes at Foundation Certificate and Pre-Master's levels. Subject areas include Arts and Humanities; Science and Engineering; Law and Social Sciences; Business, Economics and Finance; and Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences.

Programmes are specifically designed in collaboration with the host university to prepare international students to succeed in UK higher education.

GIC's primary relationship is with the University of Glasgow (U of G). Kaplan Pathways has existing partnerships in the UK with the University of Brighton, Bournemouth University, the University of Liverpool, Nottingham Trent University, the University of the West of England, Bristol, the University of Essex, and the University of Nottingham, where it operates embedded colleges on each of the campuses. Kaplan also operates the University of York International Pathway College in partnership with the University of York. This is located on the University of York campus and forms part of the University of York's registration with the Office for Students.

Additionally, Kaplan Pathways operates a further college in London which links to more than one partner university. Kaplan International College London (KICL), provides pathways into Aston University, the University of Birmingham, the University of Bristol, City University of London, Cranfield University, Queen Mary University of London, University of Westminster and the University of York.

On successful completion of their studies at the required academic and English exit levels, students have a guaranteed offer of progression upon meeting the requirements of entry to an undergraduate or postgraduate degree at the host/partner university - the University of Glasgow. Students who obtain the Kaplan Pathways Award, but who fail to meet the conditions of their offer for progression to U of G, are able to access alternative offers through Kaplan

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree -awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations

Core practice (S1): The provider ensures that t he (r)espondent standard for 0.05 .04D1.0f f ma3()7r

Affairs (UKCISA) and the Joint Information System Committee (JISC) are also referred to for additional enhancement. Kaplan International Pathways has active membership and representation at events run by a number of these bodies.

1.6 Approval of course documentation including programme specifications, are another important reference point in managing student learning opportunities. Kaplan Pathways programmes are designed to ensure the successful transition of students from college to university. Programme specifications provide important information for students on the learning opportunities given to them and how they will be supported and assessed. Programme and module specifications describe the learning outcomes and the means by which these are delivered and assessed. Specifications act as summary documents but more detailed information, elaborating the programme or module syllabus, can be found in module information pages on the virtual learning environment (VLE). Learning outcomes are aligned to the appropriate level as part of the Kaplan Pathways Qualifications Framework. Programmes are developed in line with appropriate QAA Subject Benchmark Statements. Each of the programmes is designed to meet different student needs.

1.7 External examiners are appointed by the College with relevant checks made to ensure subject coverage and no conflicts of interest for the relevant higher education institution. External examiners are responsible for the monitoring, scrutinising and reviewing of student work; they provide confirmation that threshold standards are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks and credit is only awarded where threshold

report is considered by the Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC), enabling systematic monitoring of academic standards.

Core practice: Met

Level of risk: Low

Core practice (S2): The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.

Findings

1.11 GIC ensures that academic standards beyond the threshold level are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers. The team tested the expectation by meeting staff and students, and pursuing desk-based analysis of a wide range of documentation detailing arrangements. The extensive range of regulations, processes, templates and documents outlined in (S1) result in a robust framework for developing and maintaining standards which enable students the opportunity to achieve standards beyond merely threshold levels.

1.12 Learning outcomes are specified for each course, consistent with the relevant national qualification frameworks' descriptors, and assessment determines whether each student has achieved them. GIC operates processes to ensure consistency of learning outcomes with the requirements of relevant national qualifications frameworks. They make appropriate use of external examiners. Students met by the team demonstrated understanding of what is required to achieve higher grades and attain standards beyond the threshold. Academic staff met by the team clearly understand and apply approaches to setting and maintaining appropriate academic standards which is confirmed by the external examination process and the university to which GIC students progress. Representation of students' achievement which exceeds the baseline is reasonably consistent with other British providers.

Core practice: Met

Level of risk: Low

Core practice (S3): Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.

Findings

1.13 Glasgow International College offer a range of programmes at foundation certificate (s)-2 ()112.6 d applnoInt6 (de)10.2 0 Td ()Tj -0.002 Tc 0.0337Tw 0.283ameaxteudentlitS,ubjecis

academic and English exit levels, students have a guaranteed offer of progression upon meeting the requirements of entry to an undergraduate or postgraduate degree at the relevant host/partner university. Students who obtain the Kaplan Pathways Award, but who fail to meet the conditions of their offer for progression to the host/partner university, are able to access alternative offers through Kaplan's University Placement Service (UPS).

Core practice: Met

Level of risk: Low

Core practice (S4): The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.9 aKapler 8o (ab)5B.18 0.272 .0 Td (g ()T

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree -awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

1.16 The review team concludes that the setting and the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies at the provider meets UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

communicated to prospective students through the College website.

Core practice: Met

Level of risk: Low

Core practice (Q2): The provider designs and/or delivers high -quality courses.

Findings

2.7 Two groups oversee programme design. New Product Development and Approvals

Group (NPDAG) reviews products and programmes that have not been brought to market G D8(m)4.9 (es)-7

2.11 The specific target within the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Strategy ensures development of staff competences and engagement with learning technologies to enhance students' teaching and learning experience. Staff are encouraged to embed technology into their classroom practices including free applications, VLE activities and software. In January 2020, as part of the college restructure, one of the Academic Managers took responsibility for TEL and established TEL coordinator responsibilities to train and support staff in the use of new classroom technology and teaching tools as outlined in the College Action Plan.

2.12 The team tested the expectation by meeting with staff and students and pursuing desk-based analysis of a wide range of documentation. GIC staff receive college or role specific training and development from Kaplan International Pathways, webinars and online modules from CLIQ or through the College's own continuing professional development (CPD) activities. CLIQ also provided additional CPD activities to support staff in the roll out of the revised Pathways 2019 curriculum. Students met by the team commented very positively about how knowledgeable and helpful the staff were.

2.13 A resources-sharing section on Kaplan Sharing Space provides CPD digital literacy support which includes contributions from other colleges, research tools for the classroom, TEL apps, a wellbeing and resilience section, and a collaborative calendar for sharing events, webinars and conferences to staff across the network. The tutor-led GIC Away Day provides CPD sessions, in addition to a wide range of CPD TEL activities that include the use of interactive screens in classrooms, flipped learning, active learning, writing for digital content and the use of rapid authoring tool for digital content creation. Staff have opportunities to attend the University's Learning and Teaching Conference, as well as other national and international conferences. Staff met by the team stated that they felt well-supported by GIC and Kaplan International in their professional development and by the partner university.

2.14 Training or development needs may be identified within staff performance appraisal and the Evaluative and Peer Observation of Learning and Teaching also enables opportunity for professional developmental activities to be identified. Staff confirmed their engagement with online teaching observations during online delivery that included peer observations to share good practice.

Core practice: Met

Level of risk: Low

Core practice (Q4): The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

Findings

2.15 The design and approval of new programmes requires full consideration of all aspects of the learning opportunities to be provided, including consideration of student support and learning resources. The Joint Academic Management Board has responsibility for approving new programmes for progression, takes an overview and approves the pathways offered at GIC. A centralised storage and tracking system for programme specifications is held on the central intranet - KI Connect - that ensures version control and security of all documents. GIC ensures provision of computing and library facilities, digital resources and specialist facilities either within the college itself or through access to facilities at the University of Glasgow. GIC students are Associate University Students which

email surveys and questionnaires. PCs meet termly, are convened by the Programme Leader and include student representatives from each programme.

2.20 The mechanisms used to engage students in the quality of their educational experience reflect appropriately, the nature of the student population, including their initial level of competency in English, and the fact that for many students their time at GIC may be as short as two terms. GIC encourages effective student engagement before commencement of their studies by sending each student a welcome email, relevant contact information and granting access to relevant areas of the VLE. These mechanisms allow this expectation to be met and the team tested the expectation by meeting with staff and students and pursuing desk-based analysis of a wide range of documentation.

2.21 Student representatives at GIC receive training through several sessions with the academic team and Student Voice Co-ordinator, as well as a series of training sessions on areas such as eliciting feedback from their peers and the purpose of student representation. Student forums are organised prior to programme committees to allow student representatives to discuss non-academic issues prior to the meetings themselves. Programme committee meetings are minuted and are an effective mechanism to feed back to students any steps or action taken to address previous points raised. Students met by the team expressed satisfaction with their engagement with GIC in their academic and non-academic experience.

2.22 Student feedback is reviewed and acted upon as and when received and through the APR. A summary of the Student Experience Survey feedback is considered by the CEMB to review performance. It is acknowledged that an area of development could be the involvement of students more in monitoring and influencing the curriculum. It is acknowledged that a further area for improvement across all colleges is to consider the engagement of students with staff on evidence-based discussions regarding student performance and student satisfaction.

Core practice: Met

Level of risk: Low

Core practice (Q6): The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.

Findings

2.23 The ASQM details the procedures for handling academic appeals and complaints and it is GIC's responsibility to ensure these are communicated with students and shared on the VLE. There is an online process for applicants to make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the outcome or their experience of the admissions process. Any such complaints are monitored by the Senior Admissions team and reviews the admissions process annually in the light of complaints made to identify possible refinements and improvements.

2.24 Students have access to formal and informal complaint procedures if they wish to complain about the delivery and quality of learning opportunities. Informal complaints may be expressed with a Learning Advisor or any other member of staff to find an early resolution. Where the student is unable to resolve any issue through informal discussions, they can6 (hr)-5hey c(,)-6.6 ()JTJ -2429 (ni)2e7a(a c)-2 (o)n isnenidentny C,aint if 5.9 (al)46 (The)10.5 Fr

request the College Director to appoint another person to carry out a second independent investigation. If the complaint remains unresolved the student may put their concerns in writing to the Chief Operating Officer. As QAA still provides educational oversight for Glasgow International College, this college is not eligible to register with the Office of the

Core practice (Q9): The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.

Findings

2.29 Students are provided with clear and concise information embedded within the admissions process that supports their preparation for study, actively engages students in the preparation process and signposting them to additional support and resources where necessary. Students receive a 'pre-arrival guide' to prepare them for departure to the UK which contains a range of useful information. Video calls are offered to all students prior to arrival. Student induction is thorough, with specific course, resource and learning support sessions scheduled for all, as well as the opportunity for students to interact socially. Provision has shifted online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.30 There are guidelines for creating alternative means of assessment for students with disabilities, who are given student support plans. The University of Glasgow advises GIC on needs assessment for students with disabilities. GIC students are permitted to access counselling from the University. GIC have been proactive in offering mental health first aid training and suicide prevention training to staff. Students met by the team stated that feedback is useful and timely.

2.31 Educational, pastoral and social support is provided through a range of mechanisms that can be tailored to meet individual student needs where necessary, overseen by the student services team. Students under 18 years of age have a weekly 'check-in' meeting with a member of the College Services team.

2.32 Learning Advisors provide opportunities for students to routinely receive support and academic guidance as well as signposting to additional services. Meetings take place in a timely fashion and are tailored towards the needs of the students. Additional support is offered through the College Student Services. Support offered by academic tutors includes pastoral support, and students described Learning Advisors as helpful. The appointment of the Learning Advisor to provide individual and personal academic support to students on a regular basis is identified as a feature of good practice. Students met by the team stated that they felt well-supported to achieve successful outcomes.

2.33 The KapPACK e-Portfolio provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skills, confidence and graduate attributes necessary for success in higher education. Students are provided with academic skills training embedded in modules and digital literacy skills are embedded across the curriculum. Staff recruitment is targeted to the specific needs of each programme. Induction encompasses all aspects of Kaplan Pathways with additional opportunities for non-academic staff. Staff development is centred on Kaplan's staff development framework, with additional activities within individual colleges and through partner universities. The promotion, monitoring and development of the quality of learning opportunities is the responsibility of the Programme Committee, supported by the CLIQ and guided by the QAF and ASQM. Student attendance and progress is closely monitored and reported on Self Evaluation Document reports that SMT receives on attendance reports. More recently, this has been enhanced through the use of online learning analytics enabled by remote learning.

2.34 The College has made a suite of changes to provision in light of COVID-19.

2.35 End-of-Cycle Panels meet every five weeks to review a range of formative and summative evidence. Progress and attendance reports are shared with parents, sponsors and agents. Student satisfaction is generally high, and most students progress to study at the partner institution.

Core practice: Met

Level of risk: Low

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modules and programmes in order to provide feedback on how proposed changes would help to prepare the students for the transition to studying at the University. Subject moderators also advise on assessment strategy so that where students progress on to higher levels of an undergraduate degree at the University, they are prepared for the assessment strategies used there.

2.47 It is acknowledged by the GIC that an area for development is further sharing of best practice between colleges regarding the inclusive design of assessments and further scale-up of digitisation of assessment where it is appropriate and adds value to student learning. These processes allow the Common practice to be met and the team tested their effectiveness by meeting with staff and students and pursuing desk-based analysis of a wide range of documentation.

Common practice: Met

Level of risk: Low

Common practice (2): The provider's approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise.

Findings

2.48 Responsibility for the use of external expertise in maintaining academic standards is shared between GIC and the University. Programme design, approval and modification draws on external expertise across a range of levels to ensure new programmes align to relevant external benchmarks and partner university requirements. External reference points are cited in all programme specification documents.

2.49 The team tested the expectation by meeting with staff and students and pursuing desk-based analysis of a

representatives on PCs, student representatives' feedback to senior management, feedback boxes, and email surveys and questionnaires - to develop, assure and enhance the quality of the student educational experience from pre-enrolment through to the end of their programme of study. Feedback informs a diverse range of quality assurance measures, including specific key performance indicators (KPIs).

2.52 The team tested the expectation by meeting with staff and students and pursuing desk-based analysis of a wide range of documentation. Students are orientated to feedback opportunities at induction and throughout their course of study. Engagement with feedback opportunities is specified within the Student Code of Conduct. Formal feedback is scheduled against the quality calendar and detailed within the Quality Assurance Framework.

2.53 Formal feedback informs annual programme and college reports that are reviewed and scrutinised at the programme, provider and partner level on an annual basis. Annual Student Experience Survey feedback is considered by the College Executive Management Board to review performance. The Chief Operating Officer reports on the performance to UK Kaplan Pathways SMT.

2.54 Colleges provide feedback to students formally and informally. Student representative (s)-2 (of)4.3 7hw.6 2 Tc 0.0t.6 2 Tc 0.uve ((of)4ev)-2 (i)2.6 s (at)4.3 (i)10.6 (6e)10.5 (m)-5

included an Outbreak Management Plan, various staff guidance documents, surveys such as their student digital learning survey and updating their E-Safety Policy with the move from face-to-face to an online digital approach to learning and teaching.

2.66 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the provider meets UK expectations.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-

Dual award or double award

The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same programme by two degree-awarding bodies who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also multiple award .

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Expectations

Statements in the Quality Code which clearly and succinctly express the outcomes providers should achieve in setting and maintaining the standards of their awards, and for managing the quality of their provision.

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 frame work 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.

Operational definition

A formal definition of a term, establishing exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

Programme (of study)

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

Programme specifications

Published statements about the intended learning outcomes of programmes of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

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 (and associated, applicable Core and Common practices) that 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-learning)

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

Threshold academic standard

The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national frameworks and Subject Benchmark Statements.

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to learning opportunities electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

Widening participation

Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

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