

Educational Oversight-Exceptional Arrangements: desk-based analysis of INTO Queen's LLP, February 2024

Outcome of the desk-based analysis

1 From the annual return and documentary evidence, the monitoring team concludes that INTO Queen's LLP (the Centre) is continuing to maintain academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities since the [February 2023 Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements report](#).

Changes since the last QAA review

2 All students are international (non-EU), with three intakes per year in September, January and March. As of 2 January 2024, there are 240 students with total enrolments for 2023-24 estimated to be in the region of 305. The Centre currently employs 44 academic staff of whom 30 are full-time and 13 non-academic staff.

3 In June 2023, the Academic Director, who had been the main contact for QAA, was appointed Centre Director and remains as the main contact reporting to the newly appointed Senior Vice-President - who was previously the acting Centre Director, supporting the Academic Director. This Senior Vice-

programmes and services, especially in explaining the relationships between the Centre and Queen's University Belfast (QUB), to ensure that the expectations of prospective students are realistic. Communication channels have been improved to ensure that students are well-informed about the nature of the Centre and QUB, with offer holders able to contact the Centre's Marketing and Recruitment team to ask any questions they have in relation to their future study. The review and updating of marketing materials ensures that the relationship between the Centre and QUB is clear to prospective students regarding its role as a preparatory centre and the subsequent transition to QUB. The Centre undertakes an annual digital audit, review of marketing materials and checks on course information on systems in order to ensure the accuracy and currency of marketing materials.

7 Students complete arrival surveys on their pre-arrival experience and communication with generally good levels of satisfaction with the arrival experience (88% satisfied or very satisfied), with no students saying they were dissatisfied; and communications (90% satisfied or very satisfied), with only 2% saying they were dissatisfied. 18% of students reported that registration and orientation information was unclear with a small number (3%) reporting that they did not receive some information. 26% of students reported not attending orientation events and 48% reported not knowing about the Get Ready to Study programme. No evidence is provided of investigation into the reasons for this.

8 The Centre Progression team operates a calendar of events during the academic year around progression options, future careers, employability and meeting student ambassadors who are currently studying at QUB. Student feedback has been positive in providing support with the transition to study at the main QUB campus. The Centre offers opportunities for students to engage in social events to help their integration into studies and wider participation at clubs and societies.

9 Teaching, learning and assessment is underpinned by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy (TLAP), which was formally agreed and approved by QUB in May 2020. This Policy is available to existing staff and is presented to new staff as part of their induction. The Policy provides structure to the effective delivery of teaching, learning and assessment at the Centre. There is an internal system for implementing and recording teaching observations. Externally, feedback received from external examiners is cited in the Continuous Actions for Programme Enhancement (CAPE) reports.

10 The nature, level and availability of the pastoral support is outlined in the programme and policy handbooks, during course induction and updated at training courses. The pastoral care provided by the Centre Student Services team includes a Welfare Officer, support with accommodation and special educational needs and disability (SEND) support. Students can access the Student Assistance Programme and the Health Assure App with further support provided by teachers through personal tutoring.

11 Students with declared special education needs are referred to the in-house Learning Support Coordinator (LSC) for assessment and/or onward referral. The Centre's SEND Policy ensures that students with specific learning needs are identified and accommodated with the teaching and learning environment being adapted as appropriate to ensure that learning objectives can be met, performance and progression achieved, and student satisfaction improved.

12 Staff development and training is provided through INTO IUP and QUB. All staff complete mandatory training in areas including Annual Fire Safety; Email Essentials; Freedom of Information; GDPR; Health and Safety Essentials; Health and Safety for Computer Users; Secure Remote Working; Think Difference. Act Differently; Unconscious Bias; Suicide Awareness Training; and Safeguarding Training. Completion of training is monitored by the HR Manager. The Centre has added LinkedIn Learning to the Human

Resources Information System (HRIS), which allows all INTO staff access to 10,000 self-training development courses. Training covers a wide range of business, technology, creative and career building topics. The Centre has run some cross-centre Teacher Training and Development Days including coaching for lesson observations, using artificial intelligence for teaching, support for inclusive teaching and supporting student mental health and wellbeing.

Student data return

13 Total enrolments for 2023-24 are estimated to be in the region of 305, which represents an increase from 276 in 2022-23 and 229 in 2021-22. The data for 2022-23 shows that retention is very good (100%) across all programmes except for the International Foundation programmes in Engineering and Science; Business, Humanities and Social Sciences; and in Architecture which have retention rates of 98%, 95% and 75%, respectively. For Engineering and Science, and Business, Humanities and Social Sciences, this represents an improvement from the 2021-22 data (85% and 86%). For Architecture, however, this has shown a further decline from 85% in 2021-22, but for the combined September and January intakes the retention is 90%. The Graduate Diploma in Management; and the International Year One programme in Engineering show rates of 86% and 96% retention respectively.

14 In 2021-22, the overall pass rate for students was 92%, with the breakdown at each level as follows: Level 3 - 96%; Level 4 - 99%; and Level 6 - 98%. With the exception of five programmes, all pass rates were 100%. The exceptions being: the International Foundation programme in Business, Humanities and Social Sciences (85% September intake and 86% March intake); International Year One Management and Finance (89%); International Year One Engineering (88%); and Graduate Diploma Social Sciences (86% January intake and none in the March intake). In 2022-23, the overall pass rate for students was 98%, which was a significant improvement from 2021-22, with: Level 3 - 96%; Level 4 - 96%; and Level 6 - 84%. With the exception of six programmes, all pass rates were 100%. The exceptions being the Graduate Diploma Management (86%), International Foundation Programme Architecture (75%) and the International Year One Engineering (96%).

Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

15 The Centre continues to make effective progress in using external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education. The Centre is responsible to QUB for the maintenance of academic standards relating to its qualifications aligned to external reference points including *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). QAA Subject Benchmark Statements are incorporated in the design, approval, assessment and monitoring of programmes and are referenced in programme specifications. English language courses are benchmarked against the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and International English Language Testing System (IELTS) descriptors. These provide clear benchmarks for student admission, assessment and progression. The Centre continues to engage actively with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) and maps its provision to the Quality Code. The Quality Code informs policies developed by the Centre and those of QUB and are embodied in the Centre's current Academic Management Quality Assurance Manual which reflects the Expectations, Core and Common practices, and advice and guidance of the Quality Code.

16 In the period since the last QAA review, the Centre has undergone a reaccreditation

through the British Council as a result of its status as an accredited provider of English language provision under the British Council's accreditation scheme. Under the framework for this, the standards of management, resources and premises, teaching, welfare and care of under 18s were examined to ensure that they meet the required standards. The outcome of the review was positive, with the Centre being reaccredited for a further four years. The formal report from the review is pending but is

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557000
Web www.qaa.ac.uk