



INTO University of Stirling

Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements

May 2019

About this report

This is a report of a review under the Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements method conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at INTO University of Stirling. The review took place on 17 May 2019 and was conducted by a review team, as follows:

Professor Paul Brunt
Professor Alan Jago.

The main purpose of the review was to:

- make judgements about the provider's management of its responsibilities for academic standards, as set out in its contractual arrangements with its academic partner
- make judgements on the provider's management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities
- make judgements about the reliability of the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers
- report on any features of good practice

Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements:

Detailed findings about INTO Stirling

1 Academic standards

How effectively does the provider fulfil its responsibilities for the management of academic standards?

1.1 There are effective processes for maintaining academic standards which are overseen by the INTO University of Stirling Centre and the University of Stirling. A Joint Venture (JV) company was created in 2014 between the University of Stirling and INTO University Partnerships to provide a variety of progression opportunities for international students through the provision of an INTO University of Stirling Centre (the Centre) on the University's campus. A signed agreement sets out the responsibilities of each party and details the quality assurance arrangements. Roles are shared between the University, INTO University Partnerships and the Centre in respect of the management of academic standards, with the University ultimately responsible through its responsibility for validation, academic regulation, periodic review and committee processes, and as the awarding body for all the Centre's academic programmes.

1.2 The governance and strategic management of the Centre operates through an agreed committee structure. Academic governance is maintained through the JV Board, which acts as an executive board with responsibility for the delivery of the Joint Venture Business Plan. It has senior staff representation from both the University and the Centre. The Centre Director makes an annual report to the JV Board, and the JV Board is supported by three sub-committees. The sub-committees include: an Operations Group which oversees aspects such as IT and data integration; the Marketing and Recruitment Board which considers recruitment issues; and the Academic Management Board regarding academic standards and learning opportunities. University and Centre staff are represented on these sub-committees of the JV Board, and Centre staff also attend key university committees. The JV Academic Management Board ensures the appropriateness of the learning, teaching and assessment strategy, reviews programme performance and oversees the quality framework.

1.3 The University provides the quality assur

1.4 The collaboration between the University and the Centre provides an effective quality assurance framework that ensures academic standards are appropriately set and maintained across the academic programmes.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management of academic standards?

1.5 The Centre makes appropriate use of a range of external reference points. All programmes, standards and processes are mapped against the Quality Code, Subject Benchmark Statements, and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Responsibilities for programme design, development and approval are shared by the Centre and the University, and use the University's processes, informed by the Quality Code. The University's approval procedures include the involvement of external members on panels. The Centre also makes use of University reference points, including the University's Common Marking Scheme and Quality Handbook.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

How effectively does the provider fulfil its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 The JV Board has responsibility for the delivery of the JV Business Plan and

range of mechanisms, including module evaluation, student satisfaction surveys and the operation of the Student-Staff Liaison Committee.

2.9 The Centre Director produces an annual report that contains key statistical information on student recruitment and performance, and identifies areas which have gone well and those that require improvement. The Report is considered by the JV Board.

2.10 Currently the Centre does not receive regular systematic information about the progression of its students when they move onto the University. However, a system is currently being developed to share data. The review team consider it **desirable** that the Centre and the University work towards improving its progression data.

How effective are the provider's arrangements for staff development in relation to maintaining and/or enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.11 The Centre is committed to ensuring the quality of teaching is upheld. Staff are employed by the JV. A revised Approved Teacher process is to be introduced from 2019-2020. Subject teachers are required to have a degree in a relevant subject and teaching experience is desirable. New staff have an induction and undertake a probationary period; they are also required to have specific IT induction and are mentored.

2.12 The Centre is committed to continuing professional development (CPD) for its staff. There is a Staff Development Manual. Programme Managers are responsible for promoting staff development opportunities. Following the introduction of a Performance Coaching Process across the IUP network, Programme Managers engage with staff to plan and pursue professional development. It is thought that this process will offer the opportunity for a more systematic way of recording and monitoring staff development and performance. A list of CPD events has been provided. Staff can participate in the University's PG Cert in Education and are able to attend both University and IUP staff development events. The SED acknowledges that there would be benefit from a systematic review of staff CPD to ascertain commonalities, risks to the student experience and opportunities to share best practice.

2.13 There is system of regular teaching observations by management, and a peer observation system has been introduced. The former leads to a discussion on professional practice, reflection and areas for development.

2.14 Staff that the review team met were positive about the way in which they were

Services. The Team works closely with University departments to ensure that students have access to University resources and appropriate services. The Student Handbook provides information on all aspects of the services available. Students who met the review team were positive about the level of support that they received.

How effectively does the provider ensure that learning resources are accessible and sufficient to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes?

2.17 Consistent with the agreement that set up the arrangement between the IUP and the University, students are given full access to University services and facilities, including the activities and services provided by the Students' Union. Students use the University virtual learning environment which is viewed very positively.

2.18 The Centre moved to a new purpose-built building in 2017, about which the students have been very positive. Its central location and prominence on the campus is symbolic of the strength of the relationship between the University and the IUP.

The review team concludes that **confidence** can be placed in INTO Stirling's **management** and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

particular times and locations.
See also **distance learning**.

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.