



Kaplan International Colleges

Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

March 2012

Key findings about Kaplan International Colleges

This is a report of an Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Kaplan International Colleges. The review took place in a series of visits in March and April 2012.

The QAA review team (the team) formed the following judgements about Kaplan International Colleges:

The review team has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the academic standards of the awards it offers through its embedded college provision.

The review team has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for students through embedded colleges.

The review team considers that **reliance can be placed** on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself, its embedded colleges, and the programmes that they deliver.

Good practice

The team identified the following **features of good practice** at Kaplan International Colleges (KIC):

- the strength of self-reflection in KIC as demonstrated in particular by the self-evaluation document (paragraph 1.23)
- the independent dimension in the management of academic standards provided by KIC's appointment of external examiners (paragraph 1.38)
- the effective liaison, communication and collaboration with KIC's higher education partners (paragraph 2.3)
- the work of KIC's University Placement Service (paragraph 2.15)
- the quality of the pastoral and academic support provided for students (paragraph 2.16)
- the pre-admissions support provided by KIC staff to applicants (paragraph 2.18)
- the organisational cohesion of the KIC network of colleges and partner higher education institutions, including the work of its Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ) (paragraph 2.19)
- the staff development provided for KIC's management, administrative and support staff (paragraph 2.20).

Recommendations

The team makes the following recommendations to Kaplan International Colleges.

The team considers that it is **advisable** for KIC to:

- review the design and content of the transcripts issued by KIC, so as to ensure that there is no confusion regarding the ultimate responsibility for the KIC award (paragraph 1.33)
- provide a dimension of external assurance for the pre-master's programme offered at Kaplan International College Bournemouth in accordance with KIC's revised Academic Standards and Quality Manual (paragraph 1.39)

- ensure that there is provision in all programmes for an external scrutiny of examination questions and summative assignments, before these are used in student assessment (paragraph 1.41).

The team considers that it would be **desirable** for KIC to:

- continue to be confident, in the context of greater devolution to colleges, that the processes for monitoring the quality of feedback to students on their assessed work are not weakened (paragraph 1.28)
- consider ways in which it can make a fuller use of the external examiners that it has appointed (paragraph 1.43)
- continue to encourage engagement by all of the embedded colleges with the enhancement work of CLIQ (paragraph 2.7)
- further develop a coherent cross-organisational approach to the support of teaching staff, in particular with regard to the teaching of international students (paragraph 2.21).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (ECREO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Kaplan International Colleges (the provider; KIC). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review was carried out by Mr D Batty, Ms J Clarke, Professor M Cook, Mrs B Hodgkinson, Dr M Ruthe, Professor G Taylor (reviewers), and Dr P Findlay (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).² The review involved an initial briefing visit to KIC's central management in offices in London, visits to the seven KIC embedded colleges, and a final review visit to the London offices. KIC submitted a self-evaluation document to inform the review, and the team also considered a range of documentation provided by KIC, and by the individual embedded colleges. The self-evaluation included an analysis of organisational strengths and areas for development and was judged by the team to be helpfully reflective and evaluative. The team met a cross-section of KIC staff both centrally and in the colleges, and met a group of students at each college visited. In the course of each college visit, the team also met representatives of the partner university, or universities.

Please note that if you are unfamiliar with any of the terms used in this report you can find them in the [Glossary](#).

Students' contribution to the review

KIC arranged for each college to prepare a student written submission to support the review. Some of these submissions were prepared independently by student representatives, some with the assistance of the college staff. All the student submissions addressed questions relating to the student learning experience and regarding the information received by students about the college and study at KIC. The review team was able to discuss the college student submissions in meetings with students at each of the colleges.

The KIC network and the embedded colleges

Kaplan International Colleges (KIC) is a subsidiary of Kaplan Inc, a major global private provider of education, owned by the Washington Post Company. KIC was established in 2005 with the aim of developing a network of international pathway colleges which would provide a range of entry and exit points for international students wishing to enter UK higher education. In 2009, KIC Pathways was merged with existing KIC Languages provision to create a single business unit known collectively as Kaplan International Colleges. This review covered all seven colleges currently within the KIC network: Kaplan International College Bournemouth (Pathways and English Language Teaching) (KICB), University of Brighton's International College (UBIC), Glasgow International College (GIC), Liverpool International College LIC), Kaplan International College London (KICL), Nottingham Trent International College (NTIC), and Sheffield International College (SIC). Since the establishment of the first pathway college in 2005, KIC has grown to be an educational organisation with around 4,000 students representing 72 different nationalities.

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4

² www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/embedded-college-handbook.aspx

The embedded colleges are developed in close partnership with KIC's partner universities, and in the majority of cases are situated within the relevant university.

Types of partnership

Within the KIC network of colleges, partnerships with higher education institutions can take slightly differing forms. The most typical model, as found at the Brighton, Glasgow, Liverpool Nottingham Trent, and Sheffield colleges, is a direct and close articulated relationship with an individual university in which the college is embedded within the university campus, and where the students who are successful at the required level will progress directly onto that university's higher education programmes. Exceptions to this are currently found at two colleges in the group. Kaplan International College London has independent premises in London and prepares students for study at three different university institutions (City University, Cranfield University, and the University of Westminster). The second exception is Kaplan International College Bournemouth (KICB), which is currently the only KIC college where programmes are externally validated, rather than approved through an internal KIC process linked with the formal agreement with the local partner institution. KICB students may progress to a variety of higher education institutions as well as to Bournemouth University. The College has a close relationship with that University but is separately located in its own premises. KICB is also distinctive in offering closely integrated study paths in English language.

Programmes, progression routes and awards

KIC pathway programmes lead to the following internal KIC awards in the various subject areas offered through the colleges: Foundation Certificate at level 3 of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), Diploma at level 4 of the FHEQ, Graduate Diploma at level 6 of the FHEQ, and a Pre-Master's, also at level 6 of the FHEQ. Glasgow International College has mapped its awards against the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. The awards, and the programmes which lead to them, are specific to each college and are determined by the detailed negotiation on student learning outcomes, which takes place between the college and the partner university. The programmes of study lead, through the articulation routes agreed with the partner university, to the first or second year of undergraduate study, or in the case of the Graduate Diploma/Pre-Master's, to postgraduate study. Since the programmes aim to meet the needs of international students, the colleges also offer study options in pre-sessional English. The learning outcomes of the programmes therefore cover general cognitive abilities and skills, discipline-specific knowledge and skills, and language proficiency including academic communication. Successful students receive a transcript of their performance in a given programme; KIC does not present students with certificates of awards.

Organisational and management framework

Organisationally, KIC is a network of colleges with broadly similar structures, working within a common framework and guided by centralised management and administration functions. KIC's headquarters are in central London. These offices provide management and administrative services responsible for strategic direction, recruitment and admissions, marketing and sales, web management, and university placement. Central senior management posts are located here and cross-network management meetings also take place through the College Executive Management Board (CEMB). The highest management body within KIC is the Senior Management Team, which has overall responsibility for the company's strategic direction. This group is supported by the CEMB whose membership includes the directors of all the KIC colleges. KIC's senior academic body is the APQC,

which is responsible for the oversight of academic standards and quality. In each of the embedded colleges, management responsibility rests with the College Director.

KIC has established a Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ), which is based in Nottingham, and which, together with colleges, has responsibility across all the KIC colleges for academic development and enhancement and for coordinating quality assurance, also giving focused support to newly established colleges within the network. A further KIC network-wide support function is the University Placement Service (UPS). This service has secured arrangements with a wide range of universities to place students from the colleges who have successfully completed the KIC programme, but not necessarily qualified for direct progression to the partner institution.

Detailed findings about Kaplan International Colleges

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 Ultimate responsibility for the academic standards and the quality of KIC programmes lies with its Senior Management Team. KIC as the provider directs, facilitates, and supports its embedded colleges in their maintenance of academic standards and assurance of academic quality. Following a review in 2010-11, KIC has adopted a more devolved approach to the management of its embedded colleges, with significant aspects of decision-making and quality assurance now taking place at the local college level. Quality management procedures operate within a federal structure, with responsibilities lying at both the central and college level. Partner universities play a key role in this as defined in cooperation agreements. New policies and procedures have been recently developed and introduced to support the new arrangements: a revised Quality Assurance Framework was launched in 2011, with an accompanying procedural guide, the Academic Standards and Quality Manual, being updated in 2011-12. A first KIC Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy was developed in 2010-11, providing colleges with a framework to produce their own local strategies. Working with the College Director, each college has an Academic Director (or equivalent) and a programme committee, with a specific remit for course development and quality assurance, and for reporting on these areas.

1.2 The main activities contributing to the management of academic standards within KIC are the establishment of partnerships, the monitoring of standards by college programme committees and by the partner university, the contribution of external examiners, and the central oversight exercised by the CLIQ and by the Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC). All KIC colleges work closely with the partner university in the quality management of their programmes. Thus, for each partnership there will normally be a Joint Strategic Management Board (JSMB) (or equivalent), which takes a strategic overview of the performance of the College. In addition to the oversight provided by KIC's own central quality assurance framework, quality and standards are scrutinised by partner university institutions through a JAB (or equivalent), which reports to the relevant university committee. The KIC colleges in Bournemouth and London, having links with more than one institution, do not have a JAB. London (KICL) has regular formal review meetings with each partner institution. Bournemouth (KICB) operates under validation arrangements for two programmes, while standards on its English language courses are assured through the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and other external examinations.

1.3 The APQC is the senior central committee within KIC with responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement. The remit of the committee includes the establishment and monitoring of academic policies and academic standards, including the governance of the KIC quality assurance framework, the approval of new programmes and modules, major changes to existing programmes and modules, the approval of academic regulations, and the receipt of reports and surveys relating to academic standards and quality. On an annual basis, APQC receives and responds to an Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes Report. This is compiled by CLIQ and draws together reports from all the KIC colleges, thus providing an overview of information relevant to academic standards, including the reports of external examiners and of local programme committees.

1.4 At the local college level, the management of academic standards is the responsibility of the College Director, the Academic Director, and the programme teams. Programme committees are established for all programmes within each college.

The programme committee membership includes teaching staff, support staff and sometimes student representatives, and the committee meets regularly to monitor and review course-related information and matters raised by students. The programme leader prepares an annual report from the committee, and this is considered by the college's JAB (or equivalent). Annual programme reports are also reviewed by CLIQ and thus contribute to the academic standards and quality of programmes report to APQC.

1.5 The review team had access to a range of documents supporting the activities of KIC's network of committees, particularly those at college/partner level. The principal vehicle in this context was the JAB (or equivalent), whose membership always includes senior university representatives. Board papers and subsequent discussions by the review team with higher education partner representatives demonstrate a clear, active engagement in assuring the standards of the local KIC award and their appropriateness for student progression to the university concerned, through the Board's remit for changes to the curriculum, the approval of nominations for external examiners, the consideration of annual programme reports and the exchange of data between the partners.

1.6 The review team examined further documentation relating to the operation of the quality assurance framework, including policy documents, programme committee reports, annual college reports and the minutes of the relevant committees. The team was able to discuss the responsibility for overseeing quality assurance with members of the CLIQ and of the APQC. The team also noted the confidence that well established universities themselves had in the standards, structures, procedures and management of KIC and its colleges, most clearly exemplified by the intention of a number of these institutions to extend the terms of their written agreements well before the termination date of the current arrangements.

1.7 On the basis of this evidence, the team found that the arrangements in place at KIC for the management of academic standards, while in some aspects still at an early stage, are well planned and effective, with reporting structures in place that allow both for local initiative and a central overview.

Arrangements for the approval, monitoring and periodic review of embedded college provision

1.8 The first stage in the approval of embedded college provision is the decision by KIC and a university to establish such a college. The founding agreements provide the basis against which the performance and achievement of each college, including the maintenance of academic standards and quality of learning experience, are assessed. Well developed procedures are in place for the selection, development, and agreement of partnerships with universities. There is a formal strategy for selecting partners, with a checklist which is used to determine suitability and alignment with KIC's aims. This includes the reputation of a potential partner and additional value that will be given to KIC's overall subject portfolio. KIC will also assess the capacity of its selected partner with a view to the partner's future provision for the agreed number of international students.

1.9 Each partnership is subject to a formal written agreement. Agreements typically provide for the establishment and operation of a KIC college on the individual university campus, with the ownership and delivery of the programmes being KIC's responsibility. The legal agreement follows a standard model that sets out in detail the terms of reference and responsibilities of each party. Financial arrangements and circumstances triggering a review or closure are set out. An annex to the agreement sets out the details of the programmes for delivery by KIC, together with the articulation routes into the university and the expected level of academic performance required in order to progress. Service level agreements then determine the level of facilities and services that are available to KIC students locally. At KICB, the partnerships are for the delivery of programmes validated by

the University of Wales and Bournemouth University. At other centres, the programmes lead to an internal KIC award, recognised by the host university for the purposes of progression, and on successful completion of the programme to the required level, students will proceed directly to higher education courses in that university.

1.10 Review of agreements is ongoing in the light of both local and national developments in UK higher education, and is regularly a focus of discussion in the college JSMBs (or equivalent). A number of the partner universities reported to the review team that they envisaged extending the period of their agreement. KIC recognises the importance of ensuring that specification of the articulation routes into university study is updated and accurate. It has instigated a project for the review and development of the progression route management processes. This project is ongoing and an interim report has been made to the College Executive Management Board (CEMB).

1.11 The review team examined the partnership review agreement for each college and was able to discuss the development of the agreements with the senior management at KIC and with representatives of the partner universities. The review team found the agreements to be well specified, clearly defining the articulated study routes, and in line with similar formal partnership arrangements across the UK higher education sector.

Programme development and approval

1.12 Systematic arrangements are in place for the approval, monitoring and review of KIC programmes. The relevant procedures are set out in the Academic Standards and Quality Manual, and monitoring procedures build on previous practice within the KIC community, assuring a common approach to defining, monitoring and maintaining standards while taking into account increased devolution for the colleges. Periodic programme review is a new process, with the first reviews due in 2012.

1.13 Proposals for new programmes or modules may arise in individual colleges, in partner universities or centrally. Such proposals may arise usually as a result of opportunity to offer pathways into a wider range of university courses, to repackage existing programmes to meet external changes or to improve student performance after progression to the partner university. CLIQ provides support to colleges at the programme development stage. The process described below is new for the academic year 2011-12, but essentially it revises the process, which had been followed previously, for which the review team was able to see evidence of effective completion.

1.14 The process of approval first requires business approval to ensure that there is a demand, confirmed through market research, for the new programme or module and that the physical and financial resources required to support the proposed programme can be made available. The first stage takes place at the central KIC management level. The process is managed by CLIQ, and formal approval is granted by the Business Approval Sub-Group of CEMB. If business approval is given, the proposal will be sent forward for academic approval by APQC and/or the appropriate JAB to ensure that the proposed award is of the appropriate standard, as set out in the KIC Qualifications Framework, as contained within the KIC Quality Assurance Framework (see paragraph 1.35). In particular, APQC checks that the programme is at the standard required for the level of the award, that it prepares students for study in UK higher education and equips them to obtain the skills and qualities of the KIC graduate, that it is aligned with the KIC and college-level Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategies, and that it meets the requirements of the relevant external agencies. Approval by the partner university's JAB (or equivalent) then focuses on ensuring that the programme contents and standards are such that it articulates well with the intended target courses in the university. This stage of the process also provides for an element of scrutiny

in the process which is external to KIC. In those colleges where there is no JAB the review team was told that a discussion would take place with university senior management.

1.15 A similar process exists for major modifications to existing programmes and modules. However, where such proposals do not have sales and marketing implications, they are considered by the College Senior Management Group, rather than the KIC Business Development Sub-group, to determine whether approval should be given for any resource implications.

1.16 The external input into the KIC programme approval process is therefore limited to the scrutiny provided through the partner university membership of the JAB. In the view of the review team, this was acceptable, given that all KIC courses provide routes which articulate into a university's programmes, which will themselves have been scrutinised by external panel members who are representatives of the host university, when approved. However, KIC should assure itself that, in the case where there is no JAB within a college's organisational structures, there is sufficient independent scrutiny of a new programme proposal.

1.17 The process described above has been revised for the academic year 2011-12, but essentially encapsulates and formalises the process followed to date, as exemplified by the committee minutes tracing the development of a new Foundation Certificate in Science and Engineering (Maths and Science) at Sheffield International College and the enhanced university preparation programmes at Glasgow International College. These examples demonstrated to the review team that the process is followed, and is fit for purpose.

Minor modifications to existing programmes and modules

1.18 The Academic Standards and Quality Manual explains clearly the difference between changes regarded as minor or major modifications. Changes to a programme's aims or learning outcomes, mode of study or structure (for example the addition of new pathways) are regarded as significant modifications and follow the processes for programme approval detailed above. Any other change is regarded as minor and, in keeping with the decision to devolve more responsibility to college level, is initially the responsibility of the programme committee. However, if there is a considerable package of minor modifications (usually affecting 40 credits or more of modules in the programme), this must be dealt with as a significant change.

1.19 It is the responsibility of the programme committee to agree with the host university whose proposals will require approval or not at the JAB, seek this approval where required, and either to make CLIQ aware of any proposals requiring business approval at KIC level (that is, those with sales and marketing or significant resource implications) or to forward proposals with other resource implications to the college Senior Management Team. The design team (the programme team assisted as appropriate by CLIQ) is responsible for completing all necessary proposal documentation and proposed module specifications, and for keeping documentation such as student and staff handbooks up to date to reflect approved modifications.

1.20 Prior to the academic year 2011-12 and the introduction of the new Quality Assurance Framework, minor modifications were defined as those affecting less than 20 per cent of the curriculum, and were considered by a combination of APQC, the relevant JAB and CEMB. Evidence from APQC minutes showed the previous process to have been robust. While the latter was fit for purpose, the well defined new process is an improvement in that it makes clearer the distinction between minor and major modifications and avoids the danger of multiple minor modifications resulting in major programme change. The review team was able to observe the positive evidence of the transition from the previous to new

procedures. The team took the view that this was a good example of changes to procedures resulting from effective self-evaluation.

Annual monitoring

1.21 KIC has effective arrangements in place for the annual monitoring of modules and programmes. Such procedures had been in place for some time previously, with annual reports being produced for the information of KIC and university management. These procedures were further strengthened from the academic year 2011-12 with the establishment of programme committees. Programme leaders are provided by the local academic support team with detailed progression and completion data at both module and course level, together with student satisfaction survey results. In some cases, there is also data available from the partner university about the achievements of students after they have progressed to a university course. Programme and module leaders provide a critical analysis of the data and of other issues that may have arisen during the year and make recommendations for any consequent change. The finalised report is discussed by the programme committee before being forwarded to the College Senior Management Team, CLIQ and the appropriate JAB. The JAB comments on any recommendations for change. The team saw a number of annual monitoring reports and noted that, while the data in these was clear and comprehensive, the level of self-critical reflection varied.

1.22 All annual programme reports are forwarded to CLIQ, which puts together an overview report that is discussed by both APQC and CEMB. Areas of good practice and quality enhancement which can be shared across the KIC colleges are highlighted, and are then addressed at a cross-KIC level. At the time of the review, a draft of the first such report was made available. This included a range of statistical data and a clear and reflective summary of both good practice and issues to be addressed at individual colleges. The report provides the information necessary to allow annual central oversight of quality and standards. As further annual reports are produced, they will enable the monitoring of trends in admissions and completion data. In the view of the team, the new process is fit for purpose and will provide KIC with an annual oversight of quality and standards in the individual colleges and the opportunity to compare performance between colleges and identify good practice.

1.23 In addition to the annual programme reports, each college produces an annual report for the partner university. This summarises progression and completion data for all programmes in the college, comments on issues of student support and includes analysis of business performance. It is presented to the senior management of the partner university and also received by the KIC Managing Director and the CEMB. These reports provide an opportunity to compare college performance in terms of a wider range of indicators, such as student support and business performance, than the annual programme reports which focus on quality and standards of specific programmes. Reports made available to the review team were comprehensive and self-evaluative and, in the view of the team, provide a valuable contribution to the monitoring of college performance.

1.24 KIC's strategy of allowing an element of devolution in procedures at college level has introduced additional elements of assurance. The review team noted here the work of a Scrutiny Panel at Nottingham Trent International College, which considers proposals for curriculum change on behalf of the JAB. Elsewhere, college-higher education partner structures were strengthened by formal discussions at a more strategic level. As an example, the team noted the additional role at the Glasgow International College of the JSMB which, for instance, furthered discussion in such areas as marketing and recruitment, branding and student transition.

Periodic programme review

1.25 A process of periodic review has been introduced as part of the new KIC Quality Assurance Framework. The first review under this procedure had not taken place at the time of this ECREO review. The periodic reviews will be led by the Academic Director in each college and will involve the programme committees. The Academic Director will seek input to the review from external peers - either external to the college and within KIC (that is, from CLIQ or from other colleges), or external to KIC (that is, from the host university). The review outcome will be presented in the form of a report and action plan to senior management group, the relevant Programme Committee, the KIC Senior Management Team, CLIQ (which may raise any relevant issues with the APQC) and the JAB (or equivalent) of the college concerned. The review team had sight of the detailed procedures that had been developed for the periodic review, which included the specified documentation to be made available for the review process. This covered key aspects of programme delivery relating to management and reporting on quality and academic standards, programme specification and outcomes, and assessment strategy and student information.

1.26 While the processes for programme approval, monitoring and review, described in the Quality Assurance Framework and the Academic Standards and Quality Manual were revised for the academic year 2011-12, for the most part they build on and formalise existing practice within KIC. The exception to this is the periodic programme review process, which is new. On the basis of the evidence seen, the review team considered that the procedures which had been developed for the periodic review process were appropriate and would serve to further strengthen the quality of programme delivery and the setting and maintaining of appropriate standards.

How effectively does the provider manage the assessment of students?

1.27 Each college has responsibility for the assessment of its students within the framework of the KIC Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). Assessment principles and assessment regulations are set out in the Academic Standards and Quality Manual. Individual colleges are responsible for the implementation of these principles and for ensuring they are followed in the assessment processes and standards for their programmes. The first KIC Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) was developed in 2010-11. Colleges are using this to develop their own local LTAS during the academic year 2011-12 and, at the time of the review, progress with implementation of the strategy varied across colleges.

1.28 Assessment boards are held each term and are managed locally by each college in the context of its agreement(s) with partner universities but in line with the expectations of KIC's QAF. The review team noted that, in accordance with the move to devolve responsibility for quality management and assurance to local college level, the previous system of cross-organisational standardisation and moderation of assessment within KIC has been discontinued. Documentation reviewed at one of the college visits did indicate some inadequacies in feedback and assessment levels and marking. The team considered it important that KIC could continue to be confident, in the context of greater devolution to colleges, that the processes for monitoring the quality of feedback to students on their assessed work are not weakened.

1.29 The students met by the review team in meetings at the colleges were satisfied with the ways in which their learning was assessed. They were in general appreciative of the timeliness and quality of feedback that they received on their assessed work and of the way in which this helped them move forward with their learning.

1.30 Definitions of, and procedures for, dealing with academic misconduct are set out in the Academic Standards and Quality Manual (except at KICB, where validated courses follow procedures of validating universities). A part of the KIC range of outcomes is to help students to fully understand the expectations of academic culture in the UK. The students met indicated they had been effectively advised on what constitutes plagiarism, on the importance of avoiding it and the consequences if they did not.

1.31 The review team read assessment regulations, external examiners' reports and the minutes of assessment boards. It discussed assessment strategies, including marking policy, with college staff and questioned students regarding the feedback received on assessed work. Representatives of partner universities confirmed that assessment standards and grading of assessed work were appropriate. The overall conclusion of the team was that the management of assessment within KIC colleges was rigorous and effective.

Certificates and transcripts

1.32 All students, except those at Kaplan International College Bournemouth, receive transcripts issued by the specific college at which they are registered. A standard pro forma for the transcript is provided centrally by KIC, with the individual college adding local details and student information. The detailed content of the transcripts recording student achievement is appropriate. Each transcript has a hologram attached and, with the exception of those from Kaplan International College London, is stamped with the college seal, both appropriate measures to reduce any risk of fraud.

1.33 The review team considered this standard approach to the design of the transcript to be potentially confusing in two ways, and that there was consequently a risk that this could lead to misunderstanding. The logo of the KIC college and of the partner university are placed closely together, and in the view of the team it is therefore insufficiently clear which body is responsible for the transcript. KIC commented that the combined use of college and host names together was deliberately designed to signify the close partnership and to brand the embedded college. The team was further concerned that the standard transcript correctly lists KIC as the awarding authority, but also describes the particular college concerned as the awarding institution. This is also confusing. Students themselves may not be in any doubt about the responsibility for the transcript or the identity of the awarding body, but in a foreign environment there is a risk that the transcript could be understood as having been produced by the partner university rather than by Kaplan or its international college. The review team therefore advises KIC to review the design and content of transcripts, so as to ensure that there is no possibility of confusion regarding the ultimate academic responsibility.

1.34 Students successfully completing the validated courses at Kaplan International College Bournemouth receive a certificate from the relevant validating university (Bournemouth University or University of Wales), while the Pre-Master's offered at Kaplan International College Bournemouth is the only course for which KIC itself issues award certificates. These certificates are all appropriately worded.

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

1.35 KIC has developed a Qualifications Framework, and the descriptors used for each level of award have been developed with reference to FHEQ and National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 6 and NQF level 3, to provide an appropriate point of reference. Mapping against the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework (SCQF) was carried out for the provision at Glasgow International College, and the Qualifications Framework was

aligned to both the SCQF and NQF. All programmes have accompanying programme specifications, which refer as appropriate to subject benchmark statements and include defined learning outcomes. There was good evidence of the mapping of relevant aspects of local college quality assurance procedures against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), particularly with regard to student-facing policies.

1.36 There is close consultation between staff at the individual colleges and staff at partner universities in the course of the development and annual review of programmes. This work aims to ensure that content, level and standards of the programmes are appropriate to allow articulation with the related university courses, and that student achievement matches the partner's expectations. At the Foundation Certificate level, one college reported discussion with A-level providers in its vicinity to ensure comparability with respect to both content and standards.

1.37 KIC recognised that at this stage not all staff would yet be fully conversant with the details of the Quality Code. The review team found that there was good progress in aligning with the Quality Code, and overall the team concluded that there was appropriate engagement with external reference points in managing the programmes.

How effectively does the provider use external examining, moderation, or verification to assure academic standards?

1.38 External examiners are appointed to all KIC programmes. The review team considered that such involvement of external academic advice on assessment was good practice. The Academic Standards and Quality Manual sets out criteria for the appointment of external examiners. These include monitoring the extent to which the processes for assessment and the determination of awards are sound and have been fairly conducted. External examiners' reports are considered by programme committees who then contribute to the annual programme reports, which include the external examiner's report.

1.39 A central register of all KIC external examiners is maintained by CLIQ, which will notify colleges of any conflicts of interest that may arise. The current set of externals had been appointed from a range of higher education institutions. Appointments may be suggested by CLIQ or by the college or programme staff. Partner universities are involved in the appointment of external examiners with nominations being approved by JABs or by the partner university where JABs do not exist. The review team noted that individual arrangements regarding external examining were applied at specific colleges. Thus, Glasgow International College has in place a system of university-appointed subject moderators who provide an effective input into the assessment of its students, including scrutiny of assessment instruments prior to them being taken by students. At Kaplan International College Bournemouth the pre-master's programme currently had no appointed external examiner or other external involvement. The team considered it important that a programme at this level should involve external advice. KIC was aware of the issue, which was in part due to ongoing local negotiations, and it firmly intended to address this at an early stage. The review team considers it advisable that KIC provides a dimension of external assurance for the pre-master's programme, in accordance with its revised Academic Standards and Quality Manual.

1.40 The review team discussed the appointment and the remit of external examiners with senior staff of KIC and with teaching staff in the colleges. The team read a range of external examiners' reports and reviewed the way in which points raised in the reports were considered at programme level and reported through the KIC quality assurance procedures. Overall, the team found that the system was working productively, and it acknowledged that the use of external examiners in the context of KIC's work and the level of its programmes was not necessarily a requirement.

1.41 Nevertheless, the team has observations to make on the use of external examiners within KIC. The main focus of their work is to contribute to the maintenance of academic standards by reviewing a selection of completed examination scripts and assignments. However, the team noted that, with the exception of Kaplan International College Bournemouth and Sheffield International College, external examiners are not currently involved in scrutinising examination questions or assignment briefs prior to the students taking the assessment. In the view of the team, having no requirement for external scrutiny of assessment at this stage is a weakness in KIC's assessment strategy. The team therefore advises KIC to ensure that there is provision in all programmes for external scrutiny of examination questions and summative assignments, before these are used in student assessment.

1.42 Some additional shortcomings were noted in the operation of the external examining system within the colleges. One assessment board was held with no external examiner present, external examiner appointments were not always made against consistently applied criteria, and at one college it was found that external examiners' reports were not shared with all staff teaching on the relevant programme. The review team concluded that KIC was still developing a systematic and consistent approach to the involvement of external examiners.

1.43 Overall, the review team considered it creditable that KIC had put in place a system for the external examining of all its programmes, and found that in most cases this system was effective, within the limits of its remit, and was making a positive contribution to the maintenance of academic standards. The team nevertheless considered that, having taken the decision to appoint external examiners, KIC could use them to greater benefit. In its self-evaluation, KIC affirmed that the use of external examiners was a key element of its Quality Assurance Framework. With this in mind, the team considers it desirable that KIC considers ways in which it can make a fuller use of the external examiners that it has appointed.

How effectively does the provider use statistical information to monitor and assure academic standards?

1.44 Each college maintains detailed, module level records of student attendance, progression and completion using a common, standard student record system. Such data is made available as part of the annual programme report and the annual college report (and thus reported to the host university and to APQC). The data is used to highlight any problem areas and inform the need for curriculum change. The current system does not allow easy interrogation of the databases by individual staff, but a new student record system currently being installed will facilitate this and make the production of a wider range of comparative data more easily achievable.

1.45 One of the provider's strategic aims is to see alumni performing better in the host university courses to which they progress than other international students who enter the same course directly. This requires the collection of data concerning student outcomes from host institutions, with their assistance. Currently, a limited amount of such data is available for students progressing from Sheffield, Glasgow and Liverpool International Colleges, other partner universities indicated that they sought to provide such data in the future. Where data was available, it had been used to highlight specific problems faced by students and had led to changes to curriculum order and content intended to ameliorate such problems. In both Sheffield and Glasgow the data demonstrated year-on-year improvement in the performance of progressing KIC students.

1.46 A joint research project between KIC and Glasgow University (the Transition Project) has examined in detail the performance of KIC students on progression to the

University of Glasgow. A second project is using initial qualifications and progression and completion data to investigate correlation between the level of input qualifications from different countries and the level achieved on the KIC programme.

1.47 The review team was able to examine the use of data in programme monitoring reports, and for some programmes it was shown evidence of the consideration of progression data, including reports from the Transition Project. The team considers that the analysis of data relating to the progression and performance of KIC students within the partner universities provides a key indicator for the quality and academic standards of the KIC programmes, and it would therefore strongly encourage KIC and its partner institutions to continue to develop the management and the consideration of this information. Overall, the team found that KIC recognises the importance of statistical information, is seeking to strengthen this aspect of its management of academic standards, and uses the information sets currently available to it in an effective manner.

The review team has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers through embedded college provision.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 KIC has a range of processes for monitoring the quality of learning opportunities, including in particular the annual monitoring and review cycle, which carries out a comprehensive review of the programme delivery and reports on progression and completion figures. Consideration of student feedback on the quality of teaching is included in annual reports and is also used by college-level senior management in staff performance appraisal. The generally very positive outcomes from student feedback surveys were reflected in discussions with students met by the review team, who reported high levels of satisfaction with the quality of learning provided in the colleges. KIC colleges also use staff feedback on modules, elicited regularly through formal module feedback questionnaires. External examiners are invited to comment on the quality as well as the academic standards of student work. The annual college report provides an overview of the quality of learning opportunities and this report is seen by senior managers at KIC as well as by the partner university; it includes considerable detail about matters related to student support. This higher level management is supported by the compilation of quality-related information carried out by CLIQ and presented to APQC. Further evaluation is carried out regularly by the JABs (or equivalent) with the universities. Evidence for successful learning in these programmes is also provided persuasively by the students' successful transition into university programmes, the progression data which supports this, and the generally high level of satisfaction expressed by the partner universities with the qualifications of students. The range of evidence relating to quality of learning seen by the review team, and used by KIC in its quality management processes, was comprehensive, well reported and was acted upon to produce change and improvement where this was necessary.

2.2 KIC has developed a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which provides an important framework for the enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching. A specific strand of the strategy addresses the student experience and quality of learning opportunities. The strategy was currently being rolled out across the colleges, with a view to each college developing its own local policy and approach based on the strategy, supported as necessary by CLIQ. The review team considered this a positive initiative but found that currently the level of adoption and implementation of the strategy in the colleges was

variable. Overall, the review team found that careful attention was paid to the management support and continuing enhancement of student learning across KIC.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities?

2.3 As noted in paragraph 1.35, KIC develops and approves its programmes in accordance with national qualifications frameworks, subject benchmark statements and quality assurance guidance. All colleges have close relationships with their partner universities for the management and enhancement of learning opportunities, and these constitute the most significant external reference point. This is clear from the detailed articulation agreements entered into at the initial stage of development and also by the continued review of these arrangements by the JAB (or equivalent). For example, programme specifications for KIC programmes are developed to align with those at the relevant partner universities. Each college has local arrangements for day-to-day contact between college management and the partner university. The review team considers that this effective liaison, communication and collaboration with KIC's higher education partners is good practice.

2.4 Full inspections have been carried out at all the KIC colleges by the British Accreditation Council. KIC and each college have responded positively to any recommendations made by these reviews.

2.5 The diploma and foundation certificate programmes, respectively, at Kaplan International College Bournemouth are validated by the University of Wales and by Bournemouth University and so these programmes are monitored and reviewed by those universities' quality assurance requirements and processes.

How effectively does the provider assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

2.6 The quality assurance of learning and teaching within KIC is carried out through the processes and procedures already described above, that is through the work of programme committees, external examiners, annual reports, JABs (or equivalent), college annual reports, and the annual academic standards and quality of programmes report to APQC. Of these, the most well established are the JABs, which conduct a regular review of a college's programmes, receiving and considering annual programme reports. These reports include student progression data, and summaries of feedback from staff, students and external examiners. The review team read both programme reports and the minutes of JABs and was able to confirm that proper consideration was given to the learning experience of KIC students.

2.7 Of particular note in the context of enhancement in the KIC organisation is CLIQ. This centre, based in Nottingham, provides development opportunities for staff at all the various colleges. Staff during the college visits spoke highly of the secondment possibilities provided by CLIQ and of the various projects that it was undertaking with the aim of enhancing provision across the network. CLIQ acts as a support service, providing what KIC describes as a key role in quality assurance and quality enhancement. It acts as a hub supporting the development of new programmes and practices. CLIQ also administers the KIC Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund which supports innovation projects. The review team noted, however, that the level of engagement with CLIQ's enhancement and development initiatives varied between the colleges and that there was a potential for strengthening the networking activities. The team therefore considers it desirable that KIC continues to encourage engagement by all of the embedded colleges with the enhancement work of CLIQ.

How effectively does the provider make use of student feedback to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

2.8 KIC colleges are responsive to student feedback on their study experience. The context for learning within the colleges is one of a relatively small student community, low staff-student ratios, a short duration for most of the programmes and a lack of familiarity in many of the students with UK systems of student participation. In consequence, the informal opportunities for students to offer feedback are equally or more significant than formal systems. The students met by the review team were in general highly appreciative of the accessibility of academic and support staff at all levels and the responsiveness of staff to any issues that they had raised. At one college students and alumni specifically expressed the view that formal systems of representation were not necessary because any issues or concerns could be resolved informally.

2.9 KIC colleges also have effective formal systems in place and use student feedback in a variety of ways, as appropriate to the local context. These include questionnaire surveys, consultation with student representatives and student contributions to external reviews. Students and alumni met in meetings with the review team considered that their feedback was valued and taken seriously. They were able to give a number of examples of how formal student feedback had been used to make improvements that had benefited either themselves or future cohorts.

2.10 At the level of central oversight, KIC reviews and responds to student feedback as reported in Annual Programme Reviews and College reports. Annual Programme Reports are collated also by CLIQ into an overview report which can enable features of good practice identified through student feedback to be shared across the network of colleges.

2.11 The review team noted that KIC had recently initiated a comprehensive review of its student feedback strategy, which was to take into account such considerations as the risks of survey fatigue, the scope of feedback, and its systematic analysis. This initiative provided further evidence of the seriousness with which KIC took its approach to gathering and using evidence of its students' views on their studies. The team discussed the level of responsiveness to student feedback with student groups in all of the colleges, and it examined copies of student feedback surveys, programme committee reports, and annual programme reports, identifying comments on student issues. The team was satisfied that KIC uses student feedback in an effective and productive way.

How does the provider assure itself that students are supported effectively?

2.12 The ways in which student support is delivered varies between colleges, depending upon local history and context. The overall management of student support is overseen by a central Director of Student Services, who leads the college Heads of Student Services team. Their work is based on clearly defined policies and practice, covering in particular induction, attendance, tutorial guidance, and support in progression and transition into university-level studies.

2.13 In all colleges, professional and academic staff work effectively as a team to provide comprehensive student support tailored to the needs of the individual students. Low staff: student ratios and an organisational commitment to excellent support ensure that student support is personalised and effective. Appropriate support is provided at all stages of the student journey with pre-arrival briefings, arrival meetings and orientation, familiarisation with British culture and one-to-one academic support via meetings with personal and/or module tutors. The review team noted that some colleges offered a programme of extra-curricula activities known as Learning Outside the Classroom, aimed at promoting social integration

and generic skills and personal qualities - these included structured social events and games, with an organised cross-college competitive sports day.

2.14 Support for transition to university varied according to local university partnerships, but there was good evidence of engagement by the colleges with university partners to manage this transition. Some alumni who had entered the second year of their degree studies did note some issues with transition, but these seemed to be primarily related to shortcomings with the receiving institution's induction for direct entrants.

2.15 The University Placement Service (UPS) is a distinctive feature of the KIC provision. Initially established at KIC Bournemouth, the UPS has now been rolled out across the network. It hosts a network of UK universities, which will make insurance offers to students. All students who successfully complete the KIC award but do not meet the progression requirements of the particular partner institution are guaranteed an offer of a place at a UK University. Thus, the UPS provides security to students who have not performed as well as they had hoped in the earlier part of the academic year. It engages students at an appropriate stage in identifying progression routes that are appropriate to their needs and abilities. The review team considered the work of the UPS to be a feature of good practice.

2.16 The review team noted the many positive comments on the quality of student support expressed in the student written submissions received from the individual KIC colleges. These were strongly echoed in its meetings with students, and reflected in KIC's own regular student surveys. Student support at all colleges was found by the team to be effectively designed and systematically managed, and of an excellent standard. The structured and well developed approach to student support shown by KIC was judged by the team to be good practice.

How effectively does the provider manage the recruitment and admission of students?

2.17 The review team found that recruitment and admissions are efficiently and effectively managed through KIC's central administrative services. Students reported that they had become aware of KIC through a number of methods, including agents, contact with an in-country KIC office or through the KIC website. KIC is keen to have more diversity in its recruitment of students from different countries and recognises this as a challenge. Agents used in the marketing of courses and student recruitment attend training events both in-country and events in the UK. KIC also works closely with the partner universities' marketing and international offices. Detailed records of all the events and attendees are kept and monitored by admissions staff centrally. The review team noted evidence of KIC referring students who have the necessary qualifications to enter the partner university directly to that partner institution, and this is reciprocated by the partner university encouraging application to KIC by students who do not qualify for direct entry. On the basis of the evidence available, the review team considered that KIC has a responsible attitude to recruitment and to its work in this area with its agents and with higher education institutions.

2.18 The review team discussed the admissions systems with KIC staff, reviewed application-related procedures and documentation and questioned students concerning their experience of application and admissions. All admissions are administered centrally at KIC's central offices in London where admissions staff work to a detailed procedural manual. There is a two-stage standard application that captures all necessary information, including special needs. UK NARIC is used as a reference source to check qualifications and the Secure English Language Test is checked online. There are no application deadlines and so the process is a continuous one with students being enrolled onto a programme at the first available start date. Students apply to a particular college with a view to progressing to the

specific partner university, usually with a subject study path in view. Good contact is maintained between the centre and colleges locally. The central team makes visits to the colleges so that they can give potential students first-hand details of what the experience at a particular institution might be. Key to the application process is the counselling and advice given throughout the application process from first contact to enrolment. Pre-departure briefing sessions are held in-country, and the applications team keeps in constant contact with the students. The review team concluded that the procedures in place for the admission of students, especially in relation to the advice and counselling provided, constituted a feature of good practice.

How effective are the provider's arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

2.19 KIC offers ongoing support to its staff through organisation-wide policies, through local college activities, and through a framework of cross-college activity mainly centred upon CLIQ. The review team discussed staff development with senior management, and with staff in the colleges, and reviewed lists of staff development opportunities offered at each of the colleges. In many of the colleges, the staff development programme of the partner university is open to KIC staff. In this and other areas of activity already discussed, the review team found good practice in the organisational cohesion of the KIC network of colleges and partner higher education institutions, including the work of CLIQ.

2.20 The programme of staff development and the amount and quality of training available for staff was judged generally to be of a high standard. Particularly good is the attention paid to development opportunities for support staff. There is finance available to allow all staff to attend conferences and to visit colleagues in other KIC colleges. Careful management of agents, who are often the same as those used by the partner university, is a strong feature of KIC's work and especially noteworthy is the training offered to such staff when they are in the UK. KIC is naturally aware of the importance of speed in responding to external enquiries, and administrative staff are trained to execute their tasks with efficiency; the business requires speed and effectiveness in its services. Senior support staff are often mentored by equivalent staff in one of the other colleges and this network was clearly working well and much appreciated. Staff are trained for their jobs, by attending conferences for which generous funding is provided and then cascading information and skills further across the organisation. People are trained, promoted, and moved on in the organisation; a good example of this was evident in the college recently established in Brighton, where a number of experienced staff from other colleges had been moved, bringing with them particular expertise and allowing a solid start for a new college. The review team judged this range of staff development provided for KIC's management, administrative and support staff to be good practice.

2.21 Teaching staff, including the sessional staff, are provided with well managed induction and mentoring. There is significant turnover of staff who are employed according to the business needs and because of the volume of sessional staff, induction is offered on a termly basis. Staff support and professional development continues throughout their careers, through regular appraisal and a well developed peer-observation process. The staff development programmes seen by the review team showed the diversity of training opportunities, including, for example, at Glasgow, a session on the special requirements of working with international students. Clearly, training of this nature could be of benefit to teachers across the KIC network. Other elements include both teaching development sessions and sessions more closely attuned to the organisation as a business. The KIC Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy was developed through a process of cross-college consultation and working groups, which provided an opportunity to exchange views and good practice relating to the learning environment. Some staff felt that more attention might be given to a network-wide training programme to deal with the range of

issues involved in teaching international students, who may present particular challenges, and this is an area for development recognised by KIC. The review team considered that it would be desirable for KIC to further develop a coherent cross-organisational approach to the support of teaching staff, in particular with regard to the teaching of international students.

2.22 The review team concluded that there was a high level of organisational commitment to professional development within KIC. Staff are trained for their jobs, by attending conferences for which generous funding is provided and then cascading information and skills to the organisation. From meetings with staff across the colleges and in the central London office, the review team found that there was a good collegial atmosphere and a real sense that people knew what they had to do and had the training and support to do it well.

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

2.23 KIC monitors the quality and adequacy of learning resources available to students through its wider quality assurance procedures, in particular using feedback from students and staff, the annual programme reports, and the work of the JABs (or equivalent). The requirements in terms of learning resources for specific programmes are clearly established in the programme approval process and evaluated subsequently. Reporting on adequacy of facilities is covered in student and staff feedback surveys and this provides significant information for internal evaluation, particularly with regard to science and engineering programmes. Initiatives are in place to enhance and develop learning resources, for instance the introduction of the central virtual learning environment and the emphasis on new learning technologies within the KIC Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

2.24 The provision of adequate learning resources is a central feature of the partnership agreements with universities. Appropriate access to the local university facilities (library, computing, students' union, sport facilities) is set out in these agreements, which are then reviewed annually, normally through JSMB (or equivalent). In this way, the currency and suitability of the pathway programmes' learning resources is maintained by regular contact with the partner institution. Thus, typically through a JAB, or equivalent, there is opportunity for comment on the suitability of a particular programme for the receiving institution and - through the JSMB - on its available resources. This has led to regular updating of the colleges' provision in close collaboration with the partner universities. The review team saw evidence of the agreements and their ongoing review with regard to resources.

2.25 For the majority of the colleges, the learning resources provided are those of the partner university. Responsibility for the quality of learning resources therefore lies with the individual college and the university; in the majority of colleges students have access to all local resources, and their learning activity generally related primarily to the university's resources. The students met by the team in the course of the visits generally reported most positively about the quality of the environments in which they worked and also appreciated the quality of the informal spaces. In all of the fully embedded colleges, students confirmed that they had full access to the facilities of the partner university, in many cases saying that they felt as if they were already students of the institution. The review team's visits to colleges provided good evidence that this was the case; thus, for instance, KIC offers a centrally managed virtual learning environment, but in many colleges students will also use the local college/university virtual learning environment. This approach is valuable in supporting transition to the partner university's learning systems.

2.26 Naturally, the quality of the individual learning resources will vary according to the nature of the programmes and the provision of the host university. The review team noted that, where necessary, special arrangements were made to meet the needs of students on specific programmes. Thus, KIC had negotiated the necessary agreement determining that students progressing to Cranfield University through Kaplan International College London could use the nearby laboratories of City University. Teaching staff in the colleges also benefited from agreements for access to resources and commented positively about the constructive relationship with their partner university and about their ability to consult library and electronic resources provided through the partnership agreement. Overall, the review team concluded that KIC, through its careful arrangements for programme approval, partnership agreement, and ongoing evaluation, had the means to ensure that the learning resources available to colleges were of the appropriate standard.

The review team has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for students through embedded colleges.

3 Public information

How effectively does the provider's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides?

3.1 The most significant sources of public information made available by KIC are web-based pages and the hard-copy prospectuses describing the colleges and their programmes. KIC also produces promotional leaflets and pre-arrival guides. A market-facing summary of all KIC programmes available is regularly published for use by sales and admissions teams in overseas locations. The design of web pages is professionally managed and websites are accessible and clear, providing a full range of information regarding course programme content, student services, the learning environment and student fees. At programme level, student handbooks provide comprehensive study-related information, and these were welcomed and found useful by students and by staff. Students are asked by colleges in post-arrival surveys about the accuracy and usefulness of information. In meetings of the review team with students, all, without exception, said that the information they received before they arrived was accurate and some even commented that what they found on arrival was actually better than their expectations.

3.2 The review team noted that for some of the colleges, there is a seamless transition between the web pages of KIC and those of the partner institution. While KIC considered that this was a positive development in developing the students' sense of belonging to the partner university institution, the review team considered that there was a resulting risk that students might be confused about their formal status and place of enrolment. However, there was no suggestion from students at the college meetings that this was actually the case. The team also considered that some of the college prospectuses give only a partial picture of performance with respect to student progression and university placement. While nothing the team found in this respect could be described as inaccurate, it noted that, for instance, that data quoted for successful university placement related only to completing students, and that prospectuses did not provide applicants with information on non-completion rates.

How effective are the provider's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing?

3.3 Public information in KIC is managed centrally by a professional team. There is a careful approach to web design and management and to the publication of hard copy material. Because of the nature of the business and the partnership arrangements, all published material has to be seen and approved by the partner university and by local college staff. Systems are in place to ensure that published material is formally signed off by the local college director and by the managing director of KIC in the London office. As a private provider, KIC does not make public some information on college performance and internal company strategic matters. The review team found that KIC's arrangements for managing and communicating information and for ensuring the accuracy of its published information were professional and robust.

The team concludes that **reliance can be placed** on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

4 Action plan

Kaplan International Colleges action plan relating to the Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight scheme March 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the strength of self-reflection in KIC as demonstrated in particular by the self-evaluation document (paragraph 1.23) 	<p>Feed back to Kaplan International Colleges senior staff in colleges and in headquarters that the self-evaluation document was commended in the review</p> <p>Continue to draft Quality Enhancement Plan to take into account actions required, as identified in the self-evaluation document</p>	<p>Within four weeks of publication of Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight report on QAA website (anticipated by end August 2012)</p> <p>Quality Enhancement Plan to be approved by College Executive Management Board and Academic</p>	<p>Director of Compliance</p> <p>Quality Officer, Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality</p>	<p>Communication sent to staff</p> <p>Approval received from College Executive Management Board and Academic Planning and Quality</p>	<p>Director of Colleges</p> <p>Director of Colleges and Director of Student Learning</p>	<p>Feedback from staff on the communication to be received by College Executive Management Board for noting</p> <p>Effectiveness of the Quality Enhancement Plan with respect to improvements in quality, monitored and reviewed throughout the</p>

		Planning and Quality Committee by August 2012		Committee		2012-13 academic year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the independent dimension in the management of academic standards provided by KIC's appointment of external examiners (paragraph 1.38) 	Feed back to Kaplan International Colleges senior college-based staff on the independent dimension in the management of standards provided by external examiners as being as commended in the review, while raising awareness that the ways in which Kaplan International Colleges uses external examiners were identified as an area for development	Within four weeks of publication of the Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight report on QAA website (anticipated by end August 2012)	Director of Student Learning	Communication sent to staff	Chair of Academic Planning and Quality Committee	Feedback from staff on the communication to be received by Academic Planning and Quality Committee and, in turn, College Executive Management Board for noting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the effective liaison, communication and collaboration with KIC's higher education partners (paragraph 2.3) 	Awareness-raising campaign with staff in colleges, headquarters and with host universities to ensure that all staff and students know that there was commendation for effective liaison, communication and	Within four weeks of publication of Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight report on QAA website (anticipated by	Director of Compliance	Communication sent to staff in colleges, headquarters and host universities	Director of Colleges	Feedback from staff and host universities on the communication to be received by College Executive Management Board for noting

	collaboration with Kaplan International Colleges hosts and partners	end August 2012)				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the work of KIC's University Placement Service (paragraph 2.15) 	<p>Awareness-raising campaign in pathways and language colleges regarding the work of the University Placement Service, to include statistics on numbers of students placed and success stories</p> <p>Continued strategic selection of a number of partner universities to accept Kaplan International Colleges Award through the University Placement Service: target of number and appropriate institutions to be agreed</p>	<p>Campaign to be rolled out from September 2013 in order to have an impact upon students completing in April 2013</p> <p>By end of October 2013</p>	<p>Head of University Placement Service working with University Placement Service coordinators (also working with Director of Sales and Recruitment)</p> <p>Head of University Placement Service</p>	<p>Greater awareness of the University Placement Service across colleges, as evidenced through an increased uptake of students</p> <p>Increase in the number of target institutions that will accept the Kaplan International Colleges Award</p>	<p>Director of Colleges</p> <p>Director of Colleges</p>	<p>Report on the impact of the campaign to be produced by the Head of University Placement Service, received by College Executive Management Board</p> <p>Interim report on the number of institutions to be received by College Executive Management Board by December 2012; final report on numbers of partner institutions to accept Kaplan International Colleges Award through University</p>

						Placement Service by December 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality of the pastoral and academic support provided for students (paragraph 2.16) 	Awareness-raising campaign in colleges and in headquarters to ensure all staff and students know that quality of pastoral and academic support for students has received external commendation	By end of December 2012	Director of Student Services working with Heads of Student Services Group	Greater awareness of the quality of pastoral support for students	Director of Colleges	Feedback on the campaign to be received by Heads of Student Services Group and then, in turn, by the College Executive Management Board, by end of March 2013
		By end of April 2013	Quality Officer, Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality, working with Senior Learning Support tutors	Greater awareness of the quality of academic support for students	Director of Student Learning	Feedback on the campaign to be received by Academic Planning and Quality Committee by end of August 2013
	Awareness raising with sales team with regard to ensuring these message are clear in colleges' publicity	By end of May 2013	Director of Sales and Recruitment	Greater awareness of the quality of pastoral and academic support for students	Director of Student Learning	Feedback on the campaign to be received by the College Executive Management Board by end of August 2013
	Ensure that this is in	By end of	Director of Sales	Sections in all	Kaplan	Market feedback

	marketing collateral for the autumn 2013 intake	December 2012	and Recruitment	college prospectuses and websites with updated information on pastoral and academic support for students	International Colleges Managing Director	on understanding of the quality of Kaplan International Colleges pastoral and academic support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the pre-admissions support provided by KIC staff to applicants (paragraph 2.18) 	Awareness-raising campaign in colleges regarding the pre-admission support available to students	By December 2012	College directors working with marketing external relations officers (or equivalent) in colleges	Greater awareness of pre-admissions support provided by Kaplan International Colleges staff to applicants	Director of Colleges	Report on the impact of the campaign to be produced, received by the College Executive Management Board by March 2013
	Continue to develop training plans for staff in Kaplan International Colleges sales teams and overseas offices, and continue the collaboration with host higher education institutions in pre-arrival training	By December 2012	Director of Sales and Recruitment, supported by Director of Compliance	Better informed and well trained sales force	Kaplan International Colleges Managing Director	Minimal visa refusals and evidence of good practice with UK Border Agency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the organisational cohesion of the KIC network of colleges and partner higher education 	Awareness-raising campaign in colleges and across headquarters teams	During term 1 2012-13	College directors working with marketing external relations officers	Greater awareness of the Centre for Learning Innovation and	Kaplan International Colleges Managing Director	Increased take-up for initiatives such as the Learning and Teaching

<p>institutions, including the work of its Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ) (paragraph 2.19)</p>	<p>Enhance and continue the collaboration for staff development with host university continuing professional development</p>	<p>By end of August 2014</p>	<p>(or equivalent) in colleges College directors working with host universities</p>	<p>Quality's work among staff in colleges and across headquarters teams Evidence of deepening of collaborations with host universities with regard to staff development</p>	<p>Director of Colleges</p>	<p>Innovation Fund Recognition of host universities of the expertise that the colleges can bring to their own programmes of continual professional development, with particular reference to meeting the learning and support needs of international students in transition</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the staff development provided for KIC's management, administrative and support staff (paragraph 2.20). 	<p>Awareness-raising campaign in colleges and across headquarters team with regard to commendation for the staff development provided to Kaplan International Colleges staff</p>	<p>Within four weeks of publication of the Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight report on QAA website (anticipated by</p>	<p>Quality Officer, Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality to circulate relevant section to college directors, for college directors to circulate to</p>	<p>Increased awareness of new and existing staff with regard to the range and availability of staff development opportunities available</p>	<p>Director of Colleges</p>	<p>Increase in staff awareness of development opportunities, as evidenced in appraisals, mid-year reviews, and so on</p>

	Materials to be made available for staff to display examples of staff development they have undertaken, for displaying in staff areas	end August 2012)	staff as part of staff induction in September 2012	Increased awareness of new and existing staff with regard to the range and availability of staff development opportunities available	Kaplan International Colleges Managing Director	Increase in staff awareness of development opportunities, as evidenced in appraisals, mid-year reviews, and so on
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The panel considers that it is advisable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the design and content of the transcripts issued by KIC, so as to ensure that there is no confusion regarding the ultimate responsibility for the KIC award (paragraph 1.33) 	Kaplan International Colleges to review the design of the transcript issued to students at the end of their programme, with respect to the responsibility of the Kaplan International Colleges Award	Ahead of April 2013 issuing of transcripts	<p>Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality - Director of Student Learning to initiate review</p> <p>Quality Officer, Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality to coordinate responses and report findings</p>	New transcript designed, which more clearly confirms the ultimate responsibility of the Kaplan International Colleges Award	Director of Colleges	<p>Feedback from QAA on proposed new design of transcript</p> <p>Table as item for noting at Joint Academic Boards</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide a 	Kaplan International	External	Director of	External	Director of	Use the reports to

dimension of external assurance for the pre-master's programme offered at Kaplan International College, Bournemouth in accordance with KIC's revised Academic Standards and Quality Manual (paragraph 1.39)	College Bournemouth to find and appoint external examiner(s) as appropriate to the subjects under scrutiny for the pre-master's programme for 2012-13	examiner(s) to be appointed so that s/he may have oversight of the work of students completing programmes in August 2013	Studies and Head of Pathways	examiner(s) in post and reports produced by deadline	Student Learning, Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality	feed into quality assurance procedures Review the effectiveness of the support provided by the external examiner(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that there is provision in all programmes for an external scrutiny of examination questions and summative assignments, before these are used in student assessment (paragraph 1.41). 	Kaplan International Colleges to review current procedures at colleges for the external scrutiny of exam questions and summative assignments before these are used in student assessment	By end of August 2012	Quality Officer, Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality with college academic directors	Report of the review of current procedures for the external scrutiny of exam questions and summative assignments before they are used in student assessment	Director of Student Learning, Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality	Report of the review of current procedures for the external scrutiny of exam questions and summative assignments before they are used in student assessment to be received by the Academic Planning and Quality Committee
	Good practice as identified in provision of external scrutiny to be shared across	By end of term 1 2012-13	Quality Officer, Centre for Learning Innovation and	Mechanism for sharing good practice	Director of Student Learning, Centre for Learning	Feedback sought from colleges on how they might use this

	colleges Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality to support colleges currently without suitable level of externality, as identified in the Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight report, to work with external examiners and/or colleagues at host universities to devise processes to secure this externality within their own quality assurance procedures	By end of term 3 2012-13 to ensure process for external scrutiny of exam questions and summative assignments is in place for 2013-14 academic year	Quality Quality Officer, Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality	All colleges to be able to evidence that there is an opportunity for external scrutiny of questions and summative assessments, before these are used in student assessment for the start of the 2013-14 academic year	Innovation and Quality Director of Student Learning, Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality	knowledge of others' practice to inform their own Annually via the Annual Programme Reports
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The panel considers that it is desirable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to be confident, in the context of greater devolution to colleges, that the processes for 	Identify any particular college with inadequacies in feedback and assessment levels and marking,	August 2012	Quality Officer, Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality working with College	Awareness raised of development need with college staff and action plan in place	Director of Student Learning	Improvements in feedback and assessment levels and marking at identified college

<p>monitoring the quality of feedback to students on their assessed work are not weakened (paragraph 1.28)</p>	<p>and initiate appropriate development work</p> <p>Review of quality of feedback on assessed work to be conducted</p> <p>Sources of data might include external examiners' comments, student and staff perceptions of feedback, and so on</p> <p>Revise Annual Programme Review template to ensure reference to encouraging more reflection on feedback to students in particular, and all sections in general is included, for example areas for improvement and areas of good practice</p>	<p>Ahead of September 2013</p> <p>For Annual Report of 2012-13 to be written late in 2013</p>	<p>Director and Academic Director</p> <p>Quality Enhancement Plan working group</p> <p>Quality Enhancement Plan working group</p>	<p>Analysis of review of quality of feedback on assessed work</p> <p>New report template produced</p>	<p>Director of Colleges and Managing Director</p> <p>Chair of Academic Planning and Quality Committee</p>	<p>Maintaining confidence in the robust nature of processes for monitoring the quality of feedback in the context of greater devolution</p> <p>Increased level of reflection to be received by Academic Planning and Quality Committee as part of annual review process</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider ways in which it can make a fuller use of the 	<p>Kaplan International Colleges to review current procedures</p>	<p>By 31 December 2013</p>	<p>Quality Officer, Centre for Learning</p>	<p>Report of the review of the procedures for</p>	<p>Director of Student Learning, Centre</p>	<p>Report to be received by the Academic</p>

external examiners that it has appointed (paragraph 1.43)	<p>at colleges for the involvement of external examiners appointed</p> <p>Action plan to be produced based upon the report of the review</p> <p>Kaplan International Colleges to revise the external examiner's report template to ensure that full use is made of the experience of external examiners</p>	<p>By 31 August 2013, for implementation in 2013-14 academic year</p> <p>During academic year 2012-13 with new template prepared for first use for 2012-13 academic year reports</p>	<p>Innovation and Quality</p> <p>Quality Officer, Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality</p> <p>Quality Officer, Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality working with Academic Planning and Quality Committee to draft new template to encourage more feedback and encourage sharper focus in feedback for external examiners' reports</p>	<p>appointment of external examiners</p> <p>Action plan produced</p> <p>Revised external examiner's report template</p>	<p>for Learning Innovation and Quality</p> <p>Director of Student Learning</p> <p>Director of Student Learning</p>	<p>Planning and Quality Committee</p> <p>Action plan to be received by the Academic Planning and Quality Committee</p> <p>External examiner's report providing clearer feedback to contribute to programme review process</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to encourage engagement by all of the embedded 	More visible presence of Centre for Learning Innovation and	By end of December 2013	Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality staff	Greater awareness of Centre for Learning	Kaplan International Colleges Managing	Increased take-up for initiatives such as the Learning and

colleges with the enhancement work of CLIQ (paragraph 2.7)	Quality within colleges (for example newsletter, other communications, face-to-face meetings)		working with college directors	Innovation and Quality's work among staff in college and across headquarters teams	Director	Teaching Innovation Fund
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> further develop a coherent cross-organisational approach to the support of teaching staff, in particular with regard to the teaching of international students (paragraph 2.21). 	<p>Glasgow International College to feed back to Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality on the Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund project to review the induction for teaching staff</p> <p>Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality to devise a pilot programme for an initial one-day programme on teaching and supporting international students, to be delivered in new colleges for the academic year 2012-13</p>	<p>During summer term 2012</p> <p>Prepared by 1 September 2012</p>	<p>Director of Student Learning or nominee</p> <p>Director of Student Learning</p>	<p>Feedback report on the Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund project and discussions</p> <p>A one-day training programme for new academic and support staff, to focus upon the particular needs of international students</p>	<p>Director of Colleges</p> <p>Director of Student Learning</p>	<p>Inclusion of some of the project findings in the new pilot programme for staff development on the teaching of international students</p> <p>Review staff development annually to feed into Quality Enhancement Plan</p>

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to key terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. For more details see the [handbook](#)³ for this review method.

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality:

www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx.

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx.

academic standards The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

Code of practice *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* published by QAA: a set of interrelated documents giving guidance for higher education institutions.

credit(s) A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education programmes of study, expressed as 'numbers of credits' at a specific level.

feature of good practice A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

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

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

programme (of study) An approved course of study which provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

public information Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

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

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/eo-recognition-scheme.aspx

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