



Oxford International Education Group: International College Dundee

Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements

June 2019

About this report

This is a report of a review under the Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements method conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at International College Dundee. The review took place on 18 June 2019 and was conducted by a review team, as follows:

- Ms Barbara Howell
- Professor Graham Romp.

The main purpose of the review was to:

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

A summary of the key findings can be found in the section starting on page 3. The context in which these findings should be interpreted is explained on page 4. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us) and its mission.¹ More information about this review method can be found in the Handbook for providers.

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us

Key findings

The QAA panel considered evidence relating to the educational provision at International College Dundee (the College), both information supplied in advance and evidence gathered during the review visit. The review has resulted in the key findings stated in this section.

Judgements

The QAA panel formed the following judgement about International College Dundee.

- **Confidence** can be placed in International College Dundee's management of its responsibilities for academic standards, as set out in its contractual arrangements with its academic partner.
- **Confidence** can be placed in International College Dundee's management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.
- **Reliance can** be placed on the information that International College Dundee produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

The QAA panel identified the following **features of good practice** at International College Dundee:

- the students' access to university learning resources, including specialist facilities, supports student learning
- the rigorous tracking of students in the College and University provides the College with information to enhance learning opportunities.

Recommendations

The QAA panel makes the following recommendations to International College Dundee.

It is **advisable** for the provider to:

- ensure that external examiners have oversight of course work assignments and examination questions.

It is **desirable** for the provider to:

- ensure that the Staff-Student Liaison Committee, with student members in attendance, considers external examiner reports and that reference is made to this in the Student Handbook.

About International College Dundee

International College Dundee (the College) is an embedded college offering integrated programmes under the University of Dundee's (the University) Tier 4 sponsor's licence with the UKVI. The College was established by a collaboration agreement and is operated in partnership between Oxford International Education Group (OIEG) and the University. OIEG is a private education company comprising a number of organisations across a wide range of educational activities. The College is guided by the OIEG's core values. Following several months of negotiations, the University and OIEG agreed to establish what was to be called the International College Dundee through a collaboration agreement signed on 15 August 2016.

The College has a dedicated building over three floors adjacent to a number of other University buildings and within easy walking distance of the library, teaching buildings, students' union and all the facilities of the campus.

While the early intakes of undergraduate and postgraduate students had just completed their studies, at the time of the review there were 59 students and 8.67 (full-time equivalent) staff.

Detailed findings about International College Dundee

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The International College of Dundee is an Embedded College within the School of Social Sciences of the University, offering integrated programmes under the University's Tier 4 sponsor's licence. The arrangements between the College and the University were established in August 2016 with a first intake in September 2017. The provision of the College is scrutinised with the university quality mechanisms with the University retaining responsibility for setting and maintaining academic standards. The College adheres to those quality assurance standards through policies of the University as set out in the collaboration agreement, university quality framework and undergraduate regulations. The policies within the University are made available to staff and students via the university website.

1.2 Governance and management of the College are through a joint committee structure. The structure comprises: the Steering Board, chaired by the Vice-Principal (International) of the University, with overarching responsibility of the programmes; the Joint Academic Board for monitoring quality assurance and standards; and the Joint Operations Group. The Joint Academic Board and Joint Operations Group report directly to the Steering Board. The Steering Board and Joint Academic Board meet three times a year, while the Joint Operations Group meets six times a year and all operate as intended. The College has also recently introduced a Teaching and Learning Committee which reports to Joint Academic Board. The College Director and University Coordinator are responsible for the day-to-day management of the partnership.

1.3 Oversight is further maintained through the Oxford International Education Group Quality Assurance Committee where the core committee meets at least monthly and the full committee, which comprises the College Directors, meets twice a year. The Committee takes responsibility for ensuring that all core partnership documentation, collaborative agreements, operational agreements, service-level agreements, and any revisions of these, contain significant references to the provision of appropriate quality assurance procedures,

following the expectations and practices set out in the QAA's revised Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) (March 2018) and are compliant with Home Office regulations.

1.4 The College offers two programmes - the International Stage One (IS1) programme and the preparatory phase of an International Incorporated Master's (IIM) degree as approved through the University Programme Scrutiny Panel and Academic Standards Committee. Consideration of any new programme proposals or modifications to programmes takes place through the School of Social Sciences Quality Assurance office and approved by the University Quality and Academic Standards Committee.

1.5 Academic standards are maintained through the Annual Review of Taught programmes and the University Periodic Review process. An institutional review of the partnership with Oxford International Education Group will take place in 2021. An interim Periodic Review took place in April 2019 with a full review expected in 2023. Programme evaluation also takes place through the College Directors Annual Report to the Joint Academic Board and Steering Board. The report contains information on student numbers, pathways, results, scholarships, student experience, continuations and attrition, staffing and curriculum development.

1.6 Student satisfaction is collected through the Standard Operating Procedure Student Satisfaction Surveys, taken on arrival and exit, module reviews and through the Staff-Student Liaison Committee. After the analysis of the surveys, the College shares its findings with the group by providing a summary of the feedback received and by indicating how the College plans to incorporate students' feedback into their operations. Staff-Student Liaison Committee feedback as contained within the College Directors Report is presented to the Steering Board on an annual basis and more regularly at the Joint Academic Board and Teaching and Learning Committees.

1.7 The College operates a clear, fair and robust admissions process, informed by the Quality Code, *Chapter B2* and as set out in their policies and procedures, with all final decisions on the admission of students resting with the University.

1.8 The teaching staff are recruited and selected by the College Director with all College full and part-time or sessional teaching staff reviewed by the University before confirmation by the relevant committee. All teaching staff are subject to peer observations, undertaken by the Head of English supported by the College Director and used to guide on continuing professional development. Development needs are further assessed as part of the annual appraisal process for full-time staff.

1.9 The assessment of students is described as fair and transparent with information clearly set out in the students' handbook, module specifications and module guides. Module specifications follow a standard template and module guides were generally found to contain clear assessment rubrics and assessment criteria. Responsibility for the assessment organisation of examinations rests with the Administration Manager who acts as the Examination Officer and follows set examination guidelines and examination schedules.

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

1.10 The College continues to be informed by the external reference points working with the University for the approval and review of programmes. In particular, the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (SCQF) and QAA Subject Benchmark Statements as evidenced in their programmes and module specifications; and language modules reflect the requirements of the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR).

1.11 Language and study skills as developed by Oxford International Education Group match the requirements of the *Common European Framework of Reference* at Chapter B2 to C1.

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

1.12 Tutors have the responsibility for setting assessment. Those assessments are internally moderated by a panel comprising the Head of English and a full-time mathematics tutor with oversight by the College Director. The team learnt that the link tutor is also involved due to their knowledge of specialist subject areas. However, the team found that the external examiners had made it clear on their reports that they had not had oversight or indicated that oversight was not applicable for both assignments and exam scripts set. The team understood that in February 2019, it was agreed that external examiners would no longer be sent exam papers, student scripts and continual assessment work. However, university policy states that all summative assessment must be agreed with the external examiner. The review team therefore considers that it is **advisable** for the College to ensure that external examiners have oversight of coursework assignments and examination questions.

1.13 Tutors mark the work and undertake moderation of those marks in line with University Assessment Guidelines. The first and second marking is then made available to the external examiner after scrutiny by the Pre-board and subsequently, the Examination Boards. Exam Boards are held twice a year with the University Coordinator as Chair and the College Director, Head of English, External Examiners, Link Tutors and Examination Officer present.

1.14 Referral and retakes are authorised by the College Director in line with the collaboration agreement and following discussion with the relevant tutors, with recommendations and further consultations being made at the Pre-Board. Mitigating circumstances are considered at a Mitigating Circumstances Committee chaired by the College Director with the Head of English, the Associate Dean Quality Assurance of the School of Social Sciences, at least one Link Tutor and one other member of staff from the College.

1.15 External Examiners are appointed by the University in line with the collaboration agreement. External Examiners produce reports based on a university standard pro forma which are considered by the University. The University responds to those reports, and it would normally be expected that they are further considered through the Staff-Student Liaison Committee and also the Joint Academic Board. From a review of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee minutes no discussion of the external examiner reports had taken place (see paragraph 2.11).

The review team concludes that **confidence** can be placed in the International College Dundee's management of its responsibilities for academic standards, as set out in its contractual arrangements with its academic partner.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

2.1 OIEG takes a strategic approach to enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The main aim of the College is to prepare international students for successful transition into higher education at the University.

2.2 Governance and management of the College is through a joint committee structure with the University. The Steering Board is the overarching governing body responsible for all issues and decisions relating to the establishment, operation and management of the programmes at the College and all matters concerning regulatory compliance. The Joint Academic Board (JAB) reports to the Steering Board and has responsibility for monitoring quality assurance and standards issues relating to the delivery, assessment and modification of programmes delivered at the College.

2.3 There is also a Joint Operations Group (JOG) which reports to JAB and oversees operational aspects of the College. Day-to-day management of the College is conducted by the College Director who works closely with the University Coordinator.

2.4 The College shares responsibility for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities with the University. The College is responsible for delivering the curriculum, student support, setting assessments, the marking and moderation of student work, and giving feedback to students. At the time of the review, the College employed two full-time academic management staff, the College Director and the Head of English. A key element in the strategy for enhancement is to enlarge the senior management team as student numbers grow, with members being assigned specific responsibility related to learning opportunities and enhancement.

2.5 International College Dundee (ICD) programmes are designed and approved in collaboration with the University to support international students in both language and academic skills development.

2.6 The College has produced a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy that informs the management and enhancement of learning opportunities. The College recognises the opportunities and challenges in supporting international students from diverse backgrounds and there is an emphasis on cultural acclimatisation, small-class tuition, and formative assessment, to encourage the active engagement of all students.

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

2.7 The College uses a number of external reference points for the management and enhancement of learning opportunities. These include the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (SCQF) and the university processes for programme design, approval and review. Approval of programmes involves input from external subject specialists and university staff.

2.8 Adherence to *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS) and QAA Subject Benchmark Statements is embedded within the initial approval and review process of the University and is captured on the definitive programme and module templates. Module guides and assessment briefs provided to students are consistent with these approved documents.

2.9 The English Language units are embedded in the IS1 and IIM courses and are mapped to the CEFR and approved by the University to ensure that the assessment of learning outcomes of these units enables students to demonstrate their level of language ability.

2.10 There is robust scrutiny of programmes by external examiners appointed by the University to ensure that standards are comparable with UK expectations. External examiner reports are considered by the JAB. Link tutors, appointed by the University, liaise with College staff to provide information and advice, and are involved in student induction and

transition activities. The College receives feedback from link tutors and external examiners that are used in the annual review of its provision.

2.11 It is stated in its terms of reference, that external examiner reports will be considered by the Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC). However, students met by the reviewers were unaware of how to access these reports and the minutes of SSLC reviewed by the team made no reference to these reports being considered by students. For this reason, it is **recommended** as **desirable** that ICD ensures that the Staff-Student Liaison Committee, with student members in attendance, consider external examiner reports and reference is made to this in the Student Handbook.

2.12 The OIEG Admissions Policy is informed by the Quality Code, *Chapter B2*, and commits OIEG to providing a fair, effective and responsible admissions service. OIEG is primarily responsible for the recruitment of students in accord with pre-agreed academic entry criteria. The final decision over the admission of students to programmes at the College lies with the University which issues the Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) letters. The right to appeal an admissions' decision is explained in the OIEG Admissions Policy.

2.13 The College follows the University's Academic Appeals and Students Complaints' procedures which are made available to students through the handbook available on the virtual learning environment (VLE).

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

2.14 The JAB considers the outcomes of monitoring reports, assessment boards, link tutor and coordinator reports, and feedback from external examiners. Issues relating to teaching quality is a standard item on the agenda.

2.15 The College operates the University's annual monitoring and review processes for all courses and modules. The outcome of the monitoring process is the production of annual quality enhancement reports at programme and module levels. These are informed by statistical information, and feedback from students, staff, link tutors and external examiners. In addition to following the University's processes, the College Director produces a reflective annual report to the JAB and Steering Board.

2.16 Student feedback is obtained through a range of mechanisms, including representation on the Student-Staff Liaison Committee, module and programme-level feedback forms, and feedback on pre-arrival and induction procedures. Student and staff feedback is considered and followed up by the newly formed Teaching and Learning Committee throughout the academic year.

2.17 In April 2019, an Interim Programme Review of the College was undertaken by the University and reviewed documentation, and met staff and students from the College. This review identified a number of areas of good practice and made recommendations for enhancement. A full review of the College is expected to take place in 2023.

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

2.18 The College seeks to recruit teaching staff who can demonstrate an understanding of, and empathy with, international students. Staff receive induction sessions on appointment and have regular meetings with the College Director and Head of English to ensure they are supported effectively to maintain and enhance learning opportunities. Teaching staff are subject to peer observations undertaken by the Head of English, supported by the College

Director and used to guide on continuing professional development. Development needs are further assessed as part of the annual appraisal process for full-time staff.

2.19 Training for staff is provided regularly at the start of each term, with follow-up sessions later in the term. The College operates a programme of continuing professional development for its staff, which is designed to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities. OIEG also provides support for staff to acquire additional qualifications, and staff are encouraged to attend relevant conferences and workshops. College staff are able and encouraged to attend university staff development activities.

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

2.20 Students are sent pre-arrival information once they have secured a place. This material is reviewed annually by the Administration Manager, following student feedback. Students receive an induction session when they arrive at the College, and arrangements are made to support students who arrive late. The key information that students require is found in the course handbook. The handbook includes individual module guides that detail the learning outcomes, content and assessment methods.

2.21 Students are required to attend all classes and records are kept by tutors of attendance and these are transferred onto a weekly spreadsheet by the Administration Manager. The College follows a clear and robust attendance policy, with a series of interventions in cases of protracted absence from classes. The College operates a personal tutor system to provide general academic and personal advice and support within individual and group settings. The Administration Manager has overall responsibility for student support and welfare and is the first point of contact for any student who has a problem. Students have access to the full range of support services provided by the University.

2.22 The College receives detailed information about how its students perform when they progress to the University and this is effectively used to inform enhancement of learning opportunities. The rigorous tracking of students in the College and University provides the College with information to enhance learning opportunities and is considered **good practice**.

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

2.23 The University provides the College with teaching and administrative space, and college students have access to all university services, including learning resources, welfare, IT support and facilities, as all other enrolled university students.

2.24 To enhance student learning, access to university resources, including specialist facilities, is regularly timetabled with staff support and students reported that they highly value access to university resources. The students' access to university learning resources, including specialist facilities, supports student learning and is considered **good practice**.

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

3 Information

How effective are the provider's arrangements for ensuring that information about learning opportunities is fit-for-purpose, accessible and trustworthy?

3.1 OIEG provides information about the College through a variety of media, including the OIEG website, the college's pages hosted on the university website, the college brochure which is produced annually, information flyers highlighting specific developments, and through social media channels.

3.2 The college's pages on the university website contain material information about the College and explain the relationship with the University, including the nature of the partnership between OIEG and the University and the embedded college status of ICD.

3.3 Materials provided to support prospective students in their decision-making is managed through the university's content management system (CMS). The College Director is responsible for signing off all relevant materials.

3.4 The College provides prospective students with pre-arrival information to assist them in planning for their arrival in the UK and the College itself. Applicants to the College are made aware of what they need to achieve to continue their study at the University through the printed brochure and website, and this information is repeated at induction and during the programme.

3.5 Enrolled students are issued with a student handbook, which contains general as well as programme-specific information. The handbook makes it clear that college students are fully enrolled members of the University. Module guides provide detailed information about delivery patterns and timing and modes of assessments. Students who the review team met, confirmed that the information they received both before arrival and during their time on the course, was accurate and useful.

3.6 OIEG makes use of overseas agents to market its programmes and has extensive mechanisms in place to ensure agents are provided with up-to-date information about its programmes and partners. Students receive a university award certificate and a transcript of the academic credit achieved on the completion of their college programme.

The review team concludes that **reliance can** be placed on the information that International College Dundee produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms that may be used in this report.

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

Academic standards

The standards set by **degree-awarding bodies** for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

Award

A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

Blended learning

Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced** or **enabled learning**).

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.

Degree-awarding body

A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers or university title).

Distance-learning

A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'.
See also **blended learning**.

e-learning

See **technology enhanced** or **enabled learning**.

Embedded college

Colleges, often operating as part of a network, that are embedded on or near the campuses of UK higher education institutions (HEI) and that primarily provide preparatory programmes for higher education.

Enhancement

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

Flexible and distributed learning

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

Framework

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

Framework for higher education qualifications

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

Good practice

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

Learning opportunities

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

Learning outcomes

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

Operational definition

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

Programme (of study)

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

Programme specifications

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

Public information

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

Quality Code

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

Reference points

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

Subject Benchmark Statement

A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to

bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

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

Threshold academic standard

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

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

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

Widening participation

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

QAA2440 - R10479 - Sep 19

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

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