Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd

Glasgow International College

June 2016

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Glasgow International College. The review took place on 20 and 21 June 2016 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mrs Alison Jones
- Professor Graham Romp.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Glasgow International College and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)[1] setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
- provides a commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the embedded college is taking or plans to take.

In Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) there is also a check on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG). This check has the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure of their education provider.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

In reviewing Glasgow International College the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The themes for the academic year 2015-16 are Digital Literacy and Student Employability,[2] and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[3] A dedicated section explains the method for Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges).[4] For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] Higher Education Review themes:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=106.
[3] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.
[4] Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges):
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx.

Key findings

QAA's judgements about Glasgow International College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Glasgow International College.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Glasgow International College:

- the high quality pastoral and academic support that enables students to achieve success (Expectation B3)
- the extended staff induction process, which supports high quality teaching and learning (Expectation B3).

Enhancement of student learning opportunities

Glasgow International College Directors are members of the College Executive Management Board (CEMB), which meets regularly and provides a forum for sharing best practice and discussion of matters relating to quality improvements. These matters are captured within College action plans. There are examples of good practice identified by CEMB being adopted by the College, for example, improvements in service levels for sponsors, parents and guardians.

The College actively promotes and encourages staff to share good practice through attendance at external conferences and Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd-level events and projects. The College is involved in joint projects with other embedded colleges, for example, in sharing best practice in academic management and the Student Voice project.

Theme: Digital Literacy

Glasgow International College has used the Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd-level Blended Learning Strategy and Learning and Teaching Framework to inform the development of its own action plan, and has sought to embed blended learning into the planning and delivery of the curriculum. There is a blended learning champion at the College who supports the use of digital literacy. The College has used the centralised Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund to resource local digital literacy and blended learning innovations. The College plans to establish a staff working group in 2016-17 to further develop digital literacy skills within the curriculum.

Financial sustainability, management and governance

There were no material issues identified at Glasgow International College during the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges)](#).

About Glasgow International College

Glasgow International College (the College) was established in 2007. It is an embedded college within the Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd (KIC) pathways framework, in a partnership with the University of Glasgow. Students achieving the agreed requirements proceed directly to a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered by the University. In 2014-15, there were around 800 students enrolled at the College.

The College was reviewed as part of the Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight of KIC in March 2012. The review found: confidence that academic standards are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of KIC and the University of Glasgow; confidence that the quality of learning opportunities is assured and enhanced appropriately, and in accordance with the policies and procedures of KIC and the University of Glasgow; and that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that KIC is responsible for publishing about itself, its embedded colleges, and the programmes that they deliver.

The 2012 review report contained two recommendations to the College. An advisable recommendation related to the issue of KIC transcripts, affecting all the pathway colleges, which has been addressed across KIC. A desirable recommendation encouraged the College to further engage with the enhancement work of the KIC Centre for Learning Innovation and Quality (CLIQ) - the College has since provided extensive evidence of engagement with the CLIQ. The College continued to keep its action plan under review and introduce enhancements to its provision.

The College underwent annual monitoring in 2013 and 2015 and on both occasions was found to be making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision.

Explanation of the findings about Glasgow International College

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a brief glossary at the end of this report. A fuller glossary of terms is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the review method, also on the QAA website.

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the provider

Expectation (A1): In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:

a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* are met by:

- **positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications**
- **awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes**

b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics

c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework

d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

Quality Code, *Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards*

Findings

1.1   The College offers foundation certificate and pre-master's programmes that provide students who meet the set progression requirements entry to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at the University of Glasgow. The foundation certificate programmes are aligned to level 7 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. These programmes permit successful students to progress on to year 2 of specified programmes at the University, and so there is a clear requirement that these programmes align closely with the first year of degree programme at the University. The pre-master's programmes are designed to support students to progress to postgraduate programmes at the University and are aligned with level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. All programmes are aligned to KIC's own Qualifications Framework.

1.2   Programmes are developed in line with standard KIC procedures, as outlined in the Academic Standards and Quality Manual (ASQM). The design of the procedures would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.3   The review team considered a range of documentation relating to academic standards, including College programme and module specifications, transcripts and award certificates, and met staff responsible for the oversight of academic standards at KIC level and within the College.

1.4 The evidence provided to the review team demonstrates that KIC's quality assurance arrangements in setting academic standards are consistently implemented and make full use of external reference points. There is clear and consistent evidence that qualification learning outcomes align with the relevant standards frameworks and the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, and that students successfully passing these awards at the required level are guaranteed a place on to their intended programme of study. Students who successfully complete their programme of study at the College receive a transcript of their performance and an award certificate using the standard KIC template, which addresses the recommendation from the QAA report in 2012.

1.5 College programmes are appropriately aligned to relevant external frameworks and Subject Benchmark Statements. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.

Quality Code, *Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards*

Findings

1.6   Ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of KIC programmes lies centrally with its Senior Management Team (SMT). KIC's senior academic body is the Academic Planning and Quality Committee (APQC), which has devolved responsibility for the governance of academic standards and quality. KIC academic policies and procedures concerning the award of credit and qualifications are outlined in detail within its Quality Assurance Framework and ASQM.

1.7   The Joint Academic Management Board (JAMB) is the senior academic advisory board for the partnership, having oversight of the assurance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The JAMB has representatives from both the University of Glasgow and the College. There is also a Collegiate Board of Studies (CBoS), which similarly has membership from both the College and the University, and where more detailed consideration of academic issues are considered. At the time of the review there were ongoing discussions with the University about the need to have both the JAMB and the CBoS. The daily operational management of academic standards is the responsibility of the College Director, the Academic Director and individual programme teams. Programme Committees operate for all programmes within the College and include student representation.

1.8   The review team considered that the design of the procedures to govern academic frameworks and regulations would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.9   The review team scrutinised the College processes and their effectiveness through consideration of the documented quality assurance procedures, formal agreements with the University, minutes of meetings, external examiner reports and programme specifications. The team also met senior management, teaching and support staff, and students at the College.

1.10   The College implements the policies and procedures contained in the ASQM. This includes the effective implementation of formal committees that operate according to clear terms of reference. These arrangements allow management at both the College and KIC level to have effective oversight of academic standards. In particular, the committee structure allows the College to work closely and effectively with the University in the quality management of programmes. The CBoS and JAMB together play an important role in ensuring that the academic standards are set and maintained appropriately for the purpose of progression to the University.

1.11   The College implements transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations that enable effective oversight of academic standards. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

Quality Code, *Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards*

Findings

1.12   The College is required to maintain definitive programme and module specifications using standard templates. These templates require the level of each programme; intended learning outcomes; programme structure; and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy to be specified. These specifications need to be formally approved and updated when changes are agreed by the APQC. Module Handbooks are developed at the College to be issued to students and must be consistent with these definitive documents. Once approved the programme specifications are stored centrally by KIC. The JAMB is responsible for ensuring that the articulation agreements with the University of Glasgow are formally approved and that an accurate and up-to-date record of entry and progression requirements is kept. These are maintained centrally on KIC's Higher Education Course Management database. The design of these arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.13   The review team scrutinised the College's processes and their effectiveness through consideration of evidence provided in documented quality assurance procedures, programme specifications, module specifications, student handbooks and meetings with staff and students.

1.14   The programme and module specifications viewed by the review team contained the definitive information as required by KIC. These had been formally approved in line with KIC requirements and updated when changes had been formally approved. The approved documentation was used by staff within the College to inform the delivery and assessment of programmes, and students were issued with Module Handbooks that were consistent with formally approved documentation.

1.15   The College fully implements KIC's requirements to ensure the maintenance of definitive records for all programmes of study and for individual student records. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.16   The College follows KIC's processes for the design and approval of modules, programmes and new pathways as outlined in the ASQM. KIC and College governance committees share responsibility for the design and approval of new products and programmes as outlined in the ASQM and the Quality Assurance Framework.

1.17   The design of the process for programme approval would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.18   The review team considered a range of documentation pertaining to programme approval, including relevant quality assurance processes, programme and module specifications, and committee minutes. The team also met staff responsible for the oversight and operation of the processes within the College, and representatives from the University of Glasgow.

1.19   In adhering to the requirements of the KIC Quality Assurance Framework, including the Qualifications Framework, KIC colleges make rigorous and systematic use of external benchmarks and *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Norther Ireland* in the design and approval of new programmes. The College's Programme Committees, CBoS and JAMB undertake full consideration of all aspects of learning opportunities to be provided to students as part of the design and approval stages.

1.20   There are effective processes in place for the approval of taught programmes that enable the College to ensure academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK standard for the qualification, and are in accordance with KIC's academic frameworks and regulations. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.21   The ASQM sets out KIC's assessment principles, including the responsibility of College-level Programme Committees for ensuring that an effective assessment strategy is in place for all programmes that meet KIC's aims and principles of assessment, and supports the KIC UK Pathways Learning and Teaching Framework.

1.22   Grade descriptors are used by the College to define success and the extent to which learning outcomes are met. Programme Committees ensure that assessments are designed and considered in the overall context of the programme and module learning outcomes, and include an appropriate volume and balance of assessment methods. The Annual Programme Report (APR) is completed by the Programme Leader, in conjunction with the Programme Committee, before final approval is given by the College SMT. It is then received by the CBoS, the external examiner and the CLIQ. The APRs inform the Academic Standards and Quality of Programmes (ASQP) report, which is considered by the APQC.

1.23   The College is effectively supported in the assessment process by the CLIQ, with supplementary written guidance such as the KIC Assessment Development Guide and the Guidelines for Establishing Alternative Assessment Arrangements for Disabled Students. Support is also provided by the CLIQ through targeted training for College staff that includes developing assessment in subject areas and standardisation of marking for English language.

1.24   The design of the processes at the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.25   The review team considered a range of documentation, including programme committee minutes, APR reports, programme and module specifications, and external examiner reports. The review team met staff who were involved in programme approval, setting and marking of assessments, and in producing APRs. The review team also met students to hear about their experience of the assessment process.

1.26   Students confirmed that they received helpful information on their learning outcomes and assessment requirements from tutors. Feedback on assessment was helpful and timely, although students advised it was not always within the ten working days turnaround timescale. They were aware that the College operates a sliding scale of penalties for late submission and how to apply for extenuating/mitigating circumstances.

1.27   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.28   The College has devolved responsibility for the monitoring and review of programmes to ensure threshold standards are met as outlined in the Quality Assurance Framework.

1.29   The College undertakes ongoing monitoring and review activities as well as annual review and Periodic Programme Review (PPR). Using the standard KIC template, Programme Leaders have responsibility for completing the APR, in conjunction with the Programme Committee, focusing upon performance and data analysis, and highlighting good practice for wider dissemination and developing an action plan for resolving issues identified. The CBoS, operated with the University of Glasgow, is responsible for considering APRs and reporting back to the College.

1.30   PPR takes place every five years and draws upon APRs and other monitoring outcomes to enable Colleges to take a holistic view of its provision, ensuring programmes remain valid and fit for purpose and meet both internal and external requirements. The outcome of the process is the PPR report, which includes an action plan that is followed up by Programme Committees and the CLIQ. The CLIQ undertook a systematic periodic review of all KIC colleges in 2011-12 involving stakeholders, resulting in revised curriculum structures implemented from 2013 across the majority of colleges. In line with the University of Glasgow's five-year review schedule, the College has undergone a Periodic Subject Review during 2014-15 with the involvement of the University.

1.31   The design of the processes at the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.32   The review team considered a range of documentation, including programme committee minutes, JAMB minutes, APRs, PPR reports and APQC minutes. The team met College staff involved in programme monitoring and review activities including Programme Leaders and the Academic Director. The team also met student representatives who were members of Programme Committees.

1.33   The College follows the University of Glasgow's Academic Review process for periodic review, which had been a significant focus for the College during 2016, in liaison with University staff. Discussion had taken place at formal committees and through informal meetings, which had provided opportunities for staff development. The review team noted the extensive involvement of College staff, who confirmed that the review process enabled them to instigate new developments to ensure enhancement of the College's programmes, particularly in respect of progression and transition requirement.

1.34   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, because appropriate rules, policies and processes are in place and are appropriately communicated and applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.35   The College follows the KIC Quality Assurance Framework, which sets out the requirements for the appointment of external examiners to each award-bearing programme, or cognate group of programmes, in line with University of Glasgow procedures. In addition, an external examiner is appointed by KIC to the credit-bearing Languages for Study module operating across the network of Colleges. The College also draws upon the expertise and support from the University to ensure that the programmes remain aligned with their progression routes and exploit opportunities to enhance students' learning experience.

1.36   Feedback from external examiners is used to inform the APRs produced by Programme Leaders, at College level, and the overarching institutional level ASQP report. PPR also draws upon the feedback provided through external examiner reports.

1.37   The arrangements designed for using external and independent expertise in the setting and maintenance of academic standards would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.38   The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing external examiner reports, APRs, the PPR report and Programme Committee minutes, and in meeting staff and students.

1.39   The review team found evidence that consideration of external examiner reports was reflected in APRs and Programme Committee minutes, together with the responses to external examiners and the summary provided to students.

1.40   The College external report seen by the review team was completed in full, noting strengths and raising any concerns. The report dealt appropriately and robustly with matters relating to standards, with examples of recommendations being followed up by the College through the APR and Programme Committees. Students confirmed awareness of the external examiner process and advised that the external examiner reports were considered at Programme Committees.

1.41   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, because appropriate rules, policies and processes are in place and are appropriately communicated and applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered by the provider: Summary of findings

1.42   In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.43   All seven of the Expectations in this judgement area are met and the associated level of risk is low in each case. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area.

1.44   The College has rigorous policies and procedures for maintaining academic standards, which are in accordance with KIC's academic frameworks and regulations. The College works effectively with the University of Glasgow in the quality management of programmes.

1.45   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of Kaplan International Colleges UK Ltd at the College **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes

Quality Code, *Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval*

Findings

2.1 The College adheres to KIC defined procedures for undertaking programme design and approval, which follow the clear stages outlined in Chapter 2 of the ASQM. The College has devolved responsibility for the design and development of programmes and modules, with support from the CLIQ and other KIC internal teams as required.

2.2 KIC provides a standard set of documentation requirements to the College for the approval process that include programme and module specifications using a standard template. Once initial planning approval has been granted by the New Product Development and Approval Group (NPDAG) and Business Approval Group for Programme Developments (BAGPD) the College has responsibility for maintaining the proposal documentation throughout the approval process, ensuring that it is updated to reflect any required amendments as appropriate.

2.3 A Programme Committee is convened by the College for each programme delivered, which includes student representation, and reports to the College SMT.

2.4 The design of the arrangements in place for programme approval at the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.5 The review team tested the Expectation by reviewing the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures, and documentation relating to programme design, development and approval, and through meetings with staff and students. The review team scrutinised programme and module specifications, and minutes of Programme Committees, the JAMB, NPDAG, BAGPD and APQC.

2.6 The review team found that the College is provided with detailed guidance on the development, approval and amendment of programmes and modules through support from the CLIQ and the ASQM. The development of new programmes and pathways draws explicitly upon the Quality Code and external frameworks, which is reflected within programme specifications.

2.7 College staff demonstrated a sound understanding of the programme approval process, outlining their involvement in the programme approval process, including new developments for consideration under KIC processes. University of Glasgow representatives confirmed the CBoS and JAMB as the formal committees for discussing and approving new and amended programmes to ensure subject content is appropriate to enable progression to the University. The review team was advised that the JAMB is currently under review to ensure there is greater distinction with the role undertaken by the CBoS.

2.8 Informal links and good working relationships have also been established between University Subject Moderators and College staff that support the development of new programmes at the College, as well as staff development opportunities, such as University staff contribution at College staff away days.

2.9   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, because appropriate rules, policies and processes are in place and are appropriately communicated and applied.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.

Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education*

Findings

2.10   Student recruitment and admission into the College is managed centrally by KIC, where admissions staff work to a detailed procedural manual. Admission requirements are determined centrally by KIC, taking into consideration the learning gain required by students in order to achieve the progression threshold onto the relevant University of Glasgow programme. However, for the foundation certificate programmes these entry requirements are considered and approved by the University to ensure that they are appropriate. Applicants are also invited to disclose special educational needs at the application stage so that reasonable adjustments at the College, and subsequently at the University, can be made if necessary.

2.11   The detailed admissions manual, along with the training and support provided to relevant staff and agents, would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team explored KIC's approach to the recruitment, selection and admission of students by viewing documentation, including the admissions manual, prospectuses, offer letters and pre-arrival information provided in hard copy and online. In addition, the review team met staff and students at the College.

2.12   Staff at the College were clear on the admission processes, and students were very positive about the admissions process, valuing the pre-arrival information and support provided to inform decision-making and aid transition into the UK and the College. If accepted onto a College programme, students are sent a detailed offer letter that confirms the nature of the offer made and the requirements needed to progress to their preferred University programme.

2.13   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B3): Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.14   KIC's APQC has ultimate responsibility for assuring the quality of the learning opportunities available to students across colleges. The CLIQ is responsible for the management of learning opportunities, including the support for curriculum development and effective student learning across KIC programmes. KIC has developed a Learning and Teaching Framework, which has been used by the College to produce its own, context-specific Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and College action plan.

2.15   The promotion, monitoring and development of the quality of learning opportunities at the College is the responsibility of Programme Committees, which report to the SMT at the College. The SMT maintains a detailed action plan that is reviewed and updated every three months.

2.16   The design of the College's policies and processes to ensure high quality learning and teaching would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team examined documentary evidence relating to the College's overall approach to learning and teaching and met staff, students and recent alumni at the College.

2.17   The review team identified that the College action plan is benchmarked against the KIC Learning and Teaching Framework and is effectively used to monitor and enhance learning opportunities for students. The College provides a personalised approach to learning and teaching, with each student allocated a personal tutor that they are required to meet with on a regular basis. There are arrangements in place for students to participate in guest lectures and seminars taught by staff from the University of Glasgow and to access University resources.

2.18   Students undertake diagnostic tests when they arrive at the College so that specific learning needs can be identified and additional support provided. Students at the College highly valued the pastoral and academic support provided to them by both academic staff and student services, and acknowledged that additional support was readily available. The high quality pastoral and academic support that enables students to achieve success is **good practice**.

2.19   The College operates an extended and formalised approach to the staff induction programme, which includes a series of meetings with specified members of staff, which cover a range of issues related to learning, teaching and assessment over a three-month period, and the use of a mentor to support new members of staff. The extended staff induction process, which supports high quality teaching and learning, is **good practice**.

2.20   The College offers a range of internal staff development events, including seminars and training sessions aimed at the development and sharing of good practice in learning and teaching. Support is made available to staff to seek Higher Education Academy Fellowship status.

2.21   The College has developed an overall framework and processes that support high quality learning opportunities, and has effective mechanisms to evaluate and enhance these opportunities so that students can achieve success. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

Quality Code, *Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement*

Findings

2.22   All students at the College are required to meet regularly with a personal tutor, who is able to provide personal and academic support beyond that offered within classes. The Student Services Team at the College provides additional personal support, advice and guidance, and acts as a point of referral for students who require more specialist support.

2.23   The provision of a range a different processes designed to support student development and achievement would allow the Expectation to be met. The review team investigated the effectiveness of these processes at the College through meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, professional and support staff, and students, and through consideration of a range of documentation, including the College action plan, committee minutes, and student handbooks.

2.24   The Colleges offer a range of extracurricular activities such as all pre-arrival activities, induction and welcome events, personal tutor meetings and social activities. The College also makes use of a voluntary student mentor scheme to aid transition whereby students that have progressed to the University of Glasgow mentor College students. The College has in place, and regularly evaluates, extensive processes that support high quality learning opportunities.

2.25   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.26   College staff and students are encouraged to engage in discussions to bring about enhancement of the educational experience. The College Staff-Student Charter demonstrates the range of opportunities available to students to engage in their learning.

2.27   Chapter 9 of the ASQM sets out clear guidance to the College regarding the requirement for the principles and purpose of student feedback as an essential component in evaluating the quality of student learning opportunities, and to inform ongoing improvements. The College decides on how best to elicit formal student feedback that reflects the nature of its student body, ensuring that the outcomes are then reflected within the annual and periodic reporting processes.

2.28   The design of the arrangements in place for student engagement at the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.29   The review team tested the nature of student engagement by examining evidence of the different mechanisms in place. This was followed up by meetings with both staff and students in the College to clarify the extent to which these mechanisms are widespread and operating effectively.

2.30   Student representatives are recruited on a voluntary basis and, following the recent periodic review, the review team noted that training previously provided by the University of Glasgow will now be undertaken by the College in liaison with sparqs (Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland). Student representatives confirmed that they were members of Programme Committees and sit on Student Forums.

2.31   The College initiated a voluntary mentoring scheme that enables alumni at the University to mentor College students undertaking the foundation certificate to help support their transition to the University. In March 2016, student evaluations of the University Preparation Transitions Programme indicated that the majority of students rated the usefulness of the mentor sessions as very positive, providing useful advice to them.

2.32   The College has also been involved in a KIC-funded Student Voice project working jointly with the KIC embedded college at Nottingham Trent University to undertake research into staff and students' experience of student feedback mechanisms. The review team noted that the first stage of the project had identified many areas of good practice and also areas where student expectations had not been so clearly defined. While there was scope for different mechanisms to be used by colleges to elicit feedback, the project identified further work regarding the mechanisms used by colleges to measure satisfaction. The initial findings from the first stage of the project will be presented at the next KIC Best Practice Day to share outcomes across the network before the next project stages are taken forward.

2.33   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

Quality Code, *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning*

Findings

2.34   The College follows the KIC policies and regulations for assessment as set out in the ASQM. The ASQM provides comprehensive information on KIC assessment processes and regulations, including internal and external moderation, marking and feedback. Chapter 12 of the ASQM also sets out the minimum requirements for successful completion of modules and programmes, and how individual module marks are awarded and the calculation of the final programme average mark.

2.35   The College also provides assessment information to students during induction, which is supported by written guidance provided by the CLIQ, such as academic misconduct. Individual feedback on assessment is provided to students tutorials, which students found beneficial in helping them to improve for the next assessment and enhance their skills.

2.36   Responsibility for the development of all module formative and summative assessments has been delegated to colleges, with the exception of the summative assessments for the Language for Study 3 module, which remain centrally managed by the KIC Learning Measurement and Evaluation Team. The College draws upon the KIC Assessment Development Guide produced by the KIC Learning Measurement and Evaluation Team, which outlines the fundamental principles underpinning the development of assessment strategies to enable the achievement of aims and objectives of KIC's assessment. Module Coordinators design assessment requirements in line with the Alignment Validity Reliability Effects Practicality Standard Framework to ensure that assessments are fit for purpose, reliable and valid. KIC guidance is also available to Colleges in making reasonable adjustments to assessments for students with protected characteristics.

2.37   The design of the arrangements in place for the assessment of students at the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.38   The review team considered documents relevant to assessment and external examiner reports and spoke to staff and students with regard to assessment. The review team saw a range of programme and module specifications and handbooks that included appropriate assessment information.

2.39   Programme Committee minutes, APRs and examples of data made available for assessment boards demonstrated an appropriate approach to assessment that was in line with KIC requirements. The review team noted that ongoing monitoring of assessment results is managed through the Programme Committee, which take action to enhance the processes through module and programme review, and in response to feedback from external examiners.

2.40   External examiner reports scrutinised by the review team were positive about the assessment process and cited examples of good practice where the assessment questions/assignments dealt effectively with the contents of the modules.

2.41   College staff confirmed that there are effective formal assessment and moderation processes in operation at the College, including standardisation meetings and double marking. Module Coordinators are responsible for managing the processes, including taking an overview of the spread of marks and sampling to review feedback provided to students. University of Glasgow Subject Moderators review assessment briefs and attend assessments boards on behalf of the University, supporting the role of the external examiner. In response to a recommendation arising out of the 2016 Academic Review, the team was advised that further consideration is being given to clarify the relative roles of Subject Moderators and external examiners.

2.42   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, because the College operates equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.43   The criteria and process by which the College nominates and appoints its external examiners are set out in the ASQM, with the expectation that the College adheres to criteria specified by the University of Glasgow in addition to KIC requirements. The College notifies the CLIQ prior to the formal confirmation of a new external examiner appointment, so that the CLIQ may advise the College of any potential conflicts of interest. The CLIQ maintains a central register of all external examiner appointed at the colleges. Formal approval of a new appointment, or extension to an appointment, is undertaken by the JAMB.

2.44   Once appointed, external examiners receive a comprehensive set of information from the College Programme Leader, including programme and module specifications, the External Examiner Handbook, previous external examiner reports and the recent APR. The external examiner is required to review an agreed sample of assessed work, attend at least one Assessment Board and sign the results sheet endorsing the work of the Board.

2.45   External examiners complete an annual report using a standard KIC template normally within two weeks of the completion of the final Assessment Board. Within the report, external examiners comment upon the standards and quality of programmes, as determined by student performance, and appropriateness of the assessment process to judge the achievement of learning outcomes. The report also asks external examiners to identify areas of good practice and suggestions for enhancement. Part 2 of the report template allows for the external examiner to submit a confidential report to the KIC Director of Student Learning on any issues that are particularly important or sensitive.

2.46   The design of the arrangements in place for external examining at the College would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.47   The review team considered documents relevant to external examiners and spoke to staff and students. The review team saw evidence of external examiners' comments being identified and followed up through responses by the College through the APRs and College action plans.

2.48   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low, because the College has in place effective, regular and systematic processes for external examiners.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.

Quality Code, *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review*

Findings

2.49　　College Programme Committees monitor and review programmes on an ongoing and annual basis. The APR allows the College to ensure that the learning opportunities remain appropriate, drawing upon feedback from students, staff and external examiners. Recommendations arising from APRs are recorded within the College action plan. College action plans are reviewed by the College on a regular basis and support is provided by the CLIQ with development of its action plan.

2.50　　The CBoS and JAMB ensure that the University of Glasgow requirements are met through monitoring and review of programmes.

2.51　　The College APRs inform the development of the ASQP report, providing the APQC with opportunity to conduct systematic review of appropriateness of learning opportunities across all KIC programmes.

2.52　　Colleges undergo PPR every five years and the outcomes are considered by the APQC and JAMB. The College's PPR report follows a standard template and includes action plans for further enhancements identified as an outcome of the process. The Programme Committee is responsible for ensuring that the recommendations are followed up appropriately and reported to the College's SMT.

2.53　　The design of the arrangements in place for programme monitoring and review would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.54　　The evidence considered by the review team confirms that the monitoring and review processes for the College programmes are rigorously and consistently applied to maintain standards and enhance learning opportunities. The College makes effective use of external reference points and draws upon external expertise from external examiners and staff at the University. The review team noted the effectiveness of the current PPR process, which has enabled the College to respond to issues arising out of annual monitoring reports in order to enhance the curriculum and assessment strategies of its programmes, in collaboration with the University.

2.55　　The review team noted that the University's Academic Review had highlighted difficulties in providing detailed information on the performance of College students once they have progressed to the University. Following the review, the College now receives performance data for postgraduate and undergraduate students. College staff acknowledged the improvements in the provision of data from the University, but noted that improvements were still required, including the provision of benchmarked and comparable data with other University students. The team was advised by University representatives that further developments are underway through a recently established joint project, which will analyse and benchmark alumni performance data.

2.56　　The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation:　　Met
Level of risk:　　Low

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

Quality Code, *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints*

Findings

2.57   The College adheres to KIC policies and procedures relating to academic appeals and complaints, including those against admission decisions as specified in the ASQM. The policies and procedures would enable this Expectation to be met.

2.58   The review team examined programme handbooks issued to students and met staff and students to evaluate their effectiveness.

2.59   The appeals and complaints policies and procedures are communicated to students in the programme handbooks, student handbooks and on the virtual learning environment. Staff and students were aware of the relevant complaints and appeal processes.

2.60   KIC has designed fair, accessible and timely processes for handling academic appeals and student complaints, and these are clearly communicated to students and effectively implemented at College level. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.61   In reaching its judgement about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.62   All the Expectations in this area are met with low levels of associated risk. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area.

2.63   The College has developed an overall framework and processes that support high quality learning opportunities, and has effective mechanisms to evaluate and enhance these opportunities so that students can achieve success. Policies and processes are effectively communicated to staff and students, and students are engaged individually and collectively as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. There are two instances of good practice that relate to Expectation B3, which are the high quality pastoral and academic support provided to students, and the extended staff induction process, which supports high quality teaching and learning.

2.64   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 Public information is managed centrally by KIC. There are clear processes in place that require that published material is formally signed off by the College Director, the Managing Director or the Director of Colleges at KIC level, and by the University of Glasgow.

3.2 The design of the policies and procedures in place would enable the Expectation to be met. The review team explored the College's contribution to the production and approval of information by viewing websites, handbooks, programme and module specifications, transcripts and award certificates. In addition, the review team met College staff and students, and staff from the University.

3.3 Staff at the College were able to clearly explain how the processes for approving public information are implemented, and students valued the high quality and accurate information provided to them. There is a close working relationship with the University, formalised through the CBoS and JAMB, which ensures that published information about programmes is accurate and reliable.

3.4 The College prospectus and website is produced and designed in close consultation with the University using a joint logo. Pre-arrival guides for students are produced by the central marketing team in liaison with College staff, who check all information prior to publication. Programme handbooks are made available to students and provide comprehensive study-related information. These are formally approved by Programme Committees at the College.

3.5 Consistent with KIC requirements, students from the College are issued with a transcript that details their achievement and, where appropriate, an award certificate using a standard centralised template. Transcripts have a security seal to confirm authenticity and are clear about the ultimate responsibility for the KIC award.

3.6 KIC has comprehensive processes for managing its public information and operates robust procedures to ensure their effective implementation at College level. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: **Met**
Level of risk: **Low**

The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.7   In reaching its judgement on the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.8   Expectation C is met and the associated level of risk is low. There are no recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area. KIC has comprehensive processes for managing its public information and operates robust procedures to ensure their effective implementation at college level. The College contributes effectively to the production of information and there is a close working relationship with University of Glasgow to ensure that programme information is reliable and accurate.

3.9   The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

4   Commentary on the enhancement of student learning opportunities

Findings

4.1   The College action plan records recommendations arising from APRs to enable effective evaluation and impact of progress made.

4.2   The CEMB meets normally every six weeks to discuss operational matters relating to quality improvements, with an action plan to monitor progress. The CEMB reviews the College action plans and provides an effective forum for sharing of good practice between KIC central staff and staff within the College, which leads to enhancement. The Glasgow College Director is a member of the CEMB and examples of improvements were described as improvements in service levels for sponsors, parents and guardians, which were included within College action plans for implementation. The KIC Quality Enhancement Plan provides evidence of ongoing initiatives to share best practice across Colleges, such as information about the six-step induction process arising from KIC's Year of Service.

4.3   The College actively promotes and encourages staff to share good practice through attendance at external conferences, the KIC blended learning week, undertaking presentations at Best Practice Days, and project groups such as the digital literacy project, and also across the network, such as a joint workshop with Liverpool International College regarding sharing best practices in academic management, and the joint Student Voice project with Nottingham Trent International College.

5 Commentary on the Theme: Digital Literacy

Findings

5.1 KIC has developed both a Blended Learning Strategy 2013-17 and a Learning and Teaching Framework that outline key principles relating to embedding technology into learning and teaching. The College has used these documents to inform the development of its own action plan and enhance the digital literacy skills of its staff and students. College staff have been consulted on development of a local strategy on blended learning.

5.2 As specified within its action plan, the College has sought to embed blended learning into the planning and delivery of the curriculum. The blended learning champion at the College has organised training sessions to enhance staff skills and awareness of digital literacy. Staff and students at the College were able to identify various ways in which IT is used to support learning and teaching.

5.3 Central resources have been provided to support blended learning and digital literacy across the colleges, including two dedicated Learning Technologists within the CLIQ, who support colleges with digital initiatives. The College plans to establish a staff working group in 2016-17 to further develop digital literacy skills within the curriculum. The Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund has also been used to resource local digital literacy and blended learning innovations undertaken within the College, and it is acknowledged that there is further work to do to enhance staff and student knowledge and skills related to digital literacy.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 24-27 of the Higher Education Review (Embedded Colleges) handbook.

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality.

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

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**.

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

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Embedded college
Colleges, often operating as part of a network, that are embedded on or near the campuses of two or more 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.

Expectations
Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

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* (FQHEIS).

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

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

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

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.