



Navitas UK Holdings Ltd

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

May 2012

Annex 7: International College Portsmouth

Introduction and background

The Recognition and Articulation Agreement between Navitas and the University of Portsmouth (the University) was signed in 2009; and the first intake of students at International College Portsmouth (ICP) arrived in October 2009. There are currently 320 students, predominantly from Nigeria, Hong Kong and China. The College employs 15 full-time professional staff, and 29 part-time academic staff.

Students are enrolled on a programme leading to a University of Portsmouth award. In line with other Navitas UK colleges, International College Portsmouth has three intakes per year, in September, January and June.

The programmes offered at International College Portsmouth include:

- University Foundation in Accounting and Finance
- University Foundation in Business
- University Foundation in Computing
- University Foundation in Creative Technologies
- University Foundation in Engineering
- University Foundation in Law
- University Foundation in Mathematics
- University Foundation in Science

- First Year Degree in Accounting and Finance
- First Year Degree in Business
- First Year Degree in Computing
- First Year Degree in Creative Technologies
- First Year Degree in Engineering
- First Year Degree in Law
- First Year Degree in Mathematics
- First Year Degree in Science

- Pre-Master's in Business
- Pre-Master's in Finance

Key findings

Academic standards

As a result of its investigations, the review team considers that there can be **confidence** that academic standards at International College Portsmouth are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of the provider and of the partner higher education institution (HEI).

Quality of learning opportunities

As a result of its investigations, the review team considers that there can be **confidence** that the quality of learning opportunities at International College Portsmouth is assured and enhanced appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of the provider and the partner HEI.

Public information

As a result of its investigations, the review team considers that reliance **can be placed** on the **accuracy and** completeness of the information that International College Portsmouth is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

The review noted the features of good practice as detailed in the main report are evident at this College.

Detailed findings

How effectively do Navitas and ICP fulfil responsibilities for the management of academic standards at this college?

Selection and approval of UK partnership arrangements

1 ICP is in an exclusive partnership with the University of Portsmouth, which was ratified in a formal Recognition and Articulation Agreement (RAA) signed in 2009. The review team had sight of the agreement at the review visit to the provider. In line with the procedures for approval set out in section 10 of ICP Policies and Regulations, the approval process followed the University's standard procedures for the approval of collaborative provision. The team concluded that Navitas has effective procedures for the selection and approval of UK partnership arrangements.

Academic standards and learning opportunities

2 The Recognition and Articulation Agreements clearly define the responsibilities of ICP and the University for the management of academic standards, the quality of the student experience, and public information. Any changes to the RAA would need to be signed off by the Head of Navitas UK and the Vice Chancellor of the University of Portsmouth. Academic standards are maintained through the routine use of the Navitas College Policies and Procedures, and the Quality Manual. The review team heard evidence that College Policies and Regulations are routinely used at ICP, and concluded that appropriate structures are in place for the management of academic standards and learning opportunities.

Approval, monitoring and review

3 Drivers for new programmes may come from Marketing, or at programme level at ICP or the University. The proposal is discussed between the Head of School at the University and ICP Director and Principal. If the proposal is considered viable, approval is sought from the provider (Navitas), and it is then developed for validation through the University's standard validation procedures. Periodic review of the partnership last took place in April 2011, and it is intended that a review of the partnership will be held every three years. Periodic review at the programme level will next be undertaken by the University in 2014 and every six years thereafter. The review team concluded that effective mechanisms are in place for the approval, monitoring and review of programmes.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

4 Very clear information on assessment requirements and regulations are made available to students in handbooks or through the virtual learning environment. Students acknowledged that they receive very prompt formative feedback, typically within a ten-day turnaround time. Staff are made aware of their responsibilities regarding assessment through section 10 of College Policies and Regulations. Assessment tasks are set and marked by College staff. University staff act as moderators of assessed work, and they also attend examination boards. Students' grades are initially considered at module panels, followed by a Progression Board, and the assessment process is overseen by the Link Tutor. A sample of level 4 and pre-master's work is seen by external examiners employed by the University.

5 Students are not issued with formal certificates until the completion of their programme at the University of Portsmouth. Navitas provides a Confirmation of Attainment statement to each student, on progression to the University. Students at ICP are clearly not expecting any form of certificate from Navitas, but they are expecting a transcript of their grades. As Navitas does not make any awards, the review team was unable to see how students received formal certification for their achievement of credit at ICP. The review team concluded that robust procedures are in place for the assessment of students at International College Portsmouth.

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

6 Navitas College Policies and Regulations and the Quality Manual are closely aligned with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*. New programmes are developed with reference to the Academic Infrastructure, subject benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), and NVQ level 3 requirements. The review team concluded that effective use was made of external reference points in the management of academic standards.

How effectively are external examining, moderation, or verification used to assure academic standards?

7 Moderation is undertaken by staff in the relevant department at the University and is overseen by the link tutors. ICP does not use external examiners. However, the University of Portsmouth does employ external examiners to moderate level 4 work, and pre-master's work.

How effectively is statistical information used to monitor and assure academic standards?

8 Navitas operates a management information system known as MAZE. This is used routinely to track the progress of students, including attendance, module grade data, pass rates, and drop-out rates. The data are used in the construction of monthly reports; quarterly and annual reports. These reports are considered at Academic Advisory Committee (AAC), and at Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board (JSPMB). College statistical information on student feedback is used to compare the satisfaction rates of ICP students with i-graduate International Student Barometer data. These comparisons demonstrate higher than average levels of satisfaction at ICP. The review team concluded that regular and effective use is made of statistical data in the monitoring and assurance of academic standards.

How effectively are responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities fulfilled?

9 Resourcing is negotiated and agreed in the RAA. A wide range of learning resources is made available to students from the outset, and they are informed of this through handbooks and the student portal. This was confirmed in the meeting with students, who appear to be fully aware of the resources available to them, including wide usage of the virtual learning environment in teaching and learning. Students also have access to facilities at the University of Portsmouth, including the Students' Union, the library, and sports facilities. A regular review of learning materials is undertaken by academic staff. The teaching staff felt that they are very well supported in terms of resources by both ICP and the University. Senior staff felt that a strong enhancement process was in place, with regular reflection, and attempts to improve the student experience. The review team concluded that effective systems are in place to enable ICP to fulfill its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities.

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

10 New programmes are developed with reference to the Academic Infrastructure, subject benchmark statements, the FHEQ, and NVQ level 3 requirements. Periodic review by the University also takes into account these external reference points.

How effectively do Navitas and ICP assure themselves that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

11 The recruitment of teaching staff follows standard Navitas procedures, with induction and training provided. The University is consulted on the appointment of staff teaching on level 4 programmes. Navitas provide very clear guidance for tutors on programme specifications, learning outcomes, and assessment procedures, and these are set out in section 11 of ICP Policies and Regulations. The curriculum for a given module is outlined in the definitive module documents. Observation of teaching is undertaken by managers and by peers at least once per year and was confirmed by students, who said they had witnessed peer observation in the classroom. Student feedback is also routinely used to assure the quality of the teaching and learning at ICP. The review team concluded that robust systems are in place to assure ICP that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced.

How is student feedback used to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

12 Extensive use is made of student feedback, including module surveys, college surveys, annual Navitas surveys; as well as feedback from the Student Council. Student representatives are elected by students to serve on the Student Council. Student Council meetings are minuted, and action plans are drawn up. The review team considered this action planning to be a strength.

13 Student representatives are able to attend senior management team meetings for any items of direct relevance to the student body. The review team felt that the inclusion of student representatives as full members of deliberative committees would contribute to the desirable recommendation in the main report, to develop a more consistent approach to student engagement in quality assurance.

14 Student representatives are trained by University of Portsmouth Students' Union, and the reviewers heard that College student representatives are working in partnership with the Student Voice project at the University. The review team felt that this close and cooperative working between students is a strength. The review team concluded that extensive use is made of student feedback to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities at ICP.

How effectively do Navitas and ICP assure themselves that students are supported effectively?

15 The review team found considerable evidence that ICP is very student centred. Strong communication channels exist between students and staff, including via the virtual learning environment, email, and face-to-face. Students are also provided with useful programme handbooks. Staff know their students very well, and likened ICP to a 'family atmosphere'. Staff offer an open-door policy as far as possible. Students the review team met felt very well supported by College staff, and this is routinely fed back through surveys and Student Council meetings. The Students in Jeopardy Programme has been put in place to help students who may be struggling academically, and this is noted in the main report as being a feature of good practice.

16 The main report also distinguishes, as a feature of good practice, the effective team working within Navitas which has created a caring, accessible and responsive learning environment. The review team concluded that there is clear evidence for this judgment at ICP; and that ICP has a variety of formal and informal mechanisms by which it assures itself that students are supported effectively.

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

17 ICP robustly implements Navitas and the University admissions policy and criteria. Admissions are primarily dealt with by marketing, and use is routinely made of published entry criteria, UKBA regulations, and an applicant suitability checklist. Agents recruit 90-95 per cent of students, but offers are made through the Admissions Officer. The review team noted the good information and training provided by ICP to agents, and those involved in marketing, through the Marketing Masterclass.

What are the arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

18 Recruitment of staff follows standard recruitment and appointment processes, which appear robust. Induction and initial training is very structured, with staff fully aware of their academic and college responsibilities. CVs of staff teaching on Stage 2 courses are vetted by the University. PhD students at the University are employed (currently three), and well supported. An in-house college staff development programme is available. Staff also have access to staff development programmes at the University.

How effectively do Navitas and ICP ensure that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes?

19 Pre-departure information is made available to students via the website. On arrival, students are provided with a welcome pack, and course and programme handbooks. Structured induction programmes take place in the first week of the semester, including orientation to learning materials and the virtual learning environment. The adequacy of learning resources is monitored through formal student feedback surveys, and through the Student Council. Overall, students appeared to be fully aware of the resources available to them, including wide usage of the virtual learning environment, and the personal support provided by tutors. The University monitors ICP students use of the library. The review team concluded that effective mechanisms are in place to ensure that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes.

How effectively does Navitas' public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides at this college?

20 Students reported that pre-course information was complete and accurate. Information had been supplied via the website, and through agents in the home country. The review team concluded that ICP provides clear, accurate and comprehensive information about its programmes.

How effective are Navitas' arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing at this college?

21 A rigorous formal checking and sign-off procedure is in place prior to the publication of public/student information. ICP Director and Principal is responsible for the accuracy of all College public information. Mock-ups of proposed publications are produced by Navitas, and sent to the University. These are considered by the relevant academic department at the University, and the International Office, before being signed off by the Marketing Department. These measures for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of published information are considered by the review team to be effective.

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