



CEG UFP Ltd

FoundationCampus

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

December 2013

Annex 5: London FoundationCampus

Introduction and background

The London FoundationCampus (LFoC) was set up in 2010 as a partnership between FoundationCampus and Birkbeck College (Birkbeck). The first students commenced in the academic year 2011-12. LFoC is based at Birkbeck's central London premises. There is a progression agreement for both undergraduate and postgraduate students in place with Birkbeck. In addition, LFoC has agreements with six other parts of the University of London: Institute of Education; Goldsmiths; The Courtauld Institute of Art; Queen Mary, University of London; Royal Veterinary College and Royal Holloway, University of London. These agreements permit LFoC and FoundationCampus to promote the six institutions through their marketing materials. It also facilitates LFoC students to become aware of the opportunities at these universities. There is no guaranteed progression to these institutions, and students must apply competitively through University Central Admission Scheme (UCAS). The agreements with the constituent parts of the University of London are signed for a period of three years.

Unlike other FoundationCampus embedded colleges in the UK, LFoC holds its own visa licence and its students are its own, and are not the students of the partner institutions.

LFoC offers three programmes at Birkbeck. One is the Undergraduate Foundation Programme (UFP) which offers five pathways in Business, Economics, Finance and Management; Law, Humanities and Social Sciences; Computing, Engineering and Sciences; Life Sciences; and Media. Business and Humanities are the largest pathways; no students were on the Media pathway. There is guaranteed progression to BSc Business Studies, the LLB, and the BSc Criminology and Criminal Justice at Birkbeck for LFoC students who successfully meet the progression criteria. At the time of the review, 153 students were studying on the UFP from a very broad range of countries. Progression figures for 2013 show that less than one per cent of UFP students progress directly to Birkbeck. Around 20 per cent are admitted to the other six institutions with which LFoC has an agreement. The remainder of those completing the UFP successfully enter a broad range of higher education institutions in London and elsewhere. The second undergraduate programme is the International Diploma Programme (IDP), which at the time of the review had 33 students. This permits successful students to progress to the second year of one of four degrees in the area of business, management, and accounting at Birkbeck. The majority of graduates on this programme progress to Birkbeck, with about a third going elsewhere. The third programme is the Master's Foundation Programme (MFP) which offers pathways in Business; Engineering and Science; Law, Politics and Global Development; and Education, Culture and Society. There were 47 students on this programme at the time of the review. About half of the 2013 cohorts progressed to either Birkbeck or one of the six other institutions with whom LFoC has agreements.

A recent development at LFoC is commencement of teaching of the University of London International Foundation Programme (UoL IFP) which provides access to University of London degrees. This programme runs in parallel with the UFP but was not part of this review. Quality assurance is provided by University of London International Programmes in accordance with their quality manual. The University of London International Programmes were also reviewed by QAA in 2011. LFoC, therefore, works under two different quality assurance schemes.

LFoC employs 34 staff, twelve full-time and 22 part-time or sessional. The staff are led by a Centre Head who has a deputy.

LFoC is established as a separate company operating as FoundationCampus London Ltd. Its operations are underpinned by an agreement with Birkbeck for the provision of premises for offices and teaching, and student access to library, information technology and student support facilities. The primary responsibility for the management of academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information rests with LFoC and reflects the common framework provided by the FoundationCampus Academic Quality Assurance Manual 2013 and FoundationCampus's central policies, programmes and curricula. Birkbeck contributes to the monitoring and review of the provision. The particular nature of the relationship between LFoC and the seven London institutions, compared with other FoundationCampus embedded colleges, is reflected in areas such as admission requirements and student support.

The main points of contact at Birkbeck and other partner institutions are their respective international recruitment offices. There is no formal committee structure linking LFoC with its London partners. However, there is a termly meeting with Birkbeck and an annual review of the progression agreement. An annual conference event is held for all LFoC partners.

The students at LFoC provided a written student submission (SWS) which was prepared by students from the cohorts that commenced in September 2012 and January 2013. The students identified a number of difficulties that had arisen, particularly in the early intakes onto the LFoC programmes. The SWS was accompanied by a set of responses from LFoC. Students confirmed that these had been addressed and problems solved or alleviated.

In January 2012 LFoC had a Review for Educational Oversight (REO). Following that review LFoC prepared an action plan. The review team confirm that all aspects of the plan have been effectively addressed. The great majority of items were completed, though some, such as the introduction of peer observation, had taken longer to implement than anticipated and is planned for introduction in 2014.

Key findings

Academic standards

There can be **confidence** that academic standards at London FoundationCampus are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of FoundationCampus.

Quality of learning opportunities

There can be **confidence** that the quality of learning opportunities at the London FoundationCampus is assured and enhanced appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of FoundationCampus.

Public information

Reliance can be placed on the information that London FoundationCampus produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

All features of good practice identified in the overall FoundationCampus report applied at London FoundationCampus.

Recommendations

All recommendations identified in the overall Foundations Campus report applied at London FoundationCampus.

Detailed findings

How effectively do FoundationCampus and London Foundation Campus fulfil responsibilities for the management of academic standards at this college?

1 Academic standards are managed jointly by FoundationCampus and LFOC with some input from Birkbeck. FoundationCampus establishes the quality framework through its Academic Quality Assurance Manual 2013 and its choice of external programme verification schemes, NCFE and Pearson.

2 The FoundationCampus Academic Board has oversight of academic standards at FoundationCampus's embedded colleges. The LFOC Centre Head is a member of this Board. The Academic Board receives an annual monitoring report (AMR) for each programme prepared by FoundationCampus's Chief Academic Officer. LFOC's partner institutions have the opportunity to see the AMRs but do not contribute directly to them.

3 New modules, and amendments to existing modules taught at LFOC, are approved by the Academic Board. Birkbeck was closely involved in the initial development of the IDP but involvement subsequently, for example in the change to Pearson curricula, has been limited.

4 Subject leaders play a key role in curriculum development, teaching and learning and assessment. Over half of the subject leaders on the UFP and the MFP are located at Birkbeck.

5 Birkbeck monitors informally the quality of students progressing to the University from LFOC through comparison to international students recruited by other routes. In the light of the experience of the first cohort of IDP students to progress to Birkbeck, some changes have been made to the arrangements.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

6 Students at LFOC take centrally set examinations. LFOC is provided with examination papers and marking schemes by FoundationCampus. Marking and moderation is done in line with FoundationCampus central policies.

7 Students at LFOC on the UFP need to apply to their chosen university through University Central Admissions Scheme (UCAS). FoundationCampus percentage grades are converted into letter grades to provide comparison with other qualifications such as Advanced-levels (A-levels).

8 Teaching staff from LFoC do not attend assessment boards unless they are subject or programme leaders. Those who do not attend can be made aware of any issues that have arisen regarding their teaching or marking by their subject leader. The Centre Head also attends the boards.

9 Students confirmed that they were generally clear about the nature of the assessment on their programme and the grades that they would need to achieve in order to progress.

10 FoundationCampus has a policy on academic offences which applies across all campuses. Students are able to use plagiarism-detection software to check their work.

Where appropriate, how effectively are UK external reference points used in the management of academic standards?

11 LFoC is made aware of the requirements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) through FoundationCampus's quality framework. Academic and professional staff indicated that they were aware of the Quality Code.

12 The overall structure and content of the programmes offered at LFoC are determined centrally by FoundationCampus in conjunction with external benchmarks: NCFE in the case of the UFP, and Pearson in the case of the IDP and MFP. The teaching of English on all programmes is structured in relation to the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test which students must pass at a high level to achieve progression and meet the requirements of other institutions to which students may be applying.

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

13 The four UK external examiners for all FoundationCampus programmes report centrally. Reports are shared with staff at LFoC. They are not shared with partners except through the AMR. However, external examiner reports are not provided routinely to students.

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

14 Statistical information on student progress and completion is included in the annual monitoring report for each programme. In addition LFoC keeps detailed figures on the destinations of its students. Efforts are made to acquire information from destination universities on students' subsequent performance on their degree programme. Information has been made available by Birkbeck and some of LFoC's partners. However, the large number of destination universities (46 for 2013 graduates) makes this a difficult task.

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

15 FoundationCampus is responsible for the management and enhancing of the quality of learning opportunities at LFoC. Central to discharging this responsibility are the processes for annual programme monitoring, and programme approval and amendment set out in FoundationCampus's Academic Quality Assurance Manual 2013, and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. However, as discussed in the main FoundationCampus report, no periodic review for the three programmes offered at LFoC had been undertaken, nor are the three programmes and the overall academic performance and quality of learning opportunities for LFoC as a whole reviewed systematically. Both processes would contribute to the enhancement of learning opportunities.

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

16 Staff are aware of the provisions of the Quality Code regarding expectations for the quality of provision which underpin central FoundationCampus policies and procedures. External oversight of learning opportunities is provided through NCFE and Pearson validation and verification processes.

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

17 Vacancies are notified to CEG UFP Ltd (CEG) and circulated internally, and, if necessary, externally. Selection is guided by the need for specific knowledge and skills, such as prior experience of teaching international students, in order to prepare students effectively. Applicants are required to demonstrate their teaching skills through the preparation of lesson plans.

18 Teaching is supported and appraised by the Centre Head of the embedded college. New staff are observed and guided intensively in the first weeks of teaching. All teaching staff are observed once during each academic period. It is also planned to introduce peer observation in the next academic period. Staff also receive feedback on their teaching through end of module questionnaires, tutorials and student representative meetings. The review team heard about actions that had enhanced the quality of teaching and learning as a result of feedback. Professional staff have regular appraisals where targets are set for future performance.

19 FoundationCampus subject leaders play an important role in assuring the quality of teaching and learning. They provide staff within their subject group across all embedded colleges with schemes of work and teaching resources. Virtual subject group meetings discuss currency and materials which are shared between teaching staff. LFoC staff are appreciative of the support of subject leaders and subject groups which gave them the opportunity to share ideas and good practice. Cross-centre programme leaders are intended to play a similar role but as yet this has not developed fully. General staff meetings are held once or twice a term.

20 While the student written submission raised some specific problems in relation to teaching and learning, students met were generally satisfied with the style and quality of teaching that they received.

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

21 FoundationCampus has a student charter which sets out the mutual rights and obligations of FoundationCampus and individual students, including seeking student opinion.

22 Students at LFoC complete the same post-induction, post-module and post-programme surveys as students on other FoundationCampus programmes. The results of the surveys are analysed and incorporated into the annual monitoring report.

23 Students at LFoC have other opportunities to give feedback on their programme and to raise issues. One such opportunity is provided by the weekly tutorial meetings where individual students can raise concerns. A formal system of student representatives is also in place and a formally minuted staff student liaison committee is in place. Students are encouraged by staff to volunteer for the role. Student Conferences which are open to all

students occur two or three times a term and act as a key communications channel. Students stated that LFoC listens and responds to their concerns.

24 LFoC also has a system of student ambassadors. Each year, in the first term, about thirty are chosen from students expressing an interest in the role. Many also act as student representatives. Student ambassadors receive training; their role is varied and includes helping with campus tours, induction and acting as buddies.

25 LFoC students are represented on programme committees, but awareness of this among students appeared to be limited.

How effectively do FoundationCampus and LFOC assure themselves that students are supported effectively?

26 Students received information about their programme prior to arrival, which students stated gave them a clear idea of what LFoC would be like. On arrival there is a one week induction during which students receive a Student Handbook and Programme Handbook. Birkbeck and other partner colleges provide input into the induction week. The Student Handbook is customised for London but based on a template common to all FoundationCampus student handbooks. The Programme Handbook is produced centrally for all FoundationCampus students. Students indicated that they found the induction and the handbooks they received helpful.

27 LFoC students have a one hour group tutorial each week with one of the personal tutors. These tutorials follow a centrally developed scheme of work which ensures that a full range of academic and personal topics are covered. Students may also follow up personal issues individually. Students who met the review team stated that the tutorial system is generally supportive and helpful to them. Students receive feedback on their work and assessments but the quality and timeliness of the feedback was variable.

28 The UFP students have to apply to their chosen universities through UCAS. Similarly the post-graduate students have to apply to master's programmes at their target universities. To assist this process LFoC has two full-time staff who act as higher education officers and MFP careers advisers. These staff counsel students on their choice of university and provide advice on application processes. Students attend weekly sessions and also receive individual support. Students are expected to undertake their own research on the programmes they would like to apply to but are advised on the suitability and feasibility of their choices. Tutors provide grade predictions and references.

29 The higher education officers organise visits and taster sessions at partner institutions. They also maintain close contact with recruitment offices, especially at partners. Most students include at least one partner institution among their choices. Partners do not give LFoC applicants preferential treatment, except where there is a formal progression agreement in place. However, to optimise LFoC students' chances, higher education officers draw the attention of recruitment staff to the application and provide assistance in negotiating places during clearing.

30 Progression to degree courses was around 90 per cent, though many students did not enter the degree course that was their first choice. The review team noted the additional resources devoted to support university application processes that had been put in place by LFoC, which were appreciated by students. Students were also generally clear about what they needed to achieve in order to progress to the programme of their choice. However, the team also noted that more could be done to ensure that students had realistic expectations of progression opportunities in the UK when they arrived. This could be achieved by further briefing of agents and reviewing the clarity of publicity materials for an overseas audience.

31 The university application process is particularly compressed for students who commence their studies in January or for those undertaking a short MFP. Students on the UFP may also, dependent on their chosen subject, face early application deadlines. The SWS identified problems that these timescales had caused some students in the initial cohorts of students. Students indicated that, to their knowledge, these problems had been dealt with as far as possible, though inevitably timescales remained tight.

32 Students are asked to declare special needs when applying. Where appropriate, support is put in place jointly by LFoC and Birkbeck.

33 There is a social programme organised jointly by LFoC and students. LFoC students are associate students of Birkbeck. They have full access to Birkbeck library and computing facilities and to sports facilities and the Students' Union.

How effectively does London FoundationCampus manage the recruitment and admission of students?

34 LFoC admissions criteria for the UFP are higher than those for other UK FoundationCampus embedded colleges that offer progression. The reasons for this are: Guaranteed progression from the UFP to selected degrees at Birkbeck requires a student to achieve 6.5 or 7.0 on IELTS and the equivalent of grades AAB on FoundationCampus modules in appropriate subjects. Other partners make offers at similar levels or higher. The level of offers made by other institutions to which students may apply varies according to the university and the degree for which the student is applying.

35 Admission requirements for the IDP and the MFP are similar to those at other FoundationCampus campuses in the UK.

36 Student admission enquiries are directed to the central team in Cambridge except in the case of China where they are handled by the Beijing office. All offers are made by the central team in Cambridge. There are clear criteria for admissions in terms of local, overseas qualifications in a range of countries. Students who do not meet the standard entry requirements or who have special needs are referred to LFoC for approval before being accepted. There are multiple entry points to the UFP and MFP. Birkbeck is not involved in admissions decisions except in the case of the IDP where students enter its second year, and advice has been sought regarding borderline candidates.

37 LFoC and Birkbeck discuss student numbers from two perspectives: LFoC supplies Birkbeck with early estimates of numbers in order to plan space and to give early warning of possible progression numbers. There are no caps on numbers and there are no plans for significant growth of student numbers on these programmes at the present time.

38 Some of the students who met the review team had been recruited through agents. With one specific exception, these agents had been well informed and helpful to applicants.

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

39 New staff have a formal induction process to ensure familiarity with processes and policies and to introduce them to colleagues. There is no formal mentoring scheme.

40 Staff reported that they had access to a number of staff development opportunities. Continuing professional development events are held regularly and the FoundationCampus intranet, FOCUS, provides information about internal opportunities. Staff were aware of the reading weeks and would be expected to attend the events organised during those weeks.

Those teaching on the IDP and MFP programmes had received training for the move from NCFE to Pearson.

41 Professional staff have attended external training, for example on UCAS processes. Academic staff have access to Birkbeck library and computers, but not to Birkbeck staff development. Those teaching on the University of London IFP participate in staff development and training through that programme. As a response to the Review for Educational Oversight (REO), a number of staff development activities have been organised by FoundationCampus for LFoC and the other embedded colleges. However, at present LFoC does not have a formal staff development plan. This could be beneficial as the programmes develop.

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

42 Birkbeck provides physical learning resources for LFoC in accordance with the agreement between CEG and Birkbeck. These resources comprise office space, teaching rooms, access to the library and computing facilities.

43 Students stated that the classrooms they used were satisfactory and confirmed that library, IT and other facilities were accessible and appropriate for their needs. They also appreciated the central location of the LFoC and its proximity to London's educational and other facilities. However, those studying on courses that required access to science laboratories noted that limited access resulted in severe bunching of coursework due to timetabling constraints.

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

44 FoundationCampus publishes information about LFoC on its website and in its prospectuses. It provides these brochures and additional material about the London to agents. Students indicated that the information they had received about their programme prior to coming to LFoC was accurate and helpful. In particular it was clear about admission and progression requirements.

45 Some students had not fully understood the competitive nature of entry to some of the courses to which they aspired, or the full implications of applying for places through the UCAS system. The review team found that the published materials produced by FoundationCampus about LFoC were accurate. However, given the different circumstances in which students at LFoC will find themselves with respect to continuing their studies when compared to other FoundationCampus students, special care needs to be given to the training of agents and the clarity of materials that will be read by students for whom English is not a first language.

46 The UFP programme handbook contains general information about the programme as well as assessment regulations and appeals and complaints procedures.

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

47 All published material is produced centrally by FoundationCampus. All material using the name or logo of the seven partner colleges must be signed off by them. As a result

of action taken in response to the 2012 REO report, central records of approvals now are kept.

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