

FoundationCampus

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

December 2013

Annex 1: Coventry FoundationCampus

Introduction and background

The Cooperation Agreement with the University partner, Coventry University (the University), dates from April 2008. Coventry FoundationCampus (Coventry FoC) was one of the three original members of the FoundationCampus (FoC) network. Coventry FoC has its base on the main campus of the University.

Coventry FoC offers the International Foundation Programme (IFP), the International Diploma Programme (IDP) and the Master's Qualifying Programme (MQP). Current student numbers are 342 on the IFP, 28 on the IDP and 104 on the MQP (77 on the three-term and 27 on the one-term versions). There are 17 full-time and 21 part-time staff.

Coventry FoC operates within the centrally administered framework, notably the FoundationCampus Academic Quality Assurance Manual 2013. The centre head of Coventry FoC is a member of the FoundationCampus Academic Board, and there is also staff and student representation on the programme committees. Within Coventry FoC there is a staff-student liaison committee. The University partner has no involvement in the committee structure of FoC. The University partner does not receive the FoC annual monitoring review, and it is not involved in the oversight of academic standards. The provider's review of Coventry FoC is a business rather than academic process, though performance targets are set for student progression and attendance.

The self-evaluation document (SED) was written by FoC alone, though it was confirmed that the University had seen the document. A student written submission had also been prepared by students from the 2011-12 cohort. Neither current students nor the University had seen the submission.

Key findings

Academic standards

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

Quality of learning opportunities

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

Public information

Reliance **can** be placed on the information that the embedded college produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

The review team noted that all the good practice identified in the overall FoC report applied at Coventry FoC. In addition the review team also noted the following good practice at Coventry FoC:

- the work of the pathway leader for pastoral support (paragraph 18).

Recommendations

All recommendations identified in the overall FoC report applied at Coventry FoC. The review team makes the following recommendation in relation to this College.

The team considers that it is **advisable** for Coventry FoC to:

- revise the ways in which it communicates information to potential students about additional progression requirements and limitations on its Architecture programme pathway, so that they have accurate and timely information available to them (paragraph 26).

Detailed findings

How effectively do FoundationCampus and Coventry FoundationCampus fulfil responsibilities for the management of academic standards at this College?

1 FoC sets the framework through which academic standards are managed, notably through the FoundationCampus Academic Quality Assurance Manual 2013 and the oversight provided by Academic Board. The FoC annual Academic Review methodology is based on a report completed by the Chief Academic Officer. While this contains statistical information about the performance of students in each centre, there is no detailed consideration of Coventry FoC within it; nor is there any formal process of academic review of Coventry FoC. FoC does have a system of external examiners who moderate academic standards across the FoC network and provide external examiner reports. The University receives neither the annual academic review reports nor external examiner reports, and it is not involved in any of the academic committees of FoC. As recommended in the overall report, it is **desirable** that Coventry FoC should encourage its University partner to have greater involvement in monitoring the academic standards of its programmes.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

2 Students at Coventry FoC undertake the standard set of assessments which apply to all FoC centres. Assessments are set by subject leaders and approved by the appropriate external examiner. In the case of academic subjects, assessments are predominantly coursework-based. In the case of English, students do not take the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test, but rather undertake the locally designed English testing.

3 Students indicated that assessment requirements were generally clearly communicated, and they understood what was required. Feedback on assessed work was timely and generally it was clear what was required to achieve higher grades.

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

4 The centre head confirmed he was aware of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). Staff the review team met indicated they would look to the centre head for Coventry FoC to provide guidance in relation to the requirements of the Quality Code. The centre head was also aware of the outcomes from the 2012 Review of Educational Oversight on FoundationCampus London. Staff the review team met confirmed they found the FoundationCampus Academic Quality Assurance Manual a helpful reference point and the basis for operational systems with which they worked.

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

5 FoC currently has a team of four external examiners appointed from higher education institutions unconnected with the organisation. These cover all the individual FoC centres including Coventry. The review team were told external examiner reports go to Academic Board, but any issues relating specifically to Coventry FoC would be notified directly. Feedback on the dialogue between subject leaders and external examiners was also available, while the centre head is a member of the assessment boards held centrally, and has access to verbal comments made by the external examiners at these boards. External examiner reports are available on the staff intranet, FOCUS, and are routinely copied to subject leaders. Students do not have access to external examiner reports, except indirectly through their representation on programme committees that receive the annual monitoring reports, which include external examiner reports and a response from the Chief Academic Officer for FoC.

6 The FoundationCampus Academic Quality Assurance Manual specifies a process for internal moderation of assessment outcomes. Staff explained the procedures in relation to marking and moderation within their subject groups. This includes online meetings of staff in the subject group to standardise marking approaches in relation to the marking scheme, and limited second marking by the subject leader.

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

7 The SED included statistical information on progression and achievement at Coventry FoC, and the same information was incorporated into the annual monitoring reports for each FoC programme. The review team concluded that the statistical information available had been used to make an effective response.

8 Coventry FoC has limited information on the performance of its alumni as they progress through their chosen University programme. It recognises the value of access to formal and systematic statistical information on the progression of alumni as a contribution to the enhancement of its teaching and learning. Despite requests, this has not so far been made available by the University, though University staff believed it would be possible to do so. As recommended in the overall report, it is **desirable** that FoC works with its partner University to secure access to statistical information on the progression of its alumni.

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

9 The agreement between FoC and the University commits the former to providing infrastructure resources required for teaching and learning and arrangements for supporting students, and the latter to providing resources to support students. This includes providing

students the same access to library, information technology and support services as provided to the University's own students, including membership of the Students' Union. Students confirmed they had full access to all learning and support facilities of the University.

10 Most teaching is undertaken in space over which Coventry FoC has sole control, but specialist teaching facilities such as laboratories are made available as needed through negotiation with the University.

11 Staff at Coventry FoC were aware that there is a central project considering the acquisition of a virtual learning environment to be deployed across FoC. They believed this would take place during 2014.

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

12 The review team saw limited evidence of the use of external reference points in relation to the management and enhancement of learning opportunities.

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

13 The primary mechanism for assuring the quality of teaching and learning is through lesson observation. This is undertaken for all teaching staff annually by the senior embedded college staff. For newly appointed and inexperienced staff, there is an early opportunity to undertake lesson observation. Staff have a meeting with the senior Coventry FoC staff at which verbal feedback is provided, and the process also generates an appraisal report and agreed action plan.

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

14 Coventry FoC makes use of the cross-organisation standard online questionnaires administered at the end of induction, at the end of each term relating to modules taught during the term, and on completion of the programme. The results are available at Coventry FoC level, and are incorporated into the annual monitoring reports for each programme and discussed at the academic and programme boards. In addition, the personal tutor system was seen to be a very effective mechanism for eliciting student feedback, with students having weekly contact with their personal tutor.

15 Coventry FoC operates a student representation system. Students who volunteer to be representatives are briefed by the Subject Pathway Leader for Pastoral Support on their role, and provided with a handbook setting out their responsibilities. Student representatives sit on the Coventry FoC staff-student liaison committee. Staff and students had limited knowledge of the role of students on programme committees. Overall, students were generally positive about the responsiveness of Coventry FoC to issues they raise.

How effectively does Coventry FoundationCampus assure itself that students are supported effectively?

16 Students receive a Student Handbook, Programme Handbook and schemes of work. The Student Handbook is specific to Coventry FoC, though it is prepared using central style guidelines. Students confirmed they found the written documentation with which they are provided clear, accurate and helpful.

17 Students are provided with a pack of pre-arrival information covering a range of important matters. Coventry FoC operates an induction programme for new students, and

this covers not only programme requirements but also an introduction to the University, orientation to the campus, immigration matters and health care. Students saw this as a good induction process.

18 Coventry FoC operates a personal tutor system. Students have weekly group tutorials. The quality and consistency of personal tutor support is enhanced by the use of a Tutorial Scheme of Work, which incorporates key themes for each session together with suggested activities and possible supporting resources. The review team judged this to be a very effective approach. Personal tutors also make themselves available for one-to-one sessions with their tutees, and they are contactable by email. Students confirmed that all these arrangements are in place, and they were very positive about the support they received. In addition, the role of the Subject Pathway Leader for Pastoral Care was seen as very important. As noted in the overall report, the review team concluded that the academic and personal support arrangements available to students at Coventry FoC constituted **good practice**.

19 There is a programme of activities designed to add a dimension of social and cultural development to students' academic studies. Students with whom the team met indicated that this programme was not very well supported.

How effectively does Coventry Foundation Campus manage the recruitment and admission of students?

20 Student 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 and overseas qualifications in a range of countries. These are specified in the embedded college promotional literature. Students who do not meet the standard entry requirements or who have any special circumstances are referred to the embedded college for approval before being accepted. The embedded college may discuss the candidate with staff in the partner University before indicating to the central team whether an offer should be made. Some students indicated they had been recruited via agents working for FoC, and generally they were satisfied with this process.

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

21 Coventry FoC employs a combination of part-time, full-time and sessional staff to deliver its programmes. Staff almost always have prior teaching experience, though not necessarily at higher education level. New staff are mentored by senior staff, and subject leaders also play an important role in the induction of new teaching staff. The relevant subject leader, who may well be in a different centre of FoC, makes contact with a new member of the subject teaching team and provides a starter pack through the intranet, including teaching materials and resources and diagnostic tests. This is a useful way of ensuring not only that new staff are supported in their subject area, but also that there is consistency of approach in the subject area across the FoC network.

22 Peer observation has recently been introduced.

23 There are a number of strands to staff development at Coventry FoC. To date, a number of continuing professional development days have been offered each year to staff. Staff also have access to staff development opportunities provided by the University. They confirmed that they are notified of these opportunities through their membership of the University IT network.

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

24 See paragraphs 9 and 10.

How effectively does Coventry Foundation Campus's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides at this College?

25 Students receive information about FoC in general and Coventry FoC through agents and through the website and prospectuses. The website had been used to gain additional information about Coventry FoC, and students said they had found it clear and easy to navigate.

26 Information on progression arrangements to the University were generally clear. Students were aware in most cases that, for some progression routes, higher grades may be required or there may be a requirement to present a portfolio (Architecture) or undergo an interview. The review team were informed that there were limits to the numbers of students who may progress to the undergraduate Architecture programme. As a consequence, it is **advisable** for Coventry FoC to revise the way it communicates information to potential students about additional progression requirements and limitations on its Architecture programme pathway, so that they have accurate and timely information available to them.

27 Students receive pre-arrival information which was seen as helpful.

How effective are Coventry Foundation Campus's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing at this College?

28 The SED states that Cambridge Education Group Ltd is responsible for producing all public information on FoC programmes, including prospectuses and website content. It states that such information is signed off by the University partner and this accords with the agreement between the University and Coventry FoC. Generally, information is complete and accurate, and the review team concluded the SED statements were accurate in this regard.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Email enquiries@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

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