

CEG UFP Ltd



Foundation Campus

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

November 2013

Annex 4: University of Central Lancashire Foundation Campus

Introduction and background

The Cooperation Agreement with the University partner, the University of Central Lancashire (the University) (UCLAN), dates from March 2008. UCLAN Foundation Campus (UCLanFoC) was one of the three original members of the FoC network. During 2013, the Agreement was further extended, retaining the original schedules to the Agreement. UCLanFoC has its base on the campus of UCLAN in Preston.

UCLanFoC offers the Undergraduate Foundation Programme (UFP) in five pathways, and the Master's Foundation Programme (MFP) business pathway. It originally also offered the International Diploma Programme, but this was dropped because of a lack of viable student numbers. Current student numbers are 99 on the UFP (Engineering 43 per cent, Life Sciences 11 per cent, Art and Design seven per cent, Humanities seven per cent and Business 32 per cent) and 20 on the MFP (16 on the three-term and four on the one-term versions). In addition, there are currently 29 students on the English Language Preparation Programme. There are one full-time, three part-time and 15 sessional staff.

UCLanFoC operates within the centrally administered framework, notably the Foundation Campus Academic Quality Assurance Manual 2013. The Head of UCLanFoC is a member of the FoC Academic Board, and there is also staff and student representation on the programme committees. Within Foundation Campus UCLan, there is a staff-student liaison committee. UCLAN has no involvement in the committee structure of UCLanFoC, though the centre head from UCLanFoC is a member of the University's (UKBA) Home Office Board. The University partner does not receive the FoC annual monitoring review or external examiner reports, and it is not involved in the oversight of academic standards. Centre review of UCLanFoC 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, though it was confirmed that the University had seen the document. A student written submission (SWS) was prepared by students from the 2011-12 cohort. Current students had seen the submission, and believed it was a true reflection of UCLanFoC. The University had not seen the SWS.

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

All features of good practice identified in the overall FoC report applied at UCLanFoC. The review team also noted the following good practice at UCLanFoC:

- the social and cultural enrichment programme (paragraph 20).

Recommendations

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

The team considers that it is **advisable** for UCLanFoC to:

- revise the ways in which it communicates information to potential students about additional progression requirements and limitations on its BSc Physiotherapy programme pathway (paragraph 28).

Detailed findings

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

1 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 UCLanFoC within it, nor is there any formal process of academic review of UCLanFoC. Rather, review of the embedded college is essentially a business review with targets set for the centre head related to business performance criteria. FoC does have a system of external examiners who moderate academic standards across the FoC network and provide external examiner reports (see paragraph 5). None of the reports seen by the review team contained specific references to UCLanFoC. The University does not receive the annual academic review reports or external examiner reports, and it is not involved in any of the academic committees of FoC. As recommended in the main report, it would be **desirable** for UCLan FoC to 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 UCLanFoC undertake the standard set of assessments which apply to all FoC centres. In the case of academic subjects, assessments are a mix of examinations and coursework. In the case of English, students do not take the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test, but rather the University's own English testing which is set externally to UCLanFoC and which has been benchmarked against the Common

European Framework of Reference for Languages. Students are expected to improve their English language competence by the equivalent of 0.5 of a grade in IELTS each term. With the combination of formal language teaching plus delivery of academic subjects in English and expected levels of private study, staff said this rate of progress in English language competence was achievable.

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, though a few staff were less clear on what was required for students to progress in assignments. Students had access to their results through their personal page on Magellan, the student intranet, which enabled them to track their own progress, though they said they found the information on progression provided by their personal tutor more effective. They had received information on plagiarism and how to avoid it, together with training in referencing. UCLanFoC uses plagiarism-detection software and students said they could use this prior to final submission to test the authenticity of their work.

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

4 The centre head confirmed she was aware of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) and of the central working party which was currently mapping FoC procedures and practices against the Quality Code. She saw UCLanFoC as still being in the process of adaptation to the requirements of the Quality Code, and awaiting the outcomes of the central working party. She pointed out that staff came from a variety of backgrounds, and she believed the Quality Code would provide a focus and play a formalising role in relation to the operation of UCLanFoC. Staff were aware of the central working party on the Quality Code. They indicated they would look to the centre head for UCLanFoC 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. Key points for her were the need to formalise procedures to engender greater consistency of practice, and to encourage staff to refer to quality handbooks for guidance. Staff 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 and these cover all the individual FoC centres including UCLanFoC. The review team were told external examiner reports go to Academic Board, but any issues relating specifically to UCLanFoC would be notified directly. Feedback on the dialogue between subject leaders and the external examiners was also available to UCLanFoC. The centre head is a member of the centrally held assessment boards, 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. External examiners had made occasional visits to UCLanFoC. 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. The centre head indicated that a new procedure of pre-marking moderation meetings had been introduced in 2012-13. A subject

leader explained the procedures he uses in relation to marking and moderation within his subject group. 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 UCLanFoC, and the same information was incorporated into the annual monitoring reports for each FoC programme. This showed that, for the UFP, results for both the September and January cohorts in 2012-13 were significantly worse than in other FoC centres, and the review team queried how UCLanFoC had responded to this. The team were told that analysis had been undertaken to understand the factors that might have contributed to the poor results, and to introduce remedial actions. This included discussions with other FoC centres to ascertain why there were comparative differences in student performance. Actions had included increasing the range of optional modules available since some students failed as a result of a weakness in their third academic subject; reducing the size of classes by splitting groups; and staff meetings to discuss different class scenarios. The team concluded that the statistical information available had been used to make an effective response.

8 UCLanFoC 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 would be **desirable** for UCLanFoC to work 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 articulating the infrastructure resources required for teaching and learning and the arrangements for supporting students, and the latter to providing these resources. This includes providing the University's corporate card which gives UCLanFoC students the same access to library, information technology and support services as the University's own students, including membership of UCLAN's students' union. Students confirmed they had full access to all learning and support facilities of the University. Students felt they were less equal in one respect: the requirement on them to pay an additional fee to access sports facilities of the University. However, it was clarified that this was true for all international students in the University, not only FoC students.

10 The review team learned the centre head at UCLanFoC holds quarterly meetings with the University's facilities management unit to discuss resourcing requirements. Most teaching is undertaken in space over which UCLanFoC has sole control, but specialist teaching facilities such as laboratories are made available as needed through negotiation with the University. The centre head indicated that space was now fully deployed, and further growth would require UCLanFoC to negotiate the availability of additional space. Proposals under consideration to add pathways in Engineering and Hospitality Management would create a need for further space including specialist teaching facilities.

11 The SWS indicated that students on the Life Sciences pathway had experienced problems with the availability of specialist laboratory facilities for the delivery of their programme, and current students said they had undertaken some experiments in classrooms during term one, but expected to use specialist laboratory facilities in term two. The centre head acknowledged that the response to growing student numbers in Life Sciences had been slow. She indicated that, with small numbers, it was not financially viable to hire specialist laboratory facilities from the University, but as pathway student numbers grew, this became viable. This suggests that the student learning experience may have been compromised on financial grounds.

12 Staff at UCLanFoC 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. Currently, staff are supported by an intranet, FOCUS, and students by their own intranet, Magellan, which includes a personal student information page for each student.

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

13 Apart from the use of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to benchmark the provision of English language programmes, the review team saw no evidence of the use of external reference points in relation to the management and enhancement of learning opportunities.

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

14 The primary mechanism for assuring the quality of teaching and learning is lesson observation. This is undertaken for all teaching staff annually by the centre head. For newly appointed and inexperienced staff, there is an early opportunity to undertake lesson observation and, if necessary, this may be repeated.

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

15 UCLanFoC 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 UCLanFoC 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 by UCLanFoC to be a very effective mechanism for eliciting student feedback, with students having weekly contact with their personal tutor.

16 UCLanFoC operates a student representation system, with representatives drawn from the different pathways of the UFP, from the MFP, and from the extended versions of these two programmes. Students who volunteer to be representatives are briefed by the deputy centre head on their role. Student representatives sit on the UCLanFoC staff-student liaison committee. Examination of the minutes from this committee showed it was an effective vehicle through which students were able to raise issues relating to their learning experience. The review team did note, however, that minutes included the day and month of the meeting but not the year. Minutes of the committee are posted on noticeboards so that all students are aware of the issues discussed. There are also student representatives from UCLanFoC on the central programme committees where the first item of business on the agenda is always student feedback. Students contribute to these programme committees via LINK, a telecommunications link. However, when students including alumni from the

previous year were asked about their contribution to programme committees, they had no recollection of any involvement with them. Overall, students were generally positive about the responsiveness of UCLanFoC to issues they raise.

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

17 Students receive a Student Handbook, Programme Handbook and schemes of work. The Student Handbook is specific to UCLanFoC. Students confirmed they found the written documentation with which they are provided clear, accurate and helpful.

18 Students are provided with a pack of pre-arrival information covering a range of important matters including accommodation, finance, term dates, advice on Home Office (previously UKBA) procedures, and getting to the campus. UCLanFoC 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 and the wider city of Preston, immigration matters and health care. Students saw this as a good induction process; they described it as very comprehensive and the equal of that provided to students in the University. However, they pointed out that students had only limited support on arrival in the UK, with no more than the facility to make arrangements for a taxi transfer at their own cost through UCLanFoC.

19 UCLanFoC operates a personal tutor system, staffed by English teaching staff and academic staff from a programme not connected to the students (for example, UFP students tutored by staff only involved in delivery of the MFP). Students have weekly group tutorials, and 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 operate office hours when they are available for one-to-one sessions with their students, and they are also contactable by email. Students confirmed that all these arrangements are in place, and they were very positive about the support they received. The personal tutoring system was seen as very helpful, and students identified it as the main route through which they would seek support and guidance on such matters as their academic progress, complaints or academic appeals. Overall, as noted in the overall report, the review team concluded that the academic and personal support arrangements available to students at UCLanFoC is **good practice**.

20 Students also benefit from a strong enrichment programme. The Student Support Assistant is responsible for a weekly programme of activities designed to add a dimension of social and cultural development to students' academic studies. Students indicated that this programme was much appreciated and well supported by the student body, even though some of the activities incurred expenditure on their part. This enrichment programme is **good practice**.

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

21 Students' 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 (such as extra welfare requirements) are referred to the embedded college for approval before being accepted. In the case of MFP students, the review team were told UCLanFoC would frequently consult with the University.

Most students the team met 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?

22 UCLanFoC employs a combination of part-time, full-time and sessional staff to deliver its programmes. Recruitment is often last minute with a need for staff to start teaching within days of their appointment. Staff almost always have prior teaching experience, though not necessarily at higher education level. Induction of new staff is by the centre head or deputy head. While staff reported a limited number of instances where they had been able to attend a continuing professional development (CPD) day or shadow some classes before commencing teaching, it was clear that this was exceptional and not part of a systematic staff development process. UCLanFoC does not operate a formal staff mentoring programme. New staff are, however, subject to an early lesson observation by the centre head or deputy head. 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.

23 Teaching staff are appraised via annual lesson observations conducted by the centre head or deputy head. Staff receive both verbal feedback and a written report, and an action plan is agreed. In addition, a new system of peer observation developed within UCLanFoC is being trialed. This involves a buddying system between staff with regular rotation of pairings, and there is detailed documentation supporting its operation. The review team saw this documentation, and also heard from staff that they had found this new system a very positive developmental aid to their teaching. The review team formed the view that, while it was too soon to make a definitive judgement, the peer observation procedure had the potential to be good practice.

24 There are several strands to staff development at UCLanFoC. To date, a number of CPD days have been offered each year to staff. Typically the morning session has been devoted to generic issues, for example teaching international students and assessment, while the afternoon has covered subject-specific matters. One problem with this approach is that it has not been possible to obtain the full involvement of sessional staff because of their limited times of engagement with UCLanFoC. From December 2013, the FoC-wide reading week has been introduced to create an opportunity for staff to undertake staff development free of teaching duties, and UCLanFoC will pay sessional staff and expects them to attend. In addition, subject groups provide a forum for subject-based staff development. 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. Staff were not clear on whether there were any fee concessions in relation to award-bearing programmes or other development activities involving payment, and the University member of staff with whom the review team met was unable to clarify this.

25 Under the leadership of the deputy head, English staff at UCLanFoC have led on a project to redesign the teaching of English across FoC, and to introduce a framework based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. This will clearly be beneficial to the way English language is taught across the FoC network, but it has also been an important development activity for English staff at UCLanFoC.

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

26 See paragraphs 9 to 11.

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

27 Students receive information about FoC in general and UCLanFoC in particular through agents, the website and the prospectus. All students with whom the team met had been recruited via FoC agents, and generally they had found the information provided by the agents to be helpful and accurate. The website had been used to gain additional information about UCLanFoC, and students said they had found it clear and easy to navigate.

28 Information on progression arrangements to the University were generally clear, and 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 (art and design programmes) or undergo an interview. There was, however, one very important exception to this. Students on the Physiotherapy pathway who have an aspiration to progress to the BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy degree programme are required to gain significantly higher than pass grades in their UCLanFoC programme, and the University also places a cap on students who can go forward on this progression route, limiting it to two students. The review team were variously told that numbers on the Physiotherapy pathway could be four to six students. With the recruitment cap, it was clear that up to four students may be prevented from progressing on their chosen degree pathway, even though they may have reached the threshold grades for progression, because of this cap on numbers. The UCLanFoC brochure does have a footnote which indicates places to study on the Physiotherapy degree are limited. However, it was stated that the requirement for higher grades had not been communicated by the recruiting agent and students were only aware of the need to gain higher than pass grades on their UCLanFoC programme when they received their offer letter. The review team also saw a specimen offer letter issued to a student. This contained the statement 'on successful completion of the above course (the UCLan FoC Life Sciences pathway) you will be eligible for entry to the degree programme below: UCLan University degree course BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy'. There is no mention of a limitation on the number of students able to proceed. Students were not aware of the cap on numbers at the University until after starting their programme of studies. While UCLanFoC does seek to help students who fall outside the capped numbers by steering them towards an alternative programme at the University or helping them apply through UCAS for Physiotherapy courses in other universities, the review team saw this as a serious failing in information available to students at the application stage. Accordingly, it is **advisable** that UCLanFoC revises the ways in which it communicates information to potential students about additional progression requirements and limitations on its BSc Physiotherapy programme pathway.

29 The UCLanFoC Student Handbook is prepared using FoC style guidelines, but contains locally derived information. However, the review team did note that guidance given to students on how much paid work they could undertake without breaching the terms of their student visa varied from that provided in another FoC centre. The team were told this information was provided to UCLanFoC by its University partner.

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

30 The SED states that CEG 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 UCLanFoC. Generally, information is complete and accurate, with the important exception of the Physiotherapy pathway noted in paragraph 28.

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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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