



Educational Oversight for embedded colleges: report of the monitoring visit of Navitas UK Holdings Ltd, University of Northampton International College, November 2018

1 Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that the University of Northampton International College (UNIC) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the November 2017 [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review visit

2 UNIC has been operational since September 2016 and continues to deliver undergraduate and postgraduate pathways that lead to a University of Northampton programme. At the time of the annual return the College had 45 students, with a further 25 expected to enrol at the next admission point. A total of 136 students was enrolled during 2017-18. There are 20 staff, nine are full-time and the remainder sessional teaching staff.

3 Recent changes include the appointment of four new teaching staff to replace those who had left to take up other opportunities, and a reconfiguration of some management responsibilities. As part of a University-wide campus relocation, the College relocated to the Avenue Campus in August 2018.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The 2017 Higher Educational Review (Embedded Colleges) (HER EC) team identified two areas of good practice, concerning the academic and personal support offered to students and the student representative system. There were three recommendations concerning the approval of locally contextualised versions of Navitas UK Policy and Regulations; notification of final approval of programmes to relevant committees; and fully documenting, and making available to relevant staff, College versions of Navitas UK policies and procedures. The action being taken to establish policies and procedures for the appointment of external examiners was affirmed. The action plan to record and monitor actions has been discussed at Navitas Learning and Teaching Committee and at UNIC Management Team and includes additional actions identified by the College. For example, UNIC has started to evaluate and take appropriate action on student feedback, and a student survey action plan has been created; this records concerns, actions, success indicators and their status. UNIC has strengthened its good practice (paragraphs 5 and 6). The three recommendations, all of a regulatory and procedural nature, were completed by April 2018 (paragraphs 7 and 8). Progress has been made with the area of affirmation (paragraph 9). Navitas and UNIC operate a rigorous admissions process that complies with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) (paragraph 10). There are clearly documented regulations and procedures regarding assessment, which are understood and applied by staff, and students understand the assessment processes and requirements (paragraph 11).

5 The good practice in academic and personal support for students has been continued and further enhanced. Students are offered good academic and personal support. Those who are at risk, as determined by poor attendance or performance, are placed on the Student in Jeopardy programme and their progress is closely monitored via a report card system. Late starters are offered personalised induction and additional support. Students commented positively on the level of support provided. Students value the advice offered by their peers under the Student Ambassadors scheme. A dedicated cultural awareness programme has been devised and delivered to students under 18 who lodge with local families. There are numerous subject-based sessions delivered by University tutors to prepare the students for progression from UNIC to the University, and students who have progressed feel well prepared.

6 The good practice in student representation has also been further enhanced. The student representative system facilitates student engagement in quality assurance processes. Student representatives volunteer and, where necessary, there is an election process. Details and photographs of representatives are posted on noticeboards and students confirmed that they know who their representatives are. The representatives are trained and are invited to the Student Forum, the College Enhancement Team and the Learning and Teaching Board. There is a high level of student attendance at meetings. There is an elected Student President whose remit is to liaise with all students and encourage them to seek ways of improving and enhancing the quality of the student experience. Since the 2017 HER (EC), the College Director has instituted regular informal meetings with the President and a student lunch hosted by the President has been introduced, which will take place each semester.

7 In response to the two recommendations concerning locally contextualised versions of Navitas policies and procedures, Navitas reviewed all amended Navitas UK Policy and Regulations (NPRs), in consultation with all Colleges, to ensure that locally contextualised versions are approved in accordance with the Navitas procedures. UNIC updated its College Policy and Regulations (CPRs) in accordance with new NPRs and received approval from Navitas Academic Registry, with an approval form being signed off for each CPR. Staff the review team met confirmed that they had been made aware of the CPRs and that they are easily accessible through the central electronic storage area.

8 In response to the recommendation concerning approval of programmes, UNIC now complies with Navitas procedures and final approval of programmes includes formal notification to the relevant committee. The Navitas and College policies for programme approval and review indicate the flow of approval: namely strategic approval, approval in principle, curriculum design, scrutiny panel, approval and formal sign off. Approval of new programmes begins with the completion of the University's development approval form, including an annex for collaborative provision. Two more detailed forms, the Pilot Change of Approval Proposal Form and the Strategic Approval Form are then completed. Programme approvals are confirmed at the Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board (JSPMB). The recent approval of a Foundation Year in Fashion and Footwear was approved through relevant University and UNIC committees including the JSPMB.

9 Progress has been made with the nomination and appointment of external examiners. UNIC has agreed with the University that it will use the term adviser rather than examiner (in order to differentiate the role from University external examiners). One appointment has been made to oversee all business programmes. The appointment was approved through the Navitas process and through a University approval process that had several stages. The Navitas process aligns with the Quality Code and includes a form that incorporates the criteria for appointment to the role. The external adviser annual report template requests comment on all relevant aspects including identifying issues for the College to address. The newly appointed external adviser has been invited to attend a

University induction. The success of this appointment will be judged in due course and external advisers will be appointed to the other programme areas.

10 Admissions are aligned with the Navitas policies and procedures as well as with those of the College, which were agreed in liaison with the University. Criteria for admission to each programme are agreed by UNIC, Navitas and the University and approved during the programme approval process; these criteria are reviewed annually and made available to prospective students on the website. Navitas works with a set of approved agents whose performance the College evaluates. All marketing material must be approved by the University's Marketing Department. There is a flowchart that clarifies the decision-making process and the respective responsibilities of the Navitas Admissions and Recruitment Centre and UNIC. NARIC provides a list of benchmarked qualifications and the University is consulted should a qualification not be on the list. For non-standard entry, where an applicant is up to 10 per cent below the required entry tariff, UNIC makes the decision subject to discussion by UNIC's Academic Board. Should UNIC wish to consider an applicant who is more than 10 per cent below the academic entry requirements, the matter is referred to the University for a decision. Any special needs of applicants are taken into consideration. English language requirements are checked and students are required to take any tests at a secure testing centre. Applicants' genuine intention to study is checked by personal statement, liaison with agents and interviews where deemed necessary. Students to whom the team spoke were positive about the application and recruitment process, most had been recruited through agents and a number had been interviewed through Skype. Students confirmed that information provided before, during and after admission was accurate and helpful. Students told the monitoring team that all the information they required was provided on the VLE, with some documents such as student handbooks also provided in hard copy.

11 Programme and module learning outcomes are specified during the approval process, using standard templates, and align with Subject Benchmark Statements. Assessment conforms to the Navitas and UNIC regulations. The Navitas NPR and UNIC CPR provide guidance on assessment including regulations for examination and coursework, extenuating circumstances, feedback, and module panels and boards. The Navitas Assessment Policy stipulates the assessment, verification, moderation and external moderation processes required of the College. Students are informed of the assessment methods, timings and weighting and all related documents are available for the students through the VLE. Students submit assignments electronically using plagiarism-detection software so that academic integrity can be checked. Assessment regulations are benchmarked against those of the University to facilitate progression. For level 3 modules there is an internal moderation process within UNIC, which defines the number of scripts to be second marked and specifies that, where possible, students work should be submitted anonymously. For level 4 modules and above there is cross-moderation of assessed work within the team, led by the University module leader in the relevant faculty. Module grades are considered at a module panel and students' overall progression is considered at Progression Board. Assessments are marked within ten days and feedback is provided to students. Assessment briefs include learning outcomes, marking criteria and assessment weighting; and refer to plagiarism, academic integrity and late hand-in. Students confirmed that full details of assessment can be found on the VLE and that, in addition, staff explain assessments to them. It is the responsibility of the UNIC Learning and Teaching Board to ensure that students are assessed fairly and in accordance with the Navitas guidelines.

12 UNIC recruited 141 students across the programmes in 2016-17 and 136 in 2017-18. There have been differences between subject areas in terms of recruitment over the past two years. The review team was informed that lower risk markets are now being targeted for recruitment. Retention rates at UNIC over the past two years varied across programmes, between 70 per cent and 98 per cent. The overall retention figure across all

programmes was 89 per cent for 2016-17 and 91 per cent for 2017-18. Pass rates overall were 97 per cent for 2016-17 and 91 per cent for 2017-18.

13 UNIC has been working with the University to collect tracer data on the performance of students once they have progressed to the University, and a set of tracer data was made available for September 2018. UNIC will continue to receive tracer data, which will be used to inform annual monitoring meetings and to review performance with reference to comparable students at the University and across Navitas colleges.

4 The embedded College's use of external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

14 UNIC makes good use of relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code, to shape its policies and procedures. International Admissions qualifications are checked with NARIC. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) informs the English programmes and the English language requirements (IELTS). In addition to the use of Subject Benchmark Statements, Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation & Transfer (SEEC) level 3 indicators are used for the foundation year programmes. Navitas uses Advance HE and SEDA as external reference points, and of the eleven lecturers currently teaching at UNIC three have achieved either the Associate Fellow or Fellow of Advance HE.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

15 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

16 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Jenny Gilbert, Reviewer, and Ms Julia Baylie, QAA Officer, on 28 November 2018.

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