



Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements: report of the monitoring visit of De Montfort University Leicester International Pathway College, March 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 De Montfort University Leicester International Pathway College has made commendable progress with implementing the action plan from the [March 2017 Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements review](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 De Montfort University Leicester International Pathway College (the College) is an embedded college offering integrated programmes with De Montfort University (the University). At the time of the visit, the College had a total of 332 students enrolled on its higher education programmes, an increase of five over the number at the time of the 2017 review. Tier 4 sponsored overseas students account for 206, or 62 per cent of the total. The student intake is diverse, representing over 50 nationalities. There are 42 full-time and part-time staff involved in teaching the provision. The College has developed a new one-term pre top-up programme, offering study skills to prepare students for undertaking a top-up degree at the University.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The College has made commendable progress based on the following findings. The action plan arising from the 2017 Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements review has been fully implemented, with all target dates being met (see paragraphs 4-5). The arrangements for the admission of students are effective and thorough (see paragraphs 6-9). The College has a clear and effective set of formal arrangements for annual quality monitoring and reporting, while the College Board provides a valuable forum for the engagement of students (see paragraphs 10-12). Student retention, progression and achievement is high and exceeds the targets agreed with the University (see paragraph 13). The College makes effective and extensive use of external reference points, including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) (see paragraphs 14-15).

4 Actions have been taken to sustain and enhance the two areas of good practice reported in 2017. The strong partnership arrangements between the College, the University and the Oxford International Education Group (OIEG), the College's parent organisation, have been further developed. Initiatives include the regular sharing of experiences with other partner embedded colleges through the OIEG Quality Committee and the increased engagement of staff in University processes. A new one-term preparatory programme has been introduced, while the administrative support for University link tutors has been strengthened. The extensive staff development opportunities ensure that staff are able to access a wide programme of University activities, as well as a focused programme of College events that are informed by reflective practice and the outcomes of peer review. All staff benefit from the comprehensive termly induction sessions.

5 Very good progress has been made in addressing both recommendations from the 2017 review. Standing items are now embedded in the agenda of the College Steering Board to ensure that it gives full consideration to the minutes and outcomes of the meetings of the Joint Academic Board and Programme Management Group. Internal procedures have been strengthened to ensure that Module Enhancement Plans and Programme Appraisal and Enhancement Forms are systematically considered within the College's formal committee structure. Both reports are received by the Joint Academic Board, while the Programme Appraisal and Enhancement Forms are also sent to the University's Validation Services Board.

6 The admission of students is managed effectively within the context of a formal OIEG Pathways Admissions Policy, which has been rigorously mapped against the indicators of the Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education*. The policy, which is reviewed annually, conforms to the Student Admissions Policy of the University. It includes a section on admissions appeals and complaints. An explicit operations agreement articulates the procedures agreed between OIEG and the University for the admission of sponsored, international and European students and for complying with Home Office requirements. Applications are considered using published entry criteria, which include strictly applied English language requirements. Individual admissions are managed thoroughly and supportively with clear records maintained of the formal stages.

7 A specialist OIEG staff team oversees recruitment and admissions up to the point of an offer being made, following which the University reviews the documentation and makes the final decision to offer a place. Staff in the OIEG admissions team receive regular training and updating to ensure that they understand current regulations and requirements.

8 A network of overseas representatives provides the first point of contact for many applicants. OIEG and University staff ensure that these representatives are appropriately informed and trained to advise applicants. Students who have used the representatives attest to the valuable support they provide at the outset of the admissions process.

9 The high retention, achievement and progression rates described in paragraph 13 offer evidence for the effectiveness of the admissions policy and its associated procedures. Students confirm the clarity and fairness of the procedures, as well as the high level of support provided by admissions staff. However, they also report that recruitment materials and advice were not always sufficiently explicit about the subject and progression options on some pathways.

10 The College has a clear and effective set of formal arrangements for annual quality monitoring and reporting, which are carefully aligned with those of the University. Annual Module Enhancement Plans and Programme Appraisal and Enhancement Forms are key elements in the reporting process. Both are produced to a standard format and are subject to approval by the Joint Academic Board. The thorough reports include clear evidence of action planning and enhancement. At the institutional level, monitoring is focused on a College report and an Annual Monitoring Review, the latter being produced for scrutiny by the University. Reporting at all levels includes the detailed analysis of student performance data. The College plans to further strengthen the annual monitoring process at the programme level through the introduction of pathway reports.

11 Annual reporting draws on an appropriate range of evidence. In addition to student performance data, this evidence includes Tutor Module Evaluation Forms, the reports of external examiners, link tutor reports and the feedback obtained from students. Feedback is collected after induction and through module and programme survey forms. The College

informs students of actions taken as a result of their feedback through module handbooks and the College Board.

12 The College Board provides a valuable forum for the formal engagement of students. Its membership includes student representatives, who provide the Chair and Secretary, as well as College and University staff. Board minutes are made available to staff and students on the College virtual learning environments, although the students met during the visit were not all aware of this. While the Board is valued by students, its stated remit for developing and approving College policies is potentially confusing and not differentiated sufficiently from the remit of other deliberative committees.

13 The College's data return, combined with other supporting information, indicates that high levels of retention and achievement have been maintained over the past three years, alongside a significant increase in student numbers. Overall, the retention rate for the last three completing cohorts is 94 per cent (682 of 728). The rate has been sustained at around that figure in each year. During this period, 97 per cent (660 of 682) of students completing the programmes achieved a pass grade. A key aim of the programmes is to provide international students with the opportunity to progress to awards within the University. The data show that this is being achieved, with 96 per cent (635 of 660) of those gaining a pass grade going on to study at the University. This represents about 87 per cent of all initial entrants.

4 Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

14 The College continues to make good use of a range of external reference points, including the Quality Code, to help assure academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The University's processes for programme design, approval and review ensure alignment with the relevant expectations and indicators of the Quality Code, while also taking account of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, Higher Education Credit Framework and Subject Benchmark Statements. The College and its parent organisation undertake explicit mapping of some policies and procedures against the appropriate chapters of the Quality Code, as is evident in the policies for the admission of students and staff development.

15 In addition, external examiners, appointed and trained by the University, provide regular general and subject-specific inputs into the operation of the academic pathways. The University's policy for the appointment and training of external examiners is updated to align with the indicators of the Quality Code *Chapter B7, External Examining*. University link tutors offer a further external perspective, while English Language modules are mapped to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

16 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.

17 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Colin Fryer, Reviewer, and Mr David Lewis, Coordinator, on 15 March 2018.

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