



Educational Oversight for Embedded Colleges: report of the monitoring visit of Navitas UK Holdings Ltd, April 2018

1 Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the monitoring team concludes that Navitas UK Holdings Ltd (the Provider) is making commendable progress in implementing the action plan following the April 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 Since the 2016 QAA review a number of important changes have occurred at Provider level. The Provider's parent organisation has introduced a new global management structure, which has impacted on the management of the Navitas UK network. University partnerships have been separated organisationally from the parent organisation's other businesses. The differences between global regions have been recognised through the creation of Navitas University Pathways Europe (UPE), which is responsible for the Provider network under review. The strategic direction of the Provider remains broadly the same.

3 Strategic changes have been made to the Provider network since the last review. A commercial decision has been made to close the Edinburgh College. The closure is being overseen directly by the Provider. The Swansea College is being developed as a joint venture between the university and the Provider, following a model used elsewhere in the Provider's parent company. The Provider envisages further changes to the UK network and the possibility of new forms and modes of provision. The significant growth in student numbers at the Cambridge College, based on recruitment of home and EU students, is a trend that the Provider is looking at in relation to other colleges. Details of the changes at these three colleges are given in the monitoring reports for each respective one.

4 Organisational change has occurred within the network. There has been a significant turnover in College Directors resulting from a variety of factors. Structures are in place to facilitate future succession planning. At HQ the Quality and Standards Office has evolved into the Academic Registry, and a new Leadership Team has been created by merging the Operational Leadership Team and the Executive Leadership Team. Responsibility for learning and teaching is now divided between the Academic Registry and the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) and the participative advisory Learning and Teaching Forum.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

5 All actions identified by the QAA team in the 2016 review or since, have been addressed effectively and proposed actions have been implemented fully. This has led to improvements in the Provider's management of its higher education.

6 The April 2016 review of the Provider did not include any recommendations but identified nine features of good practice. It has built on all of these strengths and identified new enhancement opportunities. The Provider has also addressed weaknesses identified

through the QAA review of its newest College in 2017. The review found that locally contextualised Provider policies were not always formally approved or fully documented. This issue is being addressed initially as part of the annual review of UPE Policy and Regulation, with further actions relating to documentation and formal notification of programme approvals to follow.

7 The first area of good practice identified in the 2016 report concerned admissions. The UK-based Admission and Recruitment Centre (ARC) continues to provide leadership through training and process innovation. A new initiative provides support to applicants at risk of visa refusal. The oversight, monitoring and coordination of learning opportunities and teaching practices across the network has been strengthened by the rollout of the new student records system. The revised Learning and Teaching Forum is taking forward enhancement projects led by different colleges in the network. A curriculum development group has been established within the UPE Academic Registry, which is currently working on a new five-year Learning and Teaching Strategy for presentation to LTC. The Provider also benefits from the establishment of a global learning and teaching group which promotes innovation across the network. The Independent Learning Charter has been reviewed. The curriculum development group has also contributed to a review of the modules within the Interactive Learning, Skills and Communications course that prepares students for transition to university. A number of studies are being undertaken on retention and attendance including new ways to use technology to monitor engagement.

8 College Enhancement Teams (CETs) located in each centre have been central to involving students in enhancement. The efficacy of CETs as a mechanism for student engagement in the quality agenda is under review in the light of changes to learning and teaching structures. The revised Learning and Teaching Forum is expected to reinforce the sharing of good practice across the network. A Learning and Teaching conference is planned. The Learning and Teaching Forum is also taking a lead in promoting a review of assessment practices to build further on the good practice identified in the 2016 review regarding assessment regulations and feedback.

9 The admissions process is set out in Navitas Policy and Regulation QS3 which can, with provider approval, be customised by individual colleges. The policy sets out the respective roles of the Provider and colleges. It is supported by additional documentation relating to information, fees, complaints and appeals. A Code of Ethics has been developed that applies to agents employed by Navitas. Approved local processes and procedures are incorporated into College Policy and Regulation documents, CPR QS3s, and written into Colleges' Operations Manuals.

10 Recruitment and admissions processes are centralised in the Navitas ARC based in the Provider's HQ. Colleges make ARC aware of admission requirements that have been formally agreed with partner universities. Colleges may be involved in evaluating non-standard and marginal candidates. Central staff may also assist in colleges during the clearing process, particularly where home students are being recruited through UCAS. The admissions processes check that international students have met English language entry requirements, assessed through the use of Home Office approved Secure English Language Tests (SELTs). An applicant's genuine intent to study is also checked.

11 The Provider's annual monitoring policy is set out in NPR QS2. Colleges may use a template attached to the policy or, if so required, the templates and procedures of its partner university. The Provider's annual monitoring forms have recently been updated to provide a more evidence-based analysis of student outcomes. Whichever process is used, annual monitoring is required to ensure that academic standards and quality are maintained and enhanced. Annual monitoring reports (AMRs) are expected to draw upon statistical data related to student performance; staff and student feedback; and feedback from external

examiners received during moderation. Reports are expected to be evaluative and reflective. Analysis is, where appropriate, expected to be comparative and to look at trends over time. AMRs draw upon tracer data from partner universities, which evidence the success of Navitas students after progression, and compare outcomes with students recruited directly or through other pathways. A new template has been devised to ensure that colleges collect specific information through tracer data. Reports should also contain action plans to address problems and weaknesses as well as supporting enhancement. Each report should contain an update on the implementation of the previous year's action plan.

12 Where colleges use their partner university's process, they adopt the university's timelines for completion. All colleges provide a commentary on their annual monitoring activity as part of their college update to the March meeting of the UPE LTQC. The Provider does not compile a separate annual monitoring report but features in the comparative NPE Annual Learning and Teaching Report.

13 Information produced by the Provider for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities offered through its colleges is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

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

14 The Provider demonstrates highly effective engagement with relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code. The Provider ensures that policy documents and guidelines align with the expectations of the Quality Code. The Quality Code also informs the proposed developments incorporated in action plans. For example, Compliance staff ensure that ARC is made aware of changes to the Quality Code or government policy that might affect admissions processes.

15 In addition to engagement with its partner universities, and bodies such as JISC, SEDA and the Higher Education Academy, the Provider draws upon the expertise and experience of the Navitas global network, which provides access to ideas and innovations.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

16 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the Provider's and its embedded colleges' 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 and its embedded colleges 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 Mr Cameron Waitt, QAA Officer and Dr Carol Vielba, QAA Reviewer, on 20 April 2018.

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