



SwaN Global Education LLP

Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements

December 2020

About this report

This is a report of a review under the Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements method conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at SwaN Global Education LLP (the College). The review took place on 3 December 2020 and was conducted by a review team, as follows:

- Professor Alan Jago
- Ms Jill Lyttle.

The main purpose of the review was to:

- make judgements about the provider's management of its responsibilities for academic standards, as set out in its contractual arrangements with its academic partner
- make judgements on the provider's management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities
- report on any features of good practice
- make recommendations for action.

A summary of the key findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. The context in which these findings should be interpreted is explained on page 3. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.¹ More information about the review method can be found in the [Handbook for providers](#).

The impact of COVID-19

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the review of SwaN Global Education LLP in 2019-20, was subject to an interim outcome in May 2020 and was concluded in December 2020. The review was conducted online and included meetings with the senior management team, teaching staff and students. The scope of the evidence considered, and the nature of the judgements and operational milestones have remained the same but with some adjustments due to the online format. A risk assessment was carried out prior to the completion of the review to identify and mitigate any potential risks. Annual monitoring will resume in 2021-22.

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us

Key findings

The QAA panel considered evidence relating to the educational provision at SwaN Global Education LLP (the College), both information supplied in advance and evidence gathered during the review visit. The review has resulted in the key findings stated in this section.

Judgements

The QAA panel formed the following judgements about SwaN Global Education LLP.

- **Confidence** can be placed in SwaN Global Education LLP's management of its responsibilities for academic standards, as set out in its contractual arrangements with its academic partner.
- **Confidence** can be placed in SwaN Global Education LLP's management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

Good practice

The QAA panel identified the following **features of good practice** at SwaN Global Education LLP.

- The flexible, responsive and accessible student support that reflects the needs of its students.
- The support for staff and the uptake of staff development opportunities in response to COVID-19 to enhance online learning and teaching.

Recommendations

The QAA panel makes the following recommendation to SwaN Global Education LLP.

It is **desirable** for the provider to:

- review and improve student engagement and participation on deliberative committees.

About SwaN Global Education LLP

Swansea University, Navitas and International College Wales Swansea (ICWS)/the College have been working in close partnership since 2016. Under the terms of the new agreement, The College, Swansea University moved from a royalty-based pathway model to a joint venture between Swansea University and Navitas. Under the new structure, the operations of the College were transferred to the joint venture entity that is equally owned by Navitas and Swansea University and governed by a Board of Directors (Executive Committee) with equal Navitas and Swansea University representation and an independent chairperson. The new entity is formally known as Swan Global Education LLP.

From September 2018 onwards, students were enrolled at The College, Swansea University rather than ICWS. From October 2018, the College occupied a new purpose-built academic building based on Swansea University Bay Campus. In the 2017-18 academic year, work was undertaken on the migration of systems from those used by the College under Navitas to those used by Swansea University. This work continued in the 2018-19 academic year, with staff of the College and several departments in Swansea University (Admissions, Academic Services, Student Services, Student Compliance) working in collaboration to ensure continued integration of processes and procedures.

The College has reviewed the Expectations and practices of the Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) while undergoing the changes to help ensure that students continue to receive a quality education experience through a period of significant transition. The responsibility for the student learning experience rests with the College in the day-to-day operation of programmes - this is subject to quality assurance by the University. Swansea University oversees academic standards and assessment.

Currently, there are 140 Level 3 home students and 169 international students (56 at Level 3, 94 at Level 4, and 19 at pre-masters). There is a total of 34 academic staff members made up of part-time staff.

Detailed findings about SwaN Global Education LLP

1 Academic standards

How effectively does the provider fulfil its responsibilities for the management of academic standards?

1.1 The College fulfils its responsibilities for the management of academic standards effectively. The College applies the University regulations and academic framework to ensure academic standards are maintained. The regulations are available to all staff through the university 'MyUni' website. The development and approval of all courses delivered by the College are approved by the University. Oversight of academic standards is undertaken by Swansea University with university representatives on the College's Academic Advisory Committee.

1.2 Members of the Committee include college staff, link tutors and other directors of learning and teaching from across the University, and it is chaired by a University Pro-Vice-Chancellor. In addition to this committee, the College operates the College Annual Programme Review (APR) and its own Progression Boards. Both are operated in line with university procedures. Most regulations, policies and procedures are aligned with those of the University. In some cases, there are separate college policies (CPRs) which have been approved by the University - for example, there is a CPR relating to academic misconduct.

1.3 Academic regulations are well understood by staff and are applied consistently through reference to the University's policies and procedures. This process is overseen by the academic leads, who meet regularly to ensure consistency across all programme areas. Academic leads take responsibility for making sure that all staff within their subject area understand and follow appropriate policies and procedures. Adherence to academic regulations is monitored by the College Director and senior team.

1.4 Programmes are designed in conjunction with university staff and reviewed within the normal university framework, including module and programme review. Link tutors undertake a key role in ensuring a flow of information between colleges of the University. They are the key interface between the host university college and the College. Each university college in which there is cognate provision, appoints a college link tutor who has several defined roles. These include: ensuring that the necessary information is produced to support the enrolment and induction of students; ensuring that college students pursuing integrated pathways have the same access to learning resources; ensuring there is suitable provision for examinations for integrated students; and facilitating the provision of appropriate programme and related information. Link tutors attend the College Academic Advisory Committee, relevant examination boards and APR meetings. There is an annual programme review (APR) of each programme. Its purpose is to assess the overall effectiveness of the programme in preparing for subsequent progression to the University. Consequent to this review, an action plan is produced, which is the basis of the review in the following year.

1.5 Teaching observations are undertaken regularly. Extensive feedback is provided to tutors. Academic leads mentor all new academic staff and undertake teaching observations of all new staff in the first semester of teaching. The College's Director of Learning and Teaching and the Director of Academic and Student Experience review the paperwork for these observations, and will meet with members of staff if it is deemed further action is required. There are regular module feedback surveys, which students complete at the end of each module. The results from the surveys are provided to tutors and any issues identified are discussed by the tutors with the relevant academic lead.

1.6 After the initial lockdown in March 2020 as a result of COVID-19, the College made the decision, in line with the University, to maintain all provision online. In the autumn term, service for students was offered both online and face-to-face. Working with the University, the College has taken care to ensure that the academic standards of programmes delivered remotely continue to be managed effectively. This has included the development of remote end-of-term assessments.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management of academic standards?

1.7 The College makes effective use of external reference points in the management of academic standards through its implementation of the University's regulations and policies and procedures. The review team considered that, as a constituent college of the University, the College follows the University's academic regulations, policies and processes effectively in the management of academic standards.

1.8 The last QAA monitoring report commented on the Annual Programme Review process being reviewed in light of the relevant chapters of the Quality Code. The Admission processes are still determined by Navitas Policy and Regulation QS3, which is informed by the Quality Code.

How effectively does the provider use external moderation, verification or examining to assure academic standards?

1.9 External scrutiny of assessment processes is undertaken by Swansea University. There are no external examiners specific to the College's own programmes. In the case of integrated programmes, where students are enrolled on a four-year integrated programme, university external examiners oversee the programme.

1.10 Assessments are set by college staff and they are also responsible for internal moderation and marking. Foundation-level assessments are moderated by college staff. Level 4 assessments are moderated by the University's School of Management and the Pre-Masters by the relevant university external examiner. Anonymous double-marking and moderation is carried out by the same groups as appropriate.

1.11 Progression Boards are held to consider assessment results. They are attended by link tutors and members of the University's Examination and Assessment team to ensure rigour in the College's assessment processes.

1.12 As indicated above, as a result of the move to remote delivery of programmes and remote online assessments, the College has ensured that their assessment processes are in line with Swansea University procedures.

The review team concludes that **confidence** can be placed in SwaN Global Education LLP's management of its responsibilities for academic standards, as set out in its contractual arrangements with its academic partner

2 Quality of learning opportunities

How effectively does the provider fulfil its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 As a constituent college of Swansea University, the College is fully embedded in its academic management and information systems, including access to student support services. The College provides additional support services to its students as an initial source of advice. University procedures are followed, with additional college-specific policies as necessary. These include annual module and programme reviews and student experience surveys, as well as complaints and appeals processes. The appeals process was amended by the University to accommodate COVID-19.

2.2 Effective oversight by the University is exercised through the College's Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) which is chaired by a Pro-Vice-Chancellor and is responsible for supporting the College's quality assurance and enhancement processes. It receives reports from the Director/Principal of the College and from the university subject link tutors. Minutes are reported both to the College's own Executive Committee and to Navitas. The College's Learning and Teaching Committee reports to the University's Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee. College staff sit on both Navitas and university committees. Student representatives, who are trained by the University's Students' Union, are invited to both college committees although attendance by students is infrequent (see paragraph 2.15 below). The team considers it **desirable** for the College to review and improve student engagement and participation on deliberative committees.

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

2.3 The University's policies and procedures, which are followed by the College, cite the Quality Code. College academic leads are responsible for their subject area and supporting teaching staff within the College, and liaise with link tutors in relevant subject areas in the other university colleges. This helps to ensure a close fit with university processes, providing direct and ongoing links with relevant and appropriate external monitoring and evaluation which in turn add to the enhancement of learning opportunities available to college students.

2.4 Navitas is responsible for the operation of the admissions process. Its processes adhere to UKVI policy and guidelines as well as to the Core and Common practices of the Quality Code. Prior to COVID-19, work was underway to transfer operational responsibility for admissions from central Navitas staff to college staff. Throughout the admissions process during COVID-19, clear and consistent general communication was ensured through use of the University's website. The College worked collaboratively with the University to find appropriate acceptable outcomes for applicants who were unable to take recognised English language tests or who only had provisional examination results.

2.5 Complaints and appeals processes follow university procedures. Appeals from students on integrated programmes are submitted to the University's Academic Services Directorate while those on standard delivery programmes are submitted direct to the College, with a final appeal to the University. There has been only one formal complaint in recent years.

2.6 As an integral part of the University, the College benefits from direct access to, and support from, the additional expertise available within the University's structures. In response to COVID-19, the University set up a number of work streams to manage the ongoing situation and develop best practice across the University. Senior college staff play a full role in this work.

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

2.7 The College implements the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, applying each objective to its own circumstances. It is accompanied by a suitably detailed action plan. The College is fully engaged with the University's quality assurance and enhancement structure. Student feedback on modules includes both curriculum and staff evaluation. These feed into the Annual Programme Review (APR) for which an action plan is produced. University link tutors are a point of contact for the academic leads during the year and participate with them in the APR process. Student data derived from the University's systems is considered within the APR process.

2.8 The University has set up an Academic Data Quality Committee to analyse key metrics, including outcomes of student engagement and enhancement. The College is represented and plays a full part in identifying relevant data needs, including those unique to the College. To date, no significant issues have been identified with respect to specific student groups or characteristics.

2.9 Outcomes of review processes are discussed at the Student Forum and monitored by the Learning and Teaching Committee. Students are surveyed annually through university feedback processes and results are considered at university level as well as within the College.

How effective are the provider's arrangements for staff development in relation to maintaining and/or enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.10 The Academic Advisory Committee approves new staff appointments to the College. New teaching staff receive a comprehensive induction to the College and are observed during their first semester by the relevant academic lead, with additional support available if necessary. Formal peer review of teaching takes place annually and informal peer support takes place throughout the year. Ongoing individual and group staff development is available through the College and also the University. Staff participate in events run by the University's Academy of Learning and Teaching (SALT). There is no formal appraisal process for teaching staff, who are generally experienced practitioners. Many have worked in other colleges within the University and are familiar with its culture. College staff have adapted well to using the University's IT and other systems as the College has become more closely integrated. Student support staff have regular one-to-one meetings with their manager as well as annual reviews. During COVID-19, team meetings have increased and provide a collaborative environment and mutual support which has been much appreciated by staff. Ongoing staff contact with academic and support staff counterparts in the University enables informal sharing of best practice.

2.11 Teaching staff are part-time and do not have individual offices so the communal staff room holds much significance for staff. During COVID-19, the wellbeing of staff assumed greater priority for the College. Staff developed their own virtual staff room for collegial support, sharing experiences and good practice with a view to replicating the staff room situation as far as possible. Peer support has proved particularly helpful during the switch from classroom to online teaching. In response to COVID-19, staff worked together to produce a video guide for students on setting up their study space. During the summer semester, College staff participated in the University's internal training programme for online teaching, starting from first principles, to assist in supporting new students commencing their studies in an online learning environment. College staff were able to trial this in the summer term ahead of the main academic year and shared their experience with university colleagues.

2.12 The team considers that the support for staff and the uptake of staff development opportunities in response to COVID-19 to enhance online learning and teaching is **good practice**.

How effectively does the provider assure itself that students are appropriately and effectively supported?

2.13 Students at the College are able to access all university facilities, including academic and pastoral support. Given the nature of its students, some of whom are under 18 years old and/or are international students, the College has put additional support structures in place. Although the University operates an Academic Mentor system for its students, the College continues to operate the existing Personal Tutor system to ensure its students receive targeted pastoral support from the outset. Personal tutors come from the Professional Services team who staff the reception area in the main building and are usually the first point of contact for students, operating as a one-stop shop. College students approach individual lecturers directly for academic advice. They can also access the University's central support services either directly or through their Personal Tutor.

2.14 The use of the University's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system enables a more integrated and effective identification of, and more timely response to, student support needs. Individual students needing support are identified by academic staff or Personal Tutors as concerns arise from attendance and performance monitoring. Personal Tutors work in tandem with academic staff and with university central support services. Proactive attention is paid to under 18s. Students can self-identify at any stage if they need reasonable adjustments, or if they have other support needs. Some students and alumni who have progressed volunteer to act as student buddies to help students settle in, usually on an occasional basis as specific issues arise.

2.15 The College operates a small class system to ensure close student monitoring, academic guidance and support. The size of the college community facilitates informal feedback and speedy resolution of queries. The wide range of student backgrounds does not lend itself easily to the formal election of student representatives so, typically staff identify actively-engaged students and ask them to act as class representatives; they are then trained by the University's Students' Union. The Student Forum meets termly. In the first instance, this comprises student representatives, although a general invitation is extended to all students. Relatively few students in the past have engaged with this formal feedback structure and the largely virtual nature of the current college community exacerbates the situation. Notwithstanding the diverse nature of the student body, the team considers it **desirable** for the College to review and improve student engagement and participation on deliberative committees.

2.16 The College's initial response to COVID-19 was two-fold: an immediate cessation of face-to-face teaching and the development of additional arrangements for ongoing support - both academic and pastoral - for students and staff. Teaching staff, supported both by the University and by Navitas, were trained and provided with appropriate equipment. Teaching sessions were recorded and made available online. Students remaining on campus were provided with laptops where necessary. Staff and support services were still available and students were contacted regularly to offer support and gather feedback. Students who returned to their home countries received contextualised communications to ensure they too felt supported. Scheduled May assessments were delivered online and submitted through Turnitin or a managed email inbox.

2.17 Teaching in the summer term was completely online, however, some campus teaching is taking place in the new academic year through blended delivery. Staff delivering live online lectures join sessions in advance and stay afterwards to chat informally to

students and answer questions, thus providing an equivalence of the classroom situation. Additional online activities have been developed by staff to support student learning and encourage them in their studies. Support information is sent regularly to students; virtual weekly drop-in sessions are provided; and proactive one-to-one contact provided by Personal Tutors has increased in frequency. Students who met the team confirmed that both academic and pastoral support is usually readily available and is greatly valued.

2.18 The College has a well-established and effective individually-tailored student support system. It was further developed and expanded in response to COVID-19, providing more and varied online resources and more frequent contact with a focus on the wellbeing of students. The team considers the flexible, responsive and accessible student support that reflects the needs of its students to be **good practice**.

How effectively does the provider ensure that learning resources are accessible and sufficient to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes?

2.19 As fully-registered students of the University, College students have access to all its learning resources and facilities as well as those provided within the College. As the College embraces more of the university systems, students are increasingly better supported - for example, the recent change in the virtual learning environment used across the University has enhanced the student learning and support environment. Students are supported in developing employability skills through the University's Employability Award (SEA), now embedded in the curriculum.

2.20 The College is located in new flexible purpose-built accommodation, both teaching and residential, on one of the University's main campuses. The teaching building, designed with College needs in mind, is also used by staff and students of the wider university. The ongoing integration of college systems with university systems familiarises students with the University's academic, regulatory and support systems which in turn helps to ensure a smooth transfer to the completion of their degree studies.

The review team concludes that **confidence** can be placed in SwaN Global Education LLP's management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

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