

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 2 October 2015

Report of the Academic Review of Glasgow International College (GIC)

Dr Kenneth Hutton, Clerk to the Review Panel

Review Date: 26 March 2015

Review Panel:

Professor Frank Coton	Vice Principal (Academic and Educational Innovation) (Convener)
Professor Tom Baum	University of Strathclyde (External Member)
Professor John Davies	College of Science & Engineering (Academic Member)
Ms Carole MacDiarmid	EAP Manager (Teacher Development) (Language Centre Member)
Dr Michael McEwan	University Teacher (ADU Member)
Ms Breffni O'Connor	Students' Representative Council (Student Representative)
Miss Rachel Sandison	Director, Recruitment and International Office (RIO Member)
Dr Kenneth Hutton	Academic Collaborations Manager (Clerk to the Review)

1. Introduction

1.1 Background information

- 1.1.1 Background information on Glasgow International College has been provided through the Self Evaluation Report (SER) which explains that Kaplan International Colleges (KIC) is part of Kaplan Inc., a subsidiary of Graham Holdings Company (formerly known as the Washington Post Company). Kaplan annually provides education and career services to approximately 1 million students in 400 locations in 30 countries worldwide and is currently involved in the delivery of academic preparation programmes in partnership with universities in a wide range of countries including the UK, USA, UAE, Australia, Kurdistan, Nigeria, and China.
- 1.1.2 Kaplan and the University of Glasgow entered into a partnership to establish Glasgow International College in 2007 with the first cohort of students joining the College in September 2007. Foundation Certificate students who meet the criteria progress to second year at UoG and Pre-Master's students who meet the criteria enter Masters programmes at UoG.
- 1.1.3 The College is located in the main UoG campus in the Anderson College and adjoining Robertson Building. Additional to the spaces in the Anderson/Robertson buildings, GIC has access to further teaching rooms at the UoG. This is to accommodate large lecture classes and GIC students also have access to the UoG Library, sports facilities, and welfare facilities under Service Level Agreements (SLAs).
- 1.1.4 Teaching at GIC is delivered by a combination of permanent and sessional tutors. Where possible, module coordination is led by permanent tutors.

Teaching staff are supported by permanent staff in the Student Services, Academic Services and Operations departments.

Staffing	Headcount (n)	FTE (n)
Total Staff	83	55.7
Academic Staff	67	40.1

Academic Staffing		Headcount (n)	FTE (n)
Senior Management (PLs/Academic Director)		4	4
BLSS teaching staff (inc. junior management)		7	5.5
S&E teaching staff		3	3
Skills for Study/ Learning Support (inc. jr. management)	BLSS	5	5
	S&E	4	4
	Language for Study	4	5

1.1.5 Student numbers from September 2014 are as follows:

Students	Total Headcount	PE ¹ in September Term
Foundation Certificate	244	14
Pre-Master's	400	197
Total	644	211

1.1.6 Based on FTE student numbers the current staff to student ratio (SSR) is 1:16.1. This compares to a University average SSR of 1:15.8.

1.1.7 The Review considered the full range of provision offered by GIC as follows:

Undergraduate Provision:

- Foundation Certificate in Engineering
- Foundation Certificate in Science
- Foundation Certificate in Business
- Foundation Certificate in Social Science

Postgraduate Provision:

- Pre-Master's for Science and Engineering
- Pre-Master's for Business, Law and Social Science

Other Provision:

The College also offers non-credit bearing preparatory components which are delivered in the September term and include:

- Maths and Science (Foundation Certificate in Science or Engineering)
- Enhancement (Foundation Certificate and Pre-Master's, all programmes)
- Language (Foundation Certificate programmes)

English Language Provision:

All Students have Language for Study embedded in their academic programme. Additionally GIC offers programmes including one, one and a half and two-term Preparatory English (PE). PE can be taken at level 1 (International English Language Testing System (IELTS) equivalent of <5.0) or level 2 (IELTS 5.0-5.5), with intakes in September, February and June.

1.2 *Self-Evaluation Report (SER)*

- 1.2.1 The SER was prepared by Dr Neil Alexander MacLeod, GIC Academic Director, with support from Dr Joanna Royle. The quality enhancement working group at GIC, which includes a cross section of academic and support staff, also assisted in preparation of the SER. Student input was obtained at Programme Committees. Staff input was obtained at all staff development sessions as part of the reflective preparation. The penultimate draft of the document was made available to all staff for final comments before submission.
- 1.2.2 The Review Panel received the SER and other documents which supported them in undertaking a meaningful and wide ranging review. Where particular issues were identified in the SER, the Panel made efforts to explore these in more detail during the review visit.
- 1.2.3 This was the first academic review carried out with GIC, and the Panel **commends** GIC on its extensive preparations for the review, including discussions with staff, students and alumni and the preparation and collation of documents and notes that this was carried out during what will have been an unfamiliar process.
- 1.2.4 The Panel felt that the SER was descriptive and focused on process rather than what GIC felt it was effective at. Senior staff at GIC may wish to reflect on this and approach future reviews with this in mind.

2. Context and Strategy

2.1 *College Aims*

The mission of GIC, as noted from the SER, has been to offer pathway programmes to international students who do not meet the criteria for direct entry to university and to prepare those students for a successful academic experience on UK undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. It seeks to close the gap between student entry level attainment and the subject knowledge, academic skills, and English language they will need to succeed on their chosen pathway programme at UoG. GIC aims to deliver pathways designed and delivered specifically to meet the needs of international students, coming primarily from outside the EU.

2.2 *Strategic Approach to Enhancing Learning and Teaching*

The Panel noted from the SER that GIC has sought to contribute to UoG's Learning and Teaching Strategy 2011-2015 by progressing students who will contribute to the objective of creating a culturally diverse learning environment and attracting students from under-represented groups.

2.3 *Structures for Delivering College and Network Aims*

Although GIC's operational aims involve scrutiny in the relationship with UoG (such as moderation and CBoS meetings), GIC's fundamental vision follows KIC's model "The Kaplan Way". This model is intended to offer guidance and tools to facilitate pedagogical excellence but the Panel raised the question of how much operational freedom GIC is allowed within this framework, especially considering the fact the GIC is unique among the KIC group in that it is the only college operating in Scotland and matching students to Scotland's unique HE system.

GIC feel that it has room for manoeuvre within the current structure as follows:

The Academic Planning and Quality Committee works with the College Executive Management Board to develop and regularly review

documentation such as the Dignity at Study Policy and the Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2011-2014, which are then rolled out, through the support of the Centre for Learning, Innovation and Quality, to be adapted to the needs of individual colleges. For example the Glasgow International College Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2011-2014 used the strategic objectives of the KIC policy, but identified implementation priorities in line with College progress and with the needs of the partnership with the UoG. The college network operates broadly under the Kaplan International Colleges Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) which outlines the institutional structures for ensuring high quality outcomes and the systems that are used to ensure the colleges are able to maintain QAA accreditation. The JAMB and the CBoS also play a key role in assuring the quality of KIC's learning opportunities on behalf of the partner University.

(SER)

3. Enhancing the Student Experience

3.1 *Admissions, Retention and Success*

- 3.1.1 GIC for both UG and PGT admissions are processed by the KIC recruitment team centrally and students are supported throughout the programme of study, resulting in no significant issues with retention.

In 2013-14 only 3.5% of starts withdrew and 3.2% failed the programme and 74.9% progressed to UoG (Student retention and progression remains an ongoing focus for the College and GIC has set up the Student Attendance Monitoring Group and the Transition Group to monitor this area. The College Quality Enhancement Action Plan also focuses on student retention and progression issues.

- 3.1.2 The Panel were concerned at the possibility that students might be admitted to GIC with lower entry requirements than UoG would be comfortable with. At Pre-Master's level, for example, it has been noted that on occasion students have been admitted to GIC with a third class degree and this would not be credible at UoG. This issue is dealt with in **Recommendation 1**.
- 3.1.3 The Panel recognised various issues in the transition of GIC students to UoG which centred around their abilities as independent learners. At GIC, students have a great deal of face-to-face contact with teaching and administrative staff and are given a high level and large amount of guidance in their academic work. This might make some students overly reliant on tutors and unprepared for independent study at UoG.
- 3.1.4 Foundation Certificate students, for example, have a maximum of twenty six contact teaching hours at GIC but may have only around eight (depending on the subject area) at UoG. The extra layers of support provided by GIC are not present at UoG and can result in students having an uncomfortable transition. Both institutions are, however, aware of such issues and have attempted to address them in, for example, the Transitions Project for students going on to Business and Social Sciences which includes information, advice and training on mentoring, lecture skills using recorded UoG lectures, programme structure, student life, employability and Graduate Attributes as well as the University's expectations of students.
- 3.1.5 For GIC students who progress to the College of Social Sciences, extra support measures have included GIC tutors offering an additional support session and help with students' first semester coursework at UoG. This allows some continuity of support. There is a PGR intern dedicated to working with the GIC

students who are in year two at UoG and who has helped with social events and informal guidance/mentoring. There are two Senior Advisers of Study on the MA Social Sciences who focus on supporting GIC students.

These initiatives have proved to be useful and helpful to GIC students and it might be beneficial to consider extending these or mirroring them in Science and Engineering, and MVLS.

- 3.1.6 GIC has also initiated a mentoring process where its alumni in UoG mentor current Foundation Certificate GIC students. The Panel **commend** this but have concerns about it being voluntary, which means that only motivated students are likely to take advantage of it. It would also be difficult to implement for Pre-Master's students and a solution would need some thought.
- 3.1.7 In discussions with GIC alumni and current students, issues which affected transition to UoG included the fact that there is such a predominance of Students from China who are likely to mix mostly with one another and speak Chinese outside class time. This could hinder their cultural immersion and ability to overcome cultural differences which could in turn influence their ability to become independent learners such as a reluctance to ask questions, to challenge teaching staff to clarify elements of their lessons, to give personal opinions and to critically analyse what they are being taught.
- 3.1.8 Another issue for Foundation Certificate students is that they begin to study at UoG in second year but almost all the other students in their year will have begun together the year before and will, mostly, have come directly from school and within an education system which is tailored to meet the abilities of these students at a particular stage in their academic development. GIC students might be at a disadvantage in starting later and the Panel **recommends** that issues arising in this regard be addressed.
- 3.1.9 GIC indicated that it would be useful to define what independent learning consists of in a University context and to identify closely what would be expected of a student at levels one and two. This discussion should take place between GIC and the ADU.
- 3.1.10 The Panel also noted that there was a view among students that the high level of support at GIC could be gradually reduced throughout the year rather than suddenly removed at the end. Students seemed to be unaware of support at UoG, such as support for academic writing skills. It would be beneficial to some students if they were more proactive in finding out what support is available once they have progressed to UoG would be of benefit
- 3.1.11 An overall picture of student attainment and progression throughout students' careers at GIC/UoG would be helpful in assessing and monitoring how effective the transition arrangements are and the Panel **recommend** that meaningful data should be sought to facilitate this. One issue which has made this difficult is the fact that it is difficult to identify former GIC students in My Campus (UoG's main student and programme database) and this issue would need to be addressed in order to meet the recommendation.
- 3.1.12 The Panel **commends** developments in creating closer ties between the two institutions since sharing practice and exposing GIC students to the wider University is helpful in informing students as to what to expect at UoG. Staff interaction would also be useful if aligning practice and expectations where appropriate. Recent activities which have promoted closer ties were outlined in the last CBoS minutes (CBoS 20141127 minute item 9.2.1.) and include joint GIC/UoG attendance at the International Students' Seminar in May 2014; UoG representation at the GIC All Staff Conference in September 2014; an invitation

to GIC staff to attend the UoG student induction evening sessions; mini-lectures with UoG staff with pre and post-lecture sessions for preparation and reinforcement of learning. The College and University should, however, consider ways in which future ties might make GIC students feel more closely connected to the wider University.

3.2 *Equality and Diversity*

- 3.2.1 The Panel noted from the SER that students are expected to behave in accordance with GIC's Staff/Student Charter which requires them to treat others with dignity and respect.
- 3.2.2 Although GIC has attempted to embed equality and diversity in the learning and teaching environment in a variety of ways such as embedding related issues in study skills modules, academic content and assessment, GIC recognises that more could still be done for some students with protected characteristics.
- 3.2.3 It was also noted from the SER that GIC has not formally made use of the Race Equality Toolkit but believes that the majority of the recommendations are already fully embedded in the curriculum.
- 3.2.4 The Panel noted that the student nationality mix is unbalanced in comparison to other comparable institutions with Students from China dominant (65% in 2014-15) and the majority of these studying Pre-Master's Business. The Foundation programmes are more diverse but the nationalities mix at Pre-Master's level could be improved. GIC is looking at the diversification agenda with RIO in bi-annual meetings but a solution through diversifying recruitment is unlikely to resolve the issue in the short term. The Panel therefore **recommends** that GIC review the way it deals with student integration issues internally.
- 3.2.5 GIC employs a relatively diverse profile of teaching and support staff, including a mix of nationalities and an almost equal gender split and broad age profile, but this is not reflected in the senior management team.
- 3.2.6 Some staff have disclosed non-visible disabilities and, when looking at students, there are mechanisms in place to support students with a declared disability or mental health issue including utilising help from UoG's student support services. Where students do not declare, then such issues might be identified through learning support tutors during tutorials. In extreme and sudden cases, GIC would refer the student to their GP.

3.3 *Supporting Students in their Learning*

3.3.1 Pre-arrival Guide

GIC issues students a Pre-arrival Guide. The Guide gives detailed information and advice on visa applications, documentation required, College and emergency contact details, clothing, toiletries, money, medicine, arriving at the airport, accommodation, first week induction and course preparation.

- 3.3.2 The Panel **commends** the College on the high levels of engagement and commitment of staff to the provision of teaching and the creation of valuable learning opportunities for students. The passion staff have for their subject was relayed to the Panel by a number of students and was also apparent in direct communications with staff themselves. The Panel was in little doubt that the engagement and commitment of staff was a major asset of the College, which students were aware of, and on which they also placed great value.

3.3.3 *Registration and Induction*

The Panel **commends** the thoroughness of GIC's registration and induction arrangements which includes a "Welcome Pack with practical orientation details,

and sessions and talks delivered by both academic and support staff who provide advice and guidance on programme content, structure, study skills, time management, pastoral support and the full range of support services available to them within the College. Students receive training on the use of the VLE, internal online systems and tours of all facilities available on campus. They are also given tips on how to stay safe in the city, health and safety information including what to do in an emergency and who the first aiders are in the College as well as how to apply for a bank letter, how to register with the police (GIC make an appointment for all students who need to register), and how to register with a doctor." (SER.) Although this is commended, the Panel thought there was potential for more orientation to the course content and expectations in induction for Science and Engineering students.

3.3.4 *Using Student Feedback to Improve Transition*

Students give feedback on their experience of induction and registration and results are reviewed and reflected on by GIC with a view to constantly refining and improving the process.

3.4 *Student Engagement*

3.4.1 Effectiveness of Feedback mechanisms

The Panel considered a variety of student issues centred around support, representation and engagement and noted the following:

3.4.2 Appeals

Appeals follow KIC processes which are very different to UoG's. The final point of appeal is outside the College but within KIC. GIC feel that the process is suitable and is sometimes connected to technical difficulties such as students having to leave the country, due to visa regulations, before appeals can be heard. The Panel were advised that much of what appear to be appeals are in fact considerations of extenuating circumstances rather than appeals on academic grounds, and these are dealt with under the appropriate process.

GIC indicated that they are happy to work with the SRC on appeals which have implications for entry to UoG. This is intended to develop good practice and is not a Panel recommendation: the Panel recognises that UoG appeals are bound by public sector requirements which do not apply to GIC.

3.4.3 Programme Evaluations

1. Pro-forma questions are given to students with no opportunity for comments outside of the answers. Although there may be other opportunities for comments, they were not available in the pro-forma questionnaires that the Panel saw.
2. The 1-5 feedback scale is restrictive and not benchmarked to the NSS (National Student Survey).
3. The welfare score of 3.5 out of 5 should be investigated to ensure students feel supported.
4. It is difficult to compare these evaluations to those at UoG.

3.4.4 Student Representation

1. The Panel were concerned that student representatives are picked by staff.
2. SRC can raise awareness on how the process of selecting student representatives is conducted at UoG.
3. UoG/SRC makes use of SPARQS (Student Participation in Quality Scotland) and the Panel **recommends** that GIC communicate with SPARQS to gain information on training which could benefit student representation in a way that would align GIC more to the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework.

4. Enhancement in Learning and Teaching

4.1 *Learning and Teaching*

4.1.1 Curriculum Design

Curriculum Design guidance comes primarily from KIC's Centre for Learning, Innovation, and Quality (CLIQ). The Collegiate Board of Studies (CBoS, consisting of representatives from GIC and the UoG) has oversight of the GIC curriculum.

The Panel noted from the SER that there is also input from students from their contribution to the programme committees, student fora and Module Monitoring Report (MMR) feedback. The latter are collated reports of principally quantitative data, including student performance trends over the module and student feedback on the module. Students rate core elements of the teaching, materials, and assessment on a five point Likert scale for each module.

Students also provide feedback which inputs into module and curriculum design through Programme Committees which meet each term.

Where modules already exist, their development is the responsibility of the Module Coordinator (MC). Development may include refinements to the module outline; lesson plans; teaching materials; VLE maintenance; and setting assessment.

4.1.2 *Approach to Intended Learning Outcomes*

- ILOs were initially developed with the input of UoG Subject Moderators and existing KIC programme specifications. Monitoring (through CBoS and KIC's Academic, Planning and Quality Committee) and moderation over the years has resulted in modifications to ILOs with the aim of matching them as closely as possible to commensurate UoG programmes.
- Students are made aware of ILOs through teaching staff and teaching materials. Formative assessments reflect ILOs and student performance in these assessments prompts reinforcement of awareness of ILOs if necessary.
- Teaching staff and external examiners are also made aware of ILOs and part of their remit is to comment on them if need be.

4.1.3 *Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching (TELT)*

- The Panel noted from the SER and in discussion that GIC has a policy of using Turnitin for essay submissions. GIC also runs training courses for teaching staff on using some elements of the Microsoft Office suite.
- GIC uses KIC Moodle as its preferred Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and it is used as "a preparatory and revision tool for students; and a

complete repository of learning and teaching materials for both lessons and self-study is held there.” (SER.)

- GIC is committed to taking a lead in the implementation of KIC’s Blended Learning Strategy in 2015 which where technology assisted assessment will form a more substantial part of GIC practice.
- There is an open access student IT lab on Level 3 at GIC.
- There are fortnightly staff training events and TELT forms part of this programme.

4.2 *Assessment and Feedback*

4.2.1 Range of assessment methods

- Assessment Type and Weighting

Assessment types and weightings were initially established for each module in 2007 in consultation with UoG Subject Moderators and reflected those in UoG progression routes as well as aligning to ILOs and KIC guidelines. These are reviewed annually, through consultation between Programme Leaders (PLs), MCs, external examiners, UoG Subject Moderators, and students.

- Evaluation of Assessment Volume and Range

The volume and range of assessment is under regular review. The range includes formative elements, peer supported learning, and cross-module support through the Skills for Study modules.

4.2.2 *Engagement with the Code of Assessment and Assessment policy*

4.2.3 How students receive feedback on assessed work

- The Panel noted that GIC use their own marking schemes which align to KIC’s and results are sampled by UoG Subject Moderators. The marking schemes vary by subject – for example those used for technical subjects, such as mathematics, are significantly more prescriptive in nature than others.

- Written feedback

For academic subjects, students receive written feedback on all summative and most formative assessments. The arrangements are different in English Language which is approximately equivalent to IELTS criteria.

For the Skills and Language departments GIC utilises the KIC *Notes to Tutors on Marking and Script Annotation* guidance.

- Returning Feedback

The Panel noted from the SER and in discussion that GIC aims to return written feedback and grades, including an annotated copy of written assignments, to students within ten working days of submission. Depending on the type of assessment, feedback can be returned even in lesson time.

The Panel also noted that GIC encourage students to read the annotations on their written assignment and on the feedback coversheet and, in some cases, students to transcribe the annotations in order to encourage engagement with feedback.

- Evaluation of Marking Schemes and Feedback Protocols

The Panel noted from the SER that criteria-based marking and feedback at GIC is well developed and highly focused on ensuring that students develop a clear understanding of attainment expectations.

The quality of feedback has been identified in external scrutiny as an area of best practice for the College, however it was noted that this is inconsistent across programmes and modules. GIC is aware of this and will continue to build quality of feedback into its staff training in an attempt to address the issue.

4.3 *Engaging and Supporting Staff*

4.3.1 Supporting The Pedagogy of Permanent Teaching Staff

The Panel noted from the SER and confirmed in discussions with staff, that Teaching staff are given a high level of support. This includes induction, regular teaching observations, annual appraisal, peer mentoring, and internal and external training opportunities. Included in this is assessment and marking standardisation and programme team meetings to address any issues arising.

Staff are encouraged to make use of UoG's Learning and Teaching Centre for staff development and are also encouraged to engage in educational research projects but research and publishing are not part of the core business of GIC which self-identifies as, primarily, a teaching organisation.

4.3.2 Supporting the Pedagogy of Sessional Tutors

The Panel noted that although sessional tutors receive similar support to permanent tutors, their support is heightened by an enhanced induction, more guidance such as working more closely with MCs than established tutors, and being encouraged to attend internal training.

4.3.3 Evolving Teaching Delivery Relationships

The Panel noted from the SER that GIC has made changes to staffing models in response to the growth of the College. These include:

- Introduction of senior tutors in the larger programme areas to support the PLs.
- Separation of the learning support tutorial teaching team into programme-specific groups for delivery of skills for study and tutorials to BLSS, S&E and English language students.
- Transferring parts of the English teaching provision from the UoG Language Centre to be directly managed, recruited for, and delivered at GIC. This requires revision of the Service Level Agreement (in progress), but retains the co-operation and partnership with UoG.

4.3.4 Staff Development

While GIC offers much in the way of internal support for staff, the Panel noted that GIC could improve access to external opportunities for staff development. GIC have suggested engaging with any such opportunities at UoG, in particular further association with the Learning and Teaching Centre.

The Panel noted that a staff training and CPD budget exists in GIC, that secondment opportunities to other Kaplan centres are available and there is conference training and that teaching staff are paid administration rates for attending training courses.

GIC have also indicated a priority in pursuing fellowships of the Higher Education Academy for its academic teaching staff and this is part-funded by GIC and part-funded by staff.

In preparation for the Academic Review, teaching and support staff at GIC felt engaged and involved in the process and had been encouraged by GIC senior management to contribute to and comment on the draft SER.

4.4 *Resources for Learning and Teaching (staffing and physical)*

4.4.1 Learning Resources (Staffing)

GIC employs both permanent and sessional tutors who are supported by permanent staff in the Student Services, Academic Services and Operations departments.

There are currently 55.7 FTE staff at GIC with 40.1 of those being academic staff. (For further details see paragraph 1.1 above.)

4.4.2 Learning Resources (Physical)

The Panel was given a tour of facilities at GIC and noted the dedicated physical teaching resources in the Anderson/Robertson buildings in addition to staff offices and the Student Services and Academic Services offices. There are:

- Eighteen teaching rooms (capacities ranging from 15 to 50).
- Six tutorial rooms.
- A student IT lab (24 PCs, 1 printer) on level 3.
- A student common room
- A discrete student study space.
- A reflection/prayer room.

It was also noted that GIC also use UoG rooms allocated by Central Timetabling and that there is disabled access throughout the College.

The Panel noted GIC's concerns regarding allocation of rooms by UoG's Central Timetabling whereby the frequency of room changes affect the student experience as does the geographical location if, for example, rooms in the St Andrews Building are allocated then this has timetabling implications since GIC and the St Andrews Building are at opposite ends of the Campus. Bearing in mind that GIC students have very full timetables (a maximum of twenty six teaching contact hours per week), travel time and room changes can be problematic. The Panel suggests GIC review this with CTT to try to ensure more appropriate locations and a minimisation of changes to rooms.

5. Academic Standards

5.1 *Approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards:*

5.1.1 Course and Programme Approval

GIC programmes are designed as pathways to specific programmes of study at UoG. Any changes to pathways destinations at UoG will have an effect on what is taught at GIC. The Panel found that communication of such changes by UoG could be improved.

Suggested changes or additions to programmes emanating from GIC are scrutinised by UoG Subject Moderators and then by the CBoS which reports any

recommendations for approval to the JAMB. There is also consultation with students and external examiners.

These two boards plus the JSMB constitute the formal reporting and management of the partnership between GIC and UoG and the Panel **Recommends** GIC and UoG jointly review these boards with a view to reducing them from three to two if that is felt to be appropriate.

5.1.2 Annual Monitoring

Assessment types and weightings are reviewed annually, through initial consultation between PLs and MCs taking into account feedback from external examiners, UoG subject moderators, and students.

5.1.3 External Examining

GIC's External Examiners are sent copies of the programme and module specifications that indicate the ILOs for the various programmes. Discussion around the ILOs is also at the centre of external examiner scrutiny.

5.1.4 Student Feedback

Student feedback is sought for curriculum and module design, assessment and teaching.

5.1.5 Subject Benchmark Statements

The Panel noted from the SER that the Foundation Certificate is notionally aligned with SCQF level 7 and at Pre-Master's, against SCQF level 10. The ongoing alignment of individual subject modules was verified through an updated benchmarking exercise in 2013. It should be noted that due to the intensive nature of study and inclusion of English Language learning, GIC students' workload is higher than the SCQF notional learning hours.

The English Language exit exam is provided centrally from KIC to ensure that it is aligned to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning), which in turn informs and is informed by IELTS.

5.1.6 Accreditation requirements

GIC operates under the Kaplan International Colleges Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) which influences the outcomes and systems intended to ensure its colleges are able to maintain QAA oversight. The JAMB and the CBoS also act as part of the quality assurance process.

5.1.7 Other external references

The Panel raised concerns over the ability of external examiners to cover the wide range of academic subject areas and, although not a recommendation, would advise that GIC be aware of this.

6. Collaborative provision

6.1 *Enhancing the Student Experience*

The Panel noted that GIC students do not feel part of the wider university community and see themselves almost exclusively as students of GIC. It seems natural for students to gravitate towards those who study the same subject and/or live and socialise together and this is an impediment to identifying with UoG. Students pointed out difficulties in, for example, joining UoG sports clubs since membership was closed by the time they arrived. There also seems to be a lack of awareness of other clubs and societies where membership is open all year round.

The Panel **recommend** that closer ties with the SRC take place to remove such barriers and involve GIC students more.

6.2 *Enhancement of Support*

The Panel noted that GIC teaching and support staff felt valued in their interactions with UoG. Generally, UoG was considered to be helpful when approached with a view to finding out specific support for GIC students and in exchanging Tier 4/visa information. More contact with UoG would be useful in identifying beneficial areas and GIC staff see no barriers to proactively seeking useful communication with UoG academics and administrative staff.

6.3 *Academic Standards*

6.3.1 One key element of ensuring academic standards are met is for UoG Subject Moderators to verify marking and assessments at GIC. A moderation timetable had been agreed at CBoS in 2014 and appeared to be working well.

6.3.2 In discussions with Subject Moderators, the Panel noted that in some subject areas there was a considerable difference in the ratio of time allocated between lectures and tutorials which can be 75%/25% respectively in the case of Mathematics at UoG but the other way round at GIC.

6.3.3 Subject Moderators broadly concurred with the transition issues identified and with cultural issues such as perceived shyness and consequent reluctance to speak in tutorials. Although this had no significant influence on pass rates, a higher proportion of GIC students proceeding to Honours in areas of Social Sciences do so at the minimum threshold level than students who had had direct first year entry to UoG and the GPA for GIC students progressing to Engineering is lower than UoG direct entry students. It was also noted that in Science and Engineering, the success rate of students who entered UoG and left with an honours degree was lower than UoG would have expected. It should be noted, however, that a comprehensive picture is difficult to determine at the moment due to the lack of data on attainment and the difficulty in identifying GIC alumni through their career at UoG.

6.3.4 Subject Moderators also brought up the issue of English language ability and felt that more could be done at GIC to improve this area. It was noted that some Students from China were using Chinese translations of textbooks and this was an obvious hindrance to learning the correct English language terminology and practicing English language skills. The panel **recommends** that the balance of study skills and subject-specific elements for Science and Engineering programmes at GIC be reviewed. This is a joint action on GIC and UoG (the latter conducted primarily through Subject Moderators and Deans of Learning and Teaching).

6.3.5 The Panel noted that there were mixed experiences among Subject Moderators during the moderation process whereby some saw assessment questions prior to assessments and some did not. Concerns over the role of the External Examiner where it seems that the Subject Moderator is covering part of the External Examiner's role and the External Examiner is covering a range of modules in excess of what would be considered reasonable for a UoG External Examiner. The Panel **recommends** that the role of the Subject Moderator is clarified through CBoS to ensure clarity and consistency between Moderators.

Tied to this, the Panel noted from discussions with GIC staff that there can be a time lag between changes being made to the curriculum at UoG and this being communicated to GIC. This can affect GIC's marketing since advertising incorrect pathways is detrimental to GIC's business and to the student

experience. One possible solution is to embed communication of UoG curriculum changes within the Subject Moderator role and communicate directly with staff at GIC and/or communicate changes to Deans of Learning and Teaching who can report these at CBoS.

- 6.3.6 The Panel noted that no Subject Moderators had any concerns over the quality of materials other than for one Language for Study textbook and this, as well as any other materials, should be looked into further. There were no concerns over marking at GIC.
- 6.3.7 The Panel **commends** GIC on the way staff are working in a collaborative, cooperative manner with UoG to deliver good outcomes. The Panel felt a strong sense of collegiality, which came through in discussions with individual staff members

7. Summary of perceived strengths and areas for improvement

7.1 Key strengths

- High level of engagement and commitment from all staff.
- Timely feedback was provided to students.
- Good pastoral support available to students.
- Students, on the whole, appreciate staff accessibility.
- High level of preparation for the review such as consulting widely with students and staff and providing relevant paperwork.
- Good level of cooperation and communication with UoG in Social Sciences.
- Good induction which is particularly relevant for students coming to this country to live for the first time.
- Good mentoring programme which can be developed.

7.2 Areas for improvement

- Data gathering over a student's whole career at both GIC and UoG is weak and this is an issue for both institutions.
- The meeting of all entry requirements should be closely monitored.
- Clarification of the role of Subject Moderators and conveying programme changes to GIC need to be improved.
- Programme evaluation and feedback processes are not aligned with current practice across the HE Sector.
- Study skills and subject-specific elements for Science and Engineering programmes to be reviewed.
- GIC student integration with UoG students to help shape identity as UoG students.
- Student representation and training is not aligned to the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework.
- Independent learning skills in students need further development and affects transition to UoG.
- The successful mentoring programme could be developed to aid transition.

7.3 Conclusion

The Panel was impressed by the spirit and enthusiasm of staff and students and the cooperative way in which GIC and UoG are working. Pastoral care is strong at GIC and students are given intensive support. This also has a downside in that students generally find the transition to UoG difficult since such strong support mechanisms are not as evident nor required for the level of independent learning expected at UoG. Transition issues are the main focus for development and tie to other areas such as progression and attainment monitoring through effective data-gathering, and student integration. Some Panel recommendations are for both institutions to address and have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the Report to which they refer.

Commendations

Commendation 1

This was the first academic review carried out with GIC, and the Panel **commends** the College on its extensive preparations for the review, including discussions with staff, students and alumni and the preparation and collation of documents and notes that this was carried out during what will have been an unfamiliar process. *[Paragraph 1.2.3]*

Commendation 2

The Panel **commends** GIC on the way staff are working in a collaborative, cooperative manner with UoG to deliver good outcomes and the Panel felt a strong sense of collegiality, which came through in discussions with individual staff members. *[Paragraph 6.3.8]*

Commendation 3

The Panel **commends** the College on the high levels of staff engagement and commitment and see this as a major asset of the College. *[Paragraph 3.3.2]*

Commendation 4

The Panel **commends** the thoroughness of GIC's registration and induction arrangements which include practical information and helpful orientation advice. This ranges from advice on appropriate clothing to what to expect in the first week as well as advice on registering with a GP and using College IT systems. For international students the level of detail is invaluable. *[Paragraph 3.3.2]*

Commendation 5

The Panel **commends** the College on the pastoral support available to students. The Panel was impressed by the level of praise that students had for the staff and noted that staff were both approachable and passionate about their subject. *[Paragraph 3.3.2]*

Commendation 6

The Panel **commends** the College for the level of formative feedback it provides to students and its timely availability. The College has also instigated the use of an online submission, checking, marking and feedback system (Turnitin) across the board, which is helpful to students and staff in marking and feedback and also contributes to the TELT agenda. *[Paragraphs 4.1.3.1; 4.2.1.2 and 4.2.3.2]*

Commendation 7

The Panel **commends** the College on development of student mentoring. Current students involved found have found this useful and helpful in addressing some transition issues. Although the Panel has noted that more could be made of this, what is already in place is extremely valuable. *[Paragraph 3.1.6]*

Commendation 8

The Panel **commends** developments in creating closer ties between the two institutions and would encourage continued and further development in this area. [*Paragraphs 3.1.12 and 6.2*]

Recommendations

Recommendation 1 (Transition)

The Panel **recommends** that GIC and UoG address issues, especially around independent learning, for Foundation students making the transition from the College to the University. Although we are aware that the Transitions Project is running (for students going on to Social Sciences), and that GIC has initiated a mentoring process, we feel that more could be done to address transition issues. Specifically, this recommendation contains the following elements:

1. GIC should review the way in which students are supported throughout their programme to encourage a transition from being highly supported to a more independent mode of study that better matches expectations of UoG.
2. UoG should review ways in which highly supported students who enter second year are supported to become more independent. With the two institutions working together, the transitions project in the College of Social Sciences has helped student transition and UoG should look at how it can further work with GIC on induction plans to aid transition.
3. GIC should embed the mentoring process, perhaps even making it a compulsory activity, in order to ensure that students who currently do not take advantage of it do so in the future. Mentoring is especially relevant for students who are least likely to take it up voluntarily since they are likely to be most in need of help and most likely to benefit from it.
4. UoG also needs to look at mentoring and what it can do to help GIC ensure this works to the advantage of students who may find the transition difficult. This is particularly the case for Foundation students who enter UoG at Year Two.
5. There is a lack of awareness amongst GIC students as to what it might be like to study at UoG, what is expected of them and how they need to take control of their own learning. It seems that some students are surprised and unprepared for life as a UoG student and GIC and UoG should work together to address this, perhaps utilising the experience of GIC alumni to try to make UoG more visible to GIC students generally and in more detail.
6. Bearing in mind that Foundation Certificate students enter UoG at Year Two, UoG should reconsider how it scaffolds student advice to fill any gaps which may arise due to GIC students starting later than most of the rest of their UoG cohort who will mostly have come from school and started in Year One together.

[Paragraphs 3.1.3/4/7/8/10]

For the attention of: **GIC Senior Management, CBoS**

For information: JAMB

Recommendation 2 (Data and Entry Requirements)

The Panel **recommends** that GIC and UoG initiate a protocol around gathering data on students over their relevant learning career, from their entry to GIC to exit at UoG. This is intended to produce meaningful statistics on retention, attainment and progression throughout the students' career in Glasgow and would help identify areas where improvements are needed and resources can be focussed. The Panel felt that the current lack of meaningful data (in both directions: UoG/GIC) is inhibiting attempts to scaffold the transition from GIC to UoG. [*Paragraphs 3.1.11 and 6.3.3*]

For the attention of: **GIC Senior Management, CBoS**

For information: **JAMB, JSMB, SRC**

In close connection to this is the issue of entry requirements and concerns raised by the Panel where it seems that students have been admitted with lower level qualifications or grades than stated in the published entrance requirements. GIC **agreed** that a formal sharing point be instituted each year whereby entrance requirements are compared to what qualifications and grades GIC students actually have in order to ensure there are no discrepancies and that there is complete transparency in this area. This formal sharing point would be best dealt with through RIO. *[Paragraph 3.1.2]*

For the attention of: **GIC Senior Management, RIO**

For information: **CBoS, JAMB**

Recommendation 3 (Subject Moderator Role)

The Panel **recommends** that GIC and UoG jointly (through CBoS) clarify the role of the Subject Moderator in order to provide a clear understanding of what they are expected to do. Although the Subject Moderator process is working, the Panel feel it would be enhanced by further clarity. It would also be useful if the role covered the communication of UoG curriculum changes to GIC in as short a time as possible to allow GIC to revise marketing materials and update advice for students. *[Paragraph 6.3.5]*

For the attention of: **GIC Senior Management, CBoS, Subject Moderators**

For information: **JAMB**

Recommendation 4 (Integration)

The Panel **recommends** that GIC review the way it deals with student integration issues internally. In certain subject areas the student population is quite polarised at GIC and, aside from the possibility of solutions at the recruitment stage, some aspects of educational culture could be promoted with a view to enhancing the understanding of diversity and integration. This could help the student experience and foster independent learning. This objective should be aligned to UoG strategy and dovetail with the diversification agenda. *[Paragraphs 3.1.7/8 and 3.2.4 3.2]*

For the attention of: **GIC Senior Management**

For information: **CBoS, JAMB, SRC Subject Moderators**

Recommendation 5 (Programme Evaluation)

The Panel **recommends** that GIC review its programme evaluation and feedback processes with a view to achieving better alignment with current practice across the HE Sector. It was noted that work has begun on this but the Panel would recommend further progress jointly between GIC and UoG. *[Paragraphs 3.4.4]*

For the attention of: **GIC Senior Management, Subject Moderators, Deans of Learning and Teaching**

For information: **CBoS, JAMB, SRC**

Recommendation 6 (Science and Engineering Provision)

The Panel **recommends** that the balance of study skills and subject-specific elements for Science and Engineering programmes at GIC be reviewed. This is a joint action on GIC and UoG (the latter conducted primarily through Subject Moderators and Deans of Learning and Teaching). Cohort sizes are beginning to grow in Science and Engineering to the point where meaningful analysis of student performance at UoG can inform the shaping of support at GIC. *[Paragraph 6.3.5]*

For the attention of: **GIC Senior Management, CBoS, Subject Moderators, Deans of Learning and Teaching**

For information: **CBoS, JAMB**

Recommendation 7 (Student Participation in Clubs and Societies)

GIC students appear not to feel as though they are part of the wider university community and do not self-identify as students of the UoG. One specific reason given was that students had tried to join UoG clubs and societies and were told that they were too late and that membership was closed. The Panel **recommends** that GIC and UoG work with the SRC to smooth that pathway. [Paragraph 6.1]

For the attention of: **GIC Senior Management, SRC**

For information: **CBoS, JAMB**

Recommendation 8 (Student Support, Representation and Engagement)

The Panel **recommends** that GIC have a dialogue with SPARQS (Student Participation in Quality Scotland: <http://www.sparqs.ac.uk>) who might be able to provide useful material and perhaps even physical engagement on student training and representation which could benefit student representation in GIC in a way that would make it more aligned to the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework. [Paragraph 3.4.4]

For the attention of: **GIC Senior Management**

For information: **CBoS, JAMB, SRC**

Recommendation 9 (Review of Boards)

The Panel **recommends** that, in consultation with GIC, the current three Boards are reviewed. Currently the CBoS reports to the JAMB which reports to the ASC. A review discussion could be centred around the CBoS reporting directly to the ASC and the JAMB being stood down – provided there are no Quality Assurance issues as a result. Any operational work at the JAMB could be taken on by the CBoS and the remainder, the more strategic issues, could be taken on by the JSMB which could meet more frequently – perhaps three times per year rather than the current twice. This would require some minor membership changes to the CBoS and perhaps the JSMB. [Paragraph 5.1.1]

For the attention of: **GIC Senior Management, CBoS, JAMB, JSMB**

For information: **SRC**

Recommendation 10 (ADU Involvement in the next SER)

The Panel **recommends** that ADU be involved in support for the next academic review, possibly including preparation of (but not writing) the next SER.

For the attention of: **GIC Senior Management, ACO**

Recommendation 11 (Student Welfare)

The Panel **recommends** that GIC investigate reasons for and explore solutions to student welfare issues connected to the average of 3.5 out of 5 for this area in programme evaluations.

For the attention of: **GIC Senior Management**