

PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION PROGRAMME (IFP)

Reviewing programmes delivered by the International Study and Language Institute

Introduction

1. An internal review of programmes of the International Foundation Programme was held on 7 and 8 November. The members of the Panel were:
 - Dr Calvin Smith, School of Mathematical, Physical and Computational Sciences (*Chair*)
 - Mr Edward Bressan, Navitas Limited (*external member, subject specialist*)
 - Ms Carla Morris, CEWL, University of Kent (*external member, subject specialist*)
 - Professor Matthew Almond, School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy (*internal member*)
 - Professor Timothy Duff, School of Humanities (*internal member*)
 - Ms Amy Meadmore, School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences (*student member*)
 - Mr Richard Sandford, Senior Quality Support Officer, Centre for Quality Support and Development (*secretary*)
2. The Panel met the following:
 - Dr David Carter (*Head of School in ISLI*)
 - Alison Nader (*School Director for Teaching and Learning*)
 - Amanda Fava-Verde (*Programme Director*)
 - Dr David Nutt (*Chair of Board of Studies*)
 - Dr Mark Peace (*Senior Tutor & Senior Academic Tutor: Science Pathway*)
 - Jane Ward (*Senior Academic Tutor: Social Science Pathway*)
 - Dawn Willoughby (*Senior Academic Tutor: Social Science Pathway*)
 - Natalie Drake (*Student Welfare and Support Officer*)
 - Julia Kerr (*Course Tutor*)
 - Dr Edward Anyaeji (*Sessional Lecturer: Mathematics*)
 - Dr Maria Asensio (*Sessional Lecturer: Economics*)
 - Dr Haitham Etman (*Sessional Lecturer: Information Systems and Statistics*)
 - Dr Jenny Eyley (*Sessional Lecturer: Chemistry*)
 - Tina Jenkins (*Sessional Lecturer: Art*)
 - Meiko Murayama (*Lecturer: Business*)
 - Lyn Newdick (*Lecturer: Law*)
 - Sue Peel (*Teaching Fellow: Economics*)
 - Dr Katrina Bicknell (*School Director for Teaching and Learning: School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy*)
 - Dr Christine Ellison (*School Director for Teaching and Learning: School of Arts & Communication Design*)
 - Esther Chang (*Foundation Programmes Lead, UoRM*)
 - Lina Ying Ying Tang (*Foundation Senior Academic Tutor, UoRM*)
 - Mohd Ridhwan Abdullah (*Foundation Lecturer in English for Academic Purposes, UoRM*)

3. The Panel met students who represented the following degree programmes:
 - International Foundation Programme
 - International Foundation Programme (January intake)
 - Foundation in Business (UoRM)
 - Foundation in Science (UoRM)

General observations

4. The Review Panel held face-to-face meetings with a range of staff from across the International Foundation Programme (IFP) (including those based in Malaysia) and partner Schools. The staff were fully engaged with the review process and made the Panel feel very welcome. The Panel received a tour of the IFP's facilities. The Review was supported by a comprehensive and well-organised Blackboard organisation. The Blackboard Organisation deviated from the usual template (in order to better reflect the programme) and the Panel was very grateful to those staff members responsible for sourcing and uploading information to the site. The Panel extends its thanks to all staff members who participated in the Review.
5. The Panel welcomed the opportunity to meet face-to-face with current students, including those based in Malaysia, and with alumni currently on UoR undergraduate programmes, who gave a very positive endorsement of the IFP and the programmes under review. The Panel wishes to express its thanks to these students and alumni for their valuable input to the Review. The Panel noted that the programmes currently have students from over 30 countries, and that those students are being prepared to study on a wide range of degree programmes (c. 32 for the current cohort).
6. The Panel found that the programme for the Review was well-organised and that all contributions, whether face-to-face or online, were thoughtful and helpful.
7. The Panel was impressed by the strong sense of community found within the IFP. It was clear throughout meetings that students felt that they were part of a community of learners and that they were confident that tutors from across the programme were available to support them with a wide range of issues. Conversely, it was clear that staff felt a sense of responsibility for the welfare and development of their students **[good practice a]**.
8. The Panel found that the IFP has a wide range of activities in place to support and monitor their students (see 61 and 72 below).
9. The Panel noted the systems and processes in place for the monitoring of student attendance. The Panel heard that a more prescriptive approach to attendance monitoring processes had been put in place for the 2015-16 academic session. The aim of this new process was to ensure student attendance and improve student outcomes. Students were aware of this focus, but seemed to be unaware of that the monitoring of their attendance was related to compliance with the terms of their visas.
10. The Panel discussed UKVI requirements around attendance, and noted that there is a specific requirement for students studying below level 4 to have a minimum of 15 hours contact per week (with a handful of exceptions, e.g. for revision weeks). Many institutions would often have a member of administrative staff dedicated to monitoring attendance and ensuring written records were kept and uploaded to a central database. The Panel noted that the IFP's devolved approach to attendance monitoring, which involves Tutors taking registers and which assigns no central responsibility for uploading information to a database, might not be considered to be as reliable. Whilst the Panel was confident that the students were meeting the attendance requirement, they were unsure that the attendance recording systems in place were sufficiently robust to immediately answer questions on attendance quickly enough and in sufficient detail in the event of an audit by the Higher Education Assurance Team (HEAT). The Panel also discussed the role of the Senior Tutors and Personal Tutors in attendance monitoring. It was also noted that, while Personal

Tutors had regular contact with their students, this did not necessarily take place on a daily basis, and therefore may not provide the level of oversight required by an HEAT audit. The Panel felt that there was a lack of clarity around the processes for interventions and escalations in the event of non-attendance, given that both the Personal Tutors and the Senior Tutor might be involved. In light of the discussions around attendance monitoring the Panel felt that the processes in place might fall short of best practice in the sector **[necessary recommendation I]**.

Academic standards of the programmes

Committee structures

11. Overall, the Panel was satisfied that the committee structures in place were appropriate and effective for the quality management and enhancement of the programmes.
12. The Panel considered that the membership of the various committees was appropriate and that suitable provision was made for student representation. However, the Panel noted that the IFP faced difficulties in encouraging student engagement with some of these activities. Some of these challenges are outwith the control of the IFP (e.g. cultural issues whereby students feel disinclined to share their thoughts about the programme), and others could be addressed by the IFP (e.g. the timings of some meetings).
13. The Panel noted that the Chair of the Boards of Studies is a colleague from outside of the IFP (Dr David Nutt). The Board heard about the complexity of arrangements for the operation of the IFP Board of Studies and felt that these were well managed by the Chair. The IFP 'owns' only two of the modules for its programmes, with ownership of the others residing with academic Schools; as a result the Board of Studies has a larger than usual membership (with colleagues from all contributing Schools being invited to attend). Many of the staff delivering IFP modules are unable to attend the meetings, but they reported that they still felt included in the activity of the Board because of the strength of the communication structures in place. The Panel were informed that Board of Studies meetings were timed in order to facilitate (virtual) attendance by colleagues in Malaysia.
14. The Panel heard that the Board of Studies operates with a fixed agenda for each meeting. Owing to the size of the agenda the business of the meeting tends to be taken on a 'reporting' basis and it has become customary to take up any in-depth discussions outside of the meetings. The Panel felt that this was a productive and pragmatic solution which ensures that the Board gives full consideration to all matters that are raised.
15. The Panel welcomed the planned introduction of the FSLI-Malaysia Programme Board.
16. The Panel noted that the first Board of Studies meeting of the year takes place before Student Reps are elected, and that the last meeting of the year takes place in June, when the majority of students have completed their programme. The Panel wondered if it might be helpful to try and engage the students via another forum in order to gather feedback for the meetings. The Panel heard that student feedback is often shared with the Board of Studies from other committees (e.g. the Staff-Student Liaison Committee) and the Module Evaluation exercises but it was unclear whether, given the scarcity of student attendance, other methods for capturing feedback had been considered – including Blackboard discussion boards, 'exit' interviews, and ad hoc surveys (see also 59 below). The Panel was satisfied that the committee structures within the School and Department were appropriate and in line with University expectations, providing an effective mechanism for the quality management and enhancement of programmes.

Programme design

17. The Panel noted that there was no Subject Benchmark Statement for this provision and that the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications did not apply to the IFP.
18. The Panel found that the programme aims and learning outcomes were clearly articulated. The Panel noted that this is a well-established skills-based programme that excels in preparing students for undergraduate study in a range of disciplines. The Panel was impressed with the authentic research-informed teaching experience that students are exposed to, and by the support provided by the relevant Schools. This demonstrates a very healthy relationship between the IFP and the rest of the University and distinguishes the programme from the offerings available from many other providers.
19. There was clear alignment with key University strategies, especially with regards the University's internationalisation agenda. The alignment with the key strategic priorities in Teaching and Learning could be considered as tangential, but the Panel found that staff were valued and encouraged to develop, and that the IFP was keen to explore and utilise innovative approaches to teaching and learning. The Panel noted that the use of staff from partner Schools in the delivery of the programme meant that there was a degree of research-led teaching and that students were encouraged to undertake research activities within their studies. The nature of the programme means that opportunities to develop student employability are limited, but the Panel encourages the IFP to explore and exploit these opportunities further (see 80 below).
20. The Panel found that the programmes did not fully support the students in developing the graduate attributes identified in the Curriculum Framework. While the Panel accepted that this was to be expected given the level of the programmes, it was felt that the students would benefit from the IFP reflecting on how they might apply Curriculum Framework principles to their programmes. However, The Panel found evidence that students develop skills in research and enquiry, and that the programme aids students in developing the appropriate skills and knowledge for their studies at undergraduate level in their selected disciplines.
21. Progression in the context of the IFP means entry on undergraduate programmes at the UoR or elsewhere. The Panel found that such progression is facilitated via the guidance which students receive in choosing relevant subject modules, and by the excellent support framework which monitors student progress and attainment.
22. The Panel welcomed the IFP's ongoing programme of review and revision of module content. The recent revisions undertaken to the portfolio of modules were clearly designed to provide choice and flexibility to students. The Panel felt that this was a positive aspect of the management and development of the programme. The Panel were particularly impressed by the revisions to the Academic Skills module, which ensured that the content was up to date and included timely and relevant examples **[good practice b]**.
23. The Panel noted the IFP's use of a variety of teaching methods across its modules. This approach is integral to the delivery of the programme and serves to support students from a diverse range of backgrounds (educational, social and cultural).
24. The Panel indicated that the programme could benefit from the further exploration of how the disparate modules fit together. This would help ensure that workloads on assignments were fair and proportionate. Such a review could confirm that students are afforded a balanced learning experience on each of the modules, whilst also recognising that different subjects may require different forms and lengths of assessment (see also 31 below). The Panel felt that an oversight of programme content, preparation and assessments should be considered in order to guarantee a degree of homogeneity of workload and experience independent of the module pathway the student takes through the course.

25. The Panel felt that the programme has sufficient focus on global issues. However, the Panel noted that the programme teams in the UK and Malaysia might go further in engaging in collaborative activities. Such activities would draw on the intrinsically diverse nature of the students, societies and learning contexts in both countries. Greater use could be made of intercultural and pedagogic exchanges via conferencing facilities. The Panel noted the challenge of time-zone differences between the two campuses, but felt that these could be surmounted in order to facilitate two or three meetings per term. Clear benefits of such interactions could mean that staff could more easily exchange teaching materials, reading lists/texts and best practice. Students indicated that there was currently little interaction with cohorts at the other campus and showed some genuine excitement at the prospect of the possibility of such interactions.

Assessment and feedback

26. The Panel found that the IFP has given significant consideration to the provision of feedback, and ways in which students can be supported in recognising and acting upon feedback. The Panel noted that feedback on assessments included qualitative comments alongside numerical marks matched to set criteria. Qualitative comments are generally highly detailed and informative in order to support the diversity of educational backgrounds of the cohort.
27. The detailed feedback which students receive supports them in developing as reflective learners and to build upon their strengths and weaknesses. The IFP also provides students with other opportunities to develop their assessment literacy (ie skills used in producing assessed work) through identifying, and engaging with, feedback from other channels, including in-class discussions, tutorials and surgeries with staff members. Staff also encourage students to engage with feedback from their peers; this is facilitated by pair/group work in the class, or through the promotion of independent study groups.
28. However, whilst the Panel found some examples of useful "feed-forward", there was a lack of consistency around the provision of qualitative feedback to support improved attainment in future assessments. The Panel felt that the IFP should ensure that all feedback routinely includes details on how students might improve future work **[desirable recommendation e]**.
29. The Panel were impressed by the fact that the IFP provides students and sponsors/parents (where students have given their consent for the information to be shared) with an 'end of term report'. These are issued at the end of terms 1 and 2 and provide feedback to the students on their performance in assessments and on their general academic performance.
30. Students reported that they found the workload they faced within the course to be appropriate. They indicated that, whilst they had to work hard, the burden was not excessive and prepared them well for an undergraduate studies. They felt that the levels of work prepared them for the rigours of the undergraduate programmes, as it helped instil the work ethic and necessary motivation to succeed.
31. The Panel applauded the IFP's move to create a 'schedule of summative work'. This is a positive move which will help in any future endeavours to review coursework and workloads across the programme (see also 24 above) **[good practice c]**.
32. The Panel noted the wide range of assessment and feedback practices used across the programme. The diversity of practices reflects the wide range of modules which are offered over a very wide range of academic disciplines and taught in a number of different Schools.
33. The Panel was impressed by the dedication and hard work exhibited by all academic tutors and module convenors across the programme, noting that their positive attitude and endeavours make a significant contribution to a positive student experience.

34. The Panel applauded the diversity of assessment methods, but felt that some measure of standardisation of assessment criteria might be desirable. In particular, it was not clear why final examinations may count for different weightings e.g. 50%, 60% or 70% across modules which look to be quite similar (e.g. MM01BM, ECOMEB and ECOECO), nor why end of term tests count for 10% or 15% in those same modules. The Panel felt that such variation might be a source of confusion for some students. The Panel also found cases where significant pieces of work seemed to count for a very small percentage of marks (e.g. a 1,000 word essay counting for 5% on the module ECOECO). The Panel encourages the IFP to review practices and to decide whether greater correlation in the weightings of assessments on similar modules might be appropriate **[desirable recommendation f(i)]**.
35. The Panel also felt that it might be helpful if marks awarded for work could be aligned with standard university grade descriptions, as this would help to clearly inform students about their level of performance. For example, in the module MM01BM marks of 60-69 are described as "Grade I Standard" and marks of 40-59 as "Grade II Standard"; these could more usefully aligned with existing HE norms/descriptors, such as "1st, 2-1, 2-2 and 3rd", or with FE/Secondary descriptors such as "A, B, C and D" **[desirable recommendation f(ii)]**.
36. The Panel also wondered if more standardisation could be given in the marks reported to students (e.g. reporting all marks as a percentage). The Panel noted that in some cases (e.g. on module ECOECO) work was marked out of 5 **[desirable recommendation f(iii)]**.
37. Associated with the recommendations above, the Panel felt that it would be appropriate to explore and implement mechanisms to create greater transparency in the feedback process. The Panel found examples of marked work with associated assessment matrices which explained the descriptors of work at various levels in order to be awarded certain marks; other pieces of work had more minimal feedback and guidance. Making the feedback processes more transparent and uniform would benefit staff, in providing a clear set of criteria for use across the programme. It would also help ensure greater trust in the feedback process by students **[desirable recommendation g]**.
38. The Panel notes that the IFP employs a mixture of electronic and hard copy submissions for summative assessment, with the latter largely being used only where necessary and appropriate. However, the Panel expressed concerns that the practices for submitting hard copy work seemed to be variable. For example, some assessments were handed in during class, and others delivered to staff offices or staff pigeon holes. The Panel advises that the IFP work towards a more standardised practice for the submission of summative hard copy work, including the adoption of clear and consistent guidance on time and place for submission (e.g. via a Student Support Centre, or the IFP's reception) **[advisable recommendation a]**.
39. External Examiners each take responsibility for scrutinising work across a cluster of modules (broadly grouped as "international English and academic skill", "arts and humanities", "science", "business and economics", and "mathematics"). They have indicated that they are satisfied with the standards of work, though they note that inevitably the work cannot be benchmarked against the Further and Higher Education Qualifications Framework.

Quality of learning opportunities offered by the programmes

Teaching and learning

40. The IFP reported that a system of peer review is in place to support the development of staff. Good practice is also identified and shared via the Board of Studies and tutor meetings and also

disseminated to all staff in an annual summary. The IFP runs its own training sessions alongside those run by the University.

41. New staff based within the IFP are allocated a mentor; the IFP is also exploring whether it would be possible to provide mentors to all tutors based in partner Schools. This would help address a perceived issue around support for tutors in Schools.
42. There is a concern that some Schools do not recognise the workloads involved in the delivery of the Foundation Programme, especially for those convening modules running in Malaysia. Running modules in Malaysia meant that the workload could almost be doubled in some instances (for example, in the preparation of exam scripts).
43. The Panel was impressed by the hard work and dedication exhibited by staff in Reading and Malaysia. The Panel noted that the teams had facilitated the smooth delivery of the programme in Malaysia through a collegiate approach and collective endeavour **[good practice d]**.
44. The Panel found evidence that staff in Malaysia and the UK were working well together, e.g. in developing and amending materials for delivery in Malaysia (see 51 below). However, the Panel felt that the IFP might go further in integrating ways of working between the two campuses. For instance, it was felt that staff would benefit from sharing best practice garnered at both sites, and the Panel felt that IFP staff have developed expertise which would benefit the University's other trans-campus activities. Additionally, the Panel recognised the potential benefits to students that the opportunity presented for UoR/UoRM cohort collaboration on projects or transitional arrangements/buddying.
45. The Panel noted that on occasion communication between the IFP and partner Schools is not optimal, and that Schools may make decisions which impact delivery without informing the IFP, and vice versa. For instance, the IFP recruited to an Architecture pathway at the behest of the School of Architecture but without full consultation with the Department of Art, and the newly created Science Foundation Programme recruited significantly above target. In the case of the former, the Department of Art found it had students that it was not expecting, and the School of Architecture did not have the opportunity to review student portfolios. The over-recruitment to the University's Science Foundation Programme for 2017-18 means that a significant number of UK students are being taught alongside the IFP students. There are concerns that this will impact upon the sense of community and also the learning environment in general for IFP students, and the IFP has put in place measure to address these issues. The Panel felt that it would be beneficial to the IFP and partner Schools to set up a Community of Practice (or similar) for relevant School and Departmental Directors of Teaching and Learning to discuss the running of the programme and any planned changes. This would enable Schools to explore the strategic elements of the delivery of the IFP in an open forum **[desirable recommendation h]**.
46. A distinctive strength of the IFP is that a large proportion of the teaching is undertaken by staff employed by other Schools who are experts in their areas. The Panel felt that this provided a degree of authenticity that might be absent from other Foundation Programmes and therefore students receive a reliable introduction to the subject and later levels of study **[good practice e]**.
47. The Panel found that tutors on the programme were knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects. Amongst the School staff there were a number who had recently completed their PhDs, or were otherwise still engaged in research. This meant that students received research informed and up to date learning in the classroom, delivered by enthusiastic professionals **[good practice f]**.
48. The Panel was pleased to find a variety of teaching approaches being used within the programme. The variety of approaches is designed to support teaching and learning outcomes and mirror practices at undergraduate level. All modules contain a mixture of lectures and seminars, with the addition of tutorials/surgeries to provide additional support where needed. The science modules (Biology, Chemistry and Physics) also include practical/lab-based sessions, and use of Laboratory

handbooks, which help to foster good academic practices in the student body. The breadth and scope of the programme, and the fact that distinct subjects are taught by staff from those disciplines, naturally leads to the employment of a variety of teaching methods across the programme **[good practice g]**.

49. The Panel found the students to be engaged with their studies. Students are encouraged to fully participate in the classroom, and this is facilitated by the fact that class sizes remain small. The Panel noted that the use of technologies in the delivery of teaching and learning, including Blackboard (e.g. for online quizzes), Turnitin and interactive whiteboards, helps with student engagement in the learning process.
50. The programme has been designed to meet the needs of a student body from a diverse range of educational backgrounds and with a range of abilities. The teaching, learning and assessment practices are designed to mirror those that students will encounter when they enter an undergraduate programme. Accordingly, independent study is encouraged and students are exposed to research-based learning (e.g. through the Academic Skills module where students choose and research their own topics for a presentation and essay). The Panel found that the IFP successfully manages the expectations around levels of support and independent learning; while many students require (and receive) additional support at the start of the programme, they graduate from it as independent learners equipped for the challenges of undergraduate study.
51. The programme content allows students to reflect on topics and issues from a variety of national and cultural perspectives. In part, this is because the programme has been designed in order to be sensitive to the diversity of cultural backgrounds of the programme's students. Whilst one of the main focuses of the programme is to help students acclimatise to the UK Higher Education environment, the IFP makes great efforts to ensure that students reflect on and expand their global knowledge. This is often achieved through the subject modules but also addressed in Academic Skills and International English Modules. The Panel was pleased to note that materials delivered in Malaysia were developed and amended in order to be locally applicable (e.g. include case studies and local details), whilst continuing to engage with a global context **[good practice h]**.

Student admission, retention, progression and attainment

52. The Panel noted that there had been a decrease in the number of students recruited to the programme over the past three years, with 190 enrolling in 2014/15, 155 in 2015/16 and 107 in 2016/17. The decline in student numbers is broadly in line with national trends and can be attributed to factors such as the changes to visa procedures, and an increasingly competitive international market, including the development of 'local' offerings in countries such as China, and private providers entering the market.
53. However, the Panel was pleased to note that UoRM Foundation Programme had been successful in terms of student recruitment. The Malaysian programme has started to enrol more students than its Reading counterpart, though growth appears now to be coming to an end (with recruitment judged to be at its optimal number).
54. The Panel heard that the IFP is well supported by the Global Recruitment and Admissions team in its admissions and recruitment activities (through the IFP Admissions Steering Group). Additionally, the IFP funds an Admissions and Conversions Officer within that team, who is dedicated to IFP activities.
55. The Panel heard that the IFP had recently introduced a 1+3 programme with the School of Law. The benefits of such arrangements include the fact that students have to apply for only one visa, students are committed to continuing their studies at the University, and higher entry requirements should help improve progression rates. Current students indicated that they would have applied to a 1+3 programme had they been offered the opportunity. The Panel welcomes the

IFP's plans to expand the 1+3 provision and encourages them to explore the model with Schools across the University.

56. While the Panel would be keen to see the IFP expand 1+3 provision it also suggests that they review their activities in some other areas. For instance, recruitment to some programmes has traditionally been low, and the introduction of additional third party on-campus providers in some disciplines may further impact numbers in some areas. Accordingly, the Panel recommends that the IFP considers rationalising activity where necessary **[desirable recommendation i]**.
57. Students reported that word-of-mouth had played a significant role in helping them to choose to study at Reading. A number of students indicated that friends or family had previously studied at Reading either on the IFP or at undergraduate level. This seems to be a significant factor in helping students choose Reading.
58. The Panel found the IFP's arrangements for the induction of new students to be detailed and appropriate. These include early meetings with their Personal Tutors, social events, STaR mentor support, an Away Day and a Student Survival Guide. The students are quickly inducted into UK Higher Education learning and the programme prepares them for their studies at undergraduate level. The Panel found that the Student Handbook clearly outlines the Module Requirements and Rules of Progression for entry to undergraduate programmes and that this was supplemented by the use of the 'Your own Degree Requirements' form which students fill out and take to their first Personal Tutor meeting. The form helps the students identify the grades that they require in each of their modules in order to progress on to their desired undergraduate programme.
59. The Panel felt that, while the Programme Handbook was a useful guide to life as an IFP student, it may be overwhelming for some students. The Programme Handbook follows the standard University template and the Panel wondered if some of the language used in the document might be confusing to students who do not have English as a first language. Additionally, students might be overwhelmed by the level of detail as it contains a lot of information for the IFP students to digest at the start of their studies. The Panel felt that it would be appropriate for the IFP to undertake a review of student communications in order to ensure that all key information is imparted in plain English, and at appropriate times. Such a review could also consider how information is delivered to students (i.e. via which media) and utilise appropriate technologies/media for distinctive types of messaging (e.g. Blackboard and email for programme information and social media for events/marketing messages) **[advisable recommendation b]**.
60. The students are supported in their studies by both their Personal Tutor and the individual module tutors. Student attendance and progress is monitored and the information is shared between module tutors and Personal Tutors. The IFP is keenly aware of the correlation between attendance and attainment and reinforces this with their students. Attendance is monitored by module tutors and non-attendance is reported to Personal Tutors, then the Senior Tutor and finally escalated to a meeting with the School Director for Teaching and Learning, if necessary. This process has been streamlined in recent years in order to ensure that any persistent absences are identified and remedied at an early stage.
61. Students are monitored throughout the programme, and any areas of additional support are readily identified. On entering the programme students are tested to ascertain their levels in English, Mathematics, and Maths for Finance Economics and Business. Students are tested again at the end of terms 1 and 2, with results being discussed at the Personal Tutor meeting at the start of the following term. Any students who are struggling are encouraged to attend workshops/surgeries for additional support (see also 71 below).
62. There are regular meetings of relevant staff within the subject areas, where progress is discussed and any concerns are shared. Student marks are recorded on RISIS and shared in termly reports. The IFP uses attendance monitoring in conjunction with monitoring of marks to highlight whether students are making the expected progress. Any potential problems are quickly escalated to the

Report on the Periodic Review of the IFP – Calvin Smith & Richard Sandford

School Director for Teaching and Learning owing to the frequent contact between module tutors, Personal Tutors and the Senior Tutor **[good practice i]**.

63. In 2015/16 the IFP has seen 86% of its UoR students qualify to progress to undergraduate degrees, and 79% of UoRM students. The IFP has received positive feedback on its provision from External Examiners, and their students apparently perform well on undergraduate programmes. Statistics provided by the IFP show that of the 93 IFP students who subsequently enrolled on an undergraduate degree at the UoR 64.5% received a 2.1 or 1st. Some of these students had then gone on to begin postgraduate study at Reading.
64. The Panel noted that much of the data collection, recording and monitoring for the IFP is done 'in-house' since it has been impossible to use central University systems to capture key data sets. The IFP is working with colleagues in the RISIS Office and the Planning and Strategy Office in order to explore ways in which they can utilise central systems for capturing key data.
65. The Panel noted that the 2016 IFP Development Plan promotes the Programme as a 'high quality, high progression Programme'. The Panel felt that in order to properly evidence this claim the IFP needs to make key datasets more visible. It would be helpful for the IFP to obtain and publicise more robust statistics regarding how many of their cohort each year are (i) qualified for and (ii) enter undergraduate degree programmes. This should be done for cohorts from both the UK and the Malaysia campuses. It would also be of interest for the IFP to monitor employment statistics for graduates who have taken the IFP prior to entering undergraduate programmes. The Panel felt that the IFP should continue to develop its relationship with the Planning and Strategy Office in order to identify and source some of this information. The Panel noted that colleagues in Marketing might be able to support the IFP in identifying what would count as 'useful data' and how to make best use of it. Making these key data sets more readily available and visible will help the IFP to market its activities in a more evidence-based way **[advisable recommendation c]**.
66. Additionally, such work would also be useful in identifying and monitoring how the programmes match to the Graduate Attributes defined by University of Reading and how their programmes prepare their students to excel in graduate attributes once they enter their undergraduate degree programme (see also 80 below).

Learning environment and student support

67. As noted above the IFP utilises staff from other Schools and Departments to deliver subject-specific materials. Often these members of staff are also involved in undergraduate teaching and are experts in both their own subjects and in appropriate pedagogies. The IFP's own staff are enthusiastic and suitably equipped to deliver their areas of the curriculum (e.g. Academic Skills).
68. The teaching staff within the IFP receive administrative support through their own support services, and programme support for in-house modules is readily accessible by students. However, subject modules delivered outside the IFP are supported by the Student Support Centres associated with the relevant School. The IFP is monitoring this situation and may provide administrative support to all IFP modules in the future if this is found to be necessary. The Panel felt that one area that might benefit from such an intervention was the management of student submissions (see 38 above).
69. The IFP benefits from 'ownership' of a suite of rooms situated on the second floor of the Edith Morley building, where teaching is generally conducted. These facilities have appropriate technology and staff make use of smartboards in delivering classes.
70. Additionally, the IFP provides resources for its students via the Self Access Centre for Language Learning (SACLL). SACLL holds copies of all module textbooks, related reading materials, and provides access to additional English language support to students who may require it, such as through online materials/courses.

71. As well as 'self-service' access to additional support for English language, the IFP identifies struggling students and, where appropriate, provides them with additional support in both mathematics and English (or proactively signposts them to central support) (see also 61 above) **[good practice j]**.
72. The Panel noted that the IFP has robust practices to ensure the safeguarding of those students who are under the age of 18. The IFP reported that they complied with University policies in this regard, but that they did not have their own Safeguarding Policy. The Panel heard that the IFP's activities go beyond compliance with University policy in this area, in that they have a designated Safeguarding Officer, have appointed a Halls-liaison Tutor, and hold separate events for over and under 18s. They also ensure that such students have a UK-based guardian and that all staff undertake Prevent training, and they provide staff with training on aspects of student welfare. The IFP has a strong ethos of pastoral care and many of its activities naturally stem from this. The Panel felt that it would be useful for the IFP to formally articulate its activities in this area in a written document, which would provide guidance for staff and key information for parents and other parties **[advisable recommendation d]**.
73. However, the Panel felt that the breadth of safeguarding activities in place, especially attendance monitoring and the free and quick flow of information between key staff (including Module Tutors, Personal Tutors and the Senior Tutor) meant that any at risk students were quickly identified and offered appropriate support, either academic or pastoral. The framework that is in place to monitor and support students was felt to be exemplary **[good practice k]**.
74. Both staff and students reported that they felt part of a community. In part, this was due to the intensive nature of the programme. The sense of community is developed through a series of social activities and events throughout the year and the supportive character of staff members. The IFP's efforts to engender a sense of belonging amongst students starts just after Welcome Week at UoR and at the start of the second semester in UoRM with an Away Day; students commented that this was a positive and formative experience **[good practice l]**.
75. The IFP organises a number of social events and trips, and individual tutors also organise trips associated with the subject (e.g. Biology students have been taken to the Natural History Museum, Business students visited local businesses and English students took trips to the theatre). During the course of the year students are encouraged to take ownership of event planning, through the Staff-Student Liaison Committee. This helps students to develop their personal and professional skills and ensures that events are appropriate and engaging **[good practice m]**.
76. The Panel was impressed by the IFP's application of the Personal Tutorial system, especially with its interplay with other monitoring mechanisms at play (see 59-61 above). On arrival at the University students are asked to complete a 'personal information document', which includes details of their schooling, home and interests etc. This forms the basis of the first meeting with the Personal Tutor and helps staff and student get to know each other. Students identified their experience with Personal Tutors as a positive one. Students were fully aware that they could approach their Personal Tutor with any issue (academic or pastoral). As noted above the regularity of meetings between Personal Tutors and Module Tutors means that key information about progression and any other issues is shared between colleagues. Not only does this provide an invaluable pastoral safety net, but it also helps ensure that student progress is monitored. The Panel felt that the use of meetings between Personal and Module Tutors to share information was an asset to the IFP **[good practice n]**.
77. The Panel was impressed that the IFP had managed to implement a version of the STaR Mentor scheme within the confines of a one year programme. The scheme normally sees Part 2 students providing mentoring to those entering the University, but the IFP has recruited former students who have enrolled onto undergraduate programmes at Reading to take on this role. Students reported that they had benefitted from the scheme and that it had helped their transition into

university life. Those students who had acted as mentors indicated that they had found it to be a rich and rewarding experience **[good practice o]**.

Employability

78. The Panel recognises that employability is not of such overriding interest to the IFP as to other programmes, given that the main purpose of IFP is to prepare students for entry to Level 4 of academic degree programmes. Accordingly, employability has not been a major element of the IFP's planning and provision.
79. The Panel noted the IFP's work on personal development with its students, as facilitated by the Social Welfare and Support Officer. The IFP reported that student personal growth was exhibited through their engagement with the planning for the social programme and involvement with the Staff-Student Liaison Committee. The Panel felt that these cornerstones of employability could be further developed during the Foundation programme. This could be achieved through the development (and awareness) of transferable skills and participation in co- or extra- curricular activities (in order to enhance CVs).
80. The Panel noted that the University's Graduate Attributes (as articulated through the Curriculum Framework) should help enhance student employability. The Panel felt that the IFP could profitably review how they inculcate a Higher Education ethos in their students. This could then form the basis of an engagement with the Curriculum Framework, benefitting students by introducing them to key concepts and activities before they embark on their undergraduate programmes. The Panel heard that the next InForm conference may focus on graduate attributes, as part of a sector-wide analysis of developments in this area. The Panel indicated that the IFP could kick-start work in this area by engaging with colleagues from across the University (especially the Academic Development and Enhancement Team within CQSD, and the TLD (Engagement and Future Direction) to explore how the Graduate Attributes might be embedded within their programmes **[desirable recommendation j]**.

Enhancement of quality and academic provision

81. The Panel considered that the IFP makes appropriate use of the data available to it, and to the feedback gathered from module evaluations and External Examiner reports. The Panel found evidence that recommendations from External Examiner reports were acted upon in order to provide the quality of provision.
82. As noted above (64 and 65) the IFP's data is not included in University-level datasets. The IFP is exploring this issue with the Planning and Strategy Office and RISIS Office. However, the Panel found that the IFP has internal measures in place for the monitoring of datasets and regularly interrogates and interprets these.
83. The Panel notes that the Staff-Student Liaison Committee represents student opinion well and that the student body felt that their ideas and concerns received fair consideration.
84. The Panel found that the IFP was adept at eliciting feedback from students, especially on operational matters (e.g. student activities, timetabling and venues for classes), and responding to any problems identified **[good practice p]**.
85. The panel noted the difficulties faced by the IFP in communicating to students any changes which had been made in response to feedback, given the short nature of the IFP courses.
86. The Panel noted that many IFP staff are unable to apply for accreditation through the HEA as level 3 teaching does not currently count as relevant experience, though some staff are able to use for this purpose undergraduate teaching experience gained elsewhere in the University. The Panel heard that colleagues in Malaysia have completed the EDMAP 1 element of the FLAIR Academic Practice

Programme. There are ongoing discussions in UoRM investigating FLAIR CPD route for recognition of their teaching at higher levels.

87. The Panel heard that staff on both campuses have access to the full range of training and CPD opportunities offered by the University. However, it was noted that that certain barriers may hinder full take-up of these opportunities, including the fact that UK staff are often on sessional contracts and not paid for time spent training. The Panel felt that it would be helpful for staff in Reading and Malaysia to explore mechanisms for the sharing of best practice **[desirable recommendation k]**.
88. The Panel noted that staff development is not only encouraged through engagement with staff training (through sessions offered both by the University centrally and within the IFP), but also through peer review and observation, and reflection on data gathered through module evaluation exercises. Staff are encouraged to share innovations and insights with colleagues and, where applicable, to develop these into formal submissions for the InForm journal or conference.
89. The Panel found that the development of the InForm journal and associated annual conference made the IFP a sector-leader in sharing and shaping best practices in the delivery of foundation programmes **[good practice q]**.

Main characteristics of the programmes under review

90. The International Foundation Programme is a long-standing programme with a world-wide reputation. It offers its students entry to undergraduate study at the University of Reading and other institutions. The Panel believes that the IFP meets its stated aim of delivering a 'high quality, high progression Programme'. The IFP is delivering a distinctive offering, delivered by informed, enthusiastic and passionate staff.
91. The Panel noted the IFP's proposals for changes to provision in order to meet an ever more demanding market. The introduction of 1+3 programmes should help ensure that students recruited to the IFP are retained by the University. The exploration of 'franchised' delivery may further enhance the IFP's global reputation. The successful delivery of the IFP in Malaysia may provide a useful model for supporting other partnership activities, including the Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology (NUIST) and the Beijing Institute of Technology (BIT).
92. The IFP continues to shape activities in the Foundation Programme sector through the internationally renowned InForm journal and annual conference.

Conclusions on innovation and good practice

93. The Panel identified the following as representing particularly good practice
 - a. The sense of community felt by both staff and students
 - b. The constant review and updating of module content
 - c. The creation of a 'schedule of summative' work, which will help in future endeavours to review coursework and workloads across the programme
 - d. The hard work and dedication exhibited by staff in Reading and Malaysia which has contributed to the successful delivery of the IFP at UoRM
 - e. IFP tutors teaching on Undergraduate programmes, making the whole programme an authentic introduction to the subject and later levels of study
 - f. Tutors are knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects, and bring up to date learning to the classroom
 - g. The variety of teaching methods across the programme
 - h. The adaptation of teaching materials by UoRM staff to make them locally applicable
 - i. Student progress monitoring
 - j. Additional support available in Mathematics and English

- k. The framework and activities to identify 'at risk' students
- l. The use of the Away Day to help engender the sense of belonging
- m. Student involvement in the arrangements for events
- n. The use of meetings between Personal Tutors and Module Tutors to share information and concerns
- o. Innovative approach to the introduction of StaR Mentors for a one year programme
- p. The Department's ability to elicit and respond to feedback on operational matters that has been gathered from students
- q. The use of the Annual Conference and InForm journal to share best practice across the sector.

Conclusions on quality and standards

94. The Panel has concluded that the quality and standards of the programmes reviewed are appropriate.

Conclusions on new degree programme proposals

95. The Panel received no submissions with regards to new programme proposals. The Panel noted the IFP's aspirations with regards possible expansion of 1+3 provision in collaboration with academic Schools and Departments and is supportive of this initiative (see 55,56 and 91 above).

Recommendations

96. The Panel recommends to the University Programmes Board that the following degree programmes taught by the International Study and Language Institute be re-approved to run for a further six years:
- International Foundation and Language Programme (IFLP)
 - International Foundation Programme
 - International Foundation Programme (January intake)
 - Foundation in Business (UoRM)
 - Foundation in Science (UoRM)
97. The report will categorise any issues as follows, in order of priority:
- Those areas where the Review Team believes it is **necessary** for action to be taken urgently to safeguard the standard of provision;
 - Those areas where it is **advisable** that the issues be addressed as soon as possible.
 - Those areas where it is **desirable** that the issue be addressed over a longer time span.
98. The Panel has made the following recommendations which must be addressed as a condition of re-approval:

The Panel makes the following recommendations to the Institute:

Necessary

There were no necessary recommendations.

Advisable

- a. Work towards standardising practices around the submission of summatively assessed student work, especially hard copy work, where there should be a clear place and time for submission, e.g. to a Student Support Centre).

Report on the Periodic Review of the IFP – Calvin Smith & Richard Sandford

- b. Review methods of communication with students to:
 - i. Ensure that key information is imparted in plain English and at appropriate times; and,
 - ii. Make use of appropriate channels (e.g. Blackboard and email for course information, and social media for events/marketing).
- c. Continue to work with central University units (including the Planning and Strategy Office and RISIS) to make key data sets available and more visible, this will help facilitate the marketing of activities in a more evidence-based way.
- d. Articulate current practices around the safeguarding activities currently at play within the Department into a formal policy.

Desirable

- e. Ensure that feedback routinely includes details on how students might improve future work.
- f. Review coursework with a view to:
 - i. Reducing variations in weightings for similar activities;
 - ii. Bringing descriptors for standards of achievement in line with other more readily identifiable norms in use in HE; and,
 - iii. Standardising how grades are reported to students.
- g. Find mechanisms to create transparency in the feedback process.
- h. Create a Community of Practice for Directors of Teaching and Learning to discuss strategic elements of IFP delivery.
- i. Continue the review of the IFP portfolio, especially with regards the expansion of 1+3 provision.
- j. Consult with University colleagues to explore how Graduate Attributes (as laid out in the Curriculum Framework) might be embedded within the programmes.
- k. Staff on both campuses to explore ways in which UK and UoRM students can work together, and ways that staff can share best practice across both campuses.

The Panel also makes the following recommendation to the University:

Necessary

- l. Engage the University's Head of Function (Student and Applicant Services) in a review of the visa arrangements for IFP students, in order to incorporate best practice in this area.
99. The Panel does not have a recommendation to the University Programmes Board as to whether any proposals for new degree programmes should be approved, as this is not applicable.