



Essex International College

Learning and Teaching Strategy

Learning and Teaching Policy

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Introduction

Essex International College recognises that Learning and Teaching are at the core of our organisation. As a result a positive and progressive Learning and Teaching Strategy has been devised to ensure a consistent and coherent experience for learners to achieve their fullest potential.

Effective Learning and Teaching

The College recognises that

'Individuals learn when they acquire new (or modify existing) knowledge, behaviours, skills or values. There are many different ways to teach, all aimed at helping a student to learn. There are many ways to empower learners with the confidence to participate, critically and creatively, in the study of their subject area(s)'. (QAA B3 Quality Code)

The College is concerned to provide an inclusive learning experience, which recognises and ensures that no student is alienated. Indeed, diversity is something that can be celebrated as enriching the learning process. The academic experience of students is recognised, and teaching staff work to ensure knowledge and understanding of the educational system.

The College recognises the idea that effective learning must be a partnership between the College, the teaching staff, the students, and the awarding bodies. The aim is for the teaching to be inspirational, providing knowledge, skills and understanding – as well as providing a context for students to be motivated, innovative and increasingly independent learners. They will then engage in transformational learning.

'Transformational learning involves a process of becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others, and assessing their relevance before making an interpretation'. (QAA B3 Quality Code)

The ability of the College to offer an effective learning environment is primarily dependant on its academic and non-academic staff. Staff must share the aims and aspirations of the College. They must be appropriately qualified and willing to engage in professional development throughout their careers. The College has a responsibility to provide a context for this development. They must be willing to evaluate their practice via a process of peer review and/or appraisal and participate in the review of their peers. The College will manage this process and provide the best possible learning environment for its staff and its students.

Aims and Objectives of the Teaching and Learning Strategy

1. The Learning and Teaching Environment

- Teaching and learning in a supportive environment
- Modern learning resources
- Application of ICT
- Maximising Human Resources

2. The Educational Experience

- Quality in educational provision
- Excellence in teaching
- Responses to changing patterns of student participation
- Curriculum monitoring and management
- Widening and increasing participation

3. Student Skills Development

- Developing reflective practice and communication
- Fostering independent learning
- Developing student skills and employability
- Guidance on Academic Misconduct

4. Student assessment and progression

- Student assessment and progression
- Verification procedures
- Academic appeals procedures

1. The Learning and Teaching Environment

For a student or teacher to fulfil their potential, a safe and supportive environment is required. This information is detailed in the welfare strategy documents designed to ensure a safe physical environment and enriching psychological environment for staff and students. This is further enhanced by the provision of supportive academic and recreational resources.

Teaching and learning in a supportive environment

Aim: To promote teaching and learning in a supportive yet challenging environment that enriches the learning experience, by:

- recognising the value to the College of having staff who have earned the esteem of peers through appropriate output measures;
- providing a modern well-maintained physical environment for teaching and learning and ensuring that the College is an environmentally friendly and pleasant place to study;
- developing and maintaining a socially and culturally diverse environment which ensures that students have the opportunity to be exposed to new and challenging experiences;
- to provide facilities for the welfare and support of students that enable students to effectively participate in their studies.

Modern learning resources

Aim: To provide the best possible range of modern learning resources appropriate to the needs of students, staff and relevant to the programmes of study, by

- keeping under review all aspects of the teaching environment so as to provide the best possible teaching and learning to students;
- ensuring that students study in well-equipped, well-maintained teaching accommodation where up to date technological resources can support innovative teaching methods;
- providing modern library services and access to a wide range of electronic resources from home as well as on campus and excellent provision of books, journals and other support materials.

Application of ICT

Aim: To exploit the potential of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to facilitate flexible approaches to teaching, high quality learning and assessment. These developments will be supported by sound educational principles by:

- taking full advantage of the potential of new technology in teaching, learning and assessment and to take part in collaborative ventures in borderless education;
- facilitating the widening of provision of higher education and to do this both using internal resources and through collaborative partnerships;
- reviewing and enhancing ICT support for the delivery of teaching, facilitation of student learning and assessment;
- implementing the use of Virtual Learning Environments to support teaching and learning across the College;
- providing open access to PC facilities and Wi-Fi onsite with specific logins for students.

Maximising Human Resources

The agents of change necessary to fulfil the strategic requirements for effective Learning come via the recruitment and development of high quality staff, and the admission of students able to flourish and succeed in the College's distinctive environment.

The College recognises that a coherent and strategically aligned programme of staff and educational development will be essential to underpin implementation of the strategy. The main thrust will come from central management, with the provision of a range of opportunities for continuing professional development, including, but not limited to, both generic and discipline-specific teaching quality enhancement interventions.

2. The Educational Experience

As an education provider, the quality of our product is identified with the provision of a quality educational experience, providing genuine opportunities for achievement and is as inclusive as possible whilst maintaining the integrity of that provision. As such we endeavour to offer:

Quality in educational provision

Aim: To achieve the highest possible quality in educational provision, as judged by the relevant internal and external performance indicators in accordance with the Quality Management Policy, by:

- working within a devolved quality framework that ensures that quality management is embedded as close to the point of delivery and possible;
- promoting and supporting an integrated approach to quality enhancement initiatives across the institution;
- monitoring the implementation of local teaching and learning strategies and reporting progress/feedback via staff meetings and the various committees.

Excellence in teaching

Aim: To deliver teaching by staff who have had access to initial training in the pedagogy of higher education, or previous experience, and thereafter opportunities for continuing professional development, by:

- providing continuing professional development opportunities for teaching staff on accredited training programmes;
- encouraging, where appropriate, staff to devote a reasonable proportion of their time to interaction with their professions either by joining and taking part in professional organisations or by achieving professional recognition and reward;
- recognising and promoting high quality teaching.

Responses to changing patterns of student participation

Aim: To be flexible so as to respond as and when is necessary to changing patterns of student need and student recruitment by:

- reviewing the needs of potential students at undergraduate and postgraduate level so that this can inform the provision of taught courses;
- encouraging new initiatives in which enhance the College through improved academic standards and income;
- integrating the government's agenda for widening participation into the recruitment of students who are suitably qualified and can benefit from study at the College;
- keeping the student recruitment strategy under review to ensure that all aspects of the College's marketing, public relations and alumni development activities contribute to student recruitment in an integrated fashion and meet the needs of academic disciplines.

Curriculum monitoring and management

Essex International College currently offers only the EDEXCEL Level 5 HND in Business and ensures that it offers this course in accordance with the curricula provided by the said body. It keeps its curricula under review to ensure that they are relevant to the learners' needs and to respond to market forces.

The College encourages innovation and intends that its curricula should be delivered in a way that is relevant and engaging for the learner. The College monitors (and encourages all its' academic staff to monitor) the trends in Teaching and Learning for the Post-compulsory sector and supports their integration as part of best practice. New methods of delivery are being established alongside traditional approaches, as appropriate to the demands of disciplines represented in the College. Strategies that involve e-learning are actively encouraged where appropriate in order to:

- promote flexibility in teaching and learning;
- widen access;
- provide alternative approaches to high quality learning by students.

One of the strengths of the College is the quality of the frontline academic and pastoral support provided at departmental or subject level through academic advisors and personal tutors. We are also able to refer students to relevant local professionals for personal counselling and/or welfare advice,

In line with national trends in higher education, the College seeks to make the development of abilities and attributes connected with employability, otherwise known as key skills, more transparent to its students. The College is working towards making key skill more explicit in modules and programmes of study. This is being achieved through recommended modules descriptors and programme specifications. The development of assessment strategies for such key skills requires further attention.

Best practice in teaching and learning is disseminated in various ways in the College, via individual; discussions and through agenda items in the various college committees

Widening and Increasing Participation

The College aims to ensure that there is a balanced social profile of students participating in higher education and that there is fair access. The College will seek to enhance its activities to encourage and enable a wide range of students to enter higher education. In addition the College will aim to ensure that its practices with regards to access and student progression are executed in strict accordance with its Equal Opportunities Policy in order to ensure students succeed.

3. Student Skills Development

Ensuring that students are equipped with the appropriate skills to complete their course and to take what they have learnt onto a professional platform where they can effectively compete in a global marketplace is fundamental to the goals of the provision here at EIC. We want our students not just to pass exams, but to succeed at achieving their goals set within and beyond the bounds of the College. In order to do this we endeavour to engender a culture which enables the:

Fostering of Independent Learning

Aim: To encourage students to become independent learners and to take responsibility for their own learning during their studies at EIC and beyond as part of lifelong learning, by:

- developing strategies for teaching and learning that foster deep approaches to learning and which recognise the teacher as a facilitator of other people's learning;
- promoting interactive learning with staff and collaborative learning with each other;
- having access to resources that will support students as individual learners;
- having appropriate and clearly defined learning objectives/outcomes for students that are documented for all programmes of study and courses/modules;
- recognising the role of the teacher as a facilitator of other people's learning;
- diversifying strategies for the assessment of student learning;
- developing alumni activities so as to continue the benefits of the learning experience with those who have benefited from and then left the College.

The Development of Reflective Practice and Communication

Aim: To enhance in all students the development of powers of critical thought, reflection and the ability to express themselves orally and in writing, by:

- enhancing the development of reflective practice as part of the learning process;
- developing progress files and/or Individual Learning Plans to log the skills gained through all types work experience, both formal and informal, and through placements (where relevant).

Development of student Skills and Employability

Aim: To encourage students to recognise and log the development of their own skills and be aware of the importance of these in the development of their academic and professional careers, by:

- making the development of abilities and attributes connected with employability, otherwise known as key skills, more transparent to students;
- seeking to develop students across a range of generic and discipline specific skills in courses and providing constructive feedback;
- making effective use of current and former students in the marketing of courses and the recruitment of students – in particular, by highlighting the achievements of recent graduates.

Guidance on academic misconduct

Students are expected to produce work that is their own, and to reference according to the Harvard Referencing System. Students will be made aware of how to do this through on-going in-class academic support and feedback and will have access to online resources to do the same.

Penalties for academic misconduct which includes but is not limited to plagiarism will depend upon the extent of the misconduct and will be excised at the discretion of the Principal. This includes a warning and a request for resubmission of work, invalidation of unit/assessment or expulsion from the course and cessation of enrolment without refund. Cases where a students' academic misconduct unfairly prejudice the learning or assessment of others will be considered especially grievous.

4. Student assessment and progression

Learning and Assessment

The College recognises the role of assessment in promoting learning. Summative assessment events provide the structure for the promotion of learning, and the acquisition of the knowledge and skills to be tested in the Learning Outcomes associated with any particular assignment or examination.

A characteristic of the weekly learning experience will be an aspect of formative assessment. This formative assessment will provide the student with a yardstick against which they can measure their skills and understanding. The formative assessments will also rehearse for the student the nature and scope of the summative assessments which follow. The College also recognises the formative nature of early summative assignments, as they provide a critical guide to the student as to their level of achievement.

The College has detailed its assessment strategy in a separate policy/strategy, but it is pertinent to note the role of assessment as a key factor in promoting effective and efficient learning.

The College, like other Higher Education providers agrees the QAA (QAA B3 Quality Code) guidelines on effective learning. This is that *'effective learning occurs when students are enabled to'*:

- *engage actively in learning, and participate fully in the learning opportunities that are presented to them*
- *understand their learning environment, its culture and resources*
- *embrace the aims and expectations of their chosen programme of study*
- *demonstrate understanding of, and an ability to reflect upon, the ways in which their skills and knowledge are developing*
- *recognise and value their existing knowledge and skills, and build upon them*
- *make effective and responsible use of advice, guidance and feedback from formative and summative assessment that is provided during their programme of study*
- *avail themselves of the opportunities to acquire and develop learning skills*
- *understand sound academic practice and behave with integrity*
- *contextualise and apply their developing knowledge and skills to their wider experience and plans for the future*
- *work together in an informal environment as well as in formal learning sessions*
- *act responsibly in planning their use of the resources available to support learning, including the effective use of their own time in independent study*
- *give constructive feedback on their perception of the quality of their learning experience*
- *engage in monitoring and influencing the curriculum*
- *show commitment to attaining the academic standards that have been defined for their programme of study'*

Verification Procedures

Internal Verification

The College shall appoint a lead Internal Verifier for the course, who, after sampling a range of students' work, shall indicate whether the original assessment decision - that made by the First Marker stands. There is scope for the First Marker to justify their decisions to the Internal Verifier however it is the Internal Verifier's decision which is final. The Internal Verifier must:

- ensure that initial marking and feedback is consistent and fair
- ensure that the First Marker's marking and feedback properly references the outcomes of the course
- prepare a sampling plan that includes all borderline submissions and a range of student levels
- prepare a sampling plan that encompasses the entirety of units completed by the students to date
- provide appropriate feedback to the First Marker regarding the above
- liaise with the External Verifier in the coordination of visits and submission of material for assessment

External Verification

External Verification shall take place in accordance with the requirements of EDEXCEL.

Student feedback

The promotion and enhancement of effective learning will only occur if issues are identified and rectified and if good practice is highlighted and shared. Student feedback is a key part of this process.

The College provides a series of structured opportunities for students to provide feedback on all aspects of the learning experience

Student responsibility to engage with the learning process

The student induction process and every subsequent learning experience must emphasise to the student the need for them to take responsibility for their own learning. They must prioritise the learning over other aspects of their life and engage as increasingly independent learners as they progress through their programmes of study.

The process by which students become effective independent learners will depend on their interaction with staff and their peers, and be shaped by the physical learning environment. The College accepts its responsibility to provide a learning environment to meet these needs and to engage staff that share this aim. The QAA (QAA B3 Quality Code) guidelines note:

'As active members of a learning community, students depend on interaction with staff and with their peers to support their learning. Achieving independence in learning means that there are always some opportunities for students to shape their learning experience. For some students this may not extend beyond selecting optional modules, undertaking additional reading or practice of relevant skills. For others it may extend to the negotiation of assessment titles or engagement in self-selected research for a dissertation or equivalent practice-based module'.

Academic Appeals Procedure

Where a student feels that an assessment decision has been granted unfairly, they have the right to appeal. Appeals are conducted in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Awarding Body, but where the impetus from the Awarding Body rests the matter with the College, the following shall be enforced.

The student must present appropriate cause for believing the assessment to be unfair. This includes:

- allegations of bias or unfair/discriminatory treatment in line with the Equal Opportunities Policy
- Unfit conditions for the conduct of controlled examinations
- Mitigating circumstances evidenced by appropriate documentation

Should the student not be satisfied with the initial internal appeal, the student has the right to appeal to their awarding body where the awarding body has provided facility to do so. The student shall be supported by the College in doing so.

Outcomes from the appeal process are considered final and binding.