Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Assemblies of God Incorporated t/a Mattersey Hall College

December 2017

Contents

About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Assemblies of God Incorporated t/a Mattersey Hall College. The review took place from 6 to 8 December 2017 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Penny Renwick
- Reverend Professor Ken Newport
- Ms Claudia Francoise (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provision and to make judgements as to whether or not academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)[1] setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA[2] and explains the method for Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers).[3] For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.
[2] QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.
[3] Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

Key findings

Judgements

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice**.

- The proactive pre-enrolment process and personalised support for students, including those with specific learning needs, which facilitates entry to the College (Expectation B2).
- The extensive range of approaches taken by the College to create a supportive learning community that enables students to take responsibility for their own learning and development (Expectation B4).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations**.

By June 2018:

- involve external input into its peer review of teaching process to enhance objectivity (Expectation B3)
- design and implement formal training for lead students to enable them to carry out their pastoral role more securely (Expectation B5)
- strengthen the role of learning outcomes in supporting assessment design and feedback in order to support student achievement (Expectation B6)
- introduce a formal process for approving and signing off programmes and modules to strengthen external engagement and College oversight (Expectations B1 and B8)
- formalise arrangements with placement providers to safeguard and support students (Expectation B10)
- use the opportunity provided in the development of a new strategic plan to more fully embed learning opportunities across the curriculum to strengthen graduate prospects (Expectation Enhancement).

By September 2018:

- develop a formal process for oversight of multiple minor modifications to ensure programme learning outcomes continue to be met (Expectation B1).

About the provider

The main aim of the Assemblies of God Incorporated t/a Mattersey Hall College (the College) is to train, equip and form the next generation of Christian leaders, and to provide continuing professional development for those already in leadership. This includes providing appropriate training for ministry, and the development of students' critical skills to enable them to engage with, analyse and evaluate theory and praxis.

Mattersey Hall offers one full-time undergraduate degree - a BA (Hons) degree in Biblical Studies and Theology that lasts three years. For those who already have a bachelor's degree in a non-theological discipline and who would like to pursue theological study or go on to study at master's level, it also offers a fully validated one-year full-time Graduate Diploma in Theological Studies. The BA and Graduate Diploma programmes may also be studied part-time and are available in two delivery formats, either on-site or as a distance learning programme.

The College offers several postgraduate programmes. There are three master's degree programmes - the MA in Practical Theology, the MA in Biblical Studies and the MA in Missional Leadership. Also, the College offers Doctor of Ministry and the Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy degrees.

Additionally, students are offered the opportunity to pursue an annual cross-cultural short-term mission.

Student numbers for the academic year 2016-17 are 135. These comprise:

- BA (Hons) Biblical Studies and Theology First year - 30 students (including 5 distance learners)
- BA (Hons) Biblical Studies and Theology Second year - 21 students (including 4 distance learners)
- BA (Hons) Biblical Studies and Theology Third year - 32 students (including 8 distance learners)
- graduate diploma - 8 students
- master's - 37 students
- doctoral programme - 7 students.

The College also offers a non-academic diploma, which runs parallel to a student's academic studies and which is intended to prepare students for a ministerial life. This is mandatory for all students living on campus.

The College faces ongoing challenges concerning:

- frequent changes of Principal
- student recruitment
- instances of academic malpractice, which are being addressed alongside the University of Chester
- disparity of student experience between on site and distance learning
- the pressures of external regulatory compliance.

All these challenges are being addressed through action planning and liaison with the awarding body, where appropriate.

The last full QAA review of the College was undertaken in 2013. Major changes since then include:

- the successful completion of a three-yearly Partnership Review
- the six-yearly revalidation of programmes with the University of Chester
- the phasing out of the BA in Christian Leadership programme
- inclusion in the National Student Survey
- the development of policies and procedures, an action plan and annual reports in relation to Prevent
- the achievement of a TEF provisional award.

At the last review, the review team recommended that the College should:

- ensure that Board of Studies and Senior Leadership Team meetings fully action their remit to analyse management information and external examiner reports to develop the higher education provision
- clarify to applicants the role of the diploma and the implications of not taking it
- create formal procedures for the development and review of management information
- formalise internal examination boards
- develop and implement a systematic evidence-based process of reflection on programmes that results in formal action planning, monitoring and review
- formalise peer observation of teaching processes
- develop and implement a resource allocation model to align with the needs of all students
- develop and implement an assessment strategy which enables feedback to students to be used to inform the quality assurance processes.

All recommendations from the last review have been addressed.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations

Expectation (A1): In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:

a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) are met by:

- **positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications**
- **awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes**

b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics

c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework

d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

Quality Code, *Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards*

Findings

1.1   Mattersey Hall College (the College) does not have degree awarding powers or the power to award academic credit. The initial setting of academic standards within its provision is not, therefore, primarily the College's responsibility, but rather that of the awarding body the University of Chester (UoC). This is reflected in the recently renewed programme agreement, which indicates that it is the University that is ultimately responsible for the standards of its awards. Nevertheless, the College is responsible for working with UoC for the setting of standards and, more generally, for engaging with the Quality Code. In considering the College's compliance with Expectation A1, therefore, the review team focused upon the arrangements at the College for working with the University for the setting of standards; it understood this as an example of how the College 'engages with the Quality Code' more generally.

1.2   Given the status of the College as a non-awarding body, there is little in place at the College to ensure that academic standards are initially set. This is reflected in College documentation, which has only a very brief section on ChapterA1. However, cross checking

information relating to Chapter A1 with Chapter B1 provides some further evidence in that the latter indicates that responsibility for programme design (which includes the setting of standards) lies with the programme team/Extended Board of Studies (E)BoS and that such matters also feature in discussions at Strategic Planning Days. The responsibilities checklist line 1 also indicates that the responsibility for the design of programmes is shared, while similarly College documents indicate that the primary responsibility for the design, development and approval of programmes lies with the Board of Studies (BoS). However, there does not appear to be a documented approval process/policy for the initial design and approval in place at the College, and the (E)BoS minutes do not provide evidence that programme design is dealt with there to any significant extent. The review team noted the flow chart provided with regard to the main aspects of changing a programme or a module but noted that this was invoked for proposed changes to existing provision rather than initial design, one feature of which would be the initial setting of academic standards.

1.3   The provision at the College underwent a periodic review and revalidation in December 2016. This resulted (with some conditions and recommendations) in the revalidation for a period of six years of: BA in Biblical Studies and Theology; Graduate Diploma in Theological Studies; MA in Practical Theology; MA in Biblical Studies; and MA in Missional Leadership. The DMin and PhD also were also revalidated. The review team noted evidence that the review included students, though also noted that all students involved were from the BA in Biblical Studies and Theology course. Following the periodic review/revalidation report the College took actions in order to comply with the conditions and to consider the recommendations. The review team understood this process as one related to this Expectation in that it comprised a revalidation of all provision that by default included the re-setting of standards.

1.4   The review team formed the view that the initial setting of standards at the College is safeguarded through the close relationship with the UoC. As is clear elsewhere in this report this includes the setting of standards within individual modules where there has been substantial revision (this is referred to later in the report). The review team therefore took the view that Expectation A1 could be met in theory despite the lack of a clear process for the design of new provision at the College. However, given the lack of clear processes for the design of provision the review team came to the view that there was an element of risk here, albeit one that was mitigated by the 'safety net' of the University's need to approve any provision delivered on its programmes. The review team also noted that in actual fact there have been no new programmes introduced at the College for several years. Indeed, the current suite of provision has remained in place since the College moved provision from its previous partner to the UoC; this was confirmed in a meeting with staff. The review team noted the nomenclature of the awards at the College and came to the view that these were in accordance with the relevant titling conventions.

1.5   In order to test the College's arrangements for the setting of academic standards, the review team considered a range of documentation including College documents, the minutes of BoS from 12 October 2015 to 14 July 2017 and noted in particular item 9 on 17 October. It also considered the minutes of (E)BoS from 15 June 2015 to 12 June 2017. The process for the design of programmes was discussed with staff. The review team also considered the flow chart that was provided relative to changes being made to programmes/modules.

1.6   The review team considered carefully the College's response to the periodic review and revalidation report as potentially indicative of College practices in responding to/working with the awarding body for the (re-)setting of academic standards. It was able to confirm that the responses to each condition (of which there were three) and recommendation (of which there were four) were carried out fully. In particular the review team noted the actions taken by the College to ensure that (positively defined) learning outcomes were matched to level

descriptors in response to the third condition arising from the revalidation process. The review team took this as evidence relating to working with the UoC of the setting of appropriate academic standards as related to levels.

1.7   The review team also explored the College staff's general familiarity with the FHEQ and QC and formed the view that there was a sufficient level of familiarity to enable the College to be able to work with the UoC in ways related to this Expectation. It noted, in particular, the College's response to condition 3 of the revalidation process, namely that 'greater clarity of levelness of modules should be apparent through a more systematic reference to the most recent FHEQ' and concluded that the College was sufficiently acquainted with the FHEQ to be able to engage with this condition effectively since this condition was considered by the BoS and determined as met by the awarding body. The review team also noted that the College was given advice by an external panel member in this context. The review team learned that information relating to any changes to external quality frameworks, including Subject Benchmark Statements, was communicated directly to staff by the Academic Dean.

1.8   Overall, the team came to the view that Expectation A1 is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.

Quality Code, *Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards*

Findings

1.9   The College works with UoC for the award of credit and awards. Under the terms of the agreement with the University, the College shares a level of responsibility for ensuring that the students undertake learning at an appropriate level and in sufficient quantity to qualify for credits for an award. Since the last full QAA review in 2013, the College has made progress on the development of their formal frameworks and regulations, for example by formalising the internal examination boards. The College provides course handbooks with live links to the UoC of academic regulations and programme specifications for each of its awards. It is the BoS that ensures that regulations are adhered to. There is an Academic Assessment Strategy for assessment and awarding of credit. The responsibility for academic governance lies with the (E)BoS, as is clear from the relevant Terms of Reference. The course handbooks provide appropriate information to students and there is also information available via the UoC portal.

1.10   The review team was of the view that the College has taken appropriate actions via its embedded live links within the Handbooks to ensure that there is clarity with regard to the comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations (of the UoC) that govern the award of credit and qualifications. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation could in principle be met.

1.11   In order to test the above, the review team scrutinised a range of documentation including relevant policies and other strategic documents and the minutes of (E)BoS. The review team undertook some sampling of the embedded live links. The team also discussed the arrangements as outlined in the documentation with members of College staff.

1.12   The live links were found to be up to date and accurate. The review team noted that in the Terms of Reference for the (E)BoS mention is made of its role in the setting and maintenance of academic standards and more generally 'to ensure compliance with the College's obligations in relation to organisational and programme agreements with the University of Chester, and to ensure that local arrangements are in line with University of Chester requirements'. Reading the minutes of the BoS, however, the review team formed the view that there was little to indicate that the adherence to regulations was a matter of much general discussion, though it was evident that some of the business of the BoS was related to the assurance of compliance with the University's regulatory requirements, at least in operational terms.

1.13   It was evident to the review team that some decisions are taken at the BoS that do relate very directly to the validated provision. For example, a decision was taken to combine two 10-credit modules into one 20-credit module and for other mergers/developments of modules to take place.

1.14   The review team noted that all provision had been included the in the revalidation process that took place in 2016 and that arrangements for the award of credit were in place.

1.15   On the basis the evidence provided, the review team concludes that this Expectation is met and the residual risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

Quality Code, *Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards*

Findings

1.16   The degree-awarding body, the University of Chester (UoC), in collaboration with the College maintains a definitive record of programmes and qualification through the publication of programme specifications, held on the UoC website. Information on the awarding of credits is also available in the relevant course handbooks, published by the College, which provide hyperlinks for ease of access to the definitive sources of this information on UoC's 'Portal' system.

1.17   Programme specifications provide a reference point for the delivery and assessment of programmes and qualifications with modifications to programmes and modules made annually through the submission to UoC of a Programme Renewal Pack (PRP).

1.18   This approach would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.19   Meeting with senior staff, the review team heard of the adherence to the recording of the alignment of programmes to FHEQ through the submission of the PRP and evidence of the learning outcomes, assessment and progression that fits the qualification descriptors and other requirements of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

1.20   The review team heard from the College Principal that the College maintains a strong relationship with UoC with regular contact through module assessment boards, and meetings via Skype and face-to-face to meet the delivery, assessment, review and monitoring of its programmes. Meeting with support staff also revealed evidence of College compliance with UoC procedures according to the partnership agreement via uploads of required documentation to the UoC site relating to assessment, monitoring and reviewing.

1.21   Students reported satisfaction in the recording of information and its availability via the College website before and during their studies. They are also aware of the process relating to the annual monitoring arrangements with the UoC.

1.22   Although the review team identified limitations in the College maintaining its own formal records it is evident they are compliant with the requirements of the awarding body. Therefore the Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.23   The College does not have degree awarding powers and is not therefore responsible for the approval of the programmes it delivers on behalf of its awarding body. The College is in a collaborative partnership agreement with the UoC for all of its academic provision, as set out in the Programme Agreement applicable from August 2017.
The awarding body's processes for the design and approval of taught programmes are set out in their own handbooks and regulations. The organisational agreement with the UoC and the responsibilities checklist together set out the responsibilities of both parties and include a requirement that the College adhere to the University of Chester's Quality and Standards Manuals. Oversight of the College's compliance with UoC requirements is maintained by the BoS. The College's arrangements to meet its awarding body requirements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.24   The review team tested the Expectation through consideration of the awarding body's regulations and documentation relating to the approval of modules contained in the PRP, together with Board of Studies minutes. It also discussed the College's arrangements for approving programmes and modules with senior, academic, and professional support staff.

1.25   The portfolio of programmes at the College is stable. The UoC initially approved the undergraduate programmes in 2012 and the postgraduate programmes in 2011. In accordance with awarding body requirements, changes to programmes and modules can be made annually through the submission of an annual PRP submitted to UoC for approval. The PRP provides details of the programmes offered; the programme specifications and any modifications; details of new modules; module modifications; minor module amendments and module withdrawals. A self-declaration is included for the provider to confirm that each programme is aligned to relevant QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, and external examiners are consulted on new modules. Formal agreement to propose new modules and to make modifications via the PRP are made at the BoS and its Terms of Reference include the responsibility to set and maintain academic standards, to comply with national standards and to take account of external examiner feedback. The oversight provided by the BoS is subject to a recommendation under Expectation B1.

1.26   Within the context of the partnership agreement with its awarding body, the evidence from the PRP, including external examiner support demonstrates that processes for the approval of programmes ensures that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standards for the qualification and are in accordance with awarding body requirements. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.27　　The University of Chester and the College are jointly responsible for setting, marking and moderating assessed work. The academic standards of the UoC are set out in the Quality Standards Manual. The University of Chester's Handbook on the 'Design of Academic Provision and Structures' states that assessment tasks must be designed to enable students to demonstrate their achievement of specified learning outcomes across the whole programme or module. The University of Chester's Requirements Governing the Assessment of Students Handbook informs the College's academic assessment strategy. Within the College, the extended BoS oversees assessment processes and ensures University standards are met. The College's arrangements to meet its awarding body's requirements would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.28　　In its review of evidence, the team tested the systems in place by studying the requirements set out by the awarding body, the UoC's Organisational Agreement, programme specifications, module descriptors, course and module handbooks and assignment briefs. In addition, the review team met academic staff during the review to explore their approach to assuring academic standards and discussed assessment with a range of students.

1.29　　Within its 'Principals and Regulations and the supporting Quality Handbook A', UoC identifies that the key purpose of assessment is to 'enable students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the objectives of the mode and form of study and achieved the standard required for the award'. The form and content of assessment must therefore be aligned with the aims and objectives of the framework, programme, pathway, course or module. Assessment strategies and tasks are designed to enable students to demonstrate achievement of specified learning outcomes across the whole programme or module. All programmes are required to provide opportunities for all the intended learning outcomes for the course to be achieved and assessed.

1.30　　UoC programme specifications identify the FHEQ levels and relevant external benchmarks; they specify programme learning outcomes at award and academic level. Module specifications set out learning outcomes that are delineated by academic level. These are accessible to students via the UoC portal and the student handbook. The College programmes are made up of a significant number of optional modules, that are not all delivered each year because of resource constraints. Currently, the College does not formally map module learning outcomes against programme learning outcomes; this means there is a potential risk that all programme learning outcomes may not be secure and the College may wish to implement a process to mitigate this possibility.

1.31　　The awarding body has appropriate measures in place to ensure that the awards are given only when the achievement of the learning outcomes has been assessed as meeting the UK threshold standards. These measures are supported by the College's

academic assessment strategy that also sets out arrangements for internal moderation and includes clear marking criteria taken from UoC Quality and Standards Manual: Handbook 'Requirements Governing the Assessment of Students 2016/17'. The College adheres to the awarding body's requirements concerning internal moderation. The need for the College to strengthen the role of learning outcomes in underpinning assessment design and feedback and quality assurance to guarantee their security is the subject of a recommendation under Expectation B6. External examiners confirm the appropriateness of standards and assessment tasks with reference to relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ and that the awarding body can have confidence that the College is enabling students to develop work of the required standard. Examination boards are convened at the College and are chaired by the academic contact from UoC.

1.32   As well as consistently following the awarding body's guidelines for assessment, the College has clear and well-understood assessment procedures, allowing students the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes, which is confirmed by external examiners. Therefore, the review team concludes that Expectation A3.2 is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.33   To ensure threshold academic standards are maintained, UoC requires that all programmes undergo annual monitoring as well as revalidation every six years, and that these processes include the use of externality. Responsibilities for periodic review and for annual monitoring for the College and the awarding body are set out in the responsibilities checklist. The overall responsibility for periodic review lies with the awarding body but for annual monitoring of academic standards, this is shared between the awarding body and the College. Within the College, institutional oversight of provision is fulfilled by the BoS. If implemented securely, these procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.34   The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising the awarding body's quality guidance, the terms of reference and minutes of the BoS, the December 2016 revalidation report, together with annual monitoring reports. The review team also tested the Expectation through meetings with academic and senior staff, and students.

1.35   In December 2016 all current programmes underwent revalidation, with the exception of the BA in Christian Leadership, which was phased out. The BoS responded to the conditions and recommendations set. In 2016 the EBoS signed off a review of programme documentation following revision to the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement.

1.36   The College meets the annual monitoring requirements set out by the awarding body and external examiners confirm the academic standards continue to be met. Separate undergraduate and postgraduate annual collaborative programme monitoring reports are submitted. Within these reports the College confirms that opportunities for programme evaluation have included programme and departmental meetings, though the College subsumes these discussions within BoS meetings, staff-student liaison meetings and analysis of data; the undergraduate reports also indicate feedback from employers, however, this is informal and not documented. The need to develop a formal College process for the review of programmes and modules to strengthen external engagement in the process is the subject of a recommendation in Expectation B8.

1.37   Oversight of Postgraduate Research (PGR) provision is included within the overarching postgraduate annual monitoring report, though relatively little attention is given to research. PGR students are required to complete an annual progress report in line with the annual progress monitoring schedule.

1.38   External examiners affirm that standards are being maintained in all programmes and that they are aligned to the FHEQ and external reference points.

1.39   The College complies with and understands the University of Chester's mechanisms for regular programme monitoring and periodic review, which are used to

secure and maintain academic standards. External examiners confirm the academic standards continue to be met. Therefore, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards*

Findings

1.40   The College is not a degree-awarding body but has responsibility under the terms of its agreement with the UoC to work with the University to ensure that academic standards are set and upheld. The BoS has the responsibility 'to set and maintain academic standards', which would include proper use of externality at key stages. However, in the context of the relationship with the UoC, final responsibility for the setting of academic standards lies with the University and the College depends heavily upon the support of the UoC in this area. As noted under A1 above, the College has not introduced any new provision for several years (although very extensive revision and revalidation has taken place at both module and programme level).

1.41   The College monitors that learning is at an appropriate level in a variety of ways, including the use of external examiners at key points, such as revisions to modules and the setting and marking of assignments. The College is also able to be in contact with the University (which it understands as an 'external body') on matters relating to standards. For example, it recently used Skype to be in contact with the UoC over a matter relating to academic misconduct. The College has received some guidance on the setting of appropriately levelled learning outcomes from an external revalidation team member.

1.42   Given that the College is not an awarding body, the review team formed the view that the arrangements within the College for ensuring a level of externality in the setting and maintaining of academic standards were broadly such that there could be reasonable confidence that they would ensure compliance with Expectation A3.4.

1.43   In order to test this Expectation, the review team studied a range of documentation including that which is referenced below under Expectation B7. The review team also spoke to a range of College staff and to external stakeholders.

1.44   The review team noted that the College documentation which deals with A3.4 offers comment almost exclusively as related to the use of external examiners. As noted below under Expectation B7, the use of external examiners at the College seems robust insofar as it relates to assessment (including the setting of assessment tasks). It is consistent with the comments under A1 above and B1 below that no reference is made to the use of externals during initial programme design and approval at College level. The review team learned from the meeting with employers that opportunities for non-academic external input into the design/review of provision (including modules) was limited. Overall, the team took the view that wider use of externality, particularly as related to employers and other stakeholders, would provide the opportunity for increased enhancement of provision. This issue is discussed under Expectations B1 and B8.

1.45   Given the status of the College as a non degree-awarding body, the review team came to the view that the arrangements within the College to work with the University to ensure that there is appropriate use of external expertise at key stages of the setting and

maintaining of academic standards were such as to provide sufficient confidence that Expectation A3.4 is met. It also concludes that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: **Met**
Level of risk: **Low**

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

1.46   In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of the academic standards of awards the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

1.47   All the Expectations in this area are met with low levels of associated risk.

1.48   From its scrutiny of a wide range of evidence, and through meetings with staff and students, the review team found that the College is effective in managing its responsibilities, in conjunction with the degree-awarding body, and is effective in maintaining academic standards. Adequate use is made of relevant subject and qualification benchmarks and external expertise in the development of programmes and their subsequent approval and monitoring, and qualifications are set at an appropriate academic level.

1.49   The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.

Quality Code, *Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval*

Findings

2.1   As the College's awarding body, the University of Chester approves the College and the programmes they deliver through a collaborative partnership agreement. Within the College, the academic enhancement strategy places the primary responsibility for the periodic design, development and approval of programmes with the Board of Studies (BoS), overseen by the Academic Dean and Director of Studies. The design of these systems and procedures would allow Expectation B1 to be met.

2.2   The review team reviewed the effectiveness of these practices and procedures by examining documentation including the partnership agreement, the terms of reference of the BoS, and the annual PRP. The review team also explored the module approval process through discussions with academic managers.

2.3   Within the College, the rather separate functions of a programme team and of institutional oversight of provision are both fulfilled by the BoS. While the terms of reference for the BoS include responsibility for the setting and maintenance of academic standards, they do not make explicit reference to its role in the design, development and approval of programmes. Students are represented on the BoS, but there is no employer or external stakeholder representation. Staff are supported for their role on the BoS and in 2016/17 an informal staff training day, with 10 attendees, was devoted to preparation for partner review and revalidation.

2.4   The portfolio of programmes at the College is stable and no programmes have been recently approved, but in December 2016 all current programmes underwent revalidation. New modules are approved as part of the annual PRP, within which external examiner consultation is documented. While new modules and module modifications are discussed at the BoS and then signed off by the academic dean, this means the full BoS does not have the opportunity to comment on and approve final documentation prior to submission to the UoC via the PRP. In consequence the BoS does not have formal oversight of the new modules that are proposed to the awarding body. Additionally, consultation with external stakeholders such as Assembly of God Directors, local churches or placement providers does not formally inform module development. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College should introduce a formal process for approving and signing off programmes and modules to strengthen external engagement and College oversight. There is no formal mechanism for the oversight of the impact of multiple minor modifications on programme learning outcomes. The review team further **recommends** that the College develop a formal process for oversight of multiple minor modifications to ensure programme learning outcomes continue to be met.

2.5   Overall, the review team concludes that the College is maintaining its responsibilities to its awarding body in the approval of modules validated by the University of Chester. Although the Expectation is met, the associated level of risk is moderate because the internal quality assurance procedures for the Expectation are informal and

underdeveloped, particularly regarding external consultation, leading to inadequate College oversight and a lack of formal external input into the design and development of modules. Additionally, oversight of multiple minor modifications is insufficient to provide assurance that programme learning outcomes continue to be met.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.

Quality Code, *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education*

Findings

2.6   Under the agreement with the University of Chester (UoC), the College is responsible for admission to the taught programmes, while UoC is responsible for the admission of research programmes. The College Admission Policy includes entry requirements, criteria and procedures for recruitment. They are transparent and clearly set out in the programme specifications for each programme and course handbooks. The approach employed by the College to select suitably qualified prospective students is underpinned by the transparency of the entry requirements located on its website.

2.7   Recruitment, selection and admission processes are conducted by a specialist Admissions Department who work closely with the BoS, whose oversight of the admissions process includes revised admission policies, modifications of which are approved by the Extended Board of Studies (EBOS) as part of the revalidation process. This includes information on the complaints and appeal procedure that forms part of the College 2017-18 approved Enhancement Action Plan.

2.8   Admission to the doctorate programmes is managed entirely by UoC with the College participating with some flexibility operative within the UoC guidelines.

2.9   The admissions process is supported by an effective Access and Participation Statement that encourages students without formal qualifications or with a learning disability to apply. The statement is embedded in the admissions policy and includes provision for applicants from non-church backgrounds to be considered for entry.

2.10   The approach to recruitment, selection and admissions to higher education outlined above would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.11   The review team examined the effectiveness, fairness, and inclusivity of the College's recruitment, selection and admissions process, by analysing all prospectus documentation and the minutes for BoS meetings. The team also met with senior academic staff, teaching staff, support staff, including the admissions team, and students. The team noted that all staff were able to clearly articulate the importance of the College's requirements to create an inclusive learning environment. The review team saw evidence relating to the recruitment selection and admissions strategies, processes and policies in programme specifications and course handbooks, and the Admission Policy and BOS terms of reference and the College website.

2.12   Meetings with staff and students described the admissions process and how it is applied. The review team heard that the admissions process involves preliminary discussion with the admissions team, who help the applicant to identify their interests and make an informed choice. This dialogue is followed up with a formal application, which is further informed by the opportunity to attend one of three residential taster days per year, designed specifically for prospective students prior to application. These include an overnight stay at the College, introduction to College life, conversations with existing students, short presentations by different departments, and the opportunity to 'sample' a lecture. The review

team heard how students with learning needs are given appropriate and timely information that is clearly communicated and are invited to declare any needs in advance of enrolment so that appropriate resources can be allocated. Students who are not able to verify their learning needs resulting from dyslexia are invited to obtain a psychological assessment, which is sometimes offered to larger groups of students on site according to demand. Mature students are assessed through the completion of an academic task.

2.13   The thoroughness of this process enables a student to proceed to interview with confidence that they have made an informed decision. Interviews are carried out by teaching staff who apply consistent selection criteria. The review team regarded the proactive pre-enrolment process and personalised support for students, including those with specific learning needs, which facilitates entry to the College as **good practice**.

2.14   This clarity and fairness of communication, and transparency in relation to admission and induction enables the Expectation to be met and the risk low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B3): Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.15 The College has a learning and teaching strategy. The College documentation indicates that it sets out the strategy for learning and teaching and makes it available to staff and students. The strategic approach to, and vision for learning and teaching is reviewed and developed through the EBoS meetings. It is informed by student and staff feedback at student faculty meetings and through Survey Monkey and the National Student Survey (NSS). Staff are encouraged to engage in continuing professional development (CPD). A system of peer observation is in place and there is a staff development plan. Some progress has been made in the area of Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA) recognition and there are clear plans to ensure that other College staff gain FHEA status within the next 12 months. Students reported a high level of satisfaction with the quality of learning and teaching and the expertise of the staff. Students also expressed appreciation for the provision of study skills designed to help them to achieve and develop as independent thinkers. Students spoke with clarity about the extent to which they felt that the approach to learning and teaching at the College was levelled so that they were able to build incrementally from level 4 to level 6. Staff have one day a week study time which is one way in which the College supports staff development related to learning and teaching, particularly as related to subject knowledge. There are also CPD events at the College that are teaching and learning focused. For example, a member of staff has recently attended the University of Chester good supervisor course.

2.16 The College has a peer-review system. This is operated within the College and does not draw on external expertise or use expertise from the UoC.

2.17 The College provided information on the physical resources for the support of student learning, although there is little detail on how these are informed by wider College practices and processes to ensure that there is synergy between student need and expenditure. Student feedback is gathered through a variety of mechanisms including student faculty meetings, student representation on EBoS, surveys via Survey Monkey and the NSS. On-campus students have study-skills sessions, and the review team learned that the College makes all such opportunities available to distance learning students who are welcome to attend any sessions they wish.

2.18 The review team came to the view that the documentation and, in particular, the commentary provided during meetings, meant that the arrangements for the provision of student learning opportunities, and the systematic review of the same, are such as to ensure that students are enabled to develop in ways that meet Expectation B3.

2.19 In order to test this Expectation the review team considered a range of documentation including the learning and teaching strategy and relevant sections of College documents. The review team also discussed learning and teaching and other aspects of the provision of quality of learning opportunities with a range of staff and with students.

2.20 The review team learned from meetings with both staff and students that there was a high degree of priority given to learning and teaching and wider support for student

learning. It noted carefully the 'indicative list of recent CPD' and came to the view that while there was some evidence of staff development in the area of learning and teaching, there was a greater emphasis upon the listing of recent publications. Although it was not clear to the review team how this research was directly related to the provision of quality student learning opportunities, the team took the view that it did furnish evidence that staff were engaged in ongoing enquiry in relevant areas of the curriculum. The review team formed the view that a more focused cycle of staff development related to core aspects of learning and teaching theory and practice may further enhance the quality of learning and teaching at the College. The CPD policy is designed in such a way as to be supportive of staff to undertake a wider range of activity. The review team learned that the cycle of CPD is agreed with the Principal. When tested, the website link to the teaching and learning strategy document did not work. The review team considered the system of peer review, which is clearly operative at the College, and came to the opinion that, in view of the small size of the College, the system could be further enhanced via the use of externals so as to provide fresh insights. The review team **recommends** that the College should involve external input into its peer review of teaching process to enhance objectivity. The review team noted that peer observation reports are discussed at EBoS.

2.21   The College's system for making on-campus lectures and other learning opportunities available to distance learning students was confirmed by distance learning students contacted by the team.

2.22   During the visit, the review team learned about some of the wider support systems in place within the College (including support for those with disabilities). It was confirmed that distance learning students knew about and, in one case, had accessed learning support for a disability. The College has extensive informal systems in place which, given the size of Mattersey Hall, enables students and staff to be appropriately aware of student progression both academically and in other aspects of their experience. Students reported positively on this. The library resources are aligned to curriculum development and are discussed directly with the principal as part of overall resource allocation.

2.23   Overall the review team came to the view that the Expectation is met and that the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

Quality Code, *Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement*

Findings

2.24   The College takes a strategic approach to student development. Arrangements for the support of students in developing their academic, personal and professional potential are included in the Enhancement Strategy and the EBoS has oversight of the implementation of the enhancement action plan. There is a disability officer and a pastoral team. The leadership formation groups (LFGs) also support student professional development. During the visit the review team learned that the LFGs were central to the College's arrangements for the support of students. All students are made aware of the support structures within the College in induction sessions and in handbooks. The effectiveness
of these arrangements is reviewed by the EBoS. The College takes a proactive approach to supporting new students in making the transition into College life and academic studies. The College uses Moodle as its virtual learning environment and this is one a way in which student learning opportunities and wider support systems are communicated. There is a disability policy and a disability officer. The student progression and results board monitors student progression and achievement. The College has a system of 'lead students' who act as part of the supporting arrangements for students. There is adequate information to ensure students are aware of the support mechanisms in place.

2.25   The review team formed the view that the arrangements in place to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential were such as to provide a level of reasonable confidence that Expectation B4 could be met.

2.26   In order to test this Expectation the review team reviewed a variety of documentation including the relevant sections of the documents provided by the College as part of the evidence base including that listed above. It also discussed the arrangements for the support of students with both staff and students, including those studying on the distance learning course.

2.27   The review team formed the view that the processes and arrangements for the support of students was effectively operated in practice. Important evidence to support this view came in the meetings with students, who explained to the review team how the College supported the wider development of their academic, personal and professional potential. While there was some level of concern expressed relating to pastoral care and academic support, it was evident to the review team that such expressions were of a limited nature and significantly outweighed by the very positive overall student consensus. The review team also understands that despite the use of the term 'leadership formation group' to describe a key part of the College's support systems, this aspect of student support was not limited to 'leadership formation' nor yet always in the context of a 'group'. It included, rather, the College's proactive systems to enable student-student support as well as individual 1 to 1 support by the tutor. The review team understands that academic support was more often accessed directly with module tutors. It was evident therefore that all three aspects of the Expectation relating to B4 (academic, personal and professional) were covered by the College's support systems. It was confirmed by the review team that distance learning students knew of the systems that are in place and were able to access support when required; distance learners themselves confirmed this. The review team heard about the many informal opportunities that the small nature of the College provided for staff and students to interact either as a group or individually. It came to the view that the informality

was appropriate given the nature and size of the student body and was reassured by the students themselves that this interaction was real and effective. It further took the view that the extensive range of approaches taken by the College to create a supportive learning community that enables students to take responsibility for their own learning and development is a feature of **good practice**.

2.28   On the basis of the above, the review team considers that Expectation B4 is met and that the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*

Findings

2.29   The College has recently published a helpful student engagement strategy that formalises opportunities for students to engage actively in educational enhancement and quality assurance processes. Engagement with students and student feedback is affected through students and faculty meetings, and student involvement in the Board of Studies (BoS). Engagement is also demonstrated through informal contact with students during mentoring sessions, and responses to programme and module surveys. Distance learning students can engage with the enhancement of their experience through the VLE, and by email correspondence with tutors.

2.30   Student representatives attend student faculty meetings (SFM) chaired by the Academic Dean or another member of the faculty in his absence. Minutes of the meetings are made available for students and faculty usually by publication on the College website. Relevant issues from the student faculty meeting are raised at the BoS meetings and other relevant management meetings for further consideration and action. Student representatives are full members of the BoS and EBoS and have a voice in all discussions.

2.31   The agenda of the student faculty meeting is determined by the student representative following discussions with the wider student body. The aim is to develop a forum where students and faculty can work together to resolve potential problems, identify areas where procedures are working well and not so well, and to contribute to the development of positive changes to enhance the learning opportunities and experience of present and future students.

2.32   In addition, as part of the operational agreement with the UoC, the College appoints a programme team that includes teaching staff and student representatives to oversee the effective implementation and management of the academic programmes, and to submit an annual monitoring report (AMR) to the UoC. This is fulfilled by the BoS and EBoS whose responsibility it is to receive minutes of meetings with student representatives and consider any appropriate response.

2.33   This approach would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.34   The review team saw evidence of deliberate steps taken by the College to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. Examination of BoS and EBoS minutes demonstrates regular attendance from student representatives and consideration of student concerns. There is clear evidence in BoS minutes of staff responding to a number of academically related concerns. For instance; where the amendment to timetabling reportedly increased student stress levels, the College reversed its decision. The College agreed for students to have more SFMs to discuss non-academic issues, and a request from students for extended hours of the research centre was approved.

2.35   The College is committed to the use of student feedback as a tool in the College's decision-making processes. The review team heard that students complete module questionnaires, and the College is moving from an electronic survey to paper-based following student requests, to promote participation in the survey. Students met by the

review team acknowledged that this change has been implemented and offers a more reliable means of surveying their opinion.

2.36   From the NSS results, it is clear students feel they can give feedback and that their views are valued; however, students met by the review team explained that they are less certain about what changes as a result of their feedback.

2.37   The College has instigated the role of the lead student. The review team heard from support staff of the effectiveness of lead students whose role focuses largely on non-academic issues. Lead students provide a first point of contact for students to discuss any part of their student experience. Relevant Issues are discussed in weekly meetings with the Principal and staff who are accessible both formally and informally. Lead students are trained by the Deputy Principal prior to and throughout their appointment. This training includes pastoral care. However, the support team said they recognised the need for further training for lead students, particularly around the extent of their pastoral remit. The review team **recommends** that the College should design and implement formal training for lead students to enable them to carry out their pastoral role more securely.

2.38   From the examination of evidence and from meetings with staff and students the review team considers that the Expectation is met and the risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

Quality Code, *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning*

Findings

2.39   The University of Chester Principles and Regulations set out the general principles for the assessment of taught programmes and is supplemented by a handbook that sets out the requirements governing the assessment of students. The expectations placed on the College by the awarding body are laid out in the Programme Agreement and the responsibilities checklist, with recognition for prior learning being the responsibility of the awarding body. Assessment boards are convened by the awarding body. The College supplements the awarding body policies through the provision of a comprehensive assessment strategy in which they seek to offer a range of assessments that are related to learning outcomes; marking criteria for all levels of study are clearly set out. The regulations and processes of the awarding body to support the equitability, validity and reliability of assessment would allow Expectation B6 to be met.

2.40   The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with academic staff and students. The team also examined policies and procedures relating to assessment from the awarding body and the College and reviewed the information provided for students on the VLE and in handbooks.

2.41   The College assessment strategy provides the overarching framework for the management of assessment. Programme handbooks provide students with high level assessment information and advice regarding assessment and how to avoid plagiarism. The assessment strategy and handbooks are available on the website. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is the responsibility of the UoC and the College is cautious about announcing its availability, so the website does not make the RPL process clear, and the College may wish to consider providing more information about RPL on the website in order to provide better information to students. Assignment briefs are made available to students on the VLE and students reported that they were clear about what is expected of them in assessment. In accordance with awarding body requirements, assessed work is returned in four weeks and students confirmed that feedback is timely and helpful.

2.42   College staff involved in the assessment of students are required to be formally approved for the role by the UoC. In 2016/17 a staff training day was devoted to assessment.

2.43   Module descriptors note which learning outcomes are associated with a particular element of assessment. However, there is low visibility of the role of intended learning outcomes within assessment briefs, guidance on assessment, in feedback provided to students and in the internal moderation documentation. The review team **recommends** that the College should strengthen the role of learning outcomes in supporting assessment design and feedback in order to support student achievement.

2.44   The College makes concerted efforts to ensure students understand good academic practice in assessment, including during induction, within specific module documentation, and in course handbooks but despite these inputs this remains an issue and has been raised as a concern by the undergraduate external examiner and discussed at the

extended BoS. Work is submitted electronically using specialist plagiarism-detection software and marked anonymously. The College has a comprehensive disability policy that sets out clear arrangements for reasonable adjustment in assessment and students are supported effectively.

2.45   In line with awarding body requirements internal moderation takes place. Student satisfaction with the fairness of assessment and marking is high, but the NSS indicates students are less satisfied with marking criteria being made available in advance. Marking criteria have been revised to further improve feedback. External examiners confirm that assessment processes are robust and that students attain standards that are comparable with similar programmes in other institutions.

2.46   The College hosts a University of Chester module assessment board at the end of each academic year, which usually involves all teaching faculty, the external examiner and representatives of the University. This board ratifies marks for individual modules only. A later awards assessment board held at the University considers matters of overall performance.

2.47   The College is operating the assessment processes required by the awarding body and the maintenance of academic standards is confirmed by external examiners. Therefore the review team concludes that Expectation B6 is met but there are weaknesses in the ways the College uses the intended module learning outcomes to underpin assessment and so the associated level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.

Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External Examining*

Findings

2.48   The College works with the UoC for the appointment of external examiners. There is one external examiner for undergraduate and one for postgraduate. The names of the external examiners are given in the course handbooks. The arrangements for external examiners are those of the UoC and are set out in the University's Quality Standards Handbook, which is used by the College. External examiners submit reports and attend the College as appropriate. The College makes use of Skype to support this system. Annual external examiner reports are submitted to the University and published on the College's website where students can access the reports. The College responds to any concerns raised by external examiners via the BoS and EBoS. College staff are encouraged to take on the work of external examiners for other providers. External examiners are recommended by the College but appointed by the University.

2.49   The College relies heavily on UoC arrangements for external examiners. The review team came to the view that these arrangements are sufficiently robust as to enable Expectation B7 to be met in theory.

2.50   In order to test the Expectation, the review team considered a range of documentation, external examiner reports, minutes of the BoS and EBoS, the UoC external examiner handbook and spoke to staff. The review team also asked students about access to external examiner reports.

2.51   Documents provide an outline of the arrangements for external examiners in the form of a list of indicators with brief comment. The review team was able to confirm the validity of the outline provided and confirmed the existence of a range of documentary evidence used by external examiners including external examiner reports, minutes of EBoS, and the external examiner quality handbook. The review team considered carefully the responses made to external examiner reports found in the formal letters sent to external examiners and, more extensively, the discussions as part of AMR. The review team was also able to ascertain other information in meetings with staff relative to the use of external examiners, which is consistent with meeting the Expectation. This included the consultation of external examiners in assessment tasks as well as for summative marking. It was confirmed by students that they have access to external examiner reports on the website.

2.52   On the basis of the above, the review team considers that the use of external examiners at the College is robust and therefore Expectation B7 is met with low risk.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.

Quality Code, *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review*

Findings

2.53   The University of Chester sets out its processes for monitoring and review of taught programmes in its Evaluation, Monitoring and Review Handbook, which requires annual monitoring and periodic revalidation every six years. The College carries out annual programme monitoring and periodic review for taught programmes according to the processes of its awarding body. Within the College, monitoring and review of programmes is under the governance of the Academic Enhancement Strategy and Action Plan, with oversight maintained by the BoS. The College's engagement with the awarding body's policies and procedures in relation to annual and periodic review would allow Expectation B8 to be met.

2.54   The review team tested the Expectation by considering the BoS terms of reference and minutes, the revalidation and AMRs. The review team also tested the Expectation through meetings with senior and academic staff, and students.

2.55   In December 2016 all current programmes underwent revalidation. The revalidation of programmes was discussed at Strategic Planning Days, although not as part of a formal College process. Revalidation was discussed at the BoS and the EBoS but the final documentation submitted for revalidation was not considered and approved by the BoS, as the Academic Dean took responsibility for this. Through membership of both Boards of Studies, students had oversight of the revalidation process but external representatives such as local churches and placement providers were not formally involved and in the view of the review team this is a missed opportunity. The review team therefore **recommends** that a formal College process for development and signing off programmes undergoing revalidation be introduced to strengthen external engagement and College oversight.

2.56   Oversight of annual monitoring is through extended BoS meetings where there is careful consideration of external examiner and student feedback, together with progression and completion data. Separate undergraduate and postgraduate AMRs are submitted to the UoC on an annual basis, although the attention given to the doctoral programmes is relatively light.

2.57   Overall, the review team concludes that the College is maintaining its responsibilities to its awarding body in the monitoring and review of provision validated by the University of Chester. Although the Expectation is met, the associated level of risk is moderate because the internal quality assurance procedures for the Expectation are informal and underdeveloped, particularly regarding external consultation leading to inadequate College oversight and a lack of external input into programme review and development. This is referred to in the recommendation under Expectation B1.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

Quality Code, *Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints*

Findings

2.58   The College is responsible for academic appeals and student complaints in accordance with its agreement with the awarding body. The complaints and appeals policy provides clear and effective information concerning students' rights, measures put in place to prevent discrimination and the timescale for responding to complaints. Additionally, the policy describes the steps that enable a complaint to be escalated upward to the awarding body where necessary. Despite this, the procedure encourages early and informal resolutions to complaints. Further information about the College's responsibilities around complaints and appeals is set out in the programme agreement and responsibilities checklist, which is accessible through the College website.

2.59   As part of the Programme Agreement, the College is responsible for maintaining a record of all complaints, which is shared with the awarding body.

2.60   Evidence of the monitoring and review of complaints and appeals is found in the Enhancement Action Plan and made clear in the guidance on the monitoring of appeals and complaints provided at the EBoS and Academic Assessment Strategy. It is also published on the College website.

2.61   The approach outlined above would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.62   The review team tested the effectiveness, accessibility and enhancement capabilities of the College's policies and procedures by examining documents relating to complaints and appeals such as the UoC Quality and Standards manual, the College Assessment strategy, the Student Complaints and Academic Appeals Procedure, review of the EBoS for the submission of complaints and appeals, and the College website.

2.63   The review team heard from senior staff that no formal complaints have been reported in the last two academic years, and the complaints and appeals policy, also published online, is intended to be transparent and is in accordance with the College's procedures and deadlines. Initial appeals are submitted to the Dean then referred to an external adjudicator in line with UoC processes.

2.64   Students who met the review team said they were all aware of the appeal and complaints procedure and the clarity of the referral structure. They commented that where students have concerns the initial contact is with a Student Leader, then with College staff but ultimately, they refer to the UoC processes.

2.65   The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the risk low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B10): Degree-awarding bodies take ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the degree-awarding body are implemented securely and managed effectively.

Quality Code, *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*

Findings

2.66   As a non degree-awarding body, the responsibilities of the College with respect to this Expectation are limited. However, The College does work with others in the delivery of its provision in that it makes extensive use of placements and promotes annual mission trips. Such activities are an important part of the undergraduate student experience for on-campus students, although distance learning students do not take part in this aspect of the College's provision. Placements and mission trips are organised by the College and it makes a financial commitment to this aspect of its work. There are staff in place at the College who have responsibility for oversight of this provision. The review team learned from some staff that while the placements/mission trips do form part of the assessment for the internal College diploma, they do not form part of the credit-bearing academic provision. In the final meeting, however, it was confirmed that the placements and mission trips may form the basis for some assessed learning via some modules. The College documentation states that '[t]he Missions Trips and Church Placements include academic elements for L4 (and as an option at L5), but all students take part in, and benefit from, the wider experience'.

2.67   Overall, the review team took the view that the design of this part of provision could in theory meet the Expectation. However, the review team considered that the implications under B10 that come as a result of the link between placement and mission trips and the academic provision (at least in the case of those students who undertake linked modules at levels 4 and 5) were not fully recognised at the College. The precise nature of this link is unclear in that the placement/mission trip does not of itself form part of the assessed work; nevertheless for many students the placement/mission trip does provide the basis for assessed critical reflection, or other forms of assignment. The wording of the extract at the end of paragraph 2.66 seems clear on this point.

2.68   The review team explored carefully the two aspects of working with others that pertains at the College, namely the arrangements for placement and mission trips. This was done mostly through meetings with staff and students, but consideration was also given to the documentation noted above.

2.69   While the review team was mindful that the placement/mission trip itself was not assessed, it did take the view that such activities nevertheless formed part of assessed learning, at least insofar as they provide the basis for critical reflection or other types of assessment. The review team was therefore not confident that the College had in place sufficient formal structures, processes and procedures to manage such activity. This includes the training of placement-based mentors sufficient to guide the students in ways that would facilitate their later assessed work. While this does not, in the opinion of the review team, currently present a significant risk, the team did come to the view that this aspect of the College's provision needs to be considered carefully so as to ensure continued meeting of Expectation B10 in the future. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College formalise its arrangements with placement providers to safeguard and support students.

2.70   On the basis of the above, and given the current ambiguity of the link between placement/mission trip activity and assessed learning, the review team formed the view that

Expectation B10 was met. However, for the reasons given above, the level of risk was judged to be moderate. This was in part due to the apparently conflicting understandings at the College that the placement was not related to the academic provision while using the experience on placement/mission trips as a core part of assessed learning in credit-bearing modules.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (B11): Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols.
This environment offers students quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.71   The College offers three research degrees in partnership with, and governed by, the awarding body whose regulations for admission decisions are set out in agreement documents such as the Quality Standards Manual Handbook, programme agreement and responsibilities checklist. Following the termination of the University's Graduate School in August and redistribution of responsibilities, UoC has approved members of the College Faculty to form part of a supervisory team. Prior to this the College has had very few responsibilities.

2.72   Monitoring of student progress takes the form of conversations with individual students and periodic joint sessions with students and supervisors, conducted largely by the UoC with the College fulfilling its duties in line with the programme agreement.

2.73   A purpose-built Research Centre and Donald Gee Pentecostal Archive was completed in 2014 following the last QAA review in December 2013 and subsequent follow-up in March 2014. The Centre offers a good range of modern resources, books and articles in all subject areas, and the archive provides access to a unique repository of Pentecostal information. The work and study spaces allow ease of movement for students of all physical abilities and provides a secure environment for carrying out individual research and group study. Students are also able to gain access to UoC's online library via a link on the student portal home page, and additional University libraries using the UoC student card.

2.74   The arrangements put in place by the College would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.75   The review team heard that research staff comply with responsibilities outlined by UoC. This includes an AMR that is submitted to UoC following the student completing their programme. Student progress is then marked by an independent adviser. Research staff reported that this arrangement worked well.

2.76   The review team heard that research staff work with students to prepare their research proposals prior to submission to UoC by highlighting omissions or significant content. Students are allocated supervisors to align with staff expertise on topic choices, expertise that is further enhanced by attendance on supervisor courses, conferences and ongoing research seminars provided by UoC.

2.77   The College has a robust research culture whereby it actively encourages staff to interact with global scholars, promote supervisors' involvement in research, and regularly attend conferences and author reviews for publication.

2.78   Students confirmed that only a small number form a cohort enrolled on the postgraduate programmes. They reported being satisfied with their programme and identified the College because of its access to unique Pentecostal resources and

internationally recognised archives as well as the appointment of high profile research staff who provide ongoing peer support. They also reported tutors being proactive in diagnosing issues around ethics.

2.79   The College creates a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research, and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. Therefore the Expectation is met and the level of risk low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.80   In reaching its judgement about the quality of student learning opportunities the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.81   Most of the Expectations in this area are met with low levels of associated risk apart from Expectations B1, B6, B8 and B10 which, whilst being met, were judged a moderate risk.

2.82   The review team identified good practice in the pro-active pre-enrolment process and personalised support for students, including those with specific learning needs, which facilitates entry to the College (Expectation B2) and in the extensive range of approaches taken by the College to create a supportive learning community that enables students to take responsibility for their own learning and development (Expectation B4).

2.83   However, the review team also makes recommendations around the development of a formal process for oversight of multiple minor modifications to ensure programme learning outcomes continue to be met (Expectation B1), the involvement of external input into its peer review of teaching process to enhance objectivity (Expectation B3, the design and implementation of formal training for lead students to enable them to carry out their pastoral role more securely (Expectation B5), the strengthening of the role of learning outcomes in supporting assessment design and feedback in order to support student achievement (Expectation B6) the introduction of a formal process for approving and signing off programmes and modules to strengthen external engagement and College oversight (Expectations B1 and B8), the formalisation of arrangements with placement providers to safeguard and support students (Expectation B10).

2.84   The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 The College provides an effective and extensive distribution of information about the College's provision of learning opportunities for current and prospective students, and staff, as well as external stakeholders. The College offers a website for external and internal use. The College also provides a VLE, which is available to students and staff via a web browser.

3.2 Programme handbooks are available to students online and in hard copy. These handbooks contain clear information about programmes of study, including expected study time and forms of assessment. The review team found that this published information is clear and in simple terms, in accordance with the College commitment statement to provide good and accurate information of all aspects of College life. Information published on the College website is easily accessible. Contents include college handbooks, policies, resources, information about taster days and Mission trips. The website also gives information about the teaching staff, including areas of specialism and details of publications.

3.3 The College has a process for signing off information intended for publication, the Principal exerting ultimate oversight. All information published on behalf of the awarding body is approved by UoC.

3.4 This approach outlined in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3 would enable the Expectation to be met.

3.5 The review team tested the effectiveness of the College's provision of information by exploring the availability and accuracy of the information provided on its website, on the VLE, in the prospectuses, and in the programme handbooks. The review team conducted meetings with students, support staff, teaching staff, and senior College staff to consider how the provision of information is organised, accessible, and fit for purpose. The review team heard from support staff that accuracy of website content is overseen by the Deputy Principal and Academic Dean who update processes by undertaking regular reviews during the year and sign off any material for publication. Further search reviews are conducted by the Deputy Principal in preparation for admission.

3.6 Students reported satisfaction with the accuracy of information and its availability. Distance learning students in particular said they routinely use the VLE to access assignment titles and other available material and found it an invaluable resource.

3.7 The review team determined the Expectation is met and the level of risk low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.8 In reaching its judgement about the quality of the information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.9 The review team scrutinised a range of documentation (both published in hard copy and electronic versions) made available to prospective, current and former students, and other stakeholders.

3.10 Overall, the review team found that the College has considered the formal requirements of Expectation C and has ensured that it can demonstrate its compliance with the Expectation.

3.11 The team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Findings

4.1 In the absence of a strategic plan, the College is working to its Strategy for the Enhancement of the Quality of Student Learning Opportunities, which was revised in 2017. The Strategy is then realised in the annual enhancement plan. The BoS is responsible for oversight of this and the associated action plan, and the work is driven by the Academic Dean. Additionally, the College has strategies in teaching and learning and student engagement. A priority within the continuing professional development policy is to assure and further advance the services of the College. The College's deliberate steps being taken at provider level would allow the Expectation to be met.

4.2 The review team tested the Expectation through meetings with senior, academic and professional support staff, and with students. The team also evaluated documents relating to enhancement including the Strategy for the Enhancement of the Quality of Student Learning Opportunities, the strategies in teaching and learning and student engagement and BoS terms of reference and minutes.

4.3 The College has put in place a number of actions in response to a 'requires improvement judgement' from QAA review in 2013. These have been signed off by QAA during annual monitoring. One of these actions was the development of the College Strategy for the Enhancement of the Quality of Student Learning Opportunities. The Strategy is rather operational, mostly devoted to activities such as meeting awarding body requirements, student engagement, responding to external examiners and annual monitoring. However, the new Principal's ambition to develop a strategic plan is noted.

4.4 The Teaching and Learning Strategy has an emphasis on quality but not on enhancement specifically. The enhancement action plan is the vehicle for taking forward the Teaching and Learning Strategy. The EBoS maintains oversight of the enhancement plan, which is agreed annually in June each year. This is informed by consideration of programme operation, student survey data and progression statistics and the outcome of this consideration has led to the withdrawal of the BA Christian Leadership and the suspension of recruitment to the MA in Mission Leadership to enable an overhaul to take place.

4.5 The Student Engagement Strategy has a clear focus on development and enhancement and student feedback is a key element of EBoS meetings, where the College is responsive in making curricula and organisational changes to enhance the student experience. The student faculty meetings have an enhancement remit. The good practice identified in student support under Expectation B4 is noted.

4.6 In addition to the curriculum-based mission trips and church placements, there are a number of extracurricular opportunities for students, such as the Activate programme and talks by influential figures in church life that take place on Wednesday mornings; although these sessions are not formally evaluated. These opportunities are valued by students and staff but they are not comprehensively embedded in the curricula. The review team therefore **recommends** that the College use the opportunity provided in the development of a new strategic plan to more fully embed learning opportunities across the curriculum to strengthen graduate prospects.

4.7   A staff development plan sets out a number of activities for staff and, while sharing best practice events are held, no formal record is kept, nor is staff development formally evaluated. Staff are encouraged to gain recognition through the HEA and one member of staff has become a senior fellow. Peer observation of teaching takes place and an overview report is made available to the EBoS. Peer observation of teaching is subject to a recommendation in Expectation B3.

4.8   The provision could be enhanced through further embedding of placements and mission trips across the curriculum. However, the College is taking deliberate steps to enhance the quality of learning opportunities at programme and provider level and so the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.9   In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of learning opportunities the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.10   The review team found that the College is effective in the deliberate steps that it takes to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities, with several enhancement initiatives adding value to the student's educational experience. However, the team identified that these opportunities would benefit from a more formal approach, and recommends that the College use the opportunity provided in the development of a new strategic plan to more fully embed learning opportunities across the curriculum to strengthen graduate prospects.

4.11   The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 21-24 of the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) handbook.

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality.

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer Glossary on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx.

Academic standards
The standards set by **degree-awarding bodies** for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

Award
A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

Awarding organisation
An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

Blended learning
Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

Credit(s)
A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

Degree-awarding body
A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers or university title).

Distance learning
A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'. See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award
The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also **multiple award**.

e-learning
See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement
The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

Expectations
Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

Flexible and distributed learning
A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations. See also **distance learning**.

Framework
A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

Framework for higher education qualifications
A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS).

Good practice
A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

Learning opportunities
The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

Learning outcomes
What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

Multiple awards
An arrangement where three or more **degree-awarding bodies** together provide a single jointly delivered **programme** (or programmes) leading to a separate **award** (and separate certification) of each awarding body. The arrangement is the same as for **dual/double awards**, but with three or more awarding bodies being involved.

Operational definition
A formal definition of a term, establishing exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

Programme (of study)
An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

Programme specifications
Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

Quality Code
Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of **reference points** for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the **Expectations** that all providers are required to meet.

Reference points
Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

Self-evaluation document
A report submitted by a higher education provider, assessing its own performance, to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

Subject Benchmark Statement
A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or **e-learning**)
Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

Threshold academic standard
The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic **award**. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**.

Virtual learning environment (VLE)
An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

Widening participation
Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.