



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of The Prince's Foundation for Building Community, June 2016

Section 1: Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that The Prince's Foundation for Building Community (the Foundation) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the [June 2015 Higher Education Review \(Plus\)](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review visit

2 No major changes have taken place since the last review. The Foundation continues to deliver the MA in Sustainable Urbanism programme awarded by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD). The Memorandum of Understanding for the validation agreement, signed in July 2013, is now due for an interim review planned for later this year.

3 The Foundation did not recruit any students in 2014 as it transitioned from the University of Wales to UWTSD in order to '...focus on the QAA review...'. The three students studying at The Foundation at the time of the June 2015 review have now completed the programme. Four students recruited for the 2015-16 intake are still in the UK on part-time study visas. The Foundation continues to face difficulties with international recruitment while still awaiting the Tier 4 Sponsor Licence. There are currently four first year students and one second year student on the MA in Sustainable Urbanism programme.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The Foundation has continued to advance areas of good practice and to implement the actions relating to affirmations in the June 2015 HER (Plus) report (paragraphs 5, 6, 7). It is implementing its own actions derived from areas of the report it identified for development (paragraph 7). With the significantly few students (paragraph 3), a robust admissions process (paragraph 8) and a holistic approach to teaching (paragraph 5), the Foundation reports high retention and achievement figures (paragraph 10). A detailed programme of study handbook has now been published (paragraph 6). Students now have access to external examiner reports (paragraph 7). The deliberative structures, which include Education Team meetings that take place every three weeks (paragraph 6), have been developed. A final draft of the terms of reference of the Academic Board, containing procedures for a proposed Internal Annual Review has been completed and is due for approval at the Academic Board's annual meeting in September 2016 (paragraph 7). The close relationship the Foundation has with UWTSD facilitates an extensive monitoring review process (paragraph 9) which the planned Internal Annual Review will enhance; and information and staff training on the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) (paragraph 12). The team is satisfied that The Prince's Foundation for Building Community has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the June 2015 Higher Education Review (Plus).

5 The Foundation has maintained its good practice by continuing to take a holistic approach and applying a range of methods in its teaching which integrate theory and practice. It continues to review its curriculum regularly. Students value the opportunities the Foundation continues to offer them, for example working on real projects alongside expert practitioners, including working on some of the Foundation's own in-house projects.

6 Actions related to the affirmations in the report are also progressing satisfactorily, with a comprehensive, current and accurate programme of study handbook now in place and the review of the deliberative structures continuing. Students confirmed receiving the new handbook. Discussion of its terms of reference was an agenda item at the Academic Board meeting in January 2016. However, it was resolved at that meeting that the roles of the Academic Board will be aligned to those outlined in the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding with UWTSD, which include Overall Course Direction, Quality Enhancement and Internal Course Review, and that the Academic Board will meet annually, with the first annual meeting scheduled for September 2016. At the annual meeting, the new terms of reference, which also include the review of external examiner and Partnership Team Leader reports, will be approved, making the deliberative structures fully effective in facilitating discussion on academic policy and practice. The deliberative structures are further strengthened by the Education Team meetings, which have been convened regularly since April 2016, to discuss operational reports from senior academic and administrative staff.

7 The action plan also includes actions in other areas which the Foundation identified in the June 2015 review report for improvement, namely giving students access to external examiner reports and formalising the Internal Annual Review. Students now have access to external examiner reports through the Foundation's virtual learning environment. The Internal Annual Review will be conducted in August each year for approval at the annual Academic Board meetings. The terms of reference of the Academic Board due for approval in September 2016 will include a proposal for the Internal Annual Review process.

8 The Foundation continues to apply a rigorous and exacting procedure for the admission of students, ensuring that students have sufficient English language competence by requesting a CV, covering letter and an essay on a set topic. For students whose first language is not English, and who have not previously studied a course at university level taught in English, an International English Language Testing System certificate is required, with an average score of 7.0, which is above that set by UWTSD. Transcripts and original certificates of prior qualifications are required of applicants, together with an academic reference from their previous institution. Applicants are also required to provide a portfolio of work, and if selected to attend an interview with two or more senior academic staff members.

9 The Foundation gathers qualitative information through regular meetings with students and also through student feedback questionnaires. The Foundation is a small and open institution with a modest number of students on its programme that enables it to respond promptly to any identified issues. Within the Foundation, the Academic Board has oversight of annual monitoring and makes recommendations to the Trustees. The Senior Lecturer also completes an annual monitoring report for UWTSD. This includes actions taken in response to comments in the annual reports by the University-appointed external examiner. In addition, the Partnership Team Leader from UWTSD visits the Foundation at least twice each year to meet students and discuss progress with them, reporting back to UWTSD.

10 All three students on the Foundation's programme at the time of the June 2015 review progressed satisfactorily from first to second year and have now graduated, with one pass, one merit and one distinction. Retention and progression rates were both 100 per cent. In the history of the programme from 2008, there has only been one withdrawal out of a total of 28 students, including those studying currently. Meetings that the team held with students

confirmed that staff at the Foundation are dedicated to ensuring that these high standards are maintained.

Section 4: Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

11 The programme is aligned with the relevant level of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), as part of UWTSD's approval process. The latter sets the assessment regulations and approves any major changes to the provision. The Partnership Team Leader and University-appointed external examiner review the provision and make recommendations.

12 The Senior Lecturer briefs staff on a context-specific basis as to the application of the Quality Code to their areas of responsibility and has, to date, delivered briefings to the Academic Board, Head of Skills and the Librarian/Tutor. Staff have also received training on the Quality Code from UWTSD.

13 A number of internal documents, including the Placement Agreement to be found in the Programme of Study Handbook, refer explicitly to the QAA Code of Practice.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

14 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

15 The monitoring visit was carried out on 23 June 2016 by Christopher Mabika (Coordinator) and Stephen Harris (Reviewer).

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