



Review for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of The Prince's Foundation for Building Community, June 2017

1 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 continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision since the [previous monitoring visit](#) in June 2016.

2 Section 2: Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The Foundation continues to deliver the MA in Sustainable Urbanism programme awarded by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (the University) and has not recruited any new students since the June 2016 Annual Monitoring Review. It intends to stop offering its validated and accredited version of the MA in Sustainable Urbanism when the current five students complete their studies in August 2017. The partnership agreement with the University expires in 2018 and the Foundation has no plans to renew it.

3 Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The Foundation has updated the action plan from the Higher Education Review (Plus) in June 2015, with the update showing that all actions have been completed. The Foundation has maintained a holistic approach to teaching, with students valuing the various elements of the approach including placements, and access to experts (paragraph 4). Students still value the comprehensive nature of the Programme of Study Handbook, despite some minor delays in publishing the updated version (paragraph 5). The Academic Board now has clearly defined terms of reference which, together with regular Education Team meetings, allow academic staff opportunities to address common issues (paragraph 6). The Foundation has continued to make external examiner reports available to students through a shared folder on its intranet (paragraph 7). In addition to regular monitoring reviews by the University, the Foundation has established an effective internal annual review process (paragraph 8) which has helped strengthen the quality assurance system. Despite having no admissions since the last review, the Foundation has maintained a robust admissions process (paragraph 9). The Foundation reports high student performance (paragraph 10). The Foundation continues to interact with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and to rely on the University's academic regulations and regular training to maintain its understanding of the Quality Code (paragraph 11).

4 The students confirmed that the Foundation continues to take a holistic approach in delivering the programme through the application of a range of teaching methods. The placement and the Foundation's networks continue to give students opportunities to learn from key experts in sustainable urbanism. Students also appreciate the requirement by the Foundation for external speakers to indicate at the start of each lecture how the lecture fits within the module and the programme. Students continue to value the Foundation's approach to teaching which enables them to work with professional practitioners and on 'live briefs'. The Foundation continues to review the curriculum regularly, with recent changes

made to the dissertation marking weightings and the relevant assessment brief published and circulated to students.

5 The Programme of Study Handbook continues to be comprehensive and useful to students. Students noted a slight delay in alteration of some dates for assignment submission in the Handbook, but this was addressed promptly and did not cause any difficulties for the students. Otherwise the content is current and accurate.

6 At the time of the June 2016 Annual Monitoring Review, the Foundation had developed new terms of reference for the Academic Board which stipulated that its roles would include overall course direction, quality enhancement and internal course review. However, at its January 2016 meeting, the Academic Board had proposed further changes including the alignment of its roles to those outlined in the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding with the University and the review of external examiner and Partnership Team Leader (PTL) reports. These proposed changes were to be circulated to all members, and approved at the Board's first annual meeting in September 2016. The September 2016 meeting approved the new terms of reference of the Academic Board, ensuring that the deliberative structures are fully effective in facilitating discussion on academic policy and practice. The Education Team meetings, convened regularly to discuss operational reports from senior academic and administrative staff, continue to further strengthen the deliberative structures. Staff find these meetings very useful in providing a forum for exchange of information and development of curriculum.

7 The Foundation has continued to implement its own actions, identified from the June 2015 Higher Education Review (Plus) report. External examiner's reports are made available to students through a student-accessible folder on the Foundation's intranet. Although students are made aware of this, they appeared to have limited knowledge of it. Currently it is the Senior Lecturer who bears responsibility for overseeing implementation of actions. There is scope for the Foundation to formalise its own action plan drawing from internal monitoring, external examiner reports, PTL reports and student and staff feedback to ensure actions are progressed in the event of the Senior Lecturer not being available.

8 The Internal Annual Review is now part of the new terms of reference of the Academic Board. This process involves the Senior Lecturer discussing the academic activity of the past year with teaching staff and compiling the internal annual report. A report was produced and discussed at the September 2016 Academic Board. This has strengthened the Foundation's internal quality management system and complements the Annual Programme Report which the Foundation prepares for the University. The new policies and procedures will be evaluated at the Academic Board meeting later in 2017. The Foundation also uses the action plans which arise from the reports of the thorough PTL visits which occur twice each year. These action plans include any issues raised by students who meet the PTL on each occasion. The PTL reports indicate that all actions are completed in a timely and satisfactory manner. The small number of students and close working proximity of staff and students allows the Foundation to resolve most problems quickly and effectively on an ongoing informal basis.

9 There have been no admissions to the programme since 2015 as it is being wound down. However, although it has not been used recently, the Foundation's rigorous and exacting procedure for the admission of students remains in place with relevant checks for English language competence and other requirements clearly shown on the Foundation's website. Each applicant is required to submit a covering letter, CV, short essay on a set topic, an academic reference, and a portfolio. Applicants are also required to attend an interview with two or more senior academic staff members. The interview process and cover letter also provide evidence of the applicant's English language competency and intent to study.

10 Four students enrolled in the 2015-17 cohort. These students remain on their programme (100 per cent retention) for the academic year 2016-17. In addition a student who had exited with a PG Diploma in 2013 rejoined the programme for 2016-17 to complete the master's degree. This gives a total of five students in the current academic year. Of these five, one student has exited with a PG Diploma (20 per cent). Three students are expected to complete and pass the master's level by August 2017 (80 per cent).

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

11 The Senior Lecturer continues to maintain currency of knowledge of the QAA quality requirements and the academic regulations of the awarding body, attending events organised by the University.

5 Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

12 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. The monitoring visit was carried out by Patricia Millner (Reviewer) and Christopher Mabika (Coordinator) on 27 June 2017.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050
Web www.qaa.ac.uk