

Review for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Al-Maktoum College of Higher Education, May 2013

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 Al-Maktoum College of Higher Education (the College) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the May 2012 [Review for Educational Oversight](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review visit

2 As discussed in the report from the May 2012 review, the College's partnership agreement with the University of Aberdeen terminated in September 2012. All students previously enrolled on higher education programmes at the College have therefore been transferred to the University of Aberdeen. At the time of the visit the College had no higher education students. Discussions with potential awarding partner universities continue. The College has chosen to seek partnership with an awarding institution with considerable expertise in subjects offered by the College. Both institutions share a vision of a politics, philosophy and religion learning and teaching approach rather than the traditional divinity approach of the previous awarding body. To support the potential new partnership, the College has in place all the necessary resources to appoint up to four additional senior academic staff. In the event of being unsuccessful in securing a partnership with an awarding partner university the College, with support from its governing body, intends to establish itself as a research centre.

3 The College is exploring opportunities to deliver certificate and diploma programmes in subject areas related to the study of Islam and Muslims. Discussions have been held with the Scottish Qualifications Authority regarding the accreditation of such programmes with a view to offering these from the start of the 2013-14 academic session. This will build on the College's existing community education provision, support its current higher education programmes and will enable successful students to gain a recognised award.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The 2012 review report had three features of good practice, one advisable and five desirable recommendations. The College has made acceptable progress in addressing the action plan.

5 As the College has no higher education students the review team is unable to confirm with students that the supportive learning environment and strong student representation noted as good practice in May 2012 continues. However, the College continues to expand and develop its real estate and has acquired a neighbouring former school. Plans under discussion with the governing body include developing this building to provide additional teaching and recreational facilities for future students.

6 The College continues to support staff with their research and personal development activities. At the time of the visit one member of staff was on a nine-month

sabbatical at Harvard University. A second member of staff has achieved recognition by the Higher Education Academy and another will achieve this as part of their continuing study towards the Postgraduate Certificate Teaching in Higher Education at the University of Dundee. This comprehensive range of staff development activities is generously supported by the College and has been incorporated into the revised staff appraisal process.

7 The College has taken acceptable action to implement the advisable recommendation to review the manner in which external examiner reports are processed. The meeting with staff provided confirmation that the College will implement fully the requirements of a future awarding partner. The current College quality system provides an effective mechanism to ensure that comments made by external examiners are actioned and monitored.

8 The small number of teaching staff is cited as the main difficulty in implementing an effective process for peer observation of teaching. Informal discussion among the teaching staff supported by seminars involving staff and students provide an appropriate mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of teaching delivery. The College will respond to the requirements of a future awarding partner, implementing and adapting processes as necessary.

9 The development work on a staff appraisal scheme was completed and introduced in October 2012. The process will be reviewed by the Principal in September 2013. Staff indicated that they valued the opportunity to meet formally to review their personal and professional development needs.

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

10 The College has taken effective action to encourage better staff engagement with external reference points. A representative from QAA was invited to provide a one-day workshop attended by academic and senior staff on the development and implementation of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). Staff have also attended QAA training and consultation events relating to the Quality Code and educational oversight.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

11 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.

12 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Grant Horsburgh (Coordinator) and Mr Millard Parkinson (Reviewer) on 30 May 2013.