

## Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance t/a Regents Theological College, February 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 Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance trading as Regents Theological College (the College) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the February 2014 [Review for Specific Course Designation](#).

### Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 The College no longer delivers the Certificate of Higher Education in Applied Theology and Youth Ministry. It appointed a new Principal and Director of Training in 2015. Its total student enrolment is 213, comprised of 141 undergraduate and 72 postgraduate students, a small decrease of 18 students from 2014, when the enrolment was 169 undergraduate and 62 postgraduate students.

### Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The College continues to develop its good practice. It engages students not only in the timetabling of teaching and assessment but also, through student representatives, in putting student suggestions for curriculum into practice. It continues to provide bespoke programme-specific regulations and supplementary module outline documents, and has upgraded all programme specifications and module descriptors to conform more closely to Parts A and C of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).

4 The College's range of support for students includes its virtual learning environment, introduced just before the previous QAA review. This includes module teaching materials, assessment marking, library information and discussion groups. Students met by the review team appreciated these initiatives, but noted that take-up is still uneven across modules. One dedicated member of staff is acting as a champion for digital technologies.

5 Further initiatives supporting student learning include refinements to the induction week, an end-of-year reflection and review of a summary of students' comments relating to academic matters. This has resulted in changes to formal documentation, the introduction of the Tech Buddies system, the Tutor Group Library Time initiative, Track Time and a new role of Disability Special Needs Support Officer.

6 A dedicated Open Learning Tutor now provides a focus for part-time open learning students. This role provides thoughtful support to overcome feelings of distance from the central institution that these students may experience.

7 The College's teaching and learning strategy exceeds the requirements of the action point of the last QAA review. This is a live document with action points and built-in monitoring and review. Recent developments include new uses of digital technologies in teaching and assessment.

8 The College now posts all external examiners' reports and its responses on the student portal. Reports are discussed at committees with students present, and students have the opportunity to input to the College's draft response. The College also publishes a digest of salient points on academic student noticeboards.

9 The College has provided more careers guidance to students interested in careers outside the Church, particularly in the performing arts area and vocational careers, but students felt that this should be more embedded in their programmes.

10 The College's assignment briefs now include reference to the appropriate academic level. It was clear to the review team that both staff and students understand the different level expectations.

11 All prospective students submit an application form and many attend a Just Looking open day. The Admissions Officer, Operations Director and Dean of Students assess all applications and decide whether to proceed to interview. The Admissions Officer assesses English proficiency. For non-mature students the entry requirement is two A Levels or equivalent and GCSE English Language. For mature students the entry requirement is evidence of language proficiency to GCSE English Language standard. In the absence of such evidence, the applicant must pass an internal test for English proficiency equivalent to C grade GCSE. Some applicants do not achieve the required grade and are not admitted.

12 The interview process determines the applicant's suitability and genuine intention to study Applied Theology at undergraduate level. The undergraduate programme interviewers, usually the Track Leader and the Dean of Students, ask questions appropriate to the track and either record general responses on the application form or fill out a checklist. The relationship of this record to the admissions criteria is not always sufficiently clear. Other supporting material may come from writing a theological essay, or taking a comprehension test and a free-writing exercise. The Postgraduate Academic Dean considers postgraduate applications and interviews prospective students, most often via telephone. Completed postgraduate application forms contain specific numbered questions and record the applicant's responses.

13 The College draws upon qualitative and quantitative information in its monitoring and review process to maintain strategic oversight of student programme performance. It also takes deliberate steps to enhance its provision in a number of ways. It does this by rigorously following the processes of its awarding body, the University of Chester, which requires an annual review, a three-yearly partnership review and a six-yearly course review. The College produces an annual academic partnership report, recently more focused on quantitative data, and an annual undergraduate collaborative monitoring return, with action points that track through its committees. The data set for 2014-15 produced no areas of concern around student retention, progression and achievement. There has been one partnership review in 2014 since the last QAA review, and the next six-yearly courses review will be in 2016-17. The College also enhances its provision by actioning information gained from examiners' comments, staff modular summary forms and student modular feedback forms.

14 The College has taken some deliberate steps to engage its students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. Students are formally represented on a number of committees, including the Student Representative Council, the Student Staff Liaison Committee, the Academic Board, and the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programme Committees. The College considers all student feedback, such as module questionnaires, through its committees and makes appropriate changes to course structures. The College has consulted with students regarding revised draft procedures on complaints and student disciplinary procedures. Staff attend training on student engagement

delivered by its awarding body. There are pilot modules that use students to discuss assessment processes through student presentations, and some third-year students assist in leading first and second-year groups.

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

15 The College's work in its 2014-15 and 2015-16 reviews draws on the Quality Code and *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, informed by attendance at events organised by its validating partner. At the request of its awarding body, the College overhauled programme specification and modular descriptors to align with the Quality Code. It also made use of the Theology and Religious Studies Subject Benchmark Statement, particularly in relation to its review of its programme specifications. The College considers the appropriate external reference points of its professional body, the Elim Movement, and the European Pentecostal Theological Association.

16 The College has raised staff awareness of the Quality Code, Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality by making named individual staff responsible for overseeing its implementation and management. Some committee agendas now include standing items on the Quality Code.

#### **Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit**

17 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.

18 The monitoring visit was carried out by Professor Edward J Esche, Coordinator, and Professor Helen King, Reviewer, on 16 February 2016.

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