

## Review for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Schumacher College (Dartington Hall Trust), December 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 Schumacher College (Dartington Hall Trust) (the College) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the December 2012 [Review for Educational Oversight](#).

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

2 The College has 32 students who started in September and expect a further 13 to start in January 2014, making 45 in total, all of whom are full-time. The Sustainable Horticulture and Food Production programme has moved to a January start, the better to coincide with the seasons. The College has withdrawn the distance learning option. It has also introduced a new Ecological Design Thinking postgraduate programme, which will admit its first students in January 2015.

### Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The College has made considerable progress in developing the good practice identified in the 2012 review report. However, in some cases the process of evaluation has not yet been completed.

4 Previously, only staff from the University of Plymouth could act as primary supervisors for student dissertations. This restriction has been removed and staff from within the College and appropriate third party academics (subject to approval by the University) now act as primary supervisors. Evaluation of these arrangements has yet to be completed.

5 The College decided not to proceed at the moment with the introduction of an MRes pathway, but instead to exemplify its innovative approach to curriculum development by developing a postgraduate programme in Ecological Design Thinking. This has been successful and the programme has been validated by the University of Plymouth.

6 Students spoke very positively about the holistic approach to teaching and learning. It has always been a feature of the College, but has now been strengthened by the introduction of a staff teaching and learning group.

7 Good use is made of the wide range of visiting lecturers. Students consider that these lecturers broaden their intellectual horizon.

8 Students enthusiastically confirmed the responsiveness of the College to the student voice. Staff are available at all times and respond helpfully to any issues raised. The College intends to use evidence of alumni participation in the College's alumni network as a means of evaluation. However, while the College has strong links with its alumni, the network has not yet been established.

9 The College is trialling student peer-to-peer assessment in the Economics for Transition programme. The process of assessing their own and others' work is greatly

valued by the students as a means of developing and improving their own work. The College intends to roll out the initiative to other programmes subject to a final evaluation by those involved.

10 Two outdoor classrooms have been established in the gardens of the College and are in regular use. Students are enthusiastic about these new facilities.

11 The College website is being reworked to provide greater accessibility to information for current and prospective students.

12 The College is taking effective action to implement recommendations from the 2012 review report, where appropriate. Staff development has been strengthened by the recently established teaching and learning group (see paragraph 6). The University of Plymouth's Academic Partnership will take a leading role in informing and guiding College staff about the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). A recommendation concerning information about distance learning for postgraduate studies is no longer applicable, as this mode of study has been withdrawn. The College has addressed the resulting question of access.

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

13 The College works with the regulations of the University of Plymouth and other external reference points such as *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. It made use of the Quality Code, particularly Part A: 'Setting and maintaining academic standards', when developing the postgraduate programme in Ecological Design Thinking in partnership with the University of Plymouth.

14 The College recognises the critical need to evaluate and map current policies and practices against the expectations outlined in Part B: 'Assuring and enhancing academic quality' and Part C: 'Information about higher education provision' of the Quality Code. With the support of the University's Academic Partnership and the College's planned appointment of a College Quality Manager, this process should begin shortly. Upon completion, the College Quality Manual will be updated to reflect the expectations of the Quality Code and associated College policies and procedures.

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

15 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.

16 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Robert Jones (Coordinator) and Mr Mark Cooper (Reviewer) on 12 December 2013.