



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of The International College of Oriental Medicine (UK) Ltd, January 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 International College of Oriental Medicine (UK) Ltd (the College) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the January 2014 [Review for Specific Course Designation](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 There are 59 students enrolled on various pathways to the University of Greenwich BSc Hons in Acupuncture. This is the same number as at the time of the January 2014 review. There have been changes in the way the University of Greenwich handles its relationship with the College. Quality assurance processes have been streamlined and are now managed primarily at faculty level. Academic staff at the College continue to have informal contact with their University colleagues. A new link tutor has been appointed.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The College has made acceptable progress in implementing the action plan developed after the 2014 review. Measures have been taken to increase transparency in management and governance oversight (see paragraph 5). The College has developed its use of formal action planning (see paragraph 6). Matters related to enhancement of learning opportunities are now included as part of the regular agenda at programme committee meetings (see paragraph 7). A new approach to identifying staff development needs is under development (see paragraph 8). The use of the College's virtual learning environment (VLE) has been enhanced but should be placed within a longer-term frame of intent (paragraph 9). Evaluation of the actions is not complete and a small number of actions remain under development. The students reported very positively on the quality of their programmes.

4 Access to professional community information has been improved by making this a standing item on meeting agenda for programme, management and Board committee meetings. The College is in dialogue with other institutions in its field, with the relevant professional associations, and is taking the lead in discussing such issues as new professional qualifications.

5 The College and its Governors have reviewed the recommendation in the 2014 review that it should consider its academic management and governance oversight practices. While it has not introduced major changes, a formal process for a second signatory to programme committee minutes has been introduced. This expands the responsibility for academic activity beyond the College directors. The Governing body, which includes faculty membership, has increased its interaction with internal academic governance practices. Governors attend internal programme management meetings on an ad hoc basis and have sight of all formal meeting minutes.

6 Staff and students reported that the action plan is regularly reviewed and supports more effective academic management practices. The review team notes that the plans only included short-term actions implying completion by the next meeting; they would need to include additional columns and the use of SMART goals to support further development.

7 The College includes matters related to enhancement of learning opportunities as part of its regular agenda at programme committee meetings. Many areas of enhancement are handled informally between staff and students and are, therefore, not formally recorded. Forward planning approaches to ensure enhancement activity is readily focused on have not yet been developed.

8 A comprehensive approach to understanding and meeting the College requirements for staff development is being put in place, although this is somewhat behind schedule. Staff development needs are collected at the individual level through the use of a standardised log, and these are then summarised for the whole College in order to provide an overview of total requirements. Peer observation activities have been introduced in full, and the benefits for both the observed and observer are clearly recognised, although these are not evaluated at College and programme levels. Not all staff have formal higher education teaching qualifications and the College intends to ask them to take external programmes provided by the University of Greenwich from September 2016. While some staff are accredited members of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), the College does not engage directly with the HEA.

9 The College's plan for its virtual learning environment (VLE) does not include SMART targets and would benefit from being set in a longer-term frame of intent. Students report that access to, and support for use of, the VLE, which is hosted and supported via arrangements with the University of Greenwich, is effective. VLE use is expanding and staff practice in this area is now more consistent. The action plan item relating to the VLE is to be reviewed after further discussions with staff and gathering of student views of ways to engage them more with the VLE. All research projects are submitted through plagiarism-detection software. Use of the originality report facility by students is facilitated by staff and those who had used it reported it to be helpful.

10 The team reviewed admissions procedures with staff and students and found that they are rigorous and designed in such a way as to facilitate the recruitment of those with the appropriate personal skills for the acupuncture profession, many of whom were returning to formal study after many years. The challenge assignment used in some cases is clearly valuable both for the applicant and for the College. The College's subsequent retention rates are somewhat variable.

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

11 The review team saw evidence that the College is familiar with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and is taking steps to review its procedures in the light of it. The College's engagement with the University of Greenwich has been undertaken in respect of the University's own regulations and policies, for example in the areas of assessment and general academic regulations, and this has been useful in developing the College's plans. The College intends to engage in a full mapping of its practices against the Quality Code. Thus far, the College has reviewed *Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education* as part of this exercise.

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.

13 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr David Taylor (Coordinator) and Ms Deborah Trayhurn (Reviewer) on 27 January 2016.

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