



This review method
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Annual Monitoring for Educational Oversight

Al-Maktoum College of
Higher Education

March 2026

Educational Oversight Review: Report of the monitoring visit for Al-Maktoum College of Higher Education, March 2026

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that Al-Maktoum College of Higher Education (the College) is making inadequate progress in its continuing management of its responsibilities for academic standards and the management/improvement of the quality of learning opportunities.

2 The online monitoring visit was carried out by Richard Samuels, Reviewer, and Monika Ruthe, QAA Officer, on 18 March 2026.

Changes since the last QAA review

3 Since the last QAA review in March 2025 the College has discontinued the delivery of the HNC/D Business programmes awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) due to insufficient recruitment of students. At the time of the annual monitoring visit the College had a total of 23 taught students (10 students on the MSc Islamic Finance awarded by the University of Dundee; 8 students on the Executive Diploma in Ethical Finance and Entrepreneurship and five students on the Professional Diploma in Muslim Family Law both awarded by SQA). In addition, there were 12 students studying for a PhD in Islamic Finance at the University of Dundee who are jointly supervised. Three PhD students remain with Abertay University, but the College is no longer involved in the delivery of the online MPhil programme at Trinity College Dublin. The number of staff in academic management, teaching and student support roles has fallen from 13 FTE to 6 FTE.

Findings

4 The reviewer concluded that Al-Maktoum College of Higher Education has made inadequate progress because the provider is unable to demonstrate that it has completed the actions against the five recommendations from its May 2025 action plan. The documentation supporting the annual return does not evidence that actions have been completed and their impact has been evaluated (see paragraphs 5 - 10). The action dashboard from September 2025 merely repeats the success indicators from the action plan without any indication whether actions have been completed and evidence to support this. In addition, progress against the action plan was not tracked by the academic governance committees identified in the plan during the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic years.



5 In relation to recommendation 1, the reviewer found that the College has reviewed and further developed its Teaching and Learning Strategy to reflect diversity and inclusion as a core value. The Strategy places emphasis on the provision of equitable and evidence-based support to students. However, there was no evidence provided that showed that practices relating to diversity and inclusion had been considered at academic governance committee level or systematically rolled out across the College as minutes of all committee meetings were without reference to inclusive practice. Also, no evidence was provided to support the College's claim in the annual return that inclusive curriculum design and assessment practices are embedded across programmes. Whilst the College is unable to demonstrate that the strategy has led to its intended effect, students at the monitoring visit highlighted that teachers are responsive to their needs as they arise.

6 In relation to recommendation 2 the reviewer found that the College has made no progress with the review of student engagement mechanisms designed to lead to a strengthening and diversifying of student representation because no evidence was provided to support the College's claim in the annual return for the stated evaluation of student engagement mechanisms and benchmarking them against sector good practice. During the monitoring visit staff stated that a review was conducted by the Registrar who is no longer in post and that the work on this action is not accessible. However, this review had already taken place prior to the last QAA review and the measures taken to address the issue are referred to in the 2025 review report. The reviewer, therefore, concluded that no new attempts had been made to address the action.

7 At the monitoring visit staff repeated that in practice the small size of the College limits the volume of engagement and acknowledged that engaging students at a representative level, such as through the Staff Student Consultative Group, remains challenging and the only working method to engage students continues to be at individual level through the completion of unit evaluation forms, which are used to inform annual programme reviews. Students also continue to have the opportunity to provide informal feedback directly to staff, or through a QR code if preferring anonymity.

8 With regard to recommendation 3 the reviewer concluded that the College has made some progress towards strengthening its approach to analysing student performance data but has provided no evidence on implementing the new approach. A Performance Data Sheet Policy has been developed to strengthen processes of data collection and analysis, which provides governing principles, responsibilities and procedures for handling performance data. Data oversight structures are clarified in the policy with the PVC Academic holding overall academic responsibility for managing student performance data and reporting data into the Academic Council. In the annual return, the College claimed that the Academic Council is beginning to take a more structured role in reviewing attainment and outcomes data. However, reference to student performance is absent from any of the minutes of the Academic Council that took place. In addition, other evidence submitted indicated a continued lack of analysis of performance data at institutional level. While the College created a student performance tracking sheet as a standard template for the recording of student attainment it contained no student data. It is, therefore, unclear whether it is actually used. Similarly, an analysis of student performance is absent from the 2025 annual programme reviews reports.

9 Regarding recommendation 4 the reviewer found that the College has developed a more formalised approach to assuring the accuracy of published information. The updated Marketing and Recruitment Strategy provides clarity on who is responsible for overseeing the accuracy, relevance and alignment of marketing materials. To ensure accurate and updated information, the review schedule aligns with academic schedules. A marketing request form is used by staff to provide specific detailed content, and the College brand guidelines will help to ensure consistency of content. No inaccuracies or misalignment with marketing materials were identified and the actions are viewed by the College as having their intended effect.

10 There has been some progress in relation to recommendation 5 on developing policies and processes for appeals to enable applicants to appeal an admissions decision. The College updated its complaints and appeals procedures for applicants to include fair admissions procedures for those unsuccessful applicants wishing to make an appeal against an admissions decision. However, the action has not had intended effect yet because the College's Student Admissions and Recruitment Policy still links to its Student Appeals Policy on the College website and this policy only covers academic appeals.

11 The annual return shows that of the 39 students who completed their programmes during the 2024-25 academic year all passed their programme. This includes 10 students who completed the Diploma in Moral Economy and Sustainable Development, 9 students who completed the Higher National Certificate in Business, 8 students who completed the Higher National Diploma in Business and 12 students who completed the MSc Islamic Finance. In total four students discontinued, which is approximately 10 percent of the total cohort. The 100 percent pass rate and 10 percent discontinuation rate for 2024-25 mirror those recorded in the 2023-24 academic year, though with a significantly smaller student cohort. The data is not broken down further and the College has provided no evaluation of this data, which highlights the value of the recommended action to strengthen its approach to the collection and analysis of student performance data (see paragraph 8).

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

12 The College continues to make appropriate use of external reference points and is aligned to the sector-recognised and Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) standards and codes. The SQA conducted a systems verification review visit in June 2025 and concluded that the College has satisfactory practices concerning monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision for SQA qualifications. In addition, the College continues to collaborate with partner universities and, in the case of the MSc in Islamic Finance, aligns with the academic standards required by the University of Dundee.

Report on a concerns investigation

13 The concerns investigation related to the resourcing of the College, particularly staffing, and the decline in student numbers which may present a risk to the academic standards of the qualification(s) awarded by the College and the quality of students' learning opportunities.

14 The investigation found no issues and the concerns were not upheld.

15 The College's current higher education provision consists of three taught postgraduate programmes (one master's programmes and two diplomas) with 23 students in total. The qualification for the master's programme is awarded by the University of Dundee and for the postgraduate and executive diplomas by the Scottish Qualification Agency. None of the programmes are taught at the premises of the College; the master's programme is taught jointly with University of Dundee staff at the university campus, and the diploma programmes are taught entirely online by College staff. In addition, there are 12 PhD students who are jointly supervised by the College and the University of Dundee and three with Abertay University.

16 In relation to resourcing, the investigation found that the College was operating with a reduced staffing resource since the closure of the HNC/D provision at the end of the 2024-25 academic year due, in large parts, to the revocation of the UKVI sponsor licence in September 2024 which rendered this programme financially inviable. At the time of the investigation the number of staff in academic management, teaching and support roles had fallen from 13 FTE to 6 FTE since March 2025 with a complement of two full-time academic staff, a joint professorial appointment with the University of Dundee and about five part-time visiting lecturers. The investigation concluded that staffing, while reduced, was sufficient to teach the number of students enrolled on the programmes. The investigation found no evidence that the academic standards of the qualifications were at risk due to a reduced teaching staff complement at the College. Indeed, the 2024-25 completion rates for all programmes show a pass rate of 100 percent for all programmes delivered.

17 While there has been a decline in overall student numbers, the views from students on the currently delivered taught postgraduate provision do not suggest that the student learning experience has been negatively impacted by lower numbers overall. Students value small class sizes and the opportunities this brings for in-depth group discussions. They reported satisfaction with the quality of teaching, assessment arrangements and the general learning experience on campus and/or online. College staff and master's students confirmed that students continue to have access to both University and College learning resources. In particular, the College library is highly valued by master's students. Students on the online programmes expressed satisfaction with their online resources and the virtual learning environment. In view of this the investigation concluded that the quality of students' learning opportunities is not negatively impacted.

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