



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Bristol Baptist College, March 2019

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that Bristol Baptist College (the College) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the [March 2017 monitoring visit](#).

Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 There are no material changes to the College or its curriculum since the most recent visit in 2017. Courses continue to be offered in partnership with the Universities of Durham and Aberdeen. There is also a stable and mature partnership with Trinity College, Bristol, which provides for sharing of resources and expertise. The curriculum is well established and consists of a range of provision from Honours Degrees through to Doctorates, exclusively in the areas of Theology, Ministry and Mission. Student numbers were 51 at the time of the visit, which is comparable with previous years, and the staffing comprises an academic team of 10 staff (5.77 full-time equivalents) The College occupies the same premises in Bristol as at the previous review.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The College continues to make commendable progress with ongoing monitoring, review and enhancement of its higher education provision. The Annual Monitoring Review in March 2017 confirmed that the College had completed all of the actions identified as a result of the recommendations in the Higher Education Review carried out in March 2016, and developed the areas of good practice (paragraph 4). Since then, the College has further developed its internal quality processes, through detailed action plans and monitoring of progress (paragraph 5). It demonstrably continues to maintain its academic standards and to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities of its provision. Quality and standards in relation to admissions (paragraph 6) and assessment (paragraphs 7 and 8) have been maintained and further developed. The College has evidenced highly effective engagement with external reference points and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), through its ongoing work with external agencies and its partner universities in supporting students to meet their vocational priorities (paragraph 11).

4 In conjunction with its partner, Trinity College, the College completes detailed and comprehensive annual self-evaluation reports for its validating institutions and uses the information developed within these to identify appropriate actions to further enhance the student experience and improve the effective management of its provision. The College action plan is monitored and updated by the shared Quality Assurance Steering Group. Impact assessment is also completed in each case with necessary additional actions discussed, identified and implemented. These actions are also discussed and monitored at team meetings where progress is formally monitored.

5 Student feedback from module evaluations, an annual survey and input from student representatives is discussed in the Joint Teaching and Learning Committee held with

representatives from Trinity College. This discussion also happens within the College at team meetings, the student house body and at the regular pastoral meetings. Students confirmed that they have representatives within the different committees and have specific agenda time to raise issues and inform enhancement of their experience. Examples of this include changes made to the timetables for the block weeks to include more time for reflection and rescheduling of the Community week to avoid the busy Christmas and Easter periods.

6 Admissions to the College are managed in accordance with their comprehensive and rigorous admissions policy. All students are required to provide a personal statement with their application and are encouraged to visit the College on one of their open days. Independent student applicants are interviewed to evidence that the necessary entry qualifications are met, and that the applicants understand the nature of the course, its links to ministry and mission, and have the necessary commitment to learning. Applicants preparing for ministry undergo a series of interviews to establish their academic aptitude, their personal circumstances, and vocation in conjunction with attendance at a Ministerial Recognition Panel of the Baptist Union. Where appropriate, applicants may also be asked to undertake a short piece of academic research and writing. International applicants are interviewed via video link and if English is not their first language they need to achieve an IELTS score of 6.5 for undergraduate courses or 7.0 for postgraduate studies. Students confirmed that their experience during admissions was effective and highly supportive in enabling them to confirm their choice of course and College.

7 The College works closely with Trinity College to manage the assessment process in accordance with the regulations of Universities of Durham and Aberdeen. A range of different assessment instruments offers students the opportunity to present their responses creatively, and students confirmed that they are always able to contextualise their work and to choose from a range of alternative topics. Assessments are planned and available to students via comprehensive information on the virtual learning environment (VLE) in advance of the module start. Tutors introduce the assessment, regularly check progress and are always available for support. A limited number of modules include examinations as part of the assessment strategy. The primary marker for assessments is usually the module tutor and another suitably qualified tutor acts as second marker. All assessments are submitted via the VLE and are subject to the application of automatic plagiarism detection software. Tutors complete detailed feedback via the same portal, and students confirmed that this feedback is developmental, timely and supportive. Staff have also been supported by the Disability Support Advisors in improving feedback to those with a learning disability, by giving further explanations on approaching spelling, grammar and academic style.

8 Assessments are reviewed annually in the light of student feedback and adjustments made. Students cited examples in connection with group assessments, and the allocation of marks for reflective reporting, both of which have now been modified to address student feedback. Responses to questions raised by students are published as appropriate in the VLE to support the wider student body. The College has also recently introduced e-portfolios for targeted groups of part-time students, and early feedback from student tutorials is positive. Staff confirmed that the main focus of this enhancement initiative is to further develop the reflective practice skills of the students. External examiner reports are positive and supportive, and examiners attend the examination boards. Their reports are discussed at the Teaching and Learning Committee meetings and all recommendations are monitored via action plans and fully implemented. Students are aware of the role of the external examiner and understand that grades are provisional until confirmed at the Examination Board.

9 Student numbers have remained broadly consistent (currently 51) and retention rates are high. Some cohorts are small which can affect the percentage after any withdrawals

resulting in a biased value. Transfer between courses is common before completion and can further skew the results. Where withdrawals have taken place, staff undertake exit interviews and consistently identify that the reason is due to changes in students' personal circumstances, especially for mature students. Students completing their course pass and, with the exception of courses with late withdrawals, pass rates of 100% have been recorded.

10 In combination with its partner, Trinity College, a detailed breakdown of retention and pass rates and progress is included in annual reports to the Universities of Durham and Aberdeen. These show that overall retention on combined undergraduate courses was 95%. The report also details the awards achieved and indicated that for many of the students who withdraw, a certificate or award has been made where sufficient credits have already been completed. The pattern of degree classifications is good with two Firsts, 15 at 2:1 and four at 2:2. For the PhD students, the report details progress for each named student.

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

11 The college continues to work effectively with the Quality Code to ensure that all policies and procedures meet the expectations of the Code. The College manages the provision under the requirements of Durham University, Common Awards and the Baptist Union of the Great Britain and the University of Aberdeen. Many aspects of the College structure and activities are controlled in this way. The annual reporting of the taught courses is submitted to both the Baptist Union and to Durham University. The College also works closely with other colleges through the Common Awards Scheme. In addition to the annual reporting, the College is subject to Periodic External Review which looks at all aspects of governance, leadership, curriculum and student data.

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 Mrs Sue Miller, Reviewer, and Mrs Roshani Swift QAA Officer, on 28 March 2019

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