



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of Cliff College, April 2018

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 Cliff College (the College) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plans from the June 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#) and the April 2017 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) Partial Re-review](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 The College continues to deliver undergraduate and postgraduate courses awarded by the University of Manchester (the University) in the following areas: BA (Hons) in Theology, BA (Hons) in Mission and Ministry, MA in Mission; PhD (Post-graduate research) and PhD Missiology. There was a total of 198 students reported at the Partial re-review undertaken in April 2017. This compares with 165 students at the annual monitoring visit, which is a decrease of 17 per cent.

3 There have been no significant changes to the academic structure or premises used by the College since the 2016 HER (AP) (the Review) visit. However, a new Principal was appointed in September 2017. In addition, senior leadership has been restructured with the existing role of Academic Dean becoming the Academic Director and the new post of Operations Director being created. The new leadership team comprises the Principal, who now has more external-facing responsibility, and the two directors who have significant internal managerial responsibility. The students reported favourably on the new structure and believed this would have a positive impact. In addition the College has six full-time and one half-time academic staff, as well as three administrative staff.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The College has made acceptable progress with its action plan from the Review and the April 2017 Partial re-review. The good practice relating to the College-wide ownership and effective involvement of student representatives and staff in the development and implementation of the Enhancement Strategy, has been maintained (see paragraph 6). All success indicators on the College's action plan have been achieved. The College continues to strengthen student engagement across programmes and ensures that all student representatives are trained and supported to perform their role effectively (see paragraph 7). There are clear lines of responsibility for the signing off of information (see paragraph 8). The College has approved a revised admissions policy to ensure both that processes are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive, and managed consistently, and that staff involved in the recruitment, selection and admissions processes receive appropriate training (see paragraph 10). The affirmation reported at the April 2017 Partial re-review for the work being undertaken to develop the use of quantitative data to identify future enhancement opportunities has been progressed, and this has helped address the recommendation reported at the Review to consistently collect and evaluate quantitative student data (see paragraphs 9 and 12).

5 The College continues to build on good practice identified at the Partial re-review which focused on the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The role descriptor for programme student representative is clear and communicated to students. There is a revamped process for the training and induction of student representatives and this helps them to play a full part in annual review and other College enhancement activities. One student representative, assisted by the Academic Director, has been proactive in using an online tool to survey students on a range of issues. Results were fed back to a Board of Studies and an action plan developed. Student representatives contribute to a Student Experience Action Plan (SEAP) and the programme annual reviews.

6 Staff across the College continue to effectively engage with strategic enhancement developments. Programme Leads produce Student Experience Action Plans (SEAPs) for their programmes and these are informed by quantitative data. The Academic Director draws together thematic issues emerging from individual programmes to form the whole College SEAP which focuses on joint areas of work and actions. The College plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the SEAP process in improving the student experience during the summer and autumn terms as actions are completed. Staff are clearly aware of the College's strategic approach to enhancement and there is an evident commitment to continuous improvement in all areas.

7 The actions taken to strengthen student engagement were reported as good practice in the Partial re-review, and they continue to operate well. Student representatives produce written reports from cohort feedback and these are presented to Boards of Studies for discussion. Programme Leads' responses to the reports are displayed on the virtual learning environment for all students to view. A comprehensive 'Policy for Strengthening Student Engagement across the College' has been produced to explain the approach to student engagement.

8 The College has responded satisfactorily to the recommendation regarding responsibilities for information by formalising procedures in a 'Policy Regarding the Signing Off of Information'. This makes clear which member of staff has delegated authority from the Executive Committee for approval of material. The policy is communicated to all personnel and forms part of the induction programme for new staff.

9 The recommendation that the College should consistently collect and evaluate quantitative data has been satisfactorily addressed. The Enhancement Strategy sets out the range of data sources used in helping take deliberate steps to enhance student learning opportunities. There is evidence in the SEAPs, annual reviews, and Academic Director's report to the Cliff College Committee (CCC) of deployment of retention and attainment data, Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DHLE) information, NSS results, and student feedback. As in April 2017, when the Partial re-review affirmed the use of quantitative data to identify future enhancement opportunities, this is a continuing area of work. For example, there are plans to develop value-added measures.

10 The College has made acceptable progress with regard to admissions procedures. To ensure staff involved in recruitment, selection and admissions receive appropriate training, a Programme Lead attended a training day which focused on fair processes and unconscious bias, run by the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA). This information was then disseminated to colleagues who carry out recruitment, selection and admissions. To promote consistent management of admissions procedures, the College has developed an Admissions Policy for Validated Taught Programmes, aligned with relevant University of Manchester policy and guidelines, which sets out the quality and regulatory framework for recruitment and admission to the College's higher education programmes. The Policy is overseen by the Academic Board and ultimately the Trustees of the College.

Students reported that information provided on the website relating to the application and admissions processes was clear, accurate, fair, and transparent.

11 Individual programme specifications are available on the College's website and contain the precise criteria for application and the admissions processes. Arrangements for non-standard entry are clear and consistent across undergraduate programmes. Candidates with standard entry qualifications are not interviewed while all non-standard applicants are interviewed by the Programme Lead and may be asked to produce a written piece of work. English language requirements are checked prior to enrolment. Applicants must be competent at B2 level on the Common European Framework of Reference or demonstrate competence via an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test. IELTS level for entry to doctoral study is seven while undergraduate programmes require a minimum of six. The College ensures that original copies of qualifications and evidence of proficiency in English Language are produced prior to enrolment. The University has agreed the entry criteria for each validated award.

12 The College follows the University's process for annual review of higher education programmes, using the relevant template for the annual programme report. The Annual Review Process (ARP) reports fully meet the awarding body's requirements. The ARP utilises a range of data sets including student evaluations, DLHE data, student metrics, external examiner reports and the University Collaborative Academic Adviser (CAA) report. As part of the ARP process the College has introduced a Unit Lead evaluation. The Unit Lead reports on the unit's teaching and learning as well as assessment results when they become available, and identifies any potential amendments. Programme Leads feed completed evaluations into the ARP process and then the Board of Studies. The ARP process for programmes includes a review meeting with involvement of the student representative and academic staff, and results in an action plan monitored mid-year by the Academic Director and Programme Lead. ARP reports are approved by the University. The College does not receive specific feedback but the reports are considered in the compilation of the CAA's Annual Report. The Academic Director produces an annual overarching report on provision for the CCC.

13 Students form an important part of the College's quality assurance and enhancement processes. Student representatives gather opinions from peers and use anonymised unit evaluations to form a report submitted to the Board of Studies of which they are active participants. They also make positive contributions on the Library Committee. The student President can attend certain meetings of Academic Board to contribute to enhancement and good practice discussions. Student representatives are also fully involved in the SEAP process though this was less well understood by some students, due to this process being new in the 2017-18 academic year. Students have also been involved in programme developments including the introduction of new units, and major and minor modifications.

14 The data submitted by the College indicates that retention rates have progressively improved over the past three academic years at 79 per cent (2014-15), 82 per cent (2015-16) and 100 per cent (2016-17). The College reports that the pass rates for completing students has been 100 per cent over the previous three academic years.

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

15 The University validates all higher education programmes offered by Cliff College. The CAA, who has close links with the College, provided a positive annual report on the provision in 2017. It commented on innovative assessment practices, developed in response

to the previous year's annual CAA report, which had been disseminated as good practice at a University showcase event.

16 The College has developed its knowledge and use of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education over a number of years. It continues to make use of the Expectations when undertaking policy and practice reviews. For example, assessment practice has been reviewed in line with *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning*. This followed a number of staff undertaking a blind marking exercise, and standardisation of the outcomes to capture good practice. As a result, changes have been made to assessment criteria used in marking reflective pieces of work. Programme Leads reported how they have also used Subject Benchmark Statements in the delivery of the Applied Practice Unit. External examiner reports are used effectively to maintain academic standards. The Programme Lead makes a suitable response to reports and actions are monitored throughout the year.

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 Mrs Patricia Millner, Reviewer, and Mr Robert Saynor, Coordinator, on the 25 April 2018.

QAA2140 - R9927 - June 18

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2018
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050
Web www.qaa.ac.uk