



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of The College of Naturopathic Medicine Ltd, March 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 College of Naturopathic Medicine Ltd (the College) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision since the [previous monitoring visit](#) in March 2015.

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 There have been no significant changes since the previous monitoring visit. There are 88 part-time teaching staff delivering five diploma programmes at levels 4-6. There are currently 1,958 students enrolled, compared with 1,941 at the time of the 2015 monitoring visit.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 Progress has been made in addressing the points noted in the previous monitoring visit and the College has embedded its institutional quality processes further. In particular, it has made progress with the use of the Quality Assurance Manual, student admissions, engagement, and quality monitoring and review. Further progress has also been made in using the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) as a development tool to reflect on the College's quality processes and procedures. The College has made progress with embedding its admissions procedures and addressing the assessment of applicants' English language capability. Examination Board minutes 2014-15 demonstrate a more consistent approach in marking across specialist subjects.

4 As a consequence of the actions taken and the progress being made in embedding quality systems, the review team concludes that acceptable progress has been made by the College since the previous monitoring visit.

5 At the 2015 monitoring visit it was noted that students were concerned about the vulnerability of tutorial support. The College has continued to provide support to students in preparation for assessment and examination. The College also seeks to support students further through the introduction of a new web-based learning environment, which will be available from July 2016. The College plans to evaluate the new web-based learning environment during the next academic year.

6 The College has investigated using plagiarism-detection software and there is support for its introduction among academic staff. However, development is on hold until the implementation of the web-based learning environment and intranet. This will be reviewed at the Overall Academic Board in September 2016.

7 Recruitment, selection and admissions policies are fair and underpinned by appropriate institutional structures and processes. Students are self-funding, either from the UK or the EU, and are often both mature and embarking on career changes. As a consequence, the College finds that students are highly motivated yet sometimes

face challenges in returning to study, often with family and/or work commitments. Course consultants, who are members of the administrative staff team and based at each centre, are responsible for the admissions of students; provision of information about the course; ascertaining students' English language capability, existing qualifications and/or experience; and selection of students. Although initial enquiries may be dealt with by telephone, all applicants undergo a face-to-face interview lasting 30-60 minutes. Students confirm that they had undertaken an interview and that this was a useful opportunity to gain insight into their course of study.

8 Consultants are guided by the Student Admissions Chapter within the Handbook for Director of Studies and the Quality Assurance Manual, which provides a structured framework on interview practice to provide a consistent approach across centres. These documents set out the entry qualifications for the programmes, including achieving English GCSE at grade 'C' or above. Entry qualification information is available in the prospectus and on the website. Clear guidance is also provided, to course consultants, for working with applicants whose first language is not English. Course consultants are also supported to assess whether candidates are sufficiently motivated and suitable for their chosen programme of studies. Due to the nature of the student cohort, processes are in place to manage deferment. Students confirmed their understanding of this.

9 The admissions process is overseen by the Directors of Studies, who meet twice annually. Minutes of their meetings identify actions relating to student admissions, support, and quality of learning opportunities. Additional support is available to course consultants through staff at the Head Office. In November 2015 a course consultant training day was held, which provided an opportunity for them to meet and discuss matters relating to their role. The next training is scheduled for March 2016.

10 The extensive Quality Assurance Manual, overseen and managed by the Quality Coordinator, sets out clearly the procedures for the management of quality processes across the College and includes chapters on the operation of College committee meetings, and processes and procedures that provide clear guidance for review and monitoring. The College has a process of Critical Course Review and the template for the 2014-15 reporting was modified to include commentary on student data. This development to help in the analysis of progression and retention has been supported by materials to help staff understand their student data. The critical review reports considered by the review team demonstrated adherence to the template and consideration of student data.

11 Critical course reviews feed into the Overall Annual Academic Summary Report. This report identifies key developments and good practice in each subject for discussion at the Overall Academic Board. The Overall Academic Board has responsibility for overseeing academic development and meets twice a year. The opportunity is also taken at this Board to consider external feedback, including lessons from external examiner reports. Minutes from the Overall Academic Board are comprehensive and a rolling action plan is used to assist the operation of the Board. Annual quality monitoring has led to quality improvement, for example the identification of marking discrepancies, which are now being addressed through the revision of the College's marking guidelines that are currently out for consultation.

12 Student evaluations take place at the end of each module and are analysed and disseminated to teaching staff. The intranet is used to share evaluations with staff, and both qualitative and quantitative data is produced. The steps taken by the College to analyse student data are noted in paragraph 10.

13 The College has moved forward positively with student engagement, and the Academic Calendar clearly sets out the opportunities for student input into its quality cycle.

Training and support for student representatives is in place. Students are represented on specialist academic boards, however, they are not currently represented on the Overall Academic Board. The student representatives met by the review team spoke positively about this involvement and commented on how student views are taken seriously and recorded. Student representatives engage with College processes, and students confirmed that they feed back effectively to their peers.

14 A recent outcome of the student and staff partnership to improve engagement is the production of a student-edited newsletter issued, in February 2016, via email and the internet to staff and students. The newsletter comprises articles and links to further information, such as preparing for examination and citing references. The newsletter signposts sources of information, including external examiners' reports and quality assurance documents. This was included to raise awareness of external examiners among students. Students met by the review team commented positively on the newsletter. Initially, the newsletter will be published twice per year. The College is monitoring the use of embedded links in the newsletter, and this will inform the content and focus of future editions.

15 The College has identified three key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure student engagement. These are: effectiveness of current mechanisms to collect student feedback; outcomes of collecting student feedback; and progress in engaging with student groups. These were ratified at the Overall Academic Board in February 2016. The College has taken deliberate steps to engage students in its quality processes and the introduction of KPIs for student engagement is a positive development.

16 Students were able to articulate how they are supported to become independent learners and valued the support provided for the development of their academic writing and the learning resources available on the intranet.

17 The student data return shows that overall retention for the cohorts, across all centres, in 2015-16 is satisfactory. The statistics for individual programmes are: Biomedicine - London, 89 per cent, and satellite centres, 85 per cent; Nutrition - Year 1 London, 87 per cent, and satellite centres, 92 per cent, Year 2 London, 95 per cent, and satellite centres, 96 per cent; Herbal Medicine - Year 1, 92 per cent, and Year 2, 94 per cent; Acupuncture - Year 1, 90 per cent, Year 2, 100 per cent, and Year 3, 85 per cent. As the students have not yet completed their studies, there is no achievement data recorded.

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

18 The College has been subject, in 2015, to monitoring and/or reaccreditation visits from the Nutrition Therapy Education Commission, the British Acupuncture Council, and the Association of Master Herbalists. Each of the monitoring visits, subject to action being taken by the College, resulted in a successful outcome.

19 The Quality Coordinator and Deputy Academic Director are engaged in an extensive exercise of referencing the College's quality procedures against the Quality Code. This three-stage process involves identifying areas fully met and documented in procedures; areas currently met but not adequately documented in procedures; and areas not currently met and not adequately documented in procedures. This exercise has resulted in the College identifying a number of considerations, including the need to clarify the appeals process. As mentioned in paragraph 15, the College has developed KPIs for student engagement, which was a result of referencing to the Quality Code, *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*. At the time of the monitoring visit, a thorough analysis of the Quality Code, Part A and Part B, and *Chapters B1-B5 and B8*, had been undertaken. The College aims to

complete the analysis of the remaining chapters in Part B and Part C of the Quality Code by December 2016.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

20 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.

21 The monitoring visit was carried out by Ms Lynn Fulford, Reviewer, and Mr Mike Ridout, Coordinator, on 2 March 2016.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050
Web www.qaa.ac.uk