



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance t/a Regents Theological College, November 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 Regents Theological College (the College) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision following the November 2017 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 The College continues to offer two undergraduate and 6 postgraduate programmes through its awarding body, the University of Chester. The MA In Applied Theology has now replaced the MTh in Applied Theology and includes key modules from the MA Missional Leadership and MA Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies programmes, both of which are being phased out. There are currently 179 full-time equivalent (FTE) students studying at the College; this is an increase of one student, compared with the number of FTE students recorded at the last QAA review.

3 The College currently has 15 full-time members of staff, 10 of whom are academic staff. There are a further five part-time members of staff.

4 The mode of delivery of undergraduate programmes was revised through the University's revalidation process and students are required to undertake six 20 credit modules each academic year, in five-week teaching blocks, with support from seminars and webinars to provide more flexibility for students. This more flexible mode of study has resulted in an increase in the number of students recruited to the undergraduate programme to 43 in 2018 (from 37 in 2017 and 24 in 2016).

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The College is effectively using the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (HER (AP)) action plan to monitor and enhance its own quality processes, while developing systems to support future enhancement and monitoring. The detailed and reflective reports, which evaluate the action taken, provide the basis on which the College can continue to build on the three areas of good practice (see paragraphs 6-9) and further develop work placement opportunities and the support provided for students while on placement (see paragraphs 10 and 11). The action plan indicates that reports on the progress of the good practice and affirmations identified are scheduled to be received for consideration by the Academic Board during the academic year 2018-19. No recommendations were identified in the HER (AP).

6 The good practice identified in the College's Admissions Policy and processes, which provide for contextualised individual admission interviews to enable the College to assess a student's suitability for admission have been further strengthened by the appointment of a full-time marketing officer. The College now actively promotes its programmes through social media and within the Elim Foursquare churches. The use of

'Just Looking' days was developed to enable potential students to discuss courses with College tutors and to decide which track is most suitable for them. Successful applicants are now given access to induction materials before commencing their studies at the College to enable them to more fully prepare for their courses.

7 Further to the processes identified in paragraph 5, the College continues to interview all applicants, and has introduced Skype interviews to provide more flexibility, particularly for 'context' students who are studying away from the College. The interview process continues to be overseen by the Pastoral Dean to ensure consistency across the programmes. The admissions criteria have been strengthened to include a requirement for IELTS and NARIC certification for non-native speakers. Mature students who have not recently been in higher education are required to take an extra assessment paper post-interview which tests their academic writing skills. The College has developed an admissions feedback form for future enhancement of the admission and induction process, but this has yet to be fully implemented. The survey concluded on 31 October 2018 and the results were not available at the time of the review. However, the College indicated that it will use the outcomes to inform changes to the admissions and induction process in 2019.

8 The strategic and comprehensive approach to developing students' knowledge, spirituality and practical skills has been strengthened through the implementation of the revalidated curriculum which includes a placement element. The College is continuing to monitor extra-curricular activities to minimise the impact of the changes in the delivery of the curriculum on community life on campus. The effectiveness of disability support has also been reviewed and is part of the inclusive learning strategy. The library resources have been enhanced through the provision of more books to support the new curriculum. The College is carefully monitoring the phasing out of the programmes that have been discontinued, and students on these programmes confirmed that their learning experience continues to be of a high quality.

9 The very effective arrangements and supportive ethos that enable the academic and personal development of students have been further developed through a revised Learning and Teaching Strategy, which re-affirms the emphasis on independent learning. In consultation with students, the College has reviewed and enhanced the support it provides through formative assessments, tutor groups, seminar content, buddy groups, placements and learning technology. Improvements have been made to the virtual learning environment (VLE) study guide materials to differentiate between online and face-to-face learning activities. Staff training has been provided on the use of grading criteria, learning outcomes and how to support students through effective feedback and feedforward. The induction programme for level 4 students has been extended to support students with their academic study skills when they embark on their first assessment. Students confirmed that they are well supported on their programme and that the extended induction effectively develops their academic skills, enabling them to complete the first set of assignments.

10 The affirmation relating to engaging students in opportunities which enhance employability has been addressed through the updating of careers guidance information and the provision of careers workshops. Placement modules which form part of the new curriculum enable students to sample different employment opportunities. The recently introduced personal tutoring system includes discussions about future careers, which are recorded on the student tutor meeting form.

11 With regard to the second affirmation, the steps being taken to formalise the process for work placement arrangements have resulted in the introduction of new placement modules and an expectation that all students following the BA (Hons) Applied Theology programme will undertake a work placement. Feedback from students and supervisors is now formally collected through placement feedback forms. Students can take

immediate advantage of placement opportunities as the admissions process includes a DBS check. The College has also moved the safeguarding element of the curriculum to the beginning of the programme to further support students on their placement. All staff were updated about developments in work placement at the training event in June 2018. Students and staff indicated that the work placement provides a practical element for the course, enables students to sample different career pathways and supports their reflection on the theoretical aspects of their programme, particularly when they complete the dissertation module.

12 Several of the actions are not due for completion until November 2018 or February 2019 and are therefore ongoing. The action plan is monitored by Academic Board, which met in January 2018 and September 2018. The College has held a series of Campus Rhythm Meetings, which involve students and staff, to review the effect of the revised curriculum delivery on the student experience on and off campus.

13 The College is reviewing the impact of the changes made since the last QAA Review and evaluation reports relating to the enhanced personal tutoring system, changes in the structure and method of delivery of the curriculum, the introduction of placement modules and processes to support them, enhancement of library resources and various 'acting initiatives' to support students following the Performing Arts track, will be formally considered by the next meeting of Academic Board. The College confirmed that evaluation of the impact of the actions taken will continue to be reviewed through the Academic Board and programme committees.

14 The College's admission process, which was identified as an area of good practice in the HER (AP) 2017 report is discussed more fully in paragraphs 5 and 6. The admissions flow chart sets out the various stages of the admissions process, which include completion of an application form, scrutiny of the applicant's qualifications, an interview with at least two members of staff to establish the student's intention to study, the collection of references, the testing of English language proficiency and a requirement for entrants with non-standard qualifications to complete an academic assessment. For the 2017-18 cohort there is an 18 per cent increase in students with no qualifications. The impact of this change in student recruitment is being monitored and the report from the Academic Dean indicates that the overall pass rate is similar to that for previous years. An application action sheet is completed at each stage of the application process and is retained with the application form. An appeals process is in place for unsuccessful applicants.

15 The University has oversight of the assessment process. This includes procedures for the setting, marking and moderation of assessments. Generic marking criteria for each level provide a framework for ensuring consistency in marking and moderation. External examiners approve summative assessments and moderate samples of assessed work. Their annual reports confirm that standards are comparable with other higher education institutions.

16 The College has delegated responsibility from the University to initially review suspected breaches of academic integrity. Plagiarism-detection software is used to review student assessments and the College has processes in place to investigate any suspected breaches of academic integrity. Students indicated to the review team that they are briefed about academic malpractice during induction and in the study skills sessions and are aware of the penalties which are set out in the assessment regulations and student handbook on the VLE.

17 Assessment of Prior/Experiential Learning (APL/EL) follows University regulations and commences at the application stage. Successful APL/EL applicants may gain entry at a

higher level or be exempted from credits. The College indicated that it has very few applicants for admission with prior learning.

18 Retention rates for both undergraduate and postgraduate full-time programmes, range from 75 to 100 per cent. For part-time undergraduate and postgraduate programmes retention rates are 61 per cent for one of the BA (Hons) Applied Theology cohorts, and 67 per cent for the MTh Applied Theology. To improve retention rates for the undergraduate programmes the College has reviewed the admission of non-standard applicants and now includes an academic test during the application process. It also now recruits fewer applicants who apply late in the year, as analysis of the data indicated that in 2016 these students had contributed to the drop-out rate. For the part-time postgraduate programmes retention rates are 63 per cent for the BA (Hons) Applied Theology and 29 per cent MTh Applied Theology. However, as the number of students recruited to these courses is small (8 for the BA (Hons) Applied Theology and 7 for the MTh Applied Theology) the retention rate is not necessarily significant. Pass rates are only provided for the 2016-17 data set, as final progression rates for 2018 are awaited from the October assessment boards.

19 The College completes annual monitoring reports for the University of Chester for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. These reports include analysis of data relating to student performance on modules and on the programmes overall, as well as reflective commentary on the student experience and curriculum. Student performance data is discussed and analysed by the College at assessment boards and Academic Board. The College recognises the challenges for part-time students in balancing full-time work with academic study, which has resulted in lower pass rates for some of the postgraduate and undergraduate programmes.

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

20 The College continues to use the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) as the key reference point for the management of its higher education provision. It has allocated individual members of staff to advise on specific aspects of the Quality Code and assess the College's interaction with the Quality Code through the action plan. A specific session on the effective use of the Quality Code was included in the training days in June and September 2018. The College also uses the University regulations and the external examiners as key external reference points.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

21 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.

22 The monitoring visit was carried out by Ms Brenda Eade, Reviewer, and Ms Nadine Baker QAA Officer, on 14 November 2018.

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