



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of ForMission Ltd trading as ForMission College, October 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 ForMission Ltd, trading as ForMission College (the College), is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the October 2017 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 The College has 203 students and 34 staff; this compares with 212 students at the time of the October 2017 review.

3 Since the October 2017 review, the College's validation agreement with York St John University has ceased and all programmes recruiting for September 2017, or earlier, with this awarding body are in teach-out mode. The College has a new validation agreement with Newman University with the first cohorts of undergraduate and postgraduate students starting in September 2018. Subsequent to these changes the College currently offers six programmes, approved by the two awarding bodies: two at level 5, two at level 6, and two at level 7.

4 Of the three programmes validated by York St John University, two have students registered. These are a BA (Hons) Theology and Mission (100 students) and the MA Missional Practice (39 students). There are no students currently registered on the Foundation Degree Theology and Mission.

5 With Newman University the College currently has 64 students recruited to the BA (Hons) Theology, Mission and Ministry, but no students are enrolled on either the Foundation Degree Theology, Mission and Ministry or the MA Missional Leadership. However, the College is intending to recruit cohorts to the MA Missional Leadership in January and June 2019.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

6 ForMission College has made acceptable progress with the action plan from the October 2017 review and is in the early stages of monitoring and evaluating all of the actions initiated. The College continues to maintain the good practice identified in respect of its strong relationship with placement providers and supporting students in their personal and professional development (paragraph 7). In respect of the recommendations, admissions policies, including procedures for appeals and complaints, have been published and can now be accessed by prospective students (paragraph 8). Information published about all programmes is consistent with definitive records (paragraph 9). Acceptable progress has been made in implementing learning and teaching enhancements previously identified (paragraph 10), and resource arrangements are currently under review to ensure that student access to physical and digital learning resources is consistent across all campuses

(paragraph 11). The College has fulfilled its affirmation to monitor systematically and report on the implementation of the academic misconduct policy (paragraph 12).

7 The College places a high priority on work placement and the relationships maintained with placement providers. All award-bearing undergraduate and postgraduate programmes require work placements. Staff members consider placement an essential feature of the learning experience and have ensured that work placements occupy a prominent position in programmes newly validated by Newman University. For example, clearer written agreements about the delivery of work-based learning activities have been concluded with the new validating partner. In the meeting with the team, students confirmed that opportunities to undertake work placements contribute substantially to their personal and professional development.

8 The College's admissions policy and procedures for appealing admissions decisions are now available for prospective students. Procedures are in place for assessing student literacy and numeracy. Internal policies and processes have been aligned with procedures required by the new validating partner. Additional time will be required to assess their effectiveness, however, as the first cohort on the undergraduate programme has only recently registered and the first recruitment of postgraduate students will not take place before January 2019.

9 The College has conferred with York St John University to ensure that programme information provided to students is correct and consistent with definitive records, and similar procedures have been followed in respect of the programmes designed for Newman University. Students met by the review team confirmed that programme information is clear and consistent, although in some cases costing information had not been so clear in the previous year. Staff members confirmed that improvements had been made in response to student feedback and that specific financial details about all programmes were now made available to all students.

10 Senior managers have ensured that acceptable progress has been made in implementing the actions identified in the College's Enhancement Report to improve learning and teaching and the student experience. They have also made improvements in response to student feedback. The College's Annual Enhancement Report contains an Action Plan that records progress made to September 2018. For example, more tutors from ethnic minority groups have been appointed to reflect the ethnic ratio of students; a Facilitator Training Day has taken place to improve tutors' cultural awareness; procedures for evaluating student entry have been revised, and, on the basis of findings, a one-year foundation programme has been developed to increase minority students' prospects for successful completion of the BA (Hons) Theology, Mission and Ministry programme. As a consequence of student feedback, programme requirements have been amended, information on fees has been clarified and a residential summer school has been introduced for postgraduate students to strengthen community time together.

11 The College has made acceptable progress in reviewing and monitoring resource arrangements aimed at ensuring consistent access to physical and digital learning resources across all campuses, and plans are underway to improve matters further in 2018-19. Trustees agreed to the College's library strategy in principle in autumn 2017, pending approval of the 2018-19 budget in August 2018. Currently, Undergraduate and Post-graduate Programme Directors oversee the provision of appropriate learning resources to students and visit every campus twice a year to ensure that resources are sufficient and all aspects of the provision are adequate. The role of campus tutors now focuses more on what resources can be delivered through the virtual learning environment (VLE).

12 Acceptable steps have been taken to monitor and report on the implementation of the academic misconduct policy, including plagiarism, in a systematic manner. Students are informed of plagiarism procedures, and all assignments are submitted on plagiarism-detection software and marked across the campuses at programme level. Cultural issues sometimes arise due to confusions between poor referencing and plagiarism. In such cases two members of staff will investigate, and appropriate policies are applied.

13 The recruitment process starts with a candidate's first contact with the College. Thereafter, the process is managed by the Admissions Officer and conducted in accordance with the Admissions Policy. Students confirmed to the review team that the information received at all stages of their applications was clear and that procedures were well managed.

14 Students whose education has not been conducted in English must take an English test online equivalent to the International English Language Testing System. Tests are invigilated, with applicants and the Admissions Officer having instant access to results. Levels required for passing vary according to the level of the programme.

15 The Admissions Officer reviews all applications to establish the appropriate route and to ensure prior qualifications are sufficient. Decisions are confirmed by the College's Admissions Board. Mature applicants over the age of 21 without the necessary qualifications are also required to undertake the Initial Student Evaluation test, which assesses levels of comprehension, analysis and composition. All prospective candidates are interviewed to assess their suitability for particular programmes and required to submit at least one reference.

16 The admissions process is reviewed periodically. The College's Annual Monitoring Return provides a very useful example of changes made regarding the information provided to applicants.

17 The College ensures that assessment is carried out with rigour and integrity and that students are sufficiently deterred from engaging in academic malpractice (paragraph 12). Student handbooks provide information on College requirements for assignment submission, as well as assessment and marking procedures. Students confirmed to the review team that submission and assessment deadlines are posted on the 'Turn-it-In' submission site. In cases where academic malpractice is suspected, senior programme team members meet with students to discuss matters and apply appropriate penalties.

18 Robust internal and external verification processes operate to ensure that required learning outcomes are achieved and that assessments are marked fairly and securely. Helpful feedback is also provided. Assessments are internally marked in a secure section of the VLE and moderated at programme level across all campuses in accordance with validating body regulations, thereby ensuring that student work is marked fairly. Records of all grades awarded and feedback provided are retained securely on the College's VLE. Performance results are reviewed in Boards of Study and Assessment Board meetings. External examiners have access to all assessed work. Their reports of June 2018 are positive for both the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and indicate that module and programme learning outcomes continue to be met at a high standard. In addition, the annual reports submitted by the College to York St John University indicate that the University's assessment requirements are being met.

19 Data provided by the College indicates that retention has improved markedly since 2015 in respect of the BA in Mission and Theology and the MA in Missional Practice. The BA programme has increased from 47 per cent in 2015 to 72 per cent in 2017, and the MA programme has risen from 48 to 79 per cent. The College recognises that retention does not guarantee progression and that students will need more support to complete their

studies. Consequently, senior managers have undertaken an in-depth analysis of factors influencing student prospects for retention and progression (paragraph 20).

20 Retention and progression information provided in the College's Enhancement Report provides a wide-ranging, in-depth analysis of student performance data. It includes, for example, progression rates that take factors such as gender and maturity more fully into account. On the basis of these findings the College has developed an action plan focused upon improving retention, summarising progress made to date (September 2018) and setting out actions to be implemented in 2018-19.

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

21 The College continues to work in accordance with the requirements of the awarding bodies and, in addition, a withdrawal plan has been agreed with York St John University for the teaching out of this awarding body's programmes.

22 The College demonstrates appropriate engagement with relevant external reference points, including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. In addition, it has taken full account of the recommendations made as a result of the 2017 review to generate improvements and accomplish objectives set out in the QAA Action Plan.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

23 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.

24 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Tommie Anderson-Jaquest, Reviewer, and Mr Derek Hamilton, QAA Officer, on 3 October 2018.

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