



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of the International College of Oriental Medicine (UK) Ltd, January 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 the International College of Oriental Medicine (UK) Ltd (the College) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the November 2017 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 There have been two significant changes since the previous review. In terms of staffing, the previous Joint Principals have retired, and been replaced by a single postholder, who was formerly the Director of Studies at the College. In respect of the curriculum, the College continues to offer a single specialist honours degree course in Acupuncture, in partnership with the University of Greenwich. However, the College has made a strategic decision to withdraw from publicly-funded provision, and the cohort recruited in 2018 are all self-funding, with the remainder of the existing students on 'teach-out'. The change has not led to any significant change of student numbers, and the 59 noted at the previous review is now 52. In view of the new approach to recruitment, the 'in-scope' student cohort has reduced to 34.

3 The College employs a Principal and senior staff who also have roles as Clinical Supervisors and Lecturers. There are a further 17 part-time academic staff (over 4 full-time equivalent - FTE), some of whom also hold clinical supervision roles, together with two full-time and six part-time (3.87 FTE) administrative staff. The College occupies the same premises in East Grinstead as at the previous review.

Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The College has made commendable progress on the featured good practice highlighted in the 2017 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) report, and is both maintaining the academic standards and enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities of its provision. No recommendations were made at the previous review, and the College has maintained and further enhanced the good practice in relation to Professional Development Portfolios (paragraph 5) and the student journey experience (paragraph 6). Quality and standards in relation to admissions (paragraph 7) and assessment (paragraph 10) have been maintained and further developed. The Provider demonstrates highly effective engagement with external reference points and the Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) (paragraph 15).

5 Good practice in the use of Professional Development Portfolios has been maintained, and further enhanced through more effective use of student-tutor dialogue captured in formal feedback. A comprehensive and systematic feedback system has been developed and implemented for use by clinical supervisors. This forms part of the formative

and summative feedback to students and is included within individual Professional Development Portfolios. Students commended the effectiveness of the use of clinical feedback reports within Professional Development Portfolios in terms of preparedness for progression into future employment.

6 The second area of good practice, which is to ensure a robust student journey experience, from recruitment through to completion, continues to be a key strength of the College. Students' personal and professional identity remains paramount across this continuum and is evidenced through the strong alumni ties and networking opportunities across the world. Students commented positively on the benefits that this approach brings, and staff confirmed plans for further developments in this area.

7 The College continues to maintain a robust approach to the admission of students to its programmes. The Admissions Policy and processes are closely aligned to both the Schwartz principles of fair admissions and the awarding body processes, and this includes a transparent dialogue from initial enquiry through to confirmation of acceptance and induction. There is a clear focus on the part of the College to admitting students to the most appropriate programme. Admissions assessment tools are well designed and successfully screen for any additional learning support needs, and there is a clear commitment to inclusion and recognition of prior learning and attainment. Collectively this ensures that there is an initial student experience closely aligned to the College's aims and objectives.

8 Details of entry requirements, admissions and audition processes and appeals are available on the website. Details of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and the non-academic admission route are outlined in the admissions policy. Additional information and guidance is provided at 'Taster Days' and 'Shadow Days' in which current and former students play a significant role. The college's existing non-academic programme designed around *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) provides effective opportunity for those who would not normally access degree-level study but are considered suitable for the programme. Applicants without the usual academic entry qualifications complete a written task and follow a rigorous interview and selection process prior to starting the programme. This has further enhanced opportunities for students to enter the programme.

9 Students who were met by the review team spoke very highly about the fair and supportive nature of the initial information, interview and taster days and the whole application process. Many students who completed their studies at the College have become part of a strong alumni community which supports the induction of new students, and the Principal confirmed further enhancements in this area.

10 Assessment processes are informed by and aligned with *Chapter B6* of the Quality Code and conform to the University of Greenwich regulations. The college is responsible for designing assessment tasks and marking, and details of assessments are contained within module guides. Students are informed of assessment points at the start of the academic year, and formative feedback is given verbally immediately after clinically supervised sessions. This is supported by comprehensive written feedback within three weeks which serve as an integral part of each student's Personal Development Portfolio.

11 Assessments are routinely second-marked with samples internally moderated in line with the University of Greenwich Academic Regulations. All academic staff have received training in assessment methodology and are well supported by link tutors.

12 External examiners review a selection of work by supervising clinical assessments, and their reports are presented to the College's Examination Board. These reports commented positively on the standard and appropriateness of assessment. In addition, students commented very favourably on the range and appropriateness of performance-based assessment, and on the usefulness of feedback, especially from clinical sessions.

13 The clinical standards are annually monitored by the British Acupuncture Accreditation Board ensuring programme currency and the maintenance of professional standards. The College is required to submit an annual return and the most recent report commends the college for upholding core principles and standards.

14 Over the past three academic years retention and progression rates have been high with many cohorts achieving at, or close to, 100%. In total, 52 out of 65 (80%) of students recruited over the past three academic years have either completed their course, or are continuing their studies. Achievement rates for the 2015-16 cohort evidence that 15 of the 16 students (94%) who have completed their studies, have been successful.

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

15 The college designs its own programmes which are validated by the University of Greenwich. As such they ensure highly-effective alignment with the Quality Code, FHEQ, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and other external reference points. Staff are aware of the revised Quality Code soon to be published. All academic staff are also current industry practitioners and bring their continuing professional experience to their teaching. As a member of the British Acupuncture Accreditation Board, the College adheres to their professional requirements.

Background to the monitoring visit

16 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.

17 The monitoring visit was carried out by David J. Malachi, Reviewer, and Roshani Swift, QAA Officer, on 15 January 2019.

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