



Quality Review Visit of Joseph Chamberlain College

November 2017

Key findings

QAA's rounded judgements about Joseph Chamberlain College

The QAA review team formed the following rounded judgements about the higher education provision at Joseph Chamberlain College.

- **There is limited confidence in the likelihood that academic standards will be reliable, meet UK expectations and be reasonably comparable with standards set and achieved in other providers in the UK, when students are admitted to the provider.**
- **There is limited confidence in the likelihood that the quality of the student academic experience will meet the baseline regulatory requirements when students are admitted to the provider.**

Areas for development

The review team identified the following **areas for development** that have the potential to enhance quality and/or further secure the reliability and/or comparability of academic standards at Joseph Chamberlain College. The review team advises Joseph Chamberlain College to:

- develop a comprehensive induction and integration programme for all higher education students (Quality Code).

Specified improvements

The review team identified the following **specified improvements** that relate to matters that are already putting, or have the potential to put, quality and/or standards at risk at Joseph Chamberlain College. The review team recommends that Joseph Chamberlain College:

- articulates terms of reference for the proposed Higher Education Committee, and strengthens the terms of reference of the existing Curriculum and Learning Committee to include an explicit reference to ensuring the maintenance of academic standards in higher education provision (Codes of Governance)
- completes the development and approval of policies and procedures that will underpin higher education provision (Codes of Governance, Quality Code, Consumer Protection, and Student Protection)
- develops and approves terms and conditions for higher education students (Consumer Protection).

About this review

The review visit took place from 21 to 22 November 2017 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Lyes Bouakaz (student reviewer)
- Ms Penny Renwick.

The overall aim of Quality Review Visit is to:

- provide the relevant funding body with an expert judgement about the readiness of a provider to enter, or continue to operate within, the higher education sector.

Quality Review Visit is designed to:

- ensure that the student interest is protected
- provide expert advice to ensure that the reputation of the UK higher education system is protected, including the protection of degree standards
- identify development areas that will help a provider to progress through a developmental period and be considered 'established'.

Each review visit considers a provider's arrangements against relevant aspects of the baseline regulatory requirements, and in particular:

- the reliability of degree standards and their reasonable comparability with standards set and achieved by other providers
- the quality of the student academic experience, including student outcomes where the provider has a track record of delivery of higher education.

About Joseph Chamberlain College

Joseph Chamberlain College is a sixth form college located close to central Birmingham in an area that suffers from high levels of deprivation. The College notes that the vast majority of its students live in socially deprived areas. The College currently offers academic and vocational courses from entry level to level three. The College has over 2,000 full-time 16-18-year-old students enrolled. The College also has over 1,000 adult students, many of whom are from the local community and are seeking to develop their skills in Maths, English, ICT and employability. In 2017 the College was inspected by Ofsted and was designated as outstanding.

The College's Higher Education Strategy, linked to its newly revised mission, aims to 'build further aspiration and ambition, while developing the skills needed for employment'. The initial proposal is to offer two BTEC Higher National Qualifications at level 4 and level 5 from September 2018, the first in Performing Arts and the second in Advanced Practice in Early Years Education.

Judgement area: Reliability and comparability of academic standards

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)

1 Joseph Chamberlain College is proposing to provide BTEC Higher National Qualifications at level 4 and level 5 in Performing Arts and in Advanced Practice in Early Years Education and has made an application to Pearson for approval. The College will be working to the relevant Pearson Programme Specifications that are articulated at levels 4 and 5 on the FHEQ. Staff at the College are able to articulate how they will use the specifications to underpin programme delivery at the appropriate FHEQ levels. Additionally, the early years' provision will take account of DfES Standards for Early Years. The College has completed a responsibilities checklist that sets out how responsibilities are divided between the College and Pearson via meetings with the staff teams who will deliver higher education.

2 The responsibilities checklist indicates that College will comply with Pearson's requirements regarding assessment design and verification which, together with the external examiner processes, will ensure the academic standards of their programmes are comparable with those of other UK higher education providers.

The relevant code of governance: such as the Higher Education Code of Governance published by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) or the Association of Colleges' (AoC) Code of Good Governance for English Colleges

3 Governance of the College is provided through the Board of the Corporation and its sub-committees in the areas of Audit, Finance and General Purpose, and Curriculum and Learning. Minutes of Board meetings demonstrate adherence to the Association of College's principal responsibilities of good governance. There is representation from three local universities on the Curriculum and Learning Committee (CLC) and an expert in Pearson higher education provision has recently been appointed as a governor. The College has a published Strategic Plan and has developed an HE Strategy that is aligned to it. There are two student governors on the Board of the Corporation and a higher education student representative will serve on the CLC. In 2014, the College was inspected by Ofsted and was designated as a 'good' college that is 'outstanding' in leadership and management.

4 The governance of higher education qualifications within the College and responsibility of academic standards in higher education will come from the Governors' CLC, which reports directly to the Board of the Corporation. However, currently, the terms of reference of the CLC do not make explicit reference to the maintenance of academic standards. The College is creating a Higher Education Committee that will provide detailed scrutiny of all matters relating to its higher education provision; this includes a student representative and the committee will provide termly reports to the CLC. Terms of reference of this Committee have not yet been drafted and the review team recommends as a **specified improvement** that the College articulates terms of reference for the proposed Higher Education Committee, and strengthens the terms of reference of the existing Curriculum and Learning Committee to include an explicit reference to ensuring the maintenance of academic standards in higher education provision.

The Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)

5 The College is currently developing a Programme Approval Process for higher education provision. As stated previously, the College is intending to initially deliver two Pearson Higher National programmes. While these two programmes were developed and approved informally prior to the introduction of the formal process the review team is satisfied appropriate procedures were followed throughout their development.

6 Systems are in place to allow the College to maintain definitive records provided by degree-awarding bodies. The College is making appropriate use of externality in the design of its programmes, including input from both academic and industrial experts.

7 Though significant discussion has taken place around assessment for higher education provision, the formal policy is still under development. The proposed Higher Education Committee will be responsible for the monitoring and review of the College's higher education programmes, although its terms of reference have yet to be defined.

8 Further to this, the College is making progress towards readiness to deliver higher education provision. However, many of the policies and procedures that will be needed to support its delivery are pending approval, in development phases or remain in initial discussion. These include policies relating to admissions, student complaints, assessment and appeals, academic offences, information, consumer protection and student protection measures, teaching observation, continuing professional development (CPD), and quality monitoring. The review team recommends as a **specified improvement** that the College completes the development and approval of policies and procedures that will underpin higher education provision.

Rounded judgement

9 The review team considered the reliability of degree standards that will be delivered at Joseph Chamberlain College and their reasonable comparability with standards set and achieved by other providers. The team noted both the College's positive track record in delivering their current provision, and its effective progress to date in developing policies and procedures in preparation for delivering higher education.

10 However, the team identified as a general specified improvement that further progress is required in the development and approval of policies and procedures in order to provide confidence in the College's ability to deliver higher education programmes. This recommendation relates both to the area of academic standards and the area of student academic experience for the College's proposed higher education provision. More specifically, the review team also made a recommendation to articulate and clarify terms of reference for key committees that will have oversight of the College's higher education provision in order to ensure sufficient oversight of academic standards for higher education provision.

11 There is limited confidence in the likelihood that academic standards will be reliable, meet UK expectations and be reasonably comparable with standards set and achieved in other providers in the UK, when students are admitted to the provider.

Judgement area: Quality of the student academic experience

The Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)

12 The College is in the process of putting in place arrangements to provide an appropriate student academic experience for students studying programmes delivered at levels 4 and 5. Many of the policies that underpin these arrangements are either under development or are awaiting approval. In such cases these are subject to the recommendation for a specified improvement referred to in paragraph 8.

13 The College has developed a comprehensive Higher Education Student Recruitment, Selection and Admission Policy to underpin the anticipated recruitment process for the Pearson programmes. This policy has not yet been formally approved through the College's governance arrangements (see paragraph 8).

14 The Assistant Principal (Students and Operations) has been assigned the responsibility of overseeing the selection and admissions procedure. The College intends to recruit a higher education keyworker, a member of the Inclusive Learning Team, to provide advice and support for applicants who identify additional needs and/or disabilities. There is a procedure for applicants who wish to appeal or complain about any element of the recruitment, selection or administration process identified within the Higher Education Recruitment, Selection and Admissions Policy.

15 Transition to higher education study workshops are planned for the summer. The College intends to adapt its current induction programme for higher education students, some of whom will transition from level 3 in the College while others will be new starters. The team advises as an **area for development** that the College develops a comprehensive induction and integration programme for all higher education students, in acknowledgement of the different routes students will take to enter into higher education at the College.

16 Through its Strategic Plan, the College is committed to providing a high-quality learning experience. The planned higher education programmes are areas of current curriculum strength and a number of staff in these curriculum areas have experience of delivering teaching and assessment at levels 4 and 5, and are also integrated well into their respective professional communities.

17 In delivering programmes in early years and performance education the College has existing relationships with early years placement providers and with The Birmingham Theatre School. These partners have been consulted on the developments in term of their responsibilities for the provision of high quality vocational learning experiences. In the case of The Birmingham Theatre School staff are particularly closely engaged. In its Higher Education Strategy, the College has aspirations to deliver the advanced learning and research ethos of a university and is informally working with local higher education institutions and with an external consultant to support its higher education development plans. In addition to this the College may wish to consider developing its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy for higher education as a means of focusing its ambitions to create a higher education learning environment.

18 The College has an assessment policy for its current provision. This policy may be adapted to include higher education, or a new policy may be developed, and the College is currently considering the best course of action (see paragraph 8). The College is not proposing to accept Recognition of Prior Learning at this time. Staff are preparing assignment briefs in line with Pearson requirements. Internal moderation will be in

accordance with Pearson requirements. The College intends revising its Academic Offences Policy to accommodate higher education provision (see paragraph 8). The College is investing in plagiarism-detection software to enhance the security of assessment processes.

19 There is a CPD Policy, but it needs updating for higher education. In particular, the Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy with its provision for graded observation requires updating. The College is aware of this but discussions have not yet commenced (see paragraph 8). An overarching CPD report is discussed at governor level. Staff are preparing for teaching in higher education through a range of CPD opportunities provided either by the College or by Pearson and staff will be supported to undertake higher degrees where necessary. New staff are assigned an induction tutor to support their integration into the College.

20 The College has a range of learning resources, including practical spaces that will support the proposed programmes. JCC Connect, the College's VLE, is being extended to provide the higher education specific area JCC HE. Further investment is planned once external approval to deliver the programmes is given. A small higher education resource room is to be developed in the library and relevant books and journals are to be purchased. The College has long-standing relationships with placement providers that will support the advanced practice in early years education programme and with The Birmingham Theatre School that will support the performing arts programme.

21 The College has an extensive range of existing policies that are designed to provide student support including a Support for Learning Strategy, an Inclusive Learning Policy and an Attendance Policy. Students will be supported with their broad academic skills development by an academic learning coach, while a personal development tutor will create and deliver a higher education scheme of personal development. Curriculum support will be provided by subject specialist module tutors.

22 A Learner Voice Strategy is overseen by the Director of Studies. A Student Council is well established and two student presidents serve on the Corporation. It is intended that a higher education sub-committee of the Student Council will be established where student feedback and external examiner reports will be discussed. A higher education student will serve on the proposed Higher Education Committee, and through the HE sub-committee students will elect their own president to attend CLC meetings. The College will need to monitor these arrangements to ensure the voice of the higher education students is adequately represented within the College's governance arrangements. The College has a robust approach to its annual student survey conducted by an independent provider, benchmarked against other providers and discussed by the Senior Leadership Team, and an additional module survey is planned for higher education provision.

23 The College has a Quality Monitoring and Improvement Policy for its existing provision and this will also be used for higher education provision. The College is aware of the need to formalise the process for these changes and is starting to formulate this, giving specific attention to providing clarification of the roles of the Higher Education Committee, the introduction of Assessment Panels and the appointment of a Higher Education Coordinator. Additionally, a separate higher education annual self-assessment report will be produced (see paragraph 8).

24 Course review meetings, involving key staff, take place four-times a year and focus on student attainment. The policy sets out the role of the Corporation through the receipt of regular reports on the College's performance and feedback from learners. They monitor outcomes data and validate the self-assessment report, as well as monitor the College improvement plan that arises from the report.

The relevant code of governance: such as the Higher Education Code of Governance published by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) or the Association of Colleges' (AoC) Code of Good Governance for English Colleges

25 The College has a strong system of student representation in place, which includes two student governors who attend the Corporation meetings. The planned creation of a higher education subcommittee of the Student Council will provide a route for the involvement of higher education students in academic governance.

26 Complaints and appeals relating to higher education will be discussed at the proposed Higher Education Committee and the higher education subcommittee of the Corporation. The Corporation currently receives a report on complaints and appeals, and going forward this will include those relating to higher education. These points will be articulated in the College's policy for higher education complaints, and the appeals section of its assessment policy, both of which are still under development (see paragraph 8).

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure consumer protection obligations are met (Competition and Markets Authority guidance)

27 The College's Higher Education Student Recruitment, Selection and Admissions Policy is being developed taking into account the College's policy for further education admissions, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and similar policies from other Colleges. Curriculum Leaders are involved in the development of the policy, which is an ongoing process. The College intends that the policy will be considered by the Corporation in December 2017 (see paragraph 8).

28 The Student Information and Consumer Protection Policy (HE Provision) identifies the information that will be provided to prospective students and the formats in which it will be made available. The policy is in draft format and has not yet been approved by the Senior Leadership Team or the Corporation (see paragraph 8).

29 The Higher Education Student Recruitment, Selection and Admissions Policy and the Student Information and Consumer Protection Policy refer to the College's terms and conditions, however, these have not yet been developed. The review team recommends as a **specified improvement** that the College develops and approves terms and conditions for higher education students to ensure prospective students have an opportunity to read and understand the terms that will apply to them prior to accepting an offer of study at the College.

30 The College is redeveloping its Complaints Procedure to accommodate higher education students, and intends to amend the policy to emphasise that students should not be put at a disadvantage for making a complaint. However, the redevelopment has yet to be finalised and approved (see paragraph 8).

Student protection measures as expressed through the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) Good Practice Framework, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's (PHSO) Principles of Good Administration, and HEFCE's Statement of Good Practice on Higher Education Course Changes and Closures

31 The Student Information and Consumer Protection Policy sets out the College's procedures for course closures and changes, and how they will be communicated to students. The policy is in draft format and has not yet been approved by the Senior Leadership Team or the Corporation (see paragraph 8).

32 The College is still developing its policies for student complaints, which will be based on that used for its further education provision (see paragraph 8). The procedure for appeals forms part of the assessment policy for higher education, which is also under development. A summary report on complaints and appeals is produced for the Corporation. The College confirmed its updated complaints policy for higher education will ensure that students are aware of their recourse to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (see paragraph 8).

Rounded judgement

33 The review team considered the proposed quality of the student academic experience for higher education to be delivered at Joseph Chamberlain College, including student outcomes. Again, the team noted both the College's positive track record in delivering their current provision, and its effective progress to date in developing policies and procedures in preparation for delivering higher education.

34 In the academic standards section of this report the review team recommended a general specified improvement that further progress is required in the development and approval of policies and procedures in order to provide confidence in the College's ability to deliver higher education programmes. This specified improvement is also relevant to the area of student academic experience. In addition, the review team identified as a specified improvement that the College develops terms and conditions for higher education students to ensure prospective students have the opportunity to read and understand the terms that will apply to them prior to accepting an offer of study at the College. The team also identified an area for development to ensure the College has an induction process that is appropriate for all higher education students, both those transitioning within the College and those coming from outside.

35 There is limited confidence in the likelihood that the quality of the student academic experience will meet the baseline regulatory requirements when students are admitted to the provider.

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