



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of The Markfield Institute of Higher Education, April 2018

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 Markfield Institute of Higher Education (the Institute) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision from the [previous monitoring visit](#) in April 2017.

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review visit

2 Since the last review in April 2017, The Markfield Institute of Higher Education has been successfully reviewed by the British Accreditation Council and awarded a satisfactory outcome in all of its assessment areas. Newman University continues as the awarding body for the taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The University of Gloucestershire continues as the awarding body for the final cohort of 8 postgraduate research students, who are enrolled on either an MPhil or PhD qualification. The Institute is progressing validation discussions with a new awarding body for postgraduate research students as they cannot recruit any further students until this has been secured.

3 Since April 2017, the overall student population has increased by 10 per cent from 86 to 96 students. There are currently 39 undergraduate students and 57 postgraduate taught students enrolled on programmes of study with 85 students studying full-time. In addition to those programmes run previously, there are two new programmes, MA Islam and Sustainable Development and MA Muslim Chaplaincy. The approval of postgraduate loans from September 2017 and the new MAs have contributed to the slight increase in student numbers. The Institute will continue with plans to develop new programmes of study that will combine Islamic Studies with education and law from 2019. There are currently four full-time and nine part-time academic staff, and one full-time and five part-time administrative staff. The Institute occupies the same premises as at the last review.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The College has made acceptable progress in continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision and is committed to the enhancement of its provision. The Quality Enhancement Action Plan for 2017-18 determines the Institution's ongoing actions to support continuous improvement and this is discussed at Management Board meetings. However, the plan is limited and does not fully identify the entire range of enhancement activity undertaken across the Institution and the monitoring of progress is not always evident or formally captured.

5 The Institute has continued the features of good practice that were identified at the last review including effective student engagement and an annual internal peer review process. The annual peer reviews of teaching are robust and can include an experienced lecturer from an external university as part of the process. Outcomes of the peer review process are reviewed by the Principal, who prepares the annual training programme to address any identified needs. Student feedback is also obtained on teaching effectiveness through module evaluations which in turn feed into the Institute's quality processes. All academics are now required to have achieved or be working towards a PGCHE and staff are supported through

this process. The Institute's academic staff are also expected to be members or apply for HEA membership within two years. At the time of the monitoring visit, 15 per cent of academic staff had achieved HEA Fellowship with more than half now eligible to apply. A majority of academic staff are engaged in research as an integral part of their job with research activity regularly reported and presented to internal research conferences which ensures academic staff progress their research.

6 Student voice continues to be an area of maintained good practice. The Student Charter sets out the expectations for students and staff and makes reference to extensive student engagement, which includes module evaluation, student representation on formal committees, Staff Student Consultative Committee meetings and, where appropriate, National Student Survey. The Institute organises a special Students' Day combined with the Open Day once a year and an action plan to improve the event, based on student feedback, is agreed. There are many other informal opportunities for student engagement that are much appreciated by the student body, including a 'Tea with the Principal' event where students have the opportunity to put questions directly to the Principal. Students commented positively on the wide range of discussion in this meeting and the support and advice provided by the Principal/Institute around employment opportunities. Student representatives have an opportunity to discuss course issues and external examiners reports with course leaders at the annual Course Committee meetings, but no issues were noted.

7 The Institute has a clear management structure which supports the formal committee reporting structure and includes an Academic Board. To better align with their own and the Awarding body annual monitoring processes and to support a more effective review of External Examiner reports, the Academic Board is now scheduled to take place in July each year. The previous Board met in January 2017, but it will continue to have overall responsibility for all quality management issues. It has oversight of academic standards and governance and monitors these through committee reports which contain details of student recruitment, retention, progression and attainment data along with all the annual monitoring reports. The action plan for 2016-17 confirms that programme modifications are submitted to their partner university for approval and overseen by Academic Board.

8 The Institute's Admissions Policy states that they adhere to Home Office's approved Secure English Language Tests (SELTs) as evidence of English language ability. All new non-EU students on master's level programmes are required to have IELTS 6.0 although the Institute has not admitted any non-EU students since February 2016. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of these changes.

9 The Institute publishes a range of information for both internal and external use that is closely monitored by the Principal to ensure it is accurate and current. The action plan for 2016-17 details the key measures used to ensure that information is appropriately handled to ensure completeness and consistency. These are detailed as a formal approval and signoff process and require the engagement of the University in the approval process of public information.

10 The Admissions Policy follows the recommendations and guidance contained in the UK Quality Code, Chapter B2, but there is no planned systematic review and validation of policies and procedures. Admissions is overseen by the Admissions and Recognised Prior Learning Committee. The Institute work to ensure that all undergraduate and postgraduate students meet strict entry criteria and are able to operate proficiently in English language. They have a detailed policy and procedure to ensure that RPL is handled effectively. Students confirmed that the procedures were followed, that the Institute offered additional support where required, and was able to respond to direct applications. Students are required to sign a formal terms and conditions document which clearly sets out expectations and responsibilities.

11 The Institute use a range of quantitative and qualitative data to support quality monitoring and enhancement activity. This is reviewed through the formal committee structure, and identifies areas for development. All data collected feeds into annual monitoring reports that are reviewed by the Senior Management team and subsequently approved at Academic Board. Annual monitoring reports include consideration of student performance and achievement, student recruitment and retention, and achievement of strategic plan actions. However, the Quality Enhancement Plan for 2017-18 does not capture all the enhancement activities as the annual monitoring reports are considered informally. Therefore actions are not always included in the plan which makes the consideration and tracking of progress difficult to evidence.

12 The data on retention and achievement shows continued success with retention rates of between 67 and 100 per cent and achievement rates of between 88 and 100 per cent across all courses. The numbers of students who do leave their courses is low and only students with genuine personal difficulties tend to leave the Institute. The data also shows that all students on the Postgraduate provision are mature and the Institute confirmed that some of these students do require additional support either on a one-to-one basis to improve their academic performance, or by approving extended course deadlines due to family circumstances, but in line with University regulations, to ensure they are successful.

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

13 Ultimate responsibility for setting academic standards and ensuring that requirements of the relevant reference points are met lies with the awarding bodies for the Institute. The processes put in place ensure the awards are correctly positioned at the relevant level of the FHEQ and are aligned with Subject Benchmark Statements. The evidence reviewed shows the procedures to be effective and with due consideration given to the UK Quality Code although none have been updated or checked since the last review. In 2016-17 the Institute developed a new MA in Islam and Sustainable Development and used relevant external reference points including QAA benchmarks, level descriptors and specialist input from external specialists from the field of study.

14 The Institute works in partnership with its awarding body for taught programmes, Newman University. This facilitates the sharing of good practice and ensures successful practices to confirm credit and qualifications are awarded only where learning outcomes and academic standards of the awarding body have been met. The Institutional Governance and Quality Assurance Handbook demonstrates consideration of the Quality Code and is used as a reference point. New policies and procedures are developed and checked against the Quality Code, but with no new or updated policies available at the time of the Review, this could not be confirmed by the team.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

15 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.

16 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Mark Cooper, Reviewer, and Dr Suzanne Richardson, Coordinator, on 24 April 2018

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