

Review of College Higher Education of Mattersey Hall College

December 2013

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About this review

This is a report of a Review of College Higher Education conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Mattersey Hall College. The review took place on 9-11 December 2013 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Maxina Butler-Holmes
- Mr James Freeman (student reviewer)
- Mr Daniel Morgan

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Mattersey Hall College and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. In this report, the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on:
 - whether the college fulfils its responsibilities for maintaining the threshold academic standards set by its awarding bodies
 - the quality of learning opportunities
 - the quality of information
 - the enhancement of learning opportunities
- provides commentaries on the theme topic
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the institution is taking or plans to take.

A summary of the [key findings](#) can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

In reviewing Mattersey Hall College, the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [themes](#) for the academic year 2012-13 are the First Year Student Experience and Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.¹ Background information about Mattersey Hall College is given at the end of this report. A dedicated [page of the website](#) explains more about this review method and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents.²

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/pages/default.aspx

² www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/rche/pages/default.aspx

Amended judgement

Mattersey Hall College underwent a Review of College Higher Education in December 2013 which resulted in a judgement of 'requires improvement to meet UK expectations' against enhancement of student learning opportunities.

As a result of this 'requires improvement' judgement, the College was subsequently required to undergo a period of follow-up activity orientated around the production and monitoring of an action plan that addressed all recommendations and good practice.

The review team had set dates for the completion of each action. The team was clear that the best interests of both students and applicants would be served by a speedy resolution, and that the action required by the College could be successfully completed within the timeframe.

The recommendations required the College to ensure that Board of Studies and Senior Leadership Team meetings fully action their remit to analyse management information and external examiner reports to develop the higher education provision (by April 2014), and develop a deliberate, college-level approach to improving the quality of student learning opportunities for all students so that good practice is recorded and disseminated (by July 2014).

Mattersey Hall College has completed the following actions to address these recommendations.

- A new Enhancement Policy has been agreed and implemented. This makes provision for extended Board of Studies meetings (which will include members of the Senior Leadership Team) in June and February each year to review all aspects of the programmes, including analysis of management information (including student feedback, performance statistics and completion rates) and external examiner reports, with a view to develop and enhance student provision.
- The College is also planning to schedule talks by experts on educational issues and opportunities to share and disseminate good practice at some of their regular College meetings.

Other recommendations made by the review team did not contribute to the judgement of 'requires improvement to meet UK expectations', but have been equally dealt with and are now complete. The Principal of Mattersey Hall College has signed off this action plan.

The judgement is now formally amended to indicate that the review team confirms that the recommendations relating to enhancement of student learning opportunities have been satisfactorily addressed and meets UK expectations, and the review can be considered to be signed off as complete.

Key findings

This section summarises the QAA review team's key findings about Mattersey Hall College (the College).

QAA's judgements about Mattersey Hall College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Mattersey Hall College.

- The academic standards of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding body **meet** UK expectations for threshold standards.
- The quality of student learning opportunities at the College **meets UK expectations**.
- The quality of information produced by the College about its learning opportunities **meets UK expectations**.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities at The College **requires improvement to meet UK expectations**.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following **features of good practice at Mattersey Hall College**.

- The College's support for research and scholarship that effectively contributes to the learning experience (paragraph 2.2).
- Mentoring and pastoral support policy and practices that are particularly effective and are highly regarded by students (paragraph 2.4).
- Career enrichment opportunities which work effectively and are central to the College mission (paragraph 2.12).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Mattersey Hall College.

By April 2014 the College should:

- ensure that Board of Studies and Senior Leadership Team meetings fully action their remit to analyse management information and external examiner reports to develop the higher education provision (paragraph 4.5)
- clarify to applicants the role of the Diploma and the implications of not taking it (paragraph 2.10)
- create formal procedures for the development and review of management information (paragraph 2.7)
- formalise internal examination boards (paragraph 1.3)
- develop and implement a systematic evidence-based process of reflection on programmes that results in formal action planning, monitoring and review (paragraph 1.10)
- formalise peer observation of teaching processes (paragraph 2.1)
- develop and implement a resource allocation model to align with the needs of all students (paragraph 2.20)
- develop and implement an assessment strategy which enables feedback to students to be used to inform the quality assurance processes (paragraph 1.7)

- institute a method to collect robust feedback from all students to inform quality assurance processes (paragraph 2.6).

By July 2014 the College should:

- systematically involve student representatives in reviewing the College handbook (paragraph 2.24)
- develop a deliberate, college-level approach to improving the quality of students' learning opportunities for all students so that good practice is recorded and disseminated (paragraph 4.6).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms the following actions** that Mattersey Hall College is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- Actions taken to engage students with external examiner reports, for example by improving access to the reports on the website and at student representative meetings (paragraph 1.4).
- Actions taken to involve more students in quality assurance, for example through attendance at College boards and at Vision Day (paragraph 2.5).
- Continuing improvements made to the distance-learning provision, for example in communication, tracking of students and development of learning materials to better meet student needs (paragraph 2.20).

Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The review team investigated the Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement at the College, and found that the College's arrangements for involving students in quality assurance and enhancement of their learning were broadly satisfactory. The College is aware that it needs to adopt more formal processes as it moves towards greater alignment with the Quality Code, and more comprehensive involvement of its students in its procedures.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the [handbook](#) for Review of College Higher Education, available on the QAA website.³

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/rche-handbook.aspx

About Mattersey Hall College

The College has a history that goes back to 1909, when the first Pentecostal Bible School was founded in London to serve the needs of the Pentecostal Missionary Union. The College moved to its current location in South Yorkshire in 1973. The College is the official training department of, and is wholly owned by, Assemblies of God Incorporated, with which it shares the campus. The denomination has around 600 assemblies served by 1,200 accredited ministers. Around half of the annual undergraduate intake is from within Assemblies of God.

Mattersey Hall College is a Christian college whose main aim is to train, equip and form the next generation of Christian leaders. In line with the historic aim of the college, this includes providing appropriate training for ministry (understood in the widest sense) and the development of students' critical skills that enable them to engage with, analyse and evaluate theory and praxis.

The higher education courses offered by Mattersey Hall College comprise BA (Hons) in Biblical Studies and Theology and BA (Hons) in Christian Leadership. A master's programme and doctoral programme are also available. In the 2012-13 academic year the College had a total of 117 full-time students and four part-time students on the undergraduate courses, and 84 students undertaking the master's programme. All awards are validated by the University of Chester (the University). Students are able to study at the College in a number of ways; they can opt to live on campus, and are provided with accommodation and meals in the halls of residence, or travel to the campus to undertake their studies. Additionally, 39 students study on a distance-learning basis. Students who opt to attend their course on campus also undertake the Mattersey Hall College Diploma, which reflects the student's experience in different forms of ministry during their time at the College and their contribution to the life of the College.

Mattersey Hall College has been reviewed by other monitoring bodies, most recently by Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) where the College was judged to meet their aims well, and to meet the standards set out in the BSI Framework for College Inspections. It has not had a QAA review before.

The College has recently changed validating universities and now all of its higher education qualifications are awarded by the University of Chester. This transition has presented challenges, as well as opportunities, as established processes and practices change, investment has been made in the construction of a new Learning Resource Centre, and formal procedures are being amended to involve students more in the life of the College.

Explanation of the findings about Mattersey Hall College

This section explains the key findings of the review in more detail.⁴

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#)⁵ is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the [handbook](#) for the review method, also on the QAA website.⁶

1 Academic standards

Outcome

The academic standards of the awards the College offers on behalf of its awarding body **meet UK expectations**. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Meeting external qualifications benchmarks

1.1 It is the responsibility of the College's awarding body to allocate the qualifications they award to the appropriate benchmarks. External examiner reports show that programmes are located at appropriate levels and include assessment tasks that lead to an appropriate standard of student achievement. Students met by the review team understood the progressive demands of different academic levels, which are clearly articulated in programme handbooks.

1.2 The College has responded to conditions set by its new awarding body and to feedback from students by modifying parts of the undergraduate programme; however, the mechanisms for academic oversight and development are not clearly delineated from general College management processes. This impedes the development of a coherent academic overview. Responsibility for making these modifications falls to a very small number of staff, and part-time staff met by the review team had limited awareness of these academic discussions, particularly with regard to the academic levelness.

Use of external examiners

1.3 The responsibility for the appointment of external examiners lies with the University. Most staff met by the review team had not had direct contact with an external examiner and no students met by the review team had met one. There is little formal systematic analysis of external examiner reports through the College Board of Studies, and external examiner reports are not formally discussed at programme level, however, they are commented on in annual course reports. In view of this, the review team recommends that the College should formalise internal examination boards.

1.4 The College has recently taken action to disseminate external examiner reports through its website, and recognises this as an area for further development. Accordingly, the review team was able to affirm actions taken to engage students with external examiner reports, for example by improving access to the reports on the website and at student representative meetings.

⁴ The full body of evidence used to compile the report is not published. However, it is available on request for inspection: please contact QAA Reviews Group.

⁵ www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx

⁶ See note 3.

Assessment and standards

1.5 External examiners confirm that assessments are well planned and enable students to achieve appropriate standards. The examiner for undergraduate programmes noted evidence of excellent feedback; however, the range of assessment methods is narrow with most involving the writing of an essay.

1.6 Staff participation in examination boards and the review of assessment practices is limited. The Director of Studies is the only College staff member to attend examination boards held by the University. New staff are supported informally by the Director of Studies to ensure appropriate academic standards in second marking, course planning and review of documentation, and the production of assignment briefs operates at a similarly informal level. However, the review team heard from new members of staff that this informal coaching was supportive in ensuring their understanding of assessment practices.

1.7 The College has recently started to draft a teaching and learning strategy, but there is no assessment strategy. Instead, the College has reacted to situations as they have arisen and produced appropriate documents or aide memoires, for example, in response to delays in feedback to students. Assessment requirements are communicated in a range of ways, and handbooks contain comprehensive guidance, including assessment and grading criteria, submission details and regulations. While students met by the review team had a clear understanding of assessment tasks and their relation to learning outcomes, and most welcomed the quality of feedback received from their tutors, there have been several examples of divergence between policy and practice for feedback on assessment. In order to facilitate a more strategic approach to assessment, the review team **recommends** that the College should develop and implement an assessment strategy which enables feedback to students to be used to inform the quality assurance processes.

Setting and maintaining programme standards

1.8 The College is developing the way in which it will discharge its responsibilities within its new relationship with the University. It is required by the Organisational Agreement to follow the University's annual monitoring and evaluation process. These reports are very brief with little evaluative commentary and no evidence of discussion with programme teams. Action plans are very limited with no identifiable responsibilities, and no indications of either progress or monitoring.

1.9 The College acknowledges the need to ensure an effective evidence-based approach towards the process of programmes review and has been addressing some of its existing structural arrangements. It has, for example, instigated a Student Faculty Meeting to enhance the student voice. Additionally, modules are evaluated and student feedback is gathered, although response rates are low and this inhibits the use of the findings. An end-of-semester survey of the student learning experience is carried out, but there is no evidence of formal analysis and discussion of the outcome.

1.10 The Board of Studies has a remit to monitor and review academic programmes to consider their continuing effectiveness. However, minutes indicate limited academic discussion and reflection on programmes, and most curriculum planning and review takes place within the Senior Leadership Team. Neither of these committees routinely considers quantitative management information to inform decision-making processes, and there is no overall annual self-assessment exercise to review the portfolio and identify priorities for development and action. There are no formal course committees, although there are strong informal approaches. The review team **recommends** that the College develops and implements a systematic evidence-based process of reflection that results in formal action planning, monitoring and review.

Subject benchmarks

1.11 Responsibility for programme design, approval and review processes reside with the College. The programme handbooks contain references to qualification statements and senior staff demonstrated awareness of appropriate subject and level benchmark statements published by QAA. This is reflected in the range of validation documents, external examiner and University validation panel comments.

1.12 While the College acknowledges the need to engage with the Quality Code, this responsibility currently falls to two members of staff. However, knowledge has recently been disseminated at staff development events.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

Outcome

The quality of learning opportunities at Mattersey Hall College **meets UK expectations**. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Professional standards for teaching and learning

2.1 The College has a teaching and learning strategy that identifies the key aims and underpinning objectives. However, it is not clear to what extent this strategy is disseminated nor effectively articulated within the College to ensure it is delivered. For example, a peer observation scheme has been implemented but all observations are undertaken by one member of staff and no formal discussion of the results is recorded. Few members of staff have a recognised teaching qualification and the College is giving consideration to the pedagogic development of staff through further qualifications. The review team recommends that the College should formalise peer observation of teaching processes to promote the effective development of teaching skills, and to ensure there is a variety of teaching and learning methods deployed.

2.2 Staff are well qualified with at least a master's degree and the majority of full-time staff have a PhD. All teaching staff are approved by the University. The College is committed to the development of its staff as stated in the Staff Handbook. There is substantial evidence of staff scholarship in the form of research activity, attendance at academic conferences and scholarly publications and this informs teaching. The College fully supports this by providing one day per week as a study day and funding conference attendance. The students were impressed by the scholarly attributes of staff and regarded this as an asset to their learning. The review team **regards** the College's support for research and scholarship that effectively contributes to the student learning experience as good practice.

Learning resources

2.3 Staff at the College are well qualified and supported. All staff receive a comprehensive handbook and full-time staff attend an induction. In particular, there are identified resources to support health and safety, disabled students and distance-learning provision. While the College has a plan that identifies ways in which learning resources are used, it is the responsibility of the Board of Studies to review learning resources but little evidence of this happening.

2.4 Overall, students are satisfied with their learning resources. Students met by the review team were very enthusiastic about the accessibility and support from College staff. The newly developed Mentoring programme has been particularly well received and is

supported by a comprehensive handbook. The review team regards as **good practice** the mentoring and pastoral support policy and practices that are particularly effective and are highly regarded by students. Some students reported that they have experienced difficulties in accessing key texts despite the best efforts of staff to provide them. They also reported that they have had difficulties in accessing the University's online resources. The College is building a new learning resource centre and has installed a new wireless access service.

Student voice

2.5 There is an effective process for student representation at the College. There is no dedicated representation from distance-learning students, although attempts are made by the campus-based representatives to include them. The College has made significant recent efforts to enhance the student voice. The student representation process is supported by an effective election system and underpinned by a guidance document. A small number of student representatives now attend the Board of Studies, which has a standing item on the agenda, and a new Student Faculty Meeting group has terms of reference to support minuted meetings. Additionally, students participate in Vision Day which forms part of staff induction. The review team affirms the actions taken to involve more students in quality assurance, for example, through attendance at College boards and at Vision Day.

2.6 Student feedback is collected but not used effectively. A survey is taken of the student experience at the end of each semester and the College acknowledges that there is not full take-up of it, and the questions limit the responses. There is no evidence of analysis and discussion of the findings from this survey. The review team **recommends** that the college institute a method to effectively collect robust information from all students to inform the quality assurance processes.

Management information

2.7 While the College does collect information about students, collated management information on recruitment, admissions, attendance, retention, progression and performance is not evident at Senior Leadership Team or Board of Studies meetings. Similarly, the Annual Monitoring Report, submitted as part of the University annual monitoring process, is not informed by an equivalent method used by the University that allows information to be analysed, and, while data is generated from the student survey, there is no analysis or discussion of it at a formal level. The review team **recommends** that the College should create formal procedures for the development and review of management information.

Admission to the College

2.8 The College admits students to its programmes in collaboration with the University. The College has an admissions criteria and process that is considered at the Board of Studies. As part of its new relationship with the University, the College has had a series of discussions to agree a position on the entry criteria that satisfies both parties, as some of the published requirements differ from those in validation documents.

2.9 Following application, the admissions team contact candidates and guide them through the rest of the process. There are open days and sample lectures, and applicants approved in principle attend an interview where they can be given further information. The review team saw evidence for planned induction and enrolment information, and the students were positive about the induction process.

2.10 Progression as a full-time student on campus is linked to successful participation in the separate College Diploma, which is not part of the validation agreement. Students met by the review team were unclear about the status of the Diploma and its impact on their

academic progression. The review team **recommends** that the College clarify the role of the Diploma and the implications of not taking it.

Complaints and appeals

2.11 The College has a complaints and appeals procedure that makes it clear that learners can escalate their concerns to the University once they have exhausted the College process. The review team found that undergraduate students were aware of the procedure, but a significant number of master's and distance-learning students were not. The Mentoring system provides a channel for students to informally air and resolve difficulties, and this is valued by students and regarded as effective.

Career advice and guidance

2.12 Central to the mission of the College preparing the next generation of Christian leaders is the College Diploma which all on-campus students take. The Diploma includes church placements, weekend ministry teams and an annual Missions Fair. This is highly regarded by students. In addition, most students undertake the Mission programme, allowing them to study overseas. This is highly valued by students met by the review team. It is also possible for students to achieve Assembly of God qualifications. Students are regularly informed of ministry opportunities by the Ministries and Mentoring Officer. These career enrichment opportunities work effectively and are central to the College's mission; they are regarded as **good practice**.

Supporting disabled students

2.13 Overall, students are satisfied with the support provided by the College for students with disability. The College has a disability policy and an identified Disability Officer in place. The College makes reasonable adjustments for students with assessed needs, however, it makes clear to students that it is unable to finance the testing of any students who may have learning difficulties. Where students have not had testing for learning disability, and would like to be tested, the Disability Officer will give advice and support as to how this can be done. The review team saw evidence of this being effectively discharged.

Supporting international students

2.14 At the time of the review, the College did not have a Tier 4 licence and so were unable to admit full-time international students to their programmes.

Supporting postgraduate research students

2.15 The College has no postgraduate research students.

Learning delivered through collaborative arrangements

2.16 The College is not responsible for any collaborative arrangements as defined by the Quality Code.

Flexible, distributed and e-learning

2.17 The College has 39 undergraduate distance-learning students. All programmes, except the MA in Missional Leadership, are now deliverable by distance learning as part of the new validation arrangements. This is in line with the more central repositioning of distance learning in the College's overall strategy to address past weaknesses in the provision. While some broad consideration has been given to the delivery mode of higher level provision, the impact on systems and resources have been less considered, and it was

evident that the transition to a new awarding body had caused problems for some distance-learning students.

2.18 In response to an increase in distance-learning student numbers, the College designated more resources to its administration. This has resulted in some improvements in communication between distance-learning students and the College, with students being allocated a personal tutor, the introduction of a system to track the turnaround of feedback on assignments and improvements in some learning materials. However, there are currently few formalised processes that might help the College assure itself that the distance-learning programmes are being delivered as intended.

2.19 Distance-learning students are designated an on-campus student representative, and students can submit comments by email. Additionally, personal tutors are intended to act as a link between the College and its distance-learning students. However, it is unclear how effective this new arrangement is, and there is little evidence of distance-learning issues being raised at student representative meetings.

2.20 While many of the serious weaknesses of the College's distance-learning provision have been addressed with the move to a new awarding body, some challenges remain. The review team **affirms** the continuing improvements made to the distance-learning provision, for example, in communication, tracking of students and development of learning materials to better meet student needs. However, the team was concerned that decisions to validate increasingly higher level distance-learning programmes had not been matched with detailed consideration of resources, planning or thorough integration with quality assurance and Student Representative processes, and that this presented a potential risk to the parity of learning opportunities across full-time and distance-learning students. The review team **recommends** that, by April 2014, the College develops and implements a resource allocation model to align with curriculum needs of all students.

Work-based and placement learning

2.21 The College's undergraduate provision contains highly regarded elements of work experience. The College offers an assessed Cross Cultural Missions trip, which is attended by most on-campus students, and is a well developed manifestation of the College mission: to train, equip and form the next generation of Christian Leaders. The Cross Cultural Missions trip is aligned to individual students' financial and personal needs, and is available at both levels 4 and 5. It is facilitated and organised by the College, with well organised debriefs and feedback sessions in supplement to formal assessment.

2.22 Students were consistently very positive about the experience of participating in the Cross Cultural Missions trip.

Student charter

2.23 Course handbooks contain a clear statement of responsibilities and entitlements. This is supplemented by an extracted version, 'Our commitment to you', on the College website. The College also uses a College handbook to outline expectations and arrangements for life on campus. Most students met by the review team were aware of the statements.

2.24 The College handbook was recently revised following comments from students during an external review. This was carried out by the College without the involvement of students or their elected representatives. The review team recommends that the College should systematically involve student representatives in reviewing the College handbook.

3 Public information

Summary

The quality of information produced by Mattersey Hall College for students and applicants **meets** UK expectations. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

3.1 While the College has responsibility for publicity materials for its programmes, it usually sends material to the University for approval. However, the internal systems for approval and review of published information are largely informal.

3.2 The College website clearly articulates the College's vision and mission. It contains a comprehensive range of information which students reported as being helpful. This includes information about fees, finance, course content, assessments and complaints and appeals procedures. This information was largely accurate. The College acknowledges that the lack of formal website oversight occasionally led to mistakes and the review team noted some errors, which were quickly corrected.

3.3 The College has a document portal for staff and students which increases the amount of information available to current students, including University material, documentation and policies. This is well regarded by students.

3.4 A College handbook, available online, introduces students to the College, its staff, facilities and rules. Course handbooks are also available. These include full descriptions of modules and programme specifications and a helpful outline of management structures. External examiner reports have also recently been made available to students online.

3.5 Overall, the College provides its students, applicants and other stakeholders with a good range of accurate, accessible and appropriate information. However, some outdated material/admissions inaccuracies did suggest that the College should formalise its approval and review systems for information as its online presence grows.

4 Enhancement of learning opportunities

Outcome

The enhancement of learning opportunities at the College **requires improvement to meet UK expectations**. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

4.1 The College has no single document outlining its approach to enhancement. While the team recognise that the College has a clear desire to improve students' learning opportunities, they found little evidence of a formalised, high-level strategic approach to enhancement in the documentation provided.

4.2 The College's recent learning and teaching strategy commits it to a quality assurance approach, using monitoring and review processes to ensure the continuing and improving quality of programmes. Similarly, the College's recent strategic plan relates student feedback to improving quality. However, the majority of short-term plans concern maintaining rather than proactively improving student learning opportunities.

4.3 Meetings, where enhancement is scheduled to be discussed, are dominated by operational issues rather than the planning of enhancement projects or receiving quality assurance information with a view to identifying enhancement opportunities. Similarly, external examiner reports are not directly used to promote enhancement and there are

limited opportunities for staff to disseminate good practice in a structured way with colleagues.

4.4 The review team were given details of projects and initiatives that clearly enhanced the students' experience, for example, additional pastoral lectures, opportunities for denominational accreditation, and student-led chapel services, combined with a programme of weekend church placements to implement the College's mission of 'forming the next generation of Christian leaders'. However, these did not focus on the enhancement of academic learning opportunities.

4.5 The review team concluded that while the College has some basic structures and procedures in place for a quality assurance led approach, there was little evidence of a long-term strategic approach to enhancement. The lack of a college-wide strategic approach to enhancement represents a moderate risk to the quality of students' learning opportunities to which the College is giving insufficient priority. At present, much of the appropriate College committees' business is taken up with operational issues. As a result, the Board of Studies and Senior Leadership Team are not focused on continually enhancing students' learning opportunities, or evaluating existing opportunities using a range of management information. The review team **recommends** that, by April 2014, the College should ensure that Board of Studies and Senior Leadership Team meetings fully action their remit to analyse management information and external examiner reports to develop the higher education provision.

4.6 While there are some opportunities for sharing good practice, these are not formalised, particularly regarding surveys and peer-observations. The review team **recommends** that, by April 2014, the College should develop a deliberate, college-level approach to improving the quality of student's learning opportunities for all students so that good practice is recorded and disseminated.

5 Theme: Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Each academic year, a specific theme relating to higher education provision in England and Northern Ireland is chosen for special attention by QAA's Review of College Higher Education teams. In 2012-13, the themes are the **First Year Student Experience** or **Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement**.

The review team investigated the Student Involvement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement at Mattersey Hall College. They found that the College's arrangements for involving students in quality assurance and enhancement of their learning were broadly satisfactory. The College is aware that it needs to adopt more formal processes as it moves towards greater alignment with the Quality Code, and more comprehensive involvement of its students in its procedures.

5.1 The College acknowledges the need to adopt a more strategic approach towards alignment with *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the Quality Code. The student submission noted the need for significant improvement in reciprocal communication channels. There are informal daily opportunities for student/staff interaction but there is little history of a structured approach. Although the College had student representatives previously, attendance at meetings had been low with discussions focusing more on hygiene factors than academic matters. There are no representatives from the distance-learning cohorts. The review team was able to confirm evidence of early initiatives becoming incorporated into practices. These include: a guidance document for student representatives; students becoming formal members of the Board of Studies; the Student Faculty meetings; and the inclusion of students in the Vision Day, which forms part of staff induction.

5.2 These developments have all taken place in a relatively short time and there is a need for further refinement and clarification. At the first team visit, some students were unsure of arrangements or did not feel involved in changes. There is no formal training for membership of the Board of Studies, but the College plans to approach this through a rotational process, which was described as learning on the job. The terms of reference for the Student Faculty meetings are evolving and experimental. The College's commitment towards effective student involvement should be sustained to ensure that engagement in quality assurance aspects include consideration of processes, such as annual monitoring, external examiner reports and module evaluations.

5.3 The BA handbook states that the College is committed to engaging 'appropriately with students in the development, monitoring and review of programmes and assessment strategies to ensure that they are appropriate, realistic and meets students' needs'. This aspiration is to be encouraged; currently there is little evidence of translation into reality. For example, students have not been consulted in relation to the curricular changes taking place at the time of the review, although the Board of Studies representatives were aware. The student body is not involved in the production and review of the College handbook. Students are not involved with University course committees.

5.4 There is a mutual agreement among both students and staff that closing the feedback loop is a significant issue. Early evidence demonstrates that a wide range of solutions are being considered; this momentum is to be encouraged as the College evolves an appropriate and effective student involvement strategy.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to key terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Most terms also have formal 'operational' definitions; for example, pages 17-20 of the handbook for this review method give formal definitions of threshold academic standards, learning opportunities and enhancement.

The handbook can be found on the QAA website at:

www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/rche-handbook.aspx.

If you require formal definitions of other terms, please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality:

www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx.

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **glossary** on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx.

academic standards: The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

credit(s): A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education programmes of study, expressed as 'numbers of credits' at a specific level.

enhancement: Taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of [learning opportunities](#). It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

feature of good practice: A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution or college manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

framework: A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

framework for higher education qualifications: A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*.

learning opportunities: The provision made for students' learning, including planned [programmes of study](#), teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios) and staff development.

learning outcome: What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

operational definition: A formal definition of a term, which establishes exactly what QAA means when using it in reports.

programme (of study): An approved course of study which provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

programme specifications: Published statements about the intended [learning outcomes](#) of

programmes of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

public information: Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

Quality Code: Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet.

subject benchmark statement: A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to [bachelor's degrees](#)), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

threshold academic standard: The minimum standard that a student should reach in order to gain a particular qualification or award, as set out in the [subject benchmark statements](#) and national [qualifications frameworks](#). Threshold standards are distinct from the standards of performance that students need to achieve in order to gain any particular class of award, for example a first-class bachelor's degree. See also [academic standards](#).

widening participation: Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Email enquiries@qaa.ac.uk
Website www.qaa.ac.uk

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