



Quality Review Visit of Morley College

March 2017

Key findings

QAA's rounded judgements about Morley College

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

- **There can be confidence in the likelihood that academic standards will be reliable, meet UK expectations and be reasonably comparable when students are admitted to the provider.**
- **There can be 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 Morley College. The review team advises Morley College to:

- ensure that all elected higher education student representatives are appropriately prepared and trained to undertake their role (Code of Governance, Quality Code)
- clarify its policy, including the terminology used, for course cancellations, closures and major course changes (Student Protection).

Specified improvements

The review team identified no **specified improvements**.

About this review

The review visit took place from 27 to 28 March 2017 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Gary Hargreaves
- Mr Oliver Wannell (student reviewer).

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 Morley College

Morley College is an adult education college located in London, specialising in Arts, Culture and Applied Sciences. It provides learning opportunities to approximately 13,000 students each year. Morley was founded in 1889 and has an interesting history linked to the Old Vic Theatre. The College aims to empower individuals and strengthen communities through adult education by building on its past achievements.

In 2016, the College decided to establish higher education provision as a 'distinctive but integral opportunity through which students can enhance and extend their learning for life'. At the time of the review Morley College does not offer higher education provision. However, the College has been approved to run six Higher National Diplomas (HND) under licence from Pearson. These will be delivered across the College's curriculum areas and are due to start in September 2017. The review considered the College's preparedness to deliver higher education and this is reflected in the wording of the report and rounded judgements.

Judgement area: Reliability and comparability of academic standards

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

1 The review team considered the College's documentation, which outlined how it will support the maintenance of academic standards and meet its awarding organisation's requirements. The team considered how the academic standards of the College's proposed programmes meet the baseline regulatory requirements, including the UK threshold requirements for the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and centre-defined programme specifications.

2 The College acknowledged the need for consistency in all programme specifications. The Health and Social Care HND programme specification has been identified internally as best practice and has clearly been developed fully, taking into account QAA and Pearson guidelines. There is a clear intention to use this as an exemplar template for future programmes.

3 The awarding organisation has confirmed that its programme approval and validation processes and requirements have been met and adhered to. While validation processes meet the awarding body requirements, and are affirmed in programme approval documentation with clear explanations for the College's programme teams, the College's internal validation process prior to submission had been self-identified as an area it intends to develop and further formalise. Through the processes of this first higher education programme development, more robust and rigorous internal validation processes have now been developed and implemented, although they have yet to be fully tested and embedded.

4 As programmes are not intended to commence until September 2017 there are no external examiner reports. However, the College has undertaken considerable and well documented research to confirm that the academic standards of its programmes will be 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

5 The review team found reliable, operative and robust governance arrangements in place to maintain the oversight of academic risk, with clear reporting structures that include a governor-led (chaired) Quality and Standards Committee, which reports directly to Governors through formal reporting structures. Discussions and evidence indicate that there have been careful and well planned preparations for the introduction of higher education at Morley College. These structures provide a clear framework while enabling academic freedom and collegiality.

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

6 Ultimate responsibility for setting and maintaining academic standards rests with Pearson, the awarding organisation for higher education provision at Morley College. The College has developed programme specifications with clear intended learning outcomes for each programme. While these programme specifications contain the definitive programme information for each course, the College has, with the exception of Health and Social Care (see paragraph 2), provided student-facing versions in which some of the

information is not present. While these student-facing versions may be helpful for marketing purposes, the College recognises that all of its HN programmes require a similar definitive, centre-defined programme specification that is accessible for all students and staff.

7 In addition to this, the College provides course outlines as a more publicly available source of programme information. The review team is satisfied that processes in place will ensure that the information in all three documents will be accurate. However, the College has acknowledged that this duplication may cause difficulty for students in accessing the definitive programme information and is working to streamline the documents following this transitional period and before opening the application process for programmes.

8 The College has a Higher National Assessment Policy document which is governed by the Quality and Standards Committee to ensure that its assessment procedures are fit for purpose. This policy sets out the process for the setting and marking of assessments and for providing timely feedback to students. It sets out the responsibilities for staff involved with marking and mandates programme managers to ensure that samples of all marked assessments are monitored by external examiners.

9 External examiners are appointed by Pearson and the College is responsible for acting on recommendations from external examiner reports. Actions will be collated in an annual higher education College action plan as part of the College's process for annual monitoring. The College plans to share external examiner reports with students via the College virtual learning environment (VLE).

Rounded judgement

10 The review team considered the reliability of degree standards that will be delivered at Morley College and their reasonable comparability with standards set and achieved by other providers. The team concludes that the College's arrangements are likely to meet the threshold academic standards set out in the FHEQ and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. There is likely to be sufficient oversight of the College's higher education provision within its governance structures, and its arrangements for discharging its responsibilities in maintaining the academic standards of the qualifications it delivers are likely to be effective.

11 The review team concludes that there can be confidence in the likelihood that academic standards will be reliable, meet UK expectations and be reasonably comparable 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 With no current students, the College has successfully documented its intended approach to the provision of higher education that aligns fully with the baseline regulatory requirements, with a potential for a robust operative implementation, including deliberative meeting structures and policies and processes.

13 Despite the lack of any current higher education students, the College has clear and established mechanisms to ensure that students are well represented at programme level, and this is well documented, including in the College's student feedback. Furthermore, there are clear plans to have higher education student representation included on the Student Council and the Class Representative Committee. The training of student representatives at programme level is identified by the College as an area that requires further development to ensure that higher education student representatives are suitably prepared and trained to fulfil their role. This is addressed in the Code of Governance section below. Effective representation of students was in evidence during the review visit and in documentation, for example by demonstrable involvement in the planning for the introduction of the HND programmes.

14 The effective design and delivery of programmes, including student involvement, is underpinned by the intended and clearly identified high quality teaching and support staff, providing academic and pastoral support for this new higher education provision.

15 Current students have been consulted on the College's ability to provide teaching, support staff and specialist resources. Through this feedback, and more generally, the College has identified and planned for additional resources. Both students and staff recognise that the College already had some excellent specialist resources, including well advanced identification of key higher education delivery teaching and management staff. Furthermore, there are clear processes in place to support staff with pedagogical and scholarly research.

16 There are well documented processes to ensure that assessment and assessment feedback will be timely, and supported with planned, regular cross-programme deliberative standardisation meetings to ensure consistency across programme teams, including on the timeliness of assessment feedback. The College has clear processes and policies in place in preparation for delivery, aligned to the awarding organisation's requirements, with clear evidence to support the way in which assessment processes and policy are communicated to students, and implemented by programme teams.

17 Current students (although not on higher education programmes) indicated that general feedback and assessment feedback are a strength at the College. Students also noted that there are good and regular opportunities to review and provide feedback across programmes. Furthermore, the College has made good use of the expertise of external stakeholders, employers and progression providers in developing best practice and identifying key resources, including those for both staff and students.

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

18 The College has a system of student representation which will be extended to include higher education students on both the Student Council and the Class Representative Committee. Current representation also includes two student members of the College Board of Governors. Members of the Student Council have constructed a Student Rep Constitution which has recently been amended to reflect the planned intake of higher education students. This process has been supported by the Principal of the College and was reported to, and approved by, the College Board of Governors.

19 The Board of Governors and its subcommittees already play a key role in monitoring and reviewing the student experience including data analysis, responding to student feedback and student complaints. Student governors receive the same training as all governors. The College has clearly indicated an intention for higher education students to be fully represented at programme level through membership of the Programme Management Committees and both the Student Council and the Class Representative Committee.

20 However, student representatives are currently not formally trained by the College. The review team advises that the College ensures that all elected higher education student representatives are appropriately prepared and trained to undertake their role, identifying this as an **area for development**. Staff whom the review team met also acknowledged this as an area for development.

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

21 The College has a comprehensive draft higher education admissions policy which details the process that applicants will follow. Standard applications will be considered on the basis of the personal statement, reference and qualifications. Where this information isn't available, or where applicants have non-standard entry qualifications, applicants will be interviewed and the College Recognition of Prior Learning policy may be engaged.

22 The College provides prospective students with information on courses, including course fees, through appropriate media. This information is version controlled and approved by the College's Head of Marketing. On receipt of an offer, students receive an individualised letter which further details course requirements and the terms and conditions of the offer. The College is developing an online module to be included as part of the induction for higher education students that affirms students' understanding of the terms and conditions.

23 The College has a clear higher education complaints process which is considered in the section below.

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

24 The College has a clear higher education complaints process which sets a structure for the fair and timely resolution of student complaints. The Board of Governors receives an annual report on College-wide student complaints, which will include complaints from higher education students.

25 The College will follow the formal Academic Appeals Policy, as defined by Pearson, and is developing its own internal process to align with this. This will be communicated to students via the VLE and will be referenced in the higher education student handbooks.

26 The College has a Higher Education Cancellation and Closure Policy. This policy sets out procedures that are designed to support students in the event of course cancellation. However, the extent to which the policy applies to courses that will be underway in the future or have students enrolled is unclear. Furthermore, there is some confused terminology in the policy, for example the interchangeable use of a course variation and a course change, and it is unclear whether the policy does or does not apply to these. This was recognised by the College during the review team visit as an area that required clarification, and the College intends to amend its policies so that they are coherent to ensure clarity of these processes for students and staff. Therefore, the review team advises that the College clarifies its policy, including the terminology used, for course cancellations, closures and major course changes, identifying this as an **area for development**.

Rounded judgement

27 The review team considered the likely quality of the student academic experience at Morley College for higher education provision, including student outcomes. The team is confident that the provider's arrangements are likely to meet the baseline regulatory requirements when it starts to deliver higher education provision.

28 The review team advises two areas for development. The first is that the College ensures that all elected higher education student representatives are appropriately prepared and trained to undertake their role. The second is that the College clarifies its policy, including the terminology used, for course cancellations, closures and major course changes. The College is aware of these requirements and the review team is confident that these areas will be addressed prior to the provision commencing delivery in September 2017.

29 The review team concludes that there can be 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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