



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of NS3 UK Ltd t/a Centre for Nutrition Education and Lifestyle Management, April 2016

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 NS3 Ltd t/a Centre for Nutrition Education and Lifestyle Management (the Centre) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance its higher education provision from the February 2014 [Review for Specific Course Designation](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 The Centre has 235 students enrolled, which represents an eight per cent decrease since the review visit in February 2014, mostly due to low numbers enrolling on the BSc (Hons) Nutritional Science in January 2015. The Centre continues to offer undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications in nutrition validated by Middlesex University. As a result of the Centre's decision to withdraw from continued course designation in May 2015, new undergraduate students are being recruited on to distance learning modes of study, though students enrolled before April 2015 are continuing to study through attendance or distance modes.

3 The Centre received a letter from Middlesex University in March 2016 terminating the partnership as a result of the University's decision to close their integrative medicine provision. Negotiations with the School of Science and Technology (Department of Natural Sciences) at Middlesex University have resulted in the partnership being transferred to the Department of Natural Sciences, and on the 5 May 2016 a subsequent letter was issued by the University withdrawing the notice of termination. Students were informed of the change to the partnership arrangement. As a result of the changes to the partnership arrangements, the need to investigate teach-out arrangements, and that there has been no annual monitoring visit since the Review for Specific Course Designation in February 2014, an extended monitoring visit took place.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The Centre continues to build effectively on all areas of good practice identified in the 2014 review report (paragraphs 7-9). The Centre has implemented the required actions against the four recommendations (paragraph 10). An action plan was devised and put in place in 2014-15 with progress monitored and evaluated through deliberative meetings. The admissions system continues to be well managed (paragraph 11) and the team saw clear evidence of effective annual monitoring (paragraph 12). The Centre undertakes annual monitoring at programme and institution level, and a comprehensive report is forwarded to the awarding body annually (paragraph 12). Student achievement and completion rates are high.

5 An Action Plan was produced in response to the letter notifying the Centre that Middlesex University would be terminating the partnership as a result of its decision to close its integrative medicine provision. The Action Plan sets out a clear strategy for informing staff

and students of developments along with actions to explore alternative university partnerships to allow for longer term sustainability of the Centre. With the transfer of the partnership to the Department of Natural Sciences, a new link tutor will be nominated, and the Manager of Academic Partnerships will continue to be the key point of contact.

6 With the withdrawal of specific course designation, all undergraduate students recruited since 2015 are self-funding and studying through distance learning. Students were informed of the loss of student loan funding for new students through Newsletters and Course Board Meetings attended by student representatives. Students enrolled prior to Easter 2015 continue to receive their student loans and to study through attendance mode.

7 Good practices identified in the Action Plan from the 2014 review continue to be built upon, including the effective engagement of students in the quality assurance process. Feedback from students is collected through online surveys and responses are carefully analysed and responded to. However, student engagement with online surveys has been low albeit improving with regard to mature distance-learning students, and the Centre is taking steps to try and improve response rates through consultations with students.

8 Actions to address matters raised by students are included in reports produced by module leaders, programme leaders and heads of level. Students also provide regular feedback through end-of-module surveys. Reports are discussed at Head of Level meetings and at Boards of Study attended by student representatives, and actions agreed. The Head of Education is responsible for monitoring progress and oversight is maintained by the Senior Academic Team in line with the Centre's deliberative structure.

9 All areas of good practice continue to be maintained and developed. Lectures are recorded and available to all students online irrespective of their mode of study, which students value. New cameras and backup systems have been purchased to produce better quality video and faster download times, and staff have received training in the use of the new equipment. Staff benefit from development opportunities, including participation in teacher training, external seminars and conferences, and in-house development days focusing on workshops which enhance pedagogy. The engagement with alumni to support their continuing professional development has been enhanced to include use of online forums, and alumni have now also been given access to resources on the virtual learning environment.

10 Clear and effective progress has been made to improve management of provision linked to the four recommendations set out in the Action Plan. The role of the Ethics Committee has been formalised. Members of the Ethics Committee have undertaken advisory roles as part of Programme Subject Review and in advising on student complaints. The student management system has been updated to track the timely marking of assessments, and commentaries on summative marking indicate late marking rates have fallen substantially. Work is continuing to review assessment timelines to reflect the demand of marking larger pieces of work such as research projects. The Centre is working to further clarify timelines for release of feedback to students through publishing a marking calendar. Procedures for formalising changes to published information have been shared with staff and new software has been introduced to enhance accessibility and version control. The Head of Quality Assurance retains overall responsibility for the currency and accuracy of all information. Evaluation of the Professional Mentor service indicates that students greatly value the group and individual support they receive. This is being further enhanced by the introduction of individual support sessions.

11 A robust admissions procedure is in place. All applicants complete an application form available on the Centre's website, and the Confirmation Agreement documents show how entry requirements are met. English language skills to the international English

Language Testing System (IELTS) level 6.5 are initially assessed through the completion of a written statement, which also provides evidence of commitment to study. Students are also invited to attend open days and all applicants are interviewed. Prior qualifications are checked and for overseas applications the Centre uses the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) to check for equivalency.

12 The Centre produces a comprehensive Annual Monitoring Report, covering all academic provision, which is submitted to Middlesex University at the end of February each year. The Report draws on student completion and progression data; reports from external examiners; annual reports from module and programme leaders, as well as qualitative feedback gathered through surveys. Annual Monitoring Reports are made available to all staff and students. The Report is considered at a range of deliberative meetings to identify key actions for enhancement. The University reviews the Report and provides a brief feedback report to the Centre via the Link Tutor, which informs continuing action planning for the next academic year.

13 Progression and achievement on programmes is very good, with 28 intakes having 100 per cent achievement, across all cohorts, though the numbers in each cohort are small, ranging from single students to groups of 19 enrolments. Success rates on the BSc (Hons) Nutritional Science full-time mode are also high with students who commenced their studies in 2012 and 2013 having achieved 100 per cent success rates. Withdrawal rates among mature students on the distance learning modes of study have led to overall success rates of 75 per cent. Arrangements are in place to teach out the BSc Nutritional Therapy to ensure students complete by 2018.

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

14 The Centre continues to make clear use of external reference points including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) to inform policies and procedures, as well as the development of professional practice skills. All provision is accredited by Middlesex University and complies with University regulations which act as a point of reference for the management of programmes. Clear use is made of Subject Benchmark Statements in the development of programmes and the framing of assessment. The Centre has recently met requirements for accreditation by the Nutritional Therapy Education Commission for routes leading to nutritional therapy practice, and professional standards are referenced and integrated into practice-related modules and assessment frameworks. The Centre's policies and procedures are referenced to the Quality Code, as is key guidance set out in the Education and Quality Enhancement Handbook. The Ethics Committee Policy, which informs the final stage of the complaints procedure, is referenced to the British Association for Nutritional Therapy professional guidance and those of the Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council regulations.

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 Peter Green, Reviewer, and Mrs Mandy Hobart, Coordinator, on 6 and 7 July 2016.

QAA1707 - R4876 - Aug 16

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2016
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050
Web www.qaa.ac.uk