



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill College), June 2017

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 Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill College) (the College) has made commendable progress with implementing the action plan from the June 2016 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 At the time of the monitoring visit there was a total of 197 students studying on the College's programmes validated by Middlesex University, its awarding body. Of these, 127 were studying at levels 4 to 6 and 15 at level 7. Of the remaining 55, one student was on a special programme and the rest were attending one or more individual modules but not currently registered for a formal award. This represents an 8 per cent decline from the previous year. There was also a decline in 2016 enrolments compared with the previous two years (38 in September 2016 compared with 58 in September 2015 and 48 in 2014). Following a review of its postgraduate programmes in November 2015 the College admitted students to new level 7 programmes in Theology. Continuing students were given the option to remain on their existing award or transfer to the new award. The majority elected to take this latter option, with two part-time students remaining on their original programme.

3 In January 2017 the College suffered the sudden death of its Principal. Following this unexpected loss, the Academic Vice-Principal took on the role of Acting Principal. There have been two new permanent academic teaching appointments - in Old Testament, and Hebrew and Homiletics (the art of sacred speaking) - the latter being a new appointment. The College intends to appoint a President to assume an outward-facing role and work closely with the current Acting Principal. The support staff team has been further strengthened by the appointment of a Head of Marketing, Communication and Stakeholder Management; an Admissions and Marketing Events Support Officer; a Human Relations and Safeguarding Manager; and an Academic Administration Officer. These appointments conclude a review of College support structures that was initiated in February 2014.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The College has made commendable progress since the June 2016 review. The College's approach to the implementation of the action plan has ensured that good practice identified in the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) has been sustained and further enhanced. The Communications Workshops have been sustained and enhanced through their closer integration with the Homiletics modules. Academic, pastoral and personal support has been strengthened through the ongoing practice of the Fellowship Groups, and other initiatives remain under discussion. Communication to students and other stakeholders remains a priority for the College and this work is being enhanced through the appointment of a Head of Marketing, Communications and Stakeholder Management. In terms of the recommendations of the review, the remits and relationships of College committees have been clarified and for each committee terms of reference and constitutions have been clearly specified. A comprehensive policy and procedure for programme design

has been approved and will be used for the next phase of revalidations, which are due to commence in autumn 2017. A single Assessment Policy has been approved. Finally, the management of placements has been strengthened through the introduction of a formal placements agreement and a placement tracking system. There are comprehensive arrangements for the recruitment, selection and admission of students. Annual monitoring is well embedded, and student data indicates exceptionally high levels of retention and achievement.

5 The action plan has been actively monitored through the College's committee system to ensure that all recommendations from the previous review have been addressed. Most actions have been completed and where they have not, the College is on target to complete them. The College is particularly cognisant of the benefits of evaluating the impacts of actions taken with regard to the action plan and this evaluation is proceeding in line with the published timetable.

6 The College develops its students' abilities to deliver sermons through the continued provision of communication workshops. The effectiveness of these, which are valued by students, has been enhanced by steps taken to facilitate closer integration between the workshops and the Homiletics modules, and a new teaching appointment in this specialism.

7 Fellowship Groups continue to be a strength of the College's arrangements for the academic, pastoral and personal support for students. This has led the College to assess ways of enhancing and coordinating all of its pastoral and support work generally and to include its part-time students in particular. Additional initiatives are under consideration to further enhance the College's student support strategy.

8 The College continues to ensure effective communication with its students and other stakeholders. Communication forms an important aspect of the new Strategic Plan, which is shortly to be approved by the College Council. The development of this plan has been fully informed by the views of students, staff and other stakeholders, and the appointment of a Head of Marketing, Communications and Stakeholder Management is intended to further strengthen the effectiveness of the College's approach to communication.

9 The College has reviewed its committees, and its structures have been informed by practice elsewhere in the higher education sector as well as relevant sections of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). Terms of reference have been revised for four key committees: the Academic Board, the Courses Evaluation Committee, the Monitoring and Evaluation Panel, and the Assessment Board. A structure diagram indicates the relationships between committees and the reporting lines. All have been approved by the Academic Board. The College plans to evaluate the operation of the structure over its first year of operation, but early signs are that it is already beneficial in enabling the College to have an overview of the management of academic standards and quality.

10 The College has also reviewed a number of its policies and procedures, a key one being that for programme development and approval. The Academic Board has approved a comprehensive process that mirrors that of the University, while at the same time reflecting local imperatives. Particular reference has been made to requirements for programme teams to consult with a wide range of stakeholders including students, the Church of England and academics. There is a requirement for approval panels, which are chaired by the University, to include at least two academic members from institutions external to both the College and the University. Undergraduate courses are due to commence revalidation in autumn 2017 when the policy and process will be implemented and the College will be able to assess its effectiveness.

11 The College has developed a single assessment policy covering its provision, which will be shortly approved by the Academic Board before implementation in September 2017. The policy has been influenced by the College's new Strategic Plan and particularly by its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Enhancement Strategy. It was also informed by reference to the Quality Code. Benefits are expected to accrue from the policy's overt reference to formative assessment and links with the College's three-way teaching observation process, which will enable the dissemination of good practice. As part of this work, a second-marking template has been introduced that is already reaping benefits in providing for the more systematic recording of the second-marking process and associated monitoring.

12 The College has taken steps to formalise the planning and management of its placement provision. This includes the requirement for formal placement agreements, which clearly set out the responsibilities of students, the College and the placement provider and supervisor. A logging process has been introduced to ensure that all providers have returned the agreements before students can embark on a placement. The College has a plan in place to evaluate the effectiveness of these actions.

13 A substantial amount of work has been undertaken in regard to the drafting of new and separate policies for academic appeals and complaints. This work has been informed by a number of external imperatives including membership of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). At the same time, the College has taken the opportunity to review and revise its policies on plagiarism and academic misconduct. The new policies will shortly be considered for approval by the Academic Board for implementation from September 2017.

14 The College continues to operate a rigorous admissions process in line with its agreement with the University. The College's website outlines the process for potential applicants that its admissions team implements. Students voiced their satisfaction with the entire admissions process, which includes an interview for all applicants where they meet staff and students. This enables their suitability and motivation to study to be assessed. Academic and, where relevant, language qualifications are verified. The College has recently reviewed its admissions policy with the help of external consultants, and recommendations for enhancements have been implemented. These include adjustments to the application form to provide for the collection of additional data and the provision of detailed guidance notes to help applicants complete the form. The College therefore takes all reasonable steps to ensure that it admits students with the relevant academic and English language qualification and who have the potential to benefit from and succeed on their course. Further enhancements to the admissions process are planned over the next two years.

15 The College prepares a detailed annual monitoring report for submission to the University. This report requires reflection on the delivery of all courses to include feedback from students and external examiners and a detailed analysis of data. The associated action plan is monitored by the College's Quality Enhancement Committee. This action plan is subsumed into an Institutional Action Plan, which also takes into consideration any actions arising from external reviews, including those of QAA and the Church. The College also uses a Good Practice Register, which aims to ensure that good practice is effectively disseminated. The College takes a robust approach to the annual monitoring of its provision and the monitoring of matters arising from the process that require action.

16 College student data indicates exceptionally positive levels of retention and achievement on all courses, with most courses achieving retention and achievement levels of 100 per cent. The College has a policy of enabling students to progress through their courses and levels. This means that it is common for students to start at a lower level and progress to higher level courses as and when further funding is available. On occasions, this may lead to retention rates on individual courses appearing to be comparatively low.

An example of this is the FdA Theology, which in 2015-16 had an apparent retention rate of 33 per cent (for nine enrolled students) but six students had in fact transferred to the BA course.

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

17 College policies and procedures are fully aligned with the expectations of the Quality Code and this was confirmed by the successful outcome of the June 2016 review. The College has continued to consult relevant chapters of the Quality Code in reviewing and updating its policies. The College also makes use of a number of other external reference points, including the regulations of its awarding body, Middlesex University, and the requirements of the Church. In April 2016 there was a Periodic External Review conducted on behalf of the House of Bishops. This resulted in a creditable outcome of 'Confidence with Qualifications' and the College is currently working through an action plan in response to recommendations made by this review. The College is not currently a member of the Church Common Awards Scheme, although this is under review. The College has engaged with relevant external agencies in formulating its policies as, for example, its Prevent Strategy (HEFCE) and complaints and appeals policy (OIA).

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

18 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.

19 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mrs Amanda Greasom, Reviewer, and Professor Nicholas Goddard, Coordinator, on 20 June 2017.

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