



Initial Review: report of the interim monitoring visit at Oldham College, February 2015

Section 1: Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided before and at the monitoring visit, the monitoring team concludes that Oldham College is making acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the [Initial Review in March 2013](#).

Section 2: Background

2 QAA carried out an Initial Review at Oldham College (the College) in March 2013. At that time, the College published an action plan in response to the outcomes of the Review. The aim of interim monitoring is to provide information for the public on whether or not the College is making acceptable progress with implementing the action plan. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the College of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next review.

3 The interim monitoring visit was carried out by Ian Welch, Review Manager, and Kevin Kendall, Reviewer, on 12 February 2015.

Section 3: Changes since the Initial Review

4 The College is planning to introduce new courses from September 2015 and September 2016 to be validated by the University of Teesside, with the first validation events to be held in June and July 2015. The last intake of University of Huddersfield students to University Campus Oldham (UCO) will be in September 2015.

5 Student numbers are similar to the time of the Initial Review, due to the stability of course portfolios. The only new programme is the BA Games Art, which is validated by the University of Huddersfield and started in September 2014. The College also plans to offer some new foundation degrees from September 2015, with an identified local need, which will offer progression from level 3 provision at the College.

Section 4: Update on good practice

6 The College has produced a comprehensive, clear and accurate course handbook template. The students state that the course handbook contains all the information that they need. The Course Teams populate the template with specific course information and distribute it at induction. It is also available electronically on the virtual learning environment (VLE).

7 Academic and vocational skills linked to employability are a key strand of the College's teaching and learning strategy for higher education. The College has strong employer links and has Employer Advisory Boards for the main subjects. Every course has a bank of contextualised resources relating to employment and students confirm that the courses prepare them well for future employment. The College is also participating in the Higher Education Academy's Strategic Enhancement Programme: Embedding Employability into the Curriculum.

8 Staff continue to make a very effective contribution to student learning through their accessibility, academic expertise and vocational networking. In addition to timetabled teaching sessions, students have group and individual tutorials to support their learning.

9 The Academic Skills Unit continues to provide a valuable resource to support learning and offers both drop-in surgeries and scheduled workshops for all students.

Section 5: Update on recommendations

10 The use of the standardised template for course handbooks has solved the issue of inconsistent terminology being used.

11 There has been significant changes to the staffing structure for higher education which has led to improvements in communication and sharing good practice, for example, between Business, Construction and Project Management in the new faculty structure. Recent re-examination of continuing professional development across the College has improved overall scholarly activity and encouraged staff to embark on new qualifications.

12 The College has made good progress in developing systems for recording student perception data. A Code of Practice on Student Feedback has been developed and formal student feedback is gathered through entry, induction, module and course questionnaires.

13 The development of the VLE has been very effective and has been operational since September 2014. Students are able to access course information; teaching and learning materials; policies and procedures, and a link to the University's VLE.

14 The College faculties have established key employer contacts and have built a database of employer links which will be incorporated into the College Central Resource Management database. Higher education is also represented on the established College employer engagement groups.

15 The Student Charter has been published and brought to the attention of students. It is available in hard copy through posters and electronic copy on the VLE.

16 A formal system for ensuring that information is fit for purpose, accurate and complete has been introduced and the review team confirms its effectiveness.

Section 6: Update on affirmations

17 The College has developed an effective committee structure for managing higher education. Issues identified in the HE Management Group can be passed to the Principalship if they need a strategic decision. The Advisory Board is particularly significant as it includes governors and provides a challenge to College ideas. Items also come from the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Group, and the Quality Improvement Group which inform policy and practice.

18 The development of the Peer Observation of Teaching Principles and Guidelines has been particularly effective. New staff have been the initial focus of the system, followed by a focus on more experienced staff. Staff have appreciated the value of sharing good practice, particularly across faculties, and sharing ideas on the learning process between observer and observee.

Section 7: Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

19 The College has been proactive in addressing the Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education¹ and other external benchmarks through all areas within the scope of this review. Some examples are given in the following paragraphs.

20 Expectation B3 is addressed through the Teaching and Learning Strategy, the higher education professional development plan, the scholarly activity application and guidelines and the Peer Observation Procedure.

21 Expectation B4 is addressed through the comprehensive tutorial programme for students and through the work of the Academic Skills Unit, both of which the students find valuable.

22 Expectation B5 is addressed in the action plan through engagement of students as partners in the management of higher education through representation at higher education groups and committees.

23 Expectation B7 is addressed through the use of external examiner reports and the completed action from the Initial Review to ensure that the reports can provide specific feedback to the College about its programmes which can then be discussed as a standard item on Course Committee agendas.

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¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.gaa.ac.uk/quality-code