



Educational Oversight: report of the extended monitoring visit of Redcliffe College, June 2015

Section 1: Outcome of the extended monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the extended monitoring visit, the review team concludes that Redcliffe College (the College) has made acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the [previous monitoring visit](#) in June 2014.

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The College is part way through a process of considerable change since the last monitoring visit. The residential undergraduate course is being phased out and the larger MA programmes delivered through blended learning have been rationalised. The College intends to concentrate on developing its postgraduate course offer. The College continues to offer its programmes on behalf of the University of Gloucestershire (the University).

3 The College plans to relinquish its substantial campus by January 2016 and start to relocate its administrative and teaching accommodation into Cathedral Close, Gloucester, in September 2015. This will provide a library, student facilities, classroom and administrative spaces. Students currently in the second year of the BA will continue next year with some changes to their teaching location and residential accommodation. First year students have found places at other colleges.

4 Management and committee structures are being reorganised with changes to the membership of the Academic Board and a revised committee structure. The intended effect of these changes is to involve course leaders more closely in academic management.

5 Student numbers in 2014-15 have continued to expand to a total of 150 from 145 at the last monitoring visit. Of these, 28 students are enrolled on undergraduate programmes and 122 on postgraduate programmes. The core staff establishment is maintained at six full-time and five part-time tutors.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

6 The College continues to make acceptable progress on the recommendations from the 2012 Review for Educational Oversight. Some actions have been fully addressed and others have been satisfactorily progressed. The developments indicated in the last monitoring report have been implemented and are working well. Implementation of the separation of the roles of the Board of Trustees, senior management team, and Academic Board enables a clear division of responsibilities for strategic and academic issues. The Academic Board works well as the academic committee advising the senior management team, drawing on the work of subcommittees including the faculty meeting, course committees and boards of examiners.

7 The College maintains the academic standards and policies of its validating body, and has its own effective procedures for managing academic standards, including a quality handbook. It has contextualised University policies on matters such as personal tutorials and

mitigating circumstances for implementation within the College context. There are current discussions about the application of some University policies at the College which will be included in a forthcoming partnership review.

8 The College has made considerable progress in developing its virtual learning environment (VLE), establishing staff guidance on the minimum content to be provided for modules. Students confirmed that the VLE was very useful as the main source of learning material and for the submission of all assessments. The University has identified as good practice the use of the VLE for digital assessment submission and return. However, the College has no system to audit the use of the VLE and share developing good practice.

9 The College action plan included further development of student support. A review of arrangements aiming to enhance student support, especially for distance learners, commenced with a consultation with students at the MA summer school in May 2015. Action to provide more timely reading prior to classes, especially for the summer school, was completed in May 2015; however, there is no provision in the action plan to check that the action is sustained.

10 The College has processes for monitoring and reviewing quality through discussion of its action plan, and good practice, as standard items on the agenda at course committees, faculty meetings, and Academic Board. The action plan is compiled from a range of sources including external examiners' reports, recommendations from validation panels, and student feedback. A comprehensive annual monitoring report is prepared for the validating body. However, a review of the minutes of meetings showed that actions are not recorded and followed up systematically.

11 Although the Principal indicated that in a small college, matters were often addressed in other meetings, the College has not yet developed an effective system to ensure the continual enhancement of provision. The completion of actions is not routinely tracked with success indicators and systematic evaluation. Improvements beyond the action plan have been driven by strategic changes in provision and location, which require the College to provide more comprehensive support for blended learning. These changes have the potential for further enhancement of the student experience.

12 Student feedback is captured formally and informally. Students complete a formal evaluation at the end of each module, and course committees receive and discuss the feedback. The College is reviewing the process of gathering module feedback, and consulted with students at the MA summer school in May 2015; the outcome remains to be determined.

13 Students are represented at all levels in the College and the Chair of the Student Committee is a member of the Academic Board. This ensures that students are informed and consulted on changes in a timely and effective manner. Overall, the College has communicated effectively with staff and students during a period of considerable change and maintained a strong sense of community in the College. The change process is being effectively managed.

14 The admissions process is thorough and, along with the recognition of prior learning, is operated according to the policies of the University. The forthcoming partnership review will consider further the respective responsibilities for admissions. Prospective applicants obtain details of entry requirements from the College website. The application form requires students to explain their motivation for study, and this is explored at interview. The College obtains academic and personal references before an offer of a place is made. Students find the admissions process to be fair and rigorous, and the programme structure enables students to enrol on the course best suited to their needs. The undergraduate BA (Hons) programme also has exit points at certificate and diploma level, while the MA programme has exit points at

postgraduate certificate and diploma level. After admission, students are able to transfer to shorter or longer courses.

15 The College records data on enrolments by course and statistics on progression, withdrawal and achievement at different exit levels in annual monitoring reports to the University. However, the statistics do not disaggregate categories such as gender and disability, and are not helpful for tracking the progress of cohorts. Tracking retention, progression and completion rates more clearly to identify outcomes in each programme will be an essential part of managing student learning opportunities through blended learning.

16 The College has a range of mechanisms to track individual students' progress. All students have tutors, who undertake termly reviews of progress. The electronic submission of assignments enables tutors to quickly identify and follow up any late submissions. Since student numbers are small, individual students' progress is routinely discussed in faculty meetings (albeit unminuted) and at examination boards. Additionally, the Principal holds exit interviews with all students.

17 The College conducts assessment rigorously in accordance with the requirements of the University. Assessed work is marked and moderated internally. Dissertations are marked independently by two assessors and marks discussed and reconciled. All work is further moderated by the University link tutor before it is sent to external examiners. College assessors have detailed discussions of the marks awarded for each criteria when marking dissertations. External examiners' reports are considered within College quality assurance processes and action points agreed. Students' assessed work is normally returned within four weeks following the submission deadline. External examiners and students acknowledge the excellent detailed feedback on assessments. Staff use plagiarism-detection software where academic malpractice is suspected.

18 The College has approved and is implementing a research strategy, including the launch of a research blog to enhance support and information on research especially for MA students. As yet, students do not routinely use the blog; however, as blended learning is extended, it will become increasingly important as a resource.

19 Most actions identified by the College and during QAA reviews, have led to improvement, and areas under development do not have the potential to put quality and standards at risk. The College has made acceptable progress in managing academic standards and in managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities during a period of transition.

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

20 The College has continued to make progress in the use of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) to support the quality assurance of its provision. Course and policy documents include specific reference to the Quality Code and the Code is considered at course team meetings. Alignment is assured through the use of the University's quality assurance systems.

21 Despite references in student handbooks and at student induction to the Quality Code, students' awareness is slight. Staff engagement is more substantial and they contributed reflections on the draft revision to the Subject Benchmark Statements for theology. However, the use of the Quality Code to deliver enhancement remains to be developed.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

22 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.

23 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr John Hurley, Coordinator, and Dr Elaine Crosthwaite, Reviewer, on 23 and 24 June 2015.

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