



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of Moorlands College, May 2019

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that Moorlands College (the College) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the [May 2018 Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

Changes since the last QAA review

2 The College has 299 students registered across three higher education programmes validated by the University of Gloucestershire (the University). Since the review in 2018, the University approved the MA in Language, Community and Development (MA LCD). Students are currently being recruited to the first phase, the Postgraduate Certificate, starting in September 2019. In addition, students studying a similar programme at another provider will transfer directly into the second phase, the Postgraduate Diploma. The College has also entered into a Collaboration Agreement with Wycliffe Bible Translators. Wycliffe provides some financial support and recommends the programme to its members: the College uses its standard admission procedures to determine whether to offer a place to an applicant. There are no changes to the number of staff since the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (HER (AP)), with a total of 89 staff across the main campus in Christchurch and regional centres, including academic and professional services staff employed in a full-time and fractional capacity. However, a new Principal started at the College in January. In June 2018 the College received a Silver Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award for one year and has since made a four-year submission. The College also received confirmation from the Office for Students of its registration as a higher education provider in October 2018.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 Following the HER (AP) review, an action plan was developed, approved by the Principal and reviewed and revised by Academic Board. The annual return further outlines the progress made against the good practice and recommendations. The review team met students and staff during the visit and considered the Colleges return and supporting documents, concluding that the College is continuing its good practice and progress has been made in response to the six recommendations, with most having been addressed. Although limited progress has been made in respect of the system for managing library resources, senior management outlined policies being considered. Further detail is provided in paragraph 8. In the case of revising the information policy, the College can do more, specifically in relation to the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Equality Act 2010. This is discussed in paragraphs 11 and 12. The review team, therefore, concludes that the College has made acceptable progress in responding to the good practice and recommendations as set out in the action plan, with effective oversight maintained by the Academic Board.

4 Good practice in the integration of theory and practice in the development of programmes has continued with the design of the MA LCD. An Academic Development

Group met regularly to produce, and review programme documentation and the programme was approved in February 2019. The programme is structured in three phases with a cross-cultural internship between each phase and a focus on students building on their professional experience. The teaching team is informed by current practice and practitioners support delivery of the programme.

5 The good practice of the vocationally-relevant placement settings continues. There is a supervisor handbook for each type of placement. Supervisors also receive one-to-one briefings and training videos are available. The review team was informed of the strong multi-layered, pastoral support provided to students through tutorial guidance and careful matching of student to placement. Advice was given to students to help them choose a study mode to suit their circumstances. National Student Survey (2017-18) results support the view that student satisfaction is high at 95 per cent meeting the 2018 benchmark and 12 points above the sector average; similarly, 98 per cent of postgraduate students are satisfied overall, 15 per cent above the national results for the sector.

6 Two recommendations relate to the identification and successful transition of direct-entry students. A survey of such students was undertaken, issues identified, and a flowchart created and approved by Academic Board. Staff were thus informed of the direct-entry students admitted in September 2018.

7 To satisfy the recommendation to identify informal complaints, Course Leaders record issues as they arise and report them to Academic Board. The latter approved this change and the new approach is workable. Students are informed of the complaints procedure on the virtual learning environment (VLE); they understand the role of student representatives in raising issues at Course Committee and are aware of the conduits for presenting informal and formal complaints.

8 The action plan responds to the recommendation to better manage library resources through a review of costs and benefits with a timescale for development of a system for secure loan of books and purchase of eBooks. Undergraduate and postgraduate students report that approximately half of the recommended books cannot be found on the shelves, they contend this is due to a lack of penalties for late return of books. The College believes that students take books without formal check-out and managing loan periods for the multiplicity of student attendance modes is problematic. Senior staff indicate that the circulation policy, including borrowing rights and return of books by post, is work in progress. While a suitable eBook provider has recently been identified and the library loan system company can supply a module for late return fees, limited progress has been made with no documented timescale.

9 The College Information Policy has been reviewed, updated and approved by Academic Board. Students report effective communication during application and induction. Placement marking criteria have been adapted and communicated to supervisors, improving students perceptions of supervisor consistency. In place of lengthy emails to students the College is endeavouring to communicate primarily via the VLE, including upload of videos. A termly email update has been introduced for staff. Academic Board discussed a survey of communication issues in late 2018 and communication is still a priority.

10 Senior managers and Course Leaders met to discuss enhancement, to review the Enhancement Policy and to articulate a provider-level strategy. As a result, Course Committees identify and report good practice to Academic Board to determine whether practice should be shared more widely. In light of the recent appointment of the Principal, new initiatives may be piloted and, if appropriate, embedded across the College. The review team was informed that the College may explore blended learning, to facilitate recruitment

from a wider geographical area, and consider whether placements, a high-risk feature of the programmes, could be simplified.

11 The College is an ecumenical Christian college and applies academic entrance requirements that also comprise a religious ethos to its programmes including the BA Applied Theology (Youth and Community Work), a vocational training programme accredited by the Joint Negotiating Committee of the National Youth Agency. Admitting students who share a religion or belief, over and above others, to the BA Applied Theology (Youth and Community work) programme, does not appear to comply with guidance on equality and diversity designed for admission for institutions, as produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The review team noted the course entrance requirements as validated by the University are worded differently in the programme specification and the College website.

12 As part of the application process, and prior to an obligatory interview, applicants for the campus-based programmes are required to complete a placement matching form that requests personal information, such as marital status and names of children. Students indicate they are happy to provide these details, and to respond to personal questions at interview, because they understand the College to be pastorally motivated. Once applicants are offered a place, they are sent the Student-College Contract: Terms and Conditions, which refers to GDPR. Consequently, it would appear applicants are not informed about the use of their personal data, nor its retention period, prior to the offer of a place. It is unclear, therefore, how these practices align to GDPR.

13 Students report that assessment learning outcomes and marking criteria are clear and feedback is useful and relevant. Undergraduate students report a wide variety of assessment methods; however postgraduate students indicate a diet of essays. There is a broad range of assessment methods listed in the recently approved MA LCD, but this is difficult to check as assessment portfolios conceal the detail of assessment. There is a robust system for assessing placements, including production of a student portfolio. Supervisors provide staged reports, moderated by the placement coordinator. Students express concern about the reflective essay assessment due to the difficulty of evidencing National Occupational Standards for youth work competencies within the word length. Tutors described changes currently being made to the assessment to address this by spreading the competencies over the three years of the programme.

14 Achievement rates for the postgraduate programme show 70 per cent (12 from 17) of students completed the final award, 18 per cent (three students) exited with an intermediate award, and two students (12 per cent) exited without any award. In the case of the undergraduate programmes, retention is reported to be 93 percent. Completion rates indicate that 81 per cent (50) of students completed with an award, with two (3 per cent) students exiting without an award and nine (15 per cent) students continuing.

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

15 The programme learning outcomes for the recently approved MA in LCD are mapped against the professional translation standards of SIL International Standard Learning Objectives and align with the Subject Benchmark Statement: Linguistics. Existing applied theology programmes align with the Subject Benchmark Statement: Theology and religious studies and the BA Applied Theology (Youth and Community Work) is accredited by the National Youth Agency. The periodic review of the partnership, by the University of Gloucestershire, was held in the week prior to the QAA annual monitoring visit. The review team was informed that the College aims to apply for degree awarding powers during the next academic year.

Background to the monitoring visit

16 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the providers 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.

17 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Jenny Gilbert, Reviewer, and Ms. Rishma Dattani, QAA Officer, on 22 May 2019.

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