

Review for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of St John's College Nottingham, June 2013

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 St John's College Nottingham has made acceptable progress in implementing the action plan from the June 2012 [Review for Educational Oversight](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 The College has 342 higher education students, which is 15 more than at the review in June 2012. The teaching staff in the academic year 2011-12 comprised eight full-time and five part-time staff. For 2012-13, this has increased by one full-time and one part-time member of staff. The intention is to move the validation of approved ordination routes for students in all theological colleges under the auspices of the Church of England to the University of Durham from September 2014. Planning for this is already under way. However, the validation of some programmes will remain with the University of Chester after September 2014.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The College has made acceptable progress on all the recommendations although in some cases there is a need for further development, which it recognises. It is using a systematic and detailed approach to the action plan to build on good practice and address the recommendations of the 2012 review report.

4 The good practice of the additional support for students provided by proactive library staff and access to online resources continues to develop positively. Students praised the library staff for providing effective support for their learning.

5 The College has clarified its management responsibilities and organisational structures. Key new posts have been identified and mostly filled. The Directorate meets regularly and the Principal's report to Council is an effective reporting mechanism. The Academic Development Group provides a clear focus for the development of policy. The College plans to complete all the organisational changes by January 2014.

6 There have been important improvements to the student experience. Student representation on committees is significantly more effective. Improvements to the induction process have resulted in greater student satisfaction. Improved materials have been prepared for the next round of induction. The timely return of marked work has increased considerably. The College effectively monitors the marking deadlines and is setting targets for further improvement. Electronic submission of assignments is helping to reduce turnaround times. Appropriate access to academic guidance and support is now available to all students.

7 The College has made acceptable progress in developing staff and monitoring their performance. It now uses a simplified and more strategic approach to staff development. To maximise attendance from part-time and external tutors, academic staff development is mainly through end-of-year planning and review days, and the pre-term faculty conference. For example, a recent staff development day included the enhancement of assessment practice and training on the virtual learning environment. Academic staff have opportunities for undertaking research supported by the availability of study leave on a planned basis. Procedures are in place for linking appraisal and peer observation with staff development although the process has yet to complete a full cycle.

8 Satisfactory procedures for ensuring the accuracy, completeness and consistency of public information are in place. Finalisation of a policy formalising all the procedures awaits the appointment of a replacement for Director of Communications who left recently. Suitable policies guide students and staff in the use of websites, blogs and social media.

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

9 The College makes effective use of the requirements and guidance in the Churches' Quality in Formation Framework in the development and oversight of the programmes.

10 The College makes acceptable use of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). There is detailed engagement with parts of the Quality Code including Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards, *Chapter A2: The subject and qualification level*, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality, *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning* and *Chapter B7: External examining*. For example, in collaboration with other institutions, staff participate fully in the development of modules for the new awards to be validated by the University of Durham using guidance informed by the relevant sections of the Quality Code. The College effectively reviews its provision based on the requirements of the University of Chester that align with the guidance in the Quality Code. It provides external examiners with a detailed response to their reports. However, the College recognises there is scope for mapping and further engagement with some parts of the Quality Code to help formulation of its policies; for example, on the information it provides about the provision.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

11 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.

12 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Peter Steer (Coordinator) and Dr Glenn Barr (Reviewer) on 24 June 2013.