



# Gateway Quality Review: Wales

## St Padarn's Institute

March 2020

### Key findings

#### QAA's judgements about St Padarn's Institute

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at St Padarn's Institute.

- **There can be confidence that academic standards are reliable, meet UK requirements, and are reasonably comparable.**
- **There can be confidence that the quality of the student academic experience meets baseline regulatory requirements.**

#### Areas for development

The review team identified the following **area for development** that have the potential to enhance quality and/or further secure the reliability and/or comparability of academic standards at St Padarn's Institute. The review team advises St Padarn's Institute to:

- ensure the terms of reference of Institute committees are updated to incorporate consideration of academic risk including student complaints (Code of Governance).

#### Specified improvements

The review team did not identify any specified improvements.

## About this review

The review visit took place from 17 to 18 March 2020 and was conducted by a team of two reviewers, as follows:

- Dr John Deane
- Miss Elizabeth Shackels.

The overall aim of Gateway Quality Review: Wales is to:

- provide the relevant funding body with an expert judgement about the readiness of a provider to enter, or continue to operate within, the higher education sector.

Gateway Quality Review: Wales is designed to:

- ensure that the student interest is protected
- provide expert advice to ensure that the reputation of the UK higher education system is protected, including the protection of degree standards
- identify development areas that will help a provider to progress through a developmental period and be considered 'established'.

Each review considers a provider's arrangements against relevant aspects of the baseline regulatory requirements, and in particular:

- the reliability of degree standards and their reasonable comparability with standards set and achieved by other providers
- the quality of the student academic experience, including student outcomes where the provider has a track record of delivery of higher education.

## About St Padarn's Institute

St Padarn's Institute fulfils a need to integrate the training of those preparing for both lay and ordained ministries in residential and non-residential contexts alongside the theological training of disciples within environments that nurtured the Welsh language.

St Padarn's Institute/Athrofa Padarn Sant was set up by the three interlocking senior bodies in the Church in Wales – the Governing Body of the Church in Wales, the Representative Body, and the Bench of Bishops. St Padarn's came into being on 1 July 2016 and was created as the result of a careful process of deliberation by the Church in Wales, which established a clear sense of what the purpose of the institution was, what needs it would fulfil, and to what it would aspire.

St Padarn's areas of activity include: lay discipleship and ministry training and resourcing; training and development for people entering licensed ministries and for those who are newly licensed; continued ministerial development; research and postgraduate education.

St Padarn's has partnerships with two higher education institutions. The first partnership is with the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) and is a validation agreement for the delivery of the BTh Theology for Discipleship, Ministry and Mission. The second partnership is with Cardiff University for franchised delivery of their MTh Theology and MTh Chaplaincy programmes. St Padarn's staff provide expert teaching as Honorary Lecturers on the programmes.

Over 90% of the 208 students on the BTh programme study part-time. The full-time and part-time cohorts are separated at levels 4 and 5 and are then combined at level 6, which is

mainly delivered at weekends to allow for those working in the ministry and other occupations. The smaller number of postgraduate students (55 registered in 2019-20) are registered as Cardiff University students and are taught by St Padarn's staff on an honorary basis.

## Judgement area: Reliability and comparability of academic standards

### *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)*

1 St Padarn's Institute (the Institute) is responsible for the maintenance of academic standards and this is outlined in the University of Wales Trinity St David's (UWTSD) Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), Appendix A which details the responsibilities of the Institute and those of UWTSD in relation to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and all aspects of management and annual monitoring of programmes.

2 The Institute has a newly established Academic Board that provides effective oversight of all quality assurance and quality enhancement for university awards. It also has newly established Boards for UWTSD and Cardiff University, which are responsible for all aspects of academic quality and standards. The Institute's Academic Board reports to the Training, Formation and Ministerial Development Committee (TFMDC) (formerly the St Padarn's Institute Council), a representative body of the Church in Wales. The Institute has a partnership with Cardiff University for the delivery of a postgraduate programme. The Cardiff University Board reports to the Institute Academic Board.

3 The Institute follows UWTSD regulations and frameworks for the approval and reapproval of programmes. The Institute follows UWTSD interim and quinquennial review processes and follows the regulations and processes of UWTSD when making modifications and major changes to programmes. The Institute follows the UWTSD annual monitoring cycle.

4 The Institute has an effective process for staff induction. As part of the process, staff are required to engage with the UWTSD Academic Quality Handbook which outlines the essential procedures and processes to follow. The Institute ensures staff engage in an appropriate range of staff development, which ensures the maintenance of academic standards, and staff have engaged with the UWTSD Collaborative Partnership Conference. The Institute is an approved partner of UWTSD who praised the support the Institute provides to its students and the extensive staff development opportunities. The Institute Registrar has an open and effective relationship with UWTSD and updates staff on any issues. The Institute hosts two interim visits each year from the UWTSD Programme Team Leader who assesses the maintenance of academic standards.

5 Assessments at the Institute are approved using UWTSD paperwork through internal moderation and external examiners. The Institute operates its own process of moderation using the UWTSD form. The Institute sends all applications for Recognition of Prior Certificated Learning (RPCL) and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) to the UWTSD Prior Learning Committee. All applications to this Committee have been successful.

6 The Institute works closely with external examiners as a mechanism for testing academic standards and responds effectively to issues raised. Students at the Institute have access to the external examiner reports which are available on the virtual learning environment. The external examiner reports confirm the quality of marking and feedback provided to students.

7 Data is used effectively by the Institute in producing annual monitoring reports for UWTSD and the Institute has acted responsively on retention data to introduce Certificate and Diploma awards. Data on student applications has been used to put in place effective

support for students who have declared a disability, as well as those who are returning to study after a significant period out of formal education. The Institute has used data to improve the learning experience and outcomes of students on two particular modules as outlined by the external examiner.

8 The Institute has in place arrangements that meet its degree-awarding bodies' requirements to ensure that the academic standards of the programmes offered meet or exceed the UK threshold standard set out by the FHEQ.

9 The Institute has partnerships with two higher education institutions, Cardiff University and UWTSO (MOA since 2016), who retain ultimate responsibility for the setting and maintenance of academic standards. The Institute does not have degree awarding powers and therefore relies on UWTSO, in particular, for setting and maintaining academic standards. In addition, a Division of Responsibility checklist articulates responsibilities for academic standards, and UWTSO's Academic Handbook and Collaborative Partnership Manual are linked to in the induction handbook.

10 The Institute is involved in the review of existing awards leading up to re-validation and can make proposals for modification to programmes. Programme specifications reflect the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. Institute staff articulate a sound understanding of their application and importance.

11 The Institute recognises its responsibility to maintain standards through assessment, including assessing whether students have achieved the learning outcomes of modules contributing to an award. Oversight rests with the Academic Board and the Business Meeting Group specifically established with each awarding body to monitor this.

12 External examiners appointed to programmes by the awarding bodies provide assurance that academic standards meet the threshold standard, are appropriate for the level of study, and are comparable with similar programmes of other higher education providers. The award of credit is ultimately governed by the awarding bodies and their regulations.

**The relevant code of governance: such as the Higher Education Code of Governance published by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) or the Association of Colleges' Code of Good Governance for English Colleges (AoC)**

13 St Padarn's has effective governance arrangements in place that include the Training, Formation and Ministerial Development Committee (that meets four times a year), the Academic Board (that meets monthly) and Senior Executive Team (that meets weekly). The membership of each committee varies according to the terms of reference but the Principal, Senior Managers such as the Director of Operations and the Registrar, and Programme Leaders have specific roles in monitoring work and keeping governors appraised of key issues.

14 The Academic Board has strategic oversight of higher education and the Senior Leadership Team has operational oversight of provision. The Registrar provides effective operational support on a day-to-day basis including the monitoring and delivery of provision in conjunction with the relevant Deans and Programme Leaders.

15 The Institute has clear terms of reference for its higher education committees. Minutes and actions from the Academic Board are fed through to the Training, Formation and Ministerial Development Committee. In addition, this process is supported by Business Meetings with Cardiff University and UWTSO.

16 The Institute's governance arrangements are supportive in respecting academic freedom. Principles of academic freedom are promoted through the Register of Invited Speakers and the Staff Development Policy, which is structured on a demand and identified-need model. Collegiality is promoted through 'focused time' that allows for staff to apply for a period of time away from normal duties to concentrate on research and to undertake PhD research.

17 At a strategic level, the Church in Wales has devised a risk register that also includes operational risks for St Padarn's Institute. The Institute has arrangements to manage academic risk whereby senior staff such as the Operations Manager will attend meetings with the TFMDC and also attend their audit and risk meeting. From discussions with senior management, it is clear that the Institute does consider and review risk throughout the academic year to inform actions that may need to be taken, such as external examiner reports, monitoring key data sets, consideration of course and modular feedback, and student complaints. Although terms of reference are comprehensive in nature, academic risk has not been included as a standing item. Consequently, the review team considers that St Padarn's Institute should ensure the terms of reference of its committees are updated to incorporate consideration of academic risk including student complaints, and identify this as an **area for development**.

### **The Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)**

18 Data is analysed primarily within the context of the annual review process. The Institute provides UWTSD with data on retention, achievement and progression that is benchmarked against sector-wide standards. Both the Programme Leader and Registrar are involved in the review of academic performance.

19 Staff appointed by the Institute must hold a relevant qualification at one level above that which they are teaching, and appear to be well qualified. Two members currently hold HEA Fellowship Awards and another four are working towards them. The Institute has a Staff Development Policy in place which is demand-led and aligned to the Staff Appraisal Scheme. There appears to be a flexible approach to staff development and staff are encouraged to attend conferences. The Staff Development Policy also allows for a 'focused time' whereby the staff member can take 'time out'. Additional research and pedagogy is strongly advocated and encouraged, and through the annual appraisal process staff are encouraged to enhance their learning and teaching abilities. Staff indicated that they are encouraged to work within thematic or subject specialist groups to build research understanding. All new staff are provided with an induction and the Programme Director for the BTh Theology for Discipleship, Ministry and Mission has been appointed as a mentor. The Institute has also recently introduced a peer review process.

20 External examiners are appointed by UWTSD. The Partnership Office encourages staff to be involved with the University through activities such as conferences and a Collaborative Partnership Newsletter. Staff were able to articulate the range of involvement between the Institute, UWTSD and other key stakeholders such as in the recent curriculum review.

## **Judgement**

21 The Institute's quality assurance arrangements are appropriate to enable it to fulfil its responsibilities to its awarding bodies and organisations, and to align with the baseline regulatory requirements in the maintenance of academic standards.

22 There is one area for development recommending that academic risk including student complaints is formally included in terms of reference and agendas for appropriate committees.

23 The review team concludes that there can be confidence that academic standards are reliable, meet UK requirements, and are reasonably comparable.

## Judgement area: Quality of the student academic experience

### The Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)

24 Responsibility for managing and monitoring the quality of the student academic experience rests with the Institute. The Academic Handbook provided by UWTSD highlights the minimum requirement. The Institute, however, has put in place a range of supportive measures to promote the quality of the student learning experience, such as student participation in TFMDC meetings and the annual election of a Senior Student who sits on the Academic Board. In addition, student meetings are also held during residential weekends to allow students to raise any concerns.

25 The Institute reviewed its Feedback Policy, which now allows students to engage more frequently with tutors. At the time of the review, the Senior Student was also in the process of launching a Student Newsletter and the Institute had recently introduced a 'You Said We Did' feedback mechanism. St Padarn's has a comprehensive, well-embedded process for marking and moderating work. Students are allocated a personal tutor and a Learner Consultative Committee has been established that meets each term. The weekly Senior Leadership Team meetings action, monitor and discuss how the Institute engages with its students and how this can be improved.

26 Module handbooks outline the requirements for modules and module assessment, and clearly articulate the aims, learning outcomes and marking criteria which are located on the virtual learning environment. The Institute has established an Assessment Guide for students. In addition, all grades and marks are analysed by both the Programme Leaders and Registrar.

27 The Institute acknowledges that it is a small provider and can be constrained within its own resources. However, the review team found that the resources and support made available to students is appropriate. Both full and part-time students are provided with a programme and module handbook. The programme handbook provides information on a wide range of topics including where to find learning support, whereas the module handbook specifically provides information on assessment. The Institute also provides access to a range of e-learning resources such as eBooks and e-journals, and students have access to online facilities of UWTSD, Cardiff University and the Church in Wales. Tutors are available on seminar days to provide additional support as required. The Admission Form includes a section where students are asked to declare if they require support, and a Learning Support Tutor has been appointed to provide assessment and signpost students to further support.

28 Information about the Institute is available on its website and virtual learning environment. Both have a guest area that students can access for information prior to beginning their course and are updated and cross-referenced to the admission process. The Admissions Policy aligns to UWTSD regulations for admissions. Students are encouraged to complete the free induction module before they commence their studies. Students come from a range of backgrounds and the marketing of programmes is undertaken through roadshow events, word of mouth and signposting from local churches. The accuracy of information on the website is checked after each recruitment phase and evaluated for its trustworthiness. Oversight of this process rests with the Director of Operations.



## The relevant code of governance

29 The Institute has in place effective arrangements for student governance. Students are represented on the TFMDC as set out in the Committee Terms of Reference. The TFMDC is the key subcommittee of the Representative Body. TFMDC is the overarching body which has oversight of the operation of the Institute and formally receives reports from the Senior Student Representative. Student issues are a formal part of the agenda for the TFMDC. Student representatives are elected and there is a Senior Student Representative. Student representatives are provided with an induction and meet three times a year at residential weekends. The Institute produces quarterly reports on student feedback, which are tabled at TFMDC. Students are represented on Academic Board, UWTSB Board and Cardiff University Board.

30 The Institute has a formal Complaints Policy for non-academic issues and an Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure. The terms of reference of the Institute's oversight committee, TFMDC, do not specifically mention receiving reports on student complaints. The terms of reference of TFMDC do not outline that the Committee receives formal reports and updates on complaints and safeguarding, although this is mentioned in the Self-Evaluation Document. The Institute's Academic Board, UWTSB Board and Cardiff University Board do not specially mention having oversight of student complaints or receiving reports on student complaints.

31 Student complaints are addressed as part of the Institute's Annual Monitoring Cycle. Student safeguarding is sometimes on the agenda of TFMDC, but not as a standing item. Lessons learned from complaints are discussed at the Senior Team Leaders Meeting. It is not clear how a report on complaints is brought to the attention of TFMDC. The Institute's formal oversight of complaints is not evidenced in the Institute's oversight committee structures: TFMDC, Academic Board or Business Meetings. This issue is addressed in the area for development under academic standards, code of governance (see paragraph 17). At the time of the review, there had been no formal complaints referred to committees. Students met by the team stated that any issues are dealt with efficiently and satisfactorily by Institute staff and they had not had cause to go through the formal complaints procedure. However, the team identified an **area for development** the need to ensure the terms of reference of Institute committees are updated to incorporate consideration of academic risk including student complaints.

## Policies and procedures are in place to ensure consumer protection obligations are met (Competition and Markets Authority guidance)

32 Information about the Institute's application process, programme information and fees are available on its website. The Institute operates a new Introduction Module of eight sessions outlining all aspects of being a student at the Institute and programme information, available before students make an application. The Institute has a formal Admissions Policy published on its website and virtual learning environment. Information is provided to students via roadshows that are held across Wales and were introduced in 2019, and promoted via social media and the Institute's website, as reported in the student submission.

33 Once students enrol, they are sent a letter from the Programme Leader and a Learner Contract setting out expectations of the Institute and its students, and clear Terms and Conditions. Prospective students are required to sign and return the Learner Contract and are then formally enrolled onto the UWTSB programme.

34 The Institute's Learners Complaints (non-Academic) Policy and Academic Appeals Policy, which has been approved by UWTSB, sets out how complaints are accessible, clear and fair, and was developed in line with best practice of the Office of the Independent

Adjudicator (OIA).

### **Student protection measures**

35 The Institute has a short student protection statement which highlights that the Institute has strategies in place to protect students in case of course closure or substantial material changes to a course. The Institute follows UWTSD procedures for minor modifications of modules or to the programme. Students were engaged in the review of the curriculum in 2019.

36 Policies and processes for changes to programmes including course closure are included in the Institute Learner Contract. The Institute has a clear process for communicating any programme change to students. This includes notifying them through the virtual learning environment, review meetings and module feedback. Where a course is being closed, the MOA outlines the responsibilities of both the Institute and the University - that is, to 'teach out' the programme. Teach out arrangements for students are set out in the agreement between the Institute and UWTSD, but students were not aware of these teach out arrangements as no courses had been closed.

37 Complaints processes are reviewed every three years and the Institute has devised a (non-academic) Complaints Policy and also an Academic Appeals Policy. They have been reviewed and assessed as fit for purpose by the Church in Wales and aligned to UWTSD processes. All complaints are strictly in line with a policy of fairness and confidentiality. The Institute views complaints as an opportunity to promote improvement through staff development. However, the Institute's oversight of complaints is not formally recognised in the key governance committees: TFMDC, Academic Board and Business Meetings. This issue is addressed in the area for development under academic standards, code of governance (see paragraph 17).

### **Judgement**

38 The review team concludes that there can be confidence that the quality of the student academic experience meets baseline regulatory requirements.

## Commentary: Welsh Language Standards

39 The Institute is not obligated to comply with the Welsh Language Act. However, all programmes can support students in both English and Welsh, and all Institute forms are available in both languages. The Institute promotes the Welsh language ethos by guaranteeing that students' work will be assessed and marked in the original language and the Statement of Contribution to the Common Good reflects the Institute's commitment. The Institute embeds Welsh Language Standards within its provision and is accommodating students who wish to use it. This has the full support of senior management, Institute staff and students who were highly complimentary about the approach taken by St Padarn's.

40 Lecturer recruitment and selection processes now indicate that for some roles the ability to speak Welsh is considered an essential characteristic and for all other student-facing roles within the Institute the ability to speak Welsh is a desirable characteristic. A Dean of Initial Ministerial Development has been appointed and is the first to have a dual-language background.

41 The Institute's induction processes inform students of the Welsh language opportunities available, as well as those staff who speak Welsh. Students met by the team had not requested materials or assessment in Welsh.

This document is available in English and Welsh.

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