



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of The College of Naturopathic Medicine Ltd, March 2015

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 The College of Naturopathic Medicine Ltd has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the March 2014 [Review for Educational Oversight](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 There have been no changes in ownership, premises or educational strategy since the March 2014 review. There are 75 part-time teaching staff delivering five diploma programmes at levels 4-6. At the time of the monitoring visit there were 1,941 students which compares with 1,661 at the time of the 2014 review.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The College has made acceptable progress with implementing recommendations in the action plan resulting from the March 2014 review, although in most cases they await evaluation and are not yet embedded in institutional procedures. Good practice in the range of assessment methods employed has been built upon through the publication of assessment deadlines and marking schemes on the student intranet.

4 A review of the management of academic procedures has taken place and more consistent approaches adopted towards marking guidelines, the use of programme templates and the way in which external examiner comments are acted upon.

5 Course consultants, who have a key role in the admissions process, have attended a training session to support their assessment of applicants' English language competency. The College's Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures Manual has recently been updated to reinforce the importance of this policy and to explain how English is assessed as part of the College admission procedures. The impact of these measures has not yet been evaluated and is likely to be of interest in a future review.

6 A more systematic approach has been introduced to monitor grades awarded across all programmes delivered by the College and more rigour added to the moderation process so that there are now clearer guidelines for second marking. All teaching staff now have access to exemplars of marked work on the staff intranet. The impact of these developments on the consistency of academic standards awaits evaluation.

7 Procedures for the appointment of external examiners have been reviewed and as a result a more detailed process has been introduced for the scrutiny of the curriculum vitae of prospective examiners. External examiner reports are now published on the student intranet although students were not aware of this development.

8 Examination Board documentation has been reviewed and now includes reports on progression and achievement. Student attendance is recorded and monitored by Directors of

Studies who intervene when a student's academic progress may be at risk through poor attendance. The impact of the progression reports has yet to be evaluated.

9 Student feedback forms have been reviewed to ask more open questions and to include coverage of assessment processes and library facilities. An electronic data capture system has recently been introduced to facilitate analysis of student data. Student representatives use social media to elicit views from other students and attend Academic Board to give feedback on their learning experience. Representatives are generally positive about the timeliness of responses to their feedback.

10 Study space has been extended by giving student access to a classroom one afternoon each week. Additional space has also been acquired at a local university and the College continues to seek appropriate new premises. Wireless internet access has been reinstated to all students.

11 The College meetings schedule has been adjusted to make more efficient use of time. Main meetings are now arranged to allow for more effective lines of reporting and attendance by staff from regional centres and there are comprehensive guidelines on the conduct and recording of meetings.

12 A more consistent approach has been adopted towards personal tuition with effective sharing of good practice across programmes, leading to the introduction of examination tutorial sessions. These have been well-received by students. However, student representatives consider that personal tutorials constitute an area which is susceptible to further development by the College.

13 The student website has been enhanced with more comprehensive access to policies, study materials and external examiners' reports. A student forum is available but students prefer to use social media for peer discussion. The College has taken effective action to control the use of its brand identity by private student social media groups.

14 Teaching materials have been reviewed to ensure that they are consistent in the use of College referencing conventions.

15 As noted in paragraph 5, admissions are conducted by Course Consultants who report directly to Directors of Studies. Training days are provided and those responsible for admissions have normally completed one of the College's diploma courses. The section on admissions in the Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures Manual has recently been reviewed to provide more comprehensive guidance on the admissions process, including language requirements. Most applicants are mature home/EU students from a wide variety of educational backgrounds; some are graduates intending a career change. Admission to the College is confirmed on the basis of a half-hour interview.

16 Assessment processes have recently been reviewed with improved student access to marking schemes, assessment criteria and submission dates. The updated Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures Manual has detailed sections on academic malpractice and plagiarism. Students are informed about good academic practice and plagiarism during their taught sessions and they are in no doubt about the importance of these matters. However, while staff are vigilant in their detection of academic unfair means, the College does not yet use electronic systems to support students and staff to detect and avoid plagiarism.

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

17 The College works closely with relevant accreditation and regulatory organisations, including the Nutrition Therapy Education Commission, the British Acupuncture Council, the Association of Naturopathic Practitioners and the Association of Master Herbalists. The College programmes are rigorously benchmarked against the external benchmarks set by these organisations, while the Homeopathy programme is also benchmarked against the European Guidelines for Homeopathic Education, Clinical Education Guidelines of the Society of Homeopaths and the Core Criteria of the Society of Homeopaths. The qualification levels of awards provided by the College are also benchmarked against *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*.

18 Although some College policies and practices, such as those on admissions and external examining, take account of relevant chapters of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) the College acknowledges that it has yet to undertake a comprehensive mapping exercise of its quality assurance policies against the Quality Code. Although this is scheduled for completion by the end of the academic year 2014-15, the College accepts that there has been some slippage with this timescale. The progress achieved with this exercise is likely to be a focus of interest in a future review.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

19 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.

20 The monitoring visit was carried out by Professor Nicholas Goddard (Coordinator) and Mrs Lynn Fulford (Reviewer) on 18 March 2015.

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