



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of The Kingham Hill Trust (Oak Hill 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 Oak Hill College (the College) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the [June 2017 monitoring visit](#).

Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 The College continues to offer undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Theology, which are validated by Middlesex University. In March 2019, there was an institutional re-approval process for the College's partnership arrangements with the University, and the undergraduate programmes are scheduled for periodic review in autumn 2019.

3 At the time of the monitoring return there were 122 students studying for a full award at the College, which represents a slight reduction when compared to the same period in 2018 (135). A further 51 individuals were studying one or more modules, either as auditors (who attend but do not complete assessments or gain credit) or creditors (who complete assessments and are awarded associated credit).

4 There have been some staff changes at senior level since the 2017 annual monitoring visit, including permanent appointments to the new roles of College Director and President. The restructuring of the leadership team has been completed with the appointment of a Director of Operations and Finance. Three new academic staff appointments have been made, including a new Director of Pastoral Care. The College has made no significant programme changes since its last annual monitoring visit but is preparing for the full review of its undergraduate programmes later in the year.

Findings from the monitoring visit

5 The College is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision. The College's last QAA review was a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (HER (AP)) in 2016, which was followed by an annual monitoring visit in 2017 at which it was confirmed that the College had fully addressed the recommendations of its HER (AP) and had taken forward good practice. Many actions in the current action plan relate to or support the forthcoming review of the undergraduate programmes in autumn 2019, which is seen as a major project for the College. The College has completed or made progress against actions in a number of areas. It has addressed the terms of reference for its committees and boards (paragraph 6) and is over halfway through its programme review (paragraph 7). Significant progress has been made with a review of the Admissions Policy, and the work to date has been detailed (paragraph 13). The College is addressing its learning and teaching actions through ongoing and responsive monitoring (paragraphs 6-8), and the programme review aims to resolve outstanding issues. A number of student support actions are being progressed and related new staffing appointments are now in place (paragraph 9). A number of actions relating to

engagement with the student community are being progressed (paragraph 10), and assessment feedback actions are ongoing (paragraphs 14 and 15). The College has developed new policies for complaints, appeals and placements (paragraph 10), it has launched a new website and is developing its handbooks and VLE content (paragraph 11). The College has also approved a new enhancement strategy (paragraph 12). The College operates thorough processes for admissions and assessment (paragraphs 13 and 15) and demonstrates effective engagement with relevant external reference points (paragraphs 17 and 18). Information produced by the college is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy (paragraphs 11 and 13).

6 Newly reviewed terms of reference for College boards and committees have positively framed each committee within the academic structure; the next phase will consider the non-academic committees. Students confirm their active engagement in all aspects of College business and recognise the value of this, and staff are enthusiastic about the greater clarity the new structure gives.

7 With the undergraduate programme review, the College will complete its actions around programme design, development and approval. The Programme Planning Team has undertaken a detailed review of student feedback, external examiners' reports, QAA reviews, periodic external reviews by the Church of England and key external reference points (see paragraphs 17 and 18). Along with discussions with staff to determine possible enhancements, this has informed a formal submission to the University outlining the proposed revisions, which the University fully supports. Students confirm that the College has consulted with them throughout the preparatory process, according to University procedures. Clear text on the College's website outlines the review process and how any changes might affect students and applicants.

8 The College's PDP process brings together its own Graduate Profile and the University's requirements. Staff and students value the new process and the way in which it combines academic and pastoral elements. Changes to the College's year structure have raised unforeseen issues around student workload and assessment bunching, which will be addressed by the programme review. Students value the new assessment package template, which includes a list of learning resources for each activity and enables library staff to respond more proactively to resourcing needs. Students value the library highly, including the new management system and the support it offers. There have been improvements in NSS scores including positive student feedback for the new VLE. Through ongoing monitoring, the College continues to address student issues regarding Wi-Fi and audio-visual support, and students are satisfied with the actions taken. The College is currently reviewing its Events and Speakers Policy, taking account of recent Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance, which students recognise will support discussions on equality and diversity issues such as gender and ethnicity.

9 The College is progressing several actions around student support and development, such as the recently reviewed and updated Student Protection Plan, and Refunds and Compensation Policy. Students feel well supported and they highly rate the formal pastoral care strategy which is being expanded and enhanced by the newly appointed Director of Pastoral Care. The College maintains its study skills provision and has added further workshops relating to online bibliographic software, although proposed individual drop-in surgeries have not yet happened because of the need to prioritise other projects. Students confirm that the College does what it can to make any reasonable adjustments. In response to student feedback the College has put in place strategies to enhance the experience of part-time students and ensure parity with the full-time experience; part-time students told the monitoring team that their experience is comparable with their full-time colleagues.

10 The College has introduced new module and programme student evaluation forms which have engendered higher response rates and ensured a clear tracking of issues raised and solutions. This has informed the programme review. Students describe a highly effective process of formal and informal feedback used across the learning community. The College has introduced new academic appeals, student complaints and grievance policies, which are available on its website. The College now maintains a log of all complaints and appeals to monitor their resolution. Students were aware of the policies but had not had cause to use them. The College has piloted a new placement agreement and staff and students confirmed that the process works very well. However, some students felt that placements could integrate with their academic learning more effectively. The College continues to work effectively with the University through its link tutor arrangements and committees.

11 The new College website is now online, and the Management Briefing Group ensures that all information complies with consumer law. The College has reviewed its handbooks for students, which are now on the website and VLE. Students describe the information they receive before and during their studies as thorough.

12 The College has approved a new Enhancement Strategy which is overseen by the Quality Enhancement Committee. The College aims to broaden the committee's scope, to encompass the broader College environment with an emphasis on the student community. The enhancement action plan is detailed and thorough.

13 The College is reviewing its admissions policies with assistance from external consultants. The newly established Admissions Policy Review (APR) Working Group is overseeing this work, which includes revision of the application, interview and reference collection processes and reviews of selection criteria and the Recognition of Prior Learning policy. The Admissions, Marketing and Communication Manager oversees recruitment and admissions processes. Occasional 'Why Get Ordained in the Church of England?' and open morning events raise the College's profile. There is currently a paper application form, which is submitted by post (which includes details of educational and employment history), but the aim is for this to be offered online in future. Applicants also provide a statement outlining why they wish to study, plus three references including one from their home church. The College considers the aptitude for ministry training and higher education study. Students whose first language is not English must have an average IELTS score of 7.0, with no less than 6.5 in each category. Alternative ways of meeting the English Language competency requirement are outlined in programme specifications and on the website. Applicants must bring photo ID and original qualification certificates and transcripts to interview, and copies are kept on file. Applicants who meet the basic admissions criteria are invited for interview, which includes meeting the admissions team to discuss accommodation, finance and support issues. Successful applicants are notified by letter, detailing any conditions of offer, and unsuccessful applicants receive a letter, which outlines the reasons for the decision. The admissions arrangements are explained clearly on the website.

14 The College's review of assessment regulations is ongoing; it has already approved a new Academic Integrity and Poor Academic Practice Policy, in response to some external examiner comments. The Enhancement Strategy and Assessment Policy define the approach to assessment and align with University regulations. The introduction of a Faculty Handbook and the module assessment package template outline the assessment process for staff and students. External examiners have raised issues around timeliness of feedback, which is currently provided to students up to eight weeks after submission (although students whom the team met said that feedback is often returned earlier). The College has three deadline dates in each academic year and publishes these in its term dates. The feedback period for the first term assessment this year was reduced to around four weeks, and the College hopes that the introduction of a new semester-style structure will enable it to further reduce marking and feedback periods.

15 The College has rigorous assessment processes. It uses anonymous marking where possible. Assessment processes for the variety of biblical languages continue previously identified good practice by ensuring that subject specialists who teach in this area, and external examiners, have the same linguistic expertise. Double-marking sheets record the thorough moderation process through double or sample marking. The Assessment Board ratifies all grades before progressing these to the University and considers cases of academic misconduct and exceptional cases (such as extenuating circumstances and re-assessment). The College defines academic integrity during the Welcome Week and in subsequent study skills sessions and all assessment guidelines. Students are clear about the requirements and criteria for assessment.

16 Data indicates generally positive levels of retention and achievement, with many courses having achievement levels of 100 per cent. The College acknowledges that its retention rates for some programmes may appear low because of internal transfers to higher level awards, and the fact that data is often based on small student numbers; a very small number of students have withdrawn with a lower exit award, and over the last four years only three students have withdrawn without a qualification. Student outcomes (which are reported to the University and published on the Unistats website) indicate that 89 per cent of 2018 leavers entered employment immediately or went on to further study, with 100 per cent of 2017 leavers being in employment six months after leaving, of which 95 per cent are in professional or managerial roles.

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

17 There is appropriate engagement with national benchmarks such as the FHEQ; the Subject Benchmark Statement: Theology and Religious Studies; the Higher Education Credit Framework; and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). Learning outcomes and the broad structure and content of the programmes and their credit weightings are clear examples of their application. The Quality Code has assisted in the review of policies and procedures, while the review of complaints and appeals indicates engagement with the OIA's guidance. The College also referenced Competition and Markets Authority guidance throughout its review of information, and the College website is clear evidence of the positive impact of this.

18 The College also engages with Middlesex University's regulations and quality policies and frameworks; and its provision is aligned with relevant guidance and criteria of the Church of England and the Federation of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) Pastors' Network.

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 Mr Mark Langley, Reviewer, and Ms Julia Baylie, QAA Officer, on 30 May 2019.

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