



Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of The Metanoia Institute, February 2019

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 Metanoia Institute (the Institute) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the December 2017 [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review

2 There are no material changes to the Institute or its curriculum since the most recent review in 2017. Courses continue to be offered in partnership with Middlesex University (the University) and cover a range of established curricula from foundation level and honours degrees through to doctorates, primarily in the areas of psychotherapy, psychology and counselling. Student numbers (excluding those studying for diplomas) have reduced from just over 1,000 at the previous review to 840 this time, largely due to planned strategies to close and finalise the status of students who had previously requested an interruption of study, or who had reached the maximum length of study allowed by the University. The Institute employs management, academic and professional staff, with a total staffing cohort of 105 (39.53 FTE), and occupies the same premises in Ealing as at the previous review.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The Institute has made commendable progress on the features of good practice highlighted in the 2017 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) report. All actions identified within the previous review have been fully implemented, and there is robust evidence that this has led to improvements in the Institute's management of its provision. The Institute has maintained and further enhanced the good practice in relation to integration of student professional, personal and clinical practice (paragraph 6); provision of clinical and professional experience opportunities (paragraph 7); and development of the research environment (paragraph 8).

4 The Institute also demonstrates commendable progress in maintaining and embedding its responses to the recommendations made, and has implemented agreed actions in relation to the appraisal and peer review process (paragraph 9); the balance between core and additional learning support (paragraph 10); enhancement of programme monitoring arrangements (paragraph 11); revised committee structure (paragraph 12); use of external expertise in the design and development of programmes (paragraph 13); and broader and deeper student engagement (paragraph 14).

5 It has also demonstrably maintained its academic standards and enhanced the quality of the learning opportunities of its provision. Quality and standards in relation to admissions (paragraph 15) and assessment (paragraph 16) have been maintained and further developed. The Institute demonstrates highly effective engagement with external reference points and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2013-18 (paragraph 20).

6 The Institute has maintained and further enhanced the good practice in relation to the strong integration of professional, personal and clinical practice within the programmes, which enhances student employment prospects. The Institute continues to place significant emphasis on preparing students for the complexities of working in the field of psychology, psychotherapy and counselling. This has been underpinned by strengthening links with local and regional specialist services to ensure that the training students receive meets the requirements of PSBR activity.

7 The Institute continues to ensure high quality clinical placements through both external agencies and the Metanoia Counselling and Psychotherapy Service (MCPS), which facilitates students' transition into placement. Students value these opportunities highly as they ensure that they have achieved the prerequisite professional placement hours to secure professional and regulatory body accreditation. A specific development in relation to a mental health familiarisation placement scheme was highlighted by students as a rare and extremely valuable opportunity.

8 Since the previous review, the Institute has developed and strengthened its research profile, in order to enhance student and staff engagement with research opportunities, including hosting an international research conference, undertaking collaborative research between staff and students, and the production and dissemination of in-house research publications. Collaborative research projects with a number of other universities and professional bodies are continuing, and further enhancement of the Institute's research profile is planned with the redesign and imminent relaunch of a research seminar programme.

9 The Institute has taken significant steps to focus on the quality of teaching and learning and there is clear evidence of ensuring that students receive a standard of teaching and learning that underpins academic theory and the intricacies of the various clinical practicum modalities. A purposeful and evidence-based peer observation process is now in place that instigates and develops a challenging and continuous pedagogical dialogue. Staff specifically commented on the consequent development of an emerging, meaningful community of academic practice.

10 Since the previous review, the Institute has undertaken an effective review of its fees structure to ensure that potential and existing students are fully informed of their entitlements and liabilities. A transparent and clear fees policy has been produced to provide clarity for students of their rights as consumers of higher education. The pre-existing charges for certain aspects of additional learning support have been explicitly discontinued.

11 The Institute has undertaken a major piece of work to systematically review the effectiveness of its programmes culminating in a data rich, reflective and solution-focused annual monitoring review (AMR) process, developed in-house. This work is driven by the Academic and Quality teams in partnership with the Student Representatives. The AMR process is part of the Institute's reviewed deliberative structures and captures the student experience and data at delivery level.

12 Since the previous review, a comprehensive revision of the establishment, purpose and operation of the Institute's committees has been carried-out, resulting in the development of a more transparent and effective deliberative structure. This has supported, at each level, a critical examination of the nuances of the range of academic and clinical modalities ensuring that academic and professional standards are set, maintained and reviewed. These revised deliberative structures provide opportunities for students and external experts, such as clinicians and employers, to contribute in partnership to ensure the continued and enhanced maintenance of standards and governance.

13 The Institute has strengthened and further developed the process for the internal design and review of programmes, including the provision of new documentation and guidance for staff. By fully using its links with appropriate professional bodies the Institute has demonstrably improved external expertise in its programme development process. The staff team also has significant employer engagement to enhance and assure currency, with further developments in areas including the NHS. The Institute has latterly engaged a specific independent consultant in programme design to work with Programme teams. This approach includes active participation in a knowledge transfer process to cover best practice in programme design, consultation processes and external stakeholder engagement.

14 Students the review team met were unanimous that their engagement within the Institute was significantly broader and deeper, and they confirmed representation on all key Committees, up to and including the Governing Body. They felt that they were now 'full partners' in their education, and that their contributions to debate were given full consideration and were dealt with appropriately according to their immediacy. Student representatives confirmed that they received training, advice and support, and written guidance in the form of a 'representative's pamphlet', and that this was effective in preparing them for their roles. A Student Liaison Officer has now been appointed and is actively engaged in enhancing further the engagement of students in the quality assurance, consultation and decision-making aspects of the work of the Institute.

15 The Institute has developed a robust and transparent approach to the admission of students, and the Admissions Policy and processes are closely aligned to principles of fair admissions and the awarding body processes. There is a clear focus on the part of the Institute to admitting students to the most appropriate programme. Admissions assessment tools are well designed and successfully screen for any additional learning support needs, and there is a clear commitment to inclusion and recognition of prior learning and attainment. Students praised the quality of the Institute's open days which provide extensive information on the various professional modalities available for study.

16 Assessment processes are informed by and aligned with *Chapter B6* of the Quality Code and conform to the University of Middlesex regulations. The Institute is responsible for designing assessment tasks and marking, and details of assessments are contained within module guides. Students are informed of assessment points at the start of the academic year, and written formative feedback is given verbally within four weeks. External examiners review a selection of work and their reports are presented to the Institute's Examination Board. These reports commented positively on the standard and appropriateness of assessment.

17 The clinical standards are annually monitored by relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies ensuring programme currency and the maintenance of professional standards. Action plans are in place to address points arising from these visits.

18 Student performance data shows an overall headline reduction in the current academic year, from 1,004 to 840 (16 per cent), but this is largely due to historical factors arising from the efforts to close and finalise the status of students who had previously requested an interruption of study, or who had reached the maximum length of study allowed by the partner University. Cohort study periods tend to reflect the part-time status of students, and frequently extend over five to seven years (or beyond in the case of doctorates) so the best evidence of retention available (2015-16 recruits) indicates that 381 of 406 students (94 per cent) are continuing their studies. Achievement data even for the 2015-16 intake is limited because of the duration of programmes, but 100 per cent of the 12 students completing their studies have achieved their qualification.

19 The Institute has strengthened its data recording at programme level, and the samples of the annual monitoring reviews demonstrated robust data capture and analysis. The next stage of planned development is to further consolidate programme-level data at Institutional level to assure and inform strategic deliberations.

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

20 The Institute designs its own programmes which are validated by Middlesex University. As such they ensure highly effective alignment with the Quality Code, *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications* (FHEQ), relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and other external reference points. Staff are aware of the revised Quality Code, which has now been published. All academic staff are also current industry practitioners and bring their continuing professional experience to their teaching. As a member of various Counselling and Psychotherapy professional bodies, the Institute adheres to their professional requirements.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

21 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.

22 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr David J Malachi, Reviewer, and Ms Roshani Swift, QAA Officer, on 7 February 2019.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050
Web www.qaa.ac.uk