



Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Trinity College Bristol, March 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 Trinity College Bristol (the College) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the [March 2017 monitoring visit](#).

Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 There are no material changes to the College or its curriculum since the most recent review in 2017, apart from a curriculum review to develop a Curriculum Creed and the appointment of a new Principal who takes up post in summer 2019. The College has clearly defined the acting-up arrangements which are in place during the interim period. Courses continue to be offered in partnership with the Universities of Durham and Aberdeen, along with a single PhD student completing a teach-out process with the University of Bristol. There is also a stable and mature partnership with Bristol Baptist College, which provides for sharing of resources and expertise. The curriculum is well established and consists of a range of provision from Foundation level and Honours Degrees through to Doctorates, exclusively in the areas of Theology, Ministry and Mission. Student numbers were 182 at the time of the visit, which is comparable with previous years, and the staffing comprises an academic team of 12 (10.3 whole-time equivalents). The College occupies the same premises in Bristol as at the previous review.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The College continues to make commendable progress with ongoing monitoring, review and enhancement of its higher education provision. The Annual Monitoring Review in March 2017 confirmed that the College had completed all of the actions identified as a result of the recommendations in the Higher Education Review carried out in March 2016, and developed the areas of good practice (paragraph 4). Since then, the College has further developed its internal quality processes, through detailed action plans and monitoring of progress (paragraph 5). The College continues to maintain its academic standards and to enhance the quality of the learning opportunities of its provision. Quality and standards in relation to admissions (paragraph 6) and assessment (paragraphs 7-9) have been maintained and further developed. The College has evidenced highly effective engagement with external reference points and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), through its ongoing work with external agencies and its partner universities in supporting students to meet their vocational priorities (paragraph 12).

4 The College completes detailed and comprehensive annual self-evaluation reports for its validating institutions and uses the information developed within these internally to identify appropriate actions to further enhance the student experience and support the effective management of the provision. The College's action plan is monitored and updated by the shared Quality Assurance Steering Group. Impact assessment is also completed in each case and any necessary additional actions identified and implemented.

5 Stakeholder and in particular student feedback and results from module and College-wide surveys are considered at all committees and have been used to inform a comprehensive review of the curriculum. Changes have been made to ensure that the practice and theoretical aspects of each module are more appropriately integrated, supported and assessed, making better use of the placement structure of the courses. The College also used this information during a recent curriculum review to develop a Curriculum Creed, which has now been embedded into practice. Students confirmed that their representatives are integrated into the committee structures with a standing agenda item for student issues and that they are able to contribute to all other agenda items. As a result of student feedback, the College has made changes to the scheduling of lectures so that there is a more consistency balance across the year, altered assessments to allow for more contextualisation with placements, and renamed the 'Quiet Day' as 'Retreat Day' which better reflects the activity. Students explained that feedback on issues they raised came not only from their representatives but also from a 'You Said We Did' information board.

6 The College employs a rigorous and well-managed admissions policy. A significant proportion of applicants for the taught courses are recommended and sponsored by their Diocese, and their entry qualifications and aptitude for study checked by the Diocese before contacting the College. The College also has an established process for independent students. All students are invited to open days and for interview, which involves both a vocational practice interview and a separate academic interview. Applicants are also required to provide a personal statement and documentary evidence of prior achievement. The interviewer reports and other documents are then considered and applicants are advised about appropriate courses, with details sent to the University of Aberdeen for confirmation prior to acceptance, and to Durham University where APL matters arise. International applicants are interviewed via video link and if English is not their first language they need to achieve an IELTS score of 6.5 for undergraduate courses or 7.0 for postgraduate studies. Students confirmed that their experience during admissions was effective and highly supportive in enabling them to confirm their choice of course and College.

7 Assessment is well managed and the College ensures that it takes place in accordance with the requirements of its partner universities and their Common Awards. Students confirm that comprehensive assessment information is readily available on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and includes details of learning outcomes and marking criteria. The primary marker for assessments is usually the module tutor and another suitably qualified tutor acts as second marker. All assessments are submitted via the VLE and are subject to the application of automatic plagiarism detection software. Tutors complete detailed feedback via the same portal, and students confirmed that this feedback is developmental, timely and supportive.

8 Students explained that although some bunching of assessment is inevitable, the College tries to minimise the effect of this and publishes the submission dates well in advance. A range of assessment instruments is used, choice in terms of topic and method of presentation is normally available and creative responses encouraged. Action to contextualise assessments and link to placements is being undertaken to support particularly the dispersed learners, but is also being introduced to the gathered learned cohorts. Staff provide up-to-date bibliographies, and sufficient library resources are available to aid research. The students are supported in assessment practice by detailed information in the Student Handbook and Style Guide. Staff monitor progress with completion of assessments regularly and provide support as required. Answers to questions raised by the students that are considered useful to the wider group are published on the VLE.

9 External examiner reports are positive and supportive, and examiners attend the examination board. Their reports are discussed at the Teaching and Learning Committee meetings and all recommendations are monitored via action plans and fully implemented. Students are aware of the role of the external examiner and understand that grades are

provisional until confirmed at the Examination Board. The College has a well understood and effective system for marking and second marking of assessments, which includes audio recording of presentations. All assessments are submitted online and are subject to the application of automatic plagiarism detection software. Staff provide detailed supportive and developmental feedback through this system. Minor instances of malpractice have been identified and been addressed in accordance with the University regulations.

10 Student numbers have remained broadly consistent (currently 182) and retention rates are high. Some cohorts are small which can affect the percentage after any withdrawals resulting in a biased value. Transfer between courses is common before completion and can further skew the results. Where withdrawals have taken place, staff undertake exit interviews and consistently record that the reason is due to changes in students' personal circumstances. Students completing their course pass and, with the exception of courses with late withdrawals, pass rates of 100% have been recorded.

11 In combination with its partner Bristol Baptist College, a detailed breakdown of retention and pass rates and progress is included in their annual reports to the Universities of Durham and Aberdeen. These show that overall retention on undergraduate courses is 95%. The report also details the awards achieved and indicates that for many of the students who withdraw, a certificate or award has been made where sufficient credits have already been completed. The pattern of degree classifications is good with 2 Firsts, 15 at 2:1 and 4 at 2:2. For the PhD students, the report details progress for each named student.

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

12 The College continues to work closely with the Quality Code to ensure that all policies and procedures meet the expectations of the code, and manages the provision under the requirements of both Common Awards and the Ministry Division of the Church of England. The annual reporting of the taught courses is both to the Ministry Division of the Church, and to Durham University, and the College also works closely with other colleges through the Common Awards Scheme. In addition to the annual reporting, the College is subject to Periodic External Review which looks at all aspects of governance, leadership, and curriculum and student data.

Background to the monitoring visit

13 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.

14 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mrs Sue Miller, Reviewer, and Mrs Roshani Swift, QAA Officer, on 27 March 2019.

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