

Review for Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of St Mellitus College Trust, 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 St Mellitus College Trust (the College) has made acceptable progress with implementing the action plan from the November 2013 [Review for Specific Course Designation](#).

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 In common with a number of other theological education institutions, St Mellitus is transferring most of its undergraduate provision from its previous partner, Middlesex University, to the Church of England Ministry Division Common Awards Framework validated by the University of Durham.

3 The College has continued to expand, developing its outreach centres in Liverpool and Chelmsford, and since the 2013 review has increased the number of students on accredited courses to 323.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

4 The College has made acceptable progress on the recommendations in the 2013 Review for Specific Course Designation report. The College has maintained the three areas of good practice and demonstrated good progress with the advisable and desirable recommendations, with further work to do in some areas

5 Good practice in student support has been further enhanced through more effective use of student feedback and discussions in staff meetings. An annual feedback form has been developed and implemented for use by placement supervisors and the College hosts an annual supervisor's day. Regular and effective communication with stakeholders has been maintained through the Dean's and supervisor's regular email communication.

6 The Dean has reviewed the terms of reference for committees. Agendas for committees have been formalised and clearly relate to the terms of reference. Minutes of committees are fuller and reflect the discussion. Action points are identified and progress monitored at subsequent meetings. A policy for monitoring and approving public information has been developed and communicated to staff. This policy has been made available to all staff on the College's intranet and is operating effectively.

7 Progress has been made with implementing the peer review system which is in the process of being linked to the staff appraisal scheme. The College plans to develop an overall reporting process identifying areas for staff development and good practice.

8 The College's website has been updated to identify the awarding body for each programme. External examiner reports are now available to students through the virtual learning environment (VLE), however more needs to be done to communicate this to students. External examiner reports are also seen by student representatives at meetings of

the Academic Board and the Board of Studies. The VLE is being further developed, however students would like to see greater consistency of learning materials across modules.

9 The University of Durham's Common Awards Framework has been successfully implemented. College staff have attended events hosted by the University. Communications to staff and students at the College, both by the University and within the College, have been effective. Students report satisfaction with how the College managed their transfer to the Common Awards curriculum, despite a few transitional problems.

10 The admission process is rigorous and thorough, resulting in the selection and admission of vocationally committed students prepared for study at higher education level. Prospective students are interviewed using a standard template. Academic and character references are obtained before admission to a programme is made. Prospective students, who may not be ready to undertake a higher education programme or whose English may need improvement, are guided to, for example, a Beginning Theology course which provides English language support where necessary. Students find the process supportive and the information provided prepares them well for their studies.

11 The assessment of students is also rigorous and thorough and follows policies and procedures of the awarding bodies. The recent introduction of plagiarism-detection software has enhanced consistency of marking, and feedback given to students as well as helping staff to return work within stated timescales. Generally, assessed work is returned to students within four to six weeks, although this has taken longer in a minority of instances. Staff are aware of the need to actively manage the return date and feedback on marked work.

12 The College has made acceptable progress in managing academic standards in a period of transition and in managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities.

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

13 The College aligns its provision with the requirements of the Ministry Division of the Church of England, which constitutes an essential external benchmark for the College's programmes. These are now articulated through the Common Awards Framework which is validated by the University of Durham. Standards of provision and assessment have been mapped by the University against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and the College is responsive to these requirements.

14 The College has addressed a recommendation to engage all staff in the use of the Quality Code through a training event and review of policies. This has flagged where further work needs to be done to ensure alignment and to integrate awareness of the Quality Code among staff. The College has made acceptable progress but recognises that this work will need to be continued.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

15 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.

16 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr John Hurley (Coordinator) and Professor Donald Pennington (Reviewer) on 17 March 2015.

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