Barnsley College

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About this review

This is a report of an Initial Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Barnsley College. The review took place on 18-19 March 2013 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

Dr Carol Vielba
Mr Brian Whitehead
Mr Jamie Clark (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Barnsley College and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality are likely to meet UK expectations. In this report the QAA review team:

makes judgements on
- threshold academic standards[1]
- the quality of learning opportunities
- the quality of information

makes recommendations
identifies

About Barnsley College

Barnsley College is a large, general further education and tertiary college serving Barnsley Metropolitan Borough and the surrounding areas in South Yorkshire. The College is the main provider of post-16 education in the Borough. The College operates on nine sites within Barnsley.

Barnsley is an area of high social disadvantage and income deprivation which continues to experience serious economic challenges, in particular low employment growth, skills poverty and ingrained worklessness, lack of aspiration, and a dependency culture.

The College's mission is to '

Explanation of the findings about Barnsley

Supporting disabled students

2.22 The College has appropriate policies, procedures and services in place to support the needs of disabled students. The College's Additional Learning Support Unit is responsible for the management and provision of student learning and disability support. The team liaises with academic staff to ensure that they are kept informed of the specific needs of an individual. They maintain and manage the information relating to a student's specific needs using the College's management information system. The system allows academic and support staff to see all information relating to a student's learning and disability needs. This information can be personalised to the individual student and notes can be added.

2.23 Students were clear that they are aware of where to go to get additional support should they require it, and were very complimentary of the support they had received so far from the College. Students identified the College's virtual learning environment as the main source, after tutors, for finding out information relating to any learning support questions.

Supporting international students

2.24 The College has no international students enrolled on its higher education courses, however it does have aspirations to recruit in the future. It has recently been awarded a Highly Trusted Sponsor Licence rating from the UK Border Agency, allowing it to sponsor international students at an as yet unspecified date.

Flexible, distributed and e-learning

2.25 Students at the College have access to a wide range of technologies to support their learning, but the College does not currently offer learning opportunities through flexible and distributed learning, and it is not its intention to do so for at least three or four years. However, one of the College's strategic priorities is to develop an 'improved twenty-first century information technology structure', and the possibilities of programmes delivered through flexible and distance learning in the future will be considered.

Work-based and placement learning

2.26 All four

Glossary

Initial Review is very similar to Review of College Higher Education (RCHE). The guidance note for Initial Review is intended to be read in conjunction with the RCHE handbook. The RCHE handbook gives formal definitions of terms such as 'threshold standards' and 'learning opportunities' (pages 17-20). This glossary provides a quick reference to the terms.

The guidance for Initial Review can be found on the QAA website at: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/initial-review-guidance.aspx.

The RCHE handbook can be found on the QAA website at: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/rche-

programme (of study): An approved course of study which provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

programme specifications: Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of **programmes of study**, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

public information: Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

Quality Code: Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet.

subject benchmark statement: A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

threshold academic standard: The minimum standard that a student should reach in order to gain a particular qualification or award, as set out in the **subject benchmark statements** and national qualifications **frameworks**. Threshold standards are distinct from the standards of performance that students need to achieve in order to gain any particular class of award, for example a first-class bachelor's degree. See also **academic standards**.

widening participation: Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.