



Review for Specific Course Designation: report of the monitoring visit of Irish Baptist College, March 2023

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 Irish Baptist College (the College) is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the [March 2022 monitoring report](#).

Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 There have been no significant changes in the management, programme structure, accommodation or staffing at the College since the desk-based annual monitoring in March 2022. There are currently 59 students (37 full-time equivalent) undertaking programmes of study - 30 undergraduates (27 FTE) and 29 postgraduates (10 FTE). The College employs four full-time academic staff and two administrative staff (1.5 FTE). There is a range of visiting faculty contributing to teaching on the programmes. The University of Chester, as the awarding body, currently validates all programmes offered at the College, but is reducing its partnerships and thus has notified the College that validation arrangements will cease in August 2023. The College has established an initial agreement with a new validating partner - Spurgeon's College - and much work is in progress to ensure an effective transition.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The actions identified following the 2021 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) (HER(AP)) have been fully implemented and reported, and evaluation is completed or is in progress. The monitoring team confirmed progress on the recommendations by reviewing a range of evidence, including student handbooks and documents related to the University of Chester, minutes of meetings of the various committees including the Postgraduate Forum, and records of staff development activity, appraisals and peer observations. Evidence of continued progress on the affirmation was seen in the implementation of the revised admissions policy.

4 The HER(AP) of March 2021 offered three recommendations, one affirmation and noted two areas of good practice. The College's Action Plan identified key actions to address the recommendations, with specific targets and success indicators. Actions to address all three recommendations have now been completed.

5 The College has fully addressed the recommendation to further embed the process for the monitoring and development of individual staff, including peer observation and staff appraisal. Documentary evidence of the cycle of appraisals was examined, and staff were able to discuss the process and its value to their development. Processes supporting ongoing professional development were evidenced through examination of documents detailing individual professional development activity (including sabbatical leave opportunities), and through discussion of how corporate development activities are supported and structured at the College.

6 The College's cycle of peer observation has now been completed, with visiting lecturers and core staff all having been reviewed, and core staff having acted as reviewers. The formal reflection on the effectiveness of the full cycle of reviews will take place in the June 2023 staffing committee, with the cycle then continuing in the coming year. The peer observation process evidences an effective balance of supportive proposals for improvement and praise for good practice. Although there is, at this point, no formal process for further dissemination of good practice, staff noted that informal exchanges allowed this to happen in a range of settings.

7 The second recommendation noted the need to more clearly distinguish the process of academic appeals from that of complaints and has been addressed through clarifying information in the student handbooks. Information available articulates the definitions of complaints and appeals, and directs students to the University of Chester processes, when appropriate. The College anticipates that, with the move to a new validating partner, more of the quality assurance responsibilities will fall directly to the College.

8 The third recommendation addressed the need for a process for postgraduate students to contribute to quality enhancement processes, and the College established a committee with this purpose, which met for the first time in June 2022. Students confirmed that they are satisfied with both the formal and informal means of addressing issues, through systematic unit feedback and through liaison committee structures. The College is restructuring its committee system in light of new validation requirements, and, as a result, committee structures will offer a much more extensive role for student participation at all levels from September 2023. These processes will supplement, rather than replace, the current Postgraduate Forum and Student Voice Committee.

9 The affirmation,

