Name of Provider: Assemblies of God Incorporated
UKPRN: 10020416

TEF Year Three provider submission

Provider Context

Mattersey Hall College is the part of Assemblies of God Incorporated that provides HE teaching, in conjunction with our validating University, the University of Chester. Our mission statement is 'to help to train and equip the next generation of Christian leaders'. Within a Higher Education context, this includes providing appropriate ministerial training alongside the development of critical abilities which enable students to engage in critical analysis and evaluation in the areas of biblical studies, theology and praxis. Although part of Assemblies of God, our faculty and student body is drawn from several denominational groups.

We offer residential and Distance Learning programmes at Undergraduate and Postgraduate levels. Our current programmes are:

BA in Biblical Studies and Theology
GradDip in Theological Studies
MA in Biblical Studies
MA in Practical Theology
MA in Missional Leadership
DMin, MPhil and PhD

In 2016-17 we had 135 students studying with us – 91 at UG level; 37 at MA level and 7 on doctoral programmes.

Last year we successfully completed a revalidation by the University, and we have recently been through a successful QAA Higher Education Review (AP).

Teaching Quality

The programme of study at Mattersey Hall has been designed in co-operation with the wider denomination and through contact with church leaders and also with subject specialists, with a view to including appropriate areas of academic study. It also reflects relevant Benchmark Statements for Theology and Religious Studies, and requirements set out in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

Teaching is done primarily through lectures and smaller seminar groups. Staff are also available for individual consultation, and for supervisory sessions. Assessment is generally through continuous assessment. This gives students the opportunity to develop research and independent study skills. Class size is relatively small, enabling a high degree of classroom interaction. This may take the form of question and answer, group work or wider class discussion of key topics. Students are also involved in church placements on most Sundays during term time, and take part in a ten day cross-cultural Missions Trip each year.

Teaching staff are well qualified in their own subject specialisms and are encouraged to teach, where possible, to those specialisms. There is provision, both in time and limited financial support, to attend relevant conferences. The teaching staff are made up of permanent faculty, full- and part-time, and visiting lecturers, whose expertise in key areas enables us to offer a wider range of modules. We also seek to maintain a good balance between academic study and its practical application, and our staff are also involved in leadership within local churches.

We are also grateful for an able, dedicated and well-motivated team of academic support staff, who are responsible for day to day academic administration.

We consider that the quality of teaching is a vital part of our provision for students. This is maintained and enhanced through:

- appropriate staff training, including opportunities to share good practice and to engage with educational experts
- professional development, including developing subject specialism through publishing, presenting papers and attending conferences, and developing additional educational skills through engagement with education specialist and the HEA
- regular peer review of classroom practice, and the involvement, where necessary of more objective assessment from outside bodies. This includes feedback, discussions and opportunities to address areas of weakness and share good practice in staff training sessions.

We are very pleased that the Assessment and Feedback metric is considerably above the benchmark. We see this as an important part of helping students to develop knowledge, understanding and appropriate skills, and are continually seeking to improve its quality.

Learning Environment

Mattersey Hall's goal is to provide a learning environment that is of a high quality with good provision of resources, and served by well-qualified faculty and staff. This, in turn aids the development of independent study and research skills.

Mattersey Hall includes around 90 rooms for residential students, recreation areas and dining provision together with three classrooms (accommodating up to 48 students, and equipped with data projectors and sound systems) and a large chapel, which may also be used for teaching larger groups. A seminar room is also available for classes up to 15. In addition, we have a purpose designed Research Centre, which was built in 2014, and provides books and journals as well as work/study space (including improved access to students with physical disabilities). We also have, onsite, the Donald Gee Pentecostal Archive, which is internationally recognised as a leading Pentecostal archive.

Faculty are encouraged to share their research with students, in order to encourage interest in research, and students are encouraged to attend research seminars organised by the University of Chester, as well as other academic conferences. This is further encouraged by the participation of faculty who both attend and, on occasions, offer papers. The occasional presence of Postgraduate and Doctoral students on campus also helps develop the research environment.

External Examiners have commented, positively, on the quality of the learning environment:

- 'A good and supportive learning environment'
- 'The College provides a good learning environment which encourages independent learning and the development of relevant skills'

We have recently also been commended for the extensive range of approaches taken to create a supportive learning community that enables students to take responsibility for their own learning and development.

In a small institution like Mattersey Hall, there is the opportunity for formal and informal conversations between staff and students around a range of topics. These include helping students to decide on options and also to discuss difficulties. This level of personal contact is a considerable strength of the College. The more formal Student Progression and Results Board gives opportunity to look at overall student performance, and also the performance of individual students. This enables us to build on strengths, but also to note areas of weakness and to offer support. Individual support is offered by both teaching and support staff. Our students come from a range of

backgrounds and include many with little or no recent experience of academic study. We, as a College, are committed to academic excellence, and an important part of that, for us, is to help students to achieve the very best that they can. The personal contact that we have with students, together with formal and strategic meetings to assess progress and performance, and also to monitor, review and enhance the student learning experience, play important parts in helping every student achieve his or her potential. Regular meetings with student representatives and the presence of students on our Board of Studies also helps us be aware of student issues and needs, so we may respond appropriately.

There is also a good level of pastoral support. This is offered by staff, who are deliberate in spending time on campus out of hours, and also through Leadership Formation Groups. Every student is assigned to a Leadership Formation Group, which is led by a staff member, and provides opportunity for group discussion as well as one-to-one support. Students also have opportunities for peer discussions, both formally, as part of designated group work, and informally. We also offer additional support for students with learning disabilities. This is overseen by our Disability Officer, who is in regular contact with individual students to discuss ways of increasing support. In a recent review that level of support was commended.

The level of direct engagement with students and personalised support has led to high retention, progression and completion rates among on-campus students. Personalised support has also contributed to a good level of attainment.

As noted, students are involved in Church Placements and Missions Trips. This gives opportunities to take part in activities and to assume levels of responsibility that will help them in future employment. The College also provides additional non-academic teaching on practical issues relating to possible areas of employment, including counselling and various forms of chaplaincy.

The daily teaching timetable has been designed so as to give students opportunity to build time for recreation, including sport and physical activity, into the day, alongside their academic pursuits, helping to encourage a more balanced and holistic routine.

Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

The latest student outcomes received from the University are for 2016-17. These indicate that, at UG level, 16% of graduating students obtained a First-Class degree and 64% obtained a 2.1 or above. Many of our students come to Mattersey Hall as mature students without formal qualifications (and this represents a significant level of value added (in the TEF 1718 figures the low and non-tariff entry qualifications totalled 61%, with only 23% at high level or above). One of the strengths of the College, that has been commented on by external examiners, is the relatively high achievement of those who come into the College with little or no academic background.

We also encourage spiritual formation of students and notice a significant increase in knowledge, skills, work readiness and personal development. Some of this is measured through assessment. Some is measured through our internal College Diploma which runs alongside the degree programme.

The result of the combination of personalised academic experience, pastoral support and an emphasis on spiritual formation is that for many of our students, the ‘distance travelled’ whilst at Mattersey Hall is considerable.

The academic programmes are also designed to include positive elements that encourage skills that contribute to life-long learning, and transferable skills that will serve graduating students in a variety of contexts. These are set out in our programme specifications, which reflect relevant benchmark statements. Alongside subject knowledge, this involves the development of:

- the student's ability to understand contexts and beliefs different to their own tradition, and the critical and analytical skills, self-awareness and the ability to reflect on and apply a variety of methods of study in order to set out clear accounts and coherent arguments.
- the student's capacity for reflexive learning and ability to gather, evaluate and synthesise different types of information
- independence of mind and initiative, and the capacity to modify, suspend or otherwise change position when warranted
- analytical ability and the capacity to formulate questions and solve problems
- presentation skills, both oral and written and ability to attend closely to the meaning of written documents.

Through our programmes, we also aim to encourage and develop:

- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- self-discipline and time-management
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
- the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

Through the academic programmes and the extra-curricular provision, we seek to prepare students for employment and/or further study. The teaching by well qualified staff who are also engaged in writing and research, the level of academic support and the quality of the learning/research environment plays a part in encouraging students to go on to further education. In addition, we regularly provide students with details of job opportunities in our sector, and contacts with the Assemblies of God and other denominations also play a role in placing graduating students. Involvement in local church placements and Missions Trips during their time at Mattersey Hall also contributes to their preparation for the work-place. The success of this provision is borne out by the metric for employment or further study. Though we are not complacent and look to continue to improve that provision, through regular monitoring and review.

The level of academic and personal formation support available on campus contributes to high continuation rates. We aim to raise the level among Distance Learning students by:

- offering greater one-to-one tutorial support, and by encouraging Distance Learning Students to come onto campus wherever possible and attend whatever lectures they can.
- talking to potential students on application about the availability of study resources, including local university libraries, and offering extended access to the College's Research Centre.
- ensuring that applicants are aware of the requirements of a full or part time degree programme – both on application and at interview.

We are, generally, very pleased with our student outcomes and 'learning gain' among on-campus students, and feedback from students is also encouraging in that regard. Our aim is to build on what is positive in order to improve and enhance the experience of our students, to enable all students to share these positive outcomes.