TEF Year Four 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, where relevant, 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 2018-19 we have 106 students studying with us – 66 at UG level; 34 at MA level and 4 on doctoral programmes.

In December 2016 we successfully completed a revalidation by the University (for implementation in September 2017). In December 2017 we had a successful QAA Higher Education Review (AP), and this was followed, in December 2018, with a successful annual monitoring review.

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.

The College programmes are well supported by a dedicated staff team. 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 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 Teaching, the Assessment and Feedback and the Academic Support metrics are 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.

The College has around 90 bedrooms for residential students, recreation areas and dining provision together with three classrooms, each 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 provides books and journals as well as work/study space, and includes access for 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 all students to achieve their potential. Regular meetings with student representatives the presence of students on our Board of Studies, and the opportunity for a student representative to report to the Governing Body, also helps us be aware of student issues and needs, so we may respond appropriately.

There is also a good level of pastoral support. There is a Pastoral Team, led by the College Dean. This includes the Student Liaisaon Officer, the Disability Officer and other members of staff. Members of the team are deliberate n spending time on campus out of hours. Students are also supported pastorally 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 previously 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

In the most recent set of outcomes received from the University (2017–18), a at UG level, no students ttained a first class degree, 53% attained a 2.1. This represents a disappointing drop in the percentage of students attaining a 2.1 or above, and the reasons for that are being explored. Nevertheless, of that leaving cohort, 30% entered college with Low or Non Tariff qualifications, and of those, 80% attained a second class degree, with 60% attaining a 2.1. This represents a significant level of value added. According to the most recent TEF figures,

students with low and non-tariff entry qualifications total 65%, 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.

The academic programme is complemented and enriched by our emphasis on and provision for the spiritual formation of students. This has resulted in a significant increase in practical knowledge, skills, work readiness and personal development. Some of this is measured through academic 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 reflective 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 a 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.

In conclusion, 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. We are, though, not complacent, and recognise the need to clealy identify and build on what is positive in order to improve, enhance and enrich the experience of our students, so that all are able to share in these positive outcomes.