



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (College)

INSTITUTION: Maryvale Institute

ADDRESS: Maryvale House
Old Oscott Hill
Birmingham
B44 9AG

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Fr Edward Clare

Accreditation status: Accredited

Date of inspection: 16 April 2015

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation 9 July 2015

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

Maryvale Institute (hereafter Maryvale) is an educational institution in the Catholic Church with a long history. Its premises, Maryvale House in Birmingham, date back to 1752, the property having been associated with the Archdiocese of Birmingham and its antecedents since the early eighteenth century. The building has been altered and expanded as occasion required, and within the bounds of its Grade II Listed status.

Maryvale was established in 1980 for the purposes of part-time learning in further and higher education in the Catholic faith, and runs short-term residential schools. Maryvale is a teaching and administration centre for academic courses and programmes, largely distance learning courses with compulsory attendance at residential weekend and week-long schools. Most students have to attend these residential schools three times a year, but overseas students attend only once annually, for between three days and two weeks, depending on the particular course. This system is currently being reconsidered. About a quarter of registered students come from outside the EU. A comprehensive administration system serves these students.

Maryvale is recognised by the Catholic Church as an 'International Catholic College for Catechesis, Theology, Philosophy and Religious Education'. In 2011 Maryvale was approved as an official 'Ecclesiastical institute' to offer degrees of the Holy See at undergraduate and postgraduate level. These degrees, through the Bologna agreement, are fully recognised in EU countries.

2. Brief description of the current provision

There are currently over 600 students registered at Maryvale, which is about a hundred fewer than in 2013. Maryvale has now reduced its different validation agreements to three: (1) Faculté Notre Dame at École Cathédrale, Paris for its divinity undergraduate course; (2) Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships (CICP) at Open University for its taught postgraduate course, an MA with five pathways; and (3) Liverpool Hope University for its postgraduate research degrees, MPhil and PhD.

2. Inspection process

The inspector was welcomed by the Director and the Registrar, and after a discussion with them was given a tour of the premises by the Estates Director. All relevant documentation was neatly laid out for scrutiny. The inspection took place on a Friday and there were no classes being held at the time.

4. Inspection history

Full accreditation inspection:	20 and 21 March 2009
Interim inspection:	28 May 2010
Reaccreditation inspection:	1 and 2 March 2013

PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgements and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector(s) during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

The most significant changes have been in the administration of Maryvale since the last inspection, including the appointment of a new Director in 2014 and the return of the former Registrar. There were also some changes in the course administration by placing more learning materials on the website, and staff were considering further improvements to the Virtual Learning Environment for their distance learning constituency. A decrease in student numbers of almost a hundred in two years is also a matter of some concern. The management of courses has been adjusted so that the Ecclesiastical Institute is no longer the cover for the entire range of programmes, but of one unit of the total provision as the Higher Institute of Religious Studies.

3. Response to action points in last report

The following actions were recommended at the reaccreditation inspection:

Staff performance reviews should be held annually for academic and administrative staff.

New staff are now appraised every six months and all staff will be appraised annually from the next academic year. The delay was due to the change in administration.

Tutors should be encouraged to make more use of illustrative material and rely less on lecture methods of reading notes, even when PowerPoint presentations are used.

This is not always practised, but the focus is not on classroom teaching, as most students only have three face-to-face encounters during their entire course. However, all staff are encouraged to attend annual training days, and the student feedback had been enhanced so that lecturers are aware of areas needing improvement and change. If serious issues are raised, the particular Course Leader will do a class observation.

Peer observation of teaching should be practised as part of the academic staff review.

This is being dealt with, especially for new staff, but there is not yet a formal system in place.

Personal tutorials could be extended to give more time for those students who need it.

It is felt that the system allows for this already, by the accessibility of the tutors during residential times and the extra time that is available to attend personal tutorials when students are present.

3. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements – spot check

3.1 Management, Staffing and Administration

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
Management, staffing and administration is well organised, documented and qualified. A part-time HR adviser has been appointed recently and heads up personnel. A comprehensive new employee handbook has been drawn up.				

3.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
The distance learning system developed in Maryvale over the years is of a high quality, supplemented with weekend and week-long seminars in residence. The Virtual Learning Environment is being developed.				

3.3 Student Welfare

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
Within the limited time they are in residence, students are well cared for and an effective pastoral system is in place for ongoing support at a distance. The student representative system has been formalised with each cohort being represented on the course committees, creating a strong student voice.				

3.4 Premises and Facilities

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be		✓		
Comments				
The premises are well maintained. The fire safety signs in the residential rooms were missing at the time of the inspection, and it was promised that this would be rectified immediately.				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Institution’s strengths

Maryvale Institute has been in existence for 35 years and continues to be very well managed, with competent oversight provided by the Archdiocese and the Trustees. The new Director has brought stability to the institute after some turbulence in leadership. Staff, both academic and administrative, are professionally qualified and very competent. The variety of distance learning programmes offered are pedagogically excellent. Students are well represented on various committees and pastoral care is very good.

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
Notices of fire safety and a floor plan must be placed in every residential room.	H
Staff performance reviews should be held annually for all academic and administrative staff.	M
A formal system of peer observation of teaching should be put in place for all teaching staff.	L
Work towards getting all teaching materials onto the Virtual Learning Environment.	L

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	YES
Further comments, if applicable	