

BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Independent Higher Education)

INSTITUTION: Maryvale Institute

ADDRESS: Maryvale House
Old Oscott Hill
Birmingham
B44 9AG

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Father Edward Clare

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 5 March 2019

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation, 23 May 2019

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

Maryvale Institute (the Institution) is an educational institution that is part of the Catholic Church. It was established in 1980 with the aim of running part-time learning courses and programmes in further and higher education in the Catholic faith.

Maryvale Institute is an unincorporated trust that is constituted under a trust deed dated 12 June 1996 and is a registered Charity. Its principal objective is the advancement and maintenance of the Roman Catholic religion through the education of the clergy and laity.

The Institution is managed through a structure headed by a Director of Institute and a senior management team made up of an Academic Registrar, Finance Controller, Director of Higher Institute of Religious Studies (HIRS) and Bachelor of Divinity and an Estates Director. It is governed by a Board of Trustees, which is chaired by the Archbishop of Birmingham. The Director, who is a priest, reports directly to the Board of Trustees.

The Institution is a teaching and administrative centre for academic courses and programmes, all of which are delivered through distance learning, but which also include compulsory study days or residential elements, three times a year.

Maryvale Institute has a recognised Higher Institute of Religious Sciences (HIRS) status which is validated by the theology faculty of the École Cathédral of Paris, on behalf of the Congregation for Catholic Education in Rome. It is currently the only such institute in the English speaking world to be approved by the Catholic Church to award bachelor's degrees and licence degrees in Divinity.

The Institution is based in Maryvale House, in Birmingham. Maryvale House dates back to 1752 and has been associated with the Archdiocese of Birmingham since the mid-eighteenth century. It has been used by several religious orders and has also been used as an orphanage. The buildings have been altered and expanded within the limits allowed by its Grade II listed status.

2. Brief description of the current provision

Maryvale Institute offers programmes from further education level to Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The higher education provision is covered by three partnership agreements. The first partnership is with the Faculté Notre Dame at the École Cathédral, Paris, and is for the Bachelor of Divinity (B Divinity) and the postgraduate Ecclesiastical Licence course. The second partnership is with the Open University for the Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Philosophy and the Catholic Tradition and the Master of Arts (MA) in Catholic Applied Theology. Finally, the third partnership with Liverpool Hope University for its research degrees leading to a Master of Philosophy or PhD.

In addition to the degree programmes, Maryvale currently offers seven certificate courses which are certificated by Maryvale Institute.

At the time of the inspection, there was a total of 352 students enrolled, of whom the majority were female. All students are part-time and over the age of 18 years. The majority of students are aged between 22 and 65 years with 33 students over 65 years old. United Kingdom (UK) and European (EU) students total 247 and there are 105 international students from 12 different countries.

Delivery is through a mixture of distance learning supported by residentials. The same staff teach the online delivery as well as providing the face-to-face teaching. There is a small team of eight permanent academic staff, four of whom are part-time. The delivery of the provision is supported by a pool of 90 associate staff drawn from academic institutions and the Church in the UK and overseas.

3. Inspection process

One inspector visited the premises in Birmingham for one day. Meetings took place with the Director of the Institute, the Academic Registrar, Finance Controller, Director of HIRS and BDiv, Estates Director, three teaching staff and a group of students. Documents provided were scrutinised and the inspector undertook a tour of the premises. The Institution responded promptly to all requests for information.

4. Inspection History

Inspection Type	Date
Full Accreditation	20-21 March 2009
Interim	28 May 2010
Re-accreditation	1-2 March 2013
Interim	16 April 2015
Re-accreditation	5 - 6 April 2017

PART B – JUDGMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgments and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution.

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

Due to the retirement of the Research Director, a replacement was appointed in January 2019. The Institution has also recruited a Marketing Manager to help with the promotion of its courses.

Validation is being sought for a new Foundation Degree in Youth Ministry and School Chaplaincy. The validation is predicted to be agreed by the end of March 2019.

The Institution is also in the process of introducing a new course in Leadership and Management in a community context.

The Trustees of the Maryvale Institute and the Trustees of the Archdiocese of Birmingham have jointly agreed that the two charities should merge so that the business of the Maryvale Institute becomes a part of the activity of the Archdiocese whilst retaining its own name and identity. This has the advantage firstly of formalising the ecclesial reality of the relationship between the two charities that already exists and secondly, simplifying the financial guarantee that the diocesan trust already provides to Maryvale. Having taken legal advice, the two boards of Trustees are currently conducting the process of due diligence that is required for such a step to take place, and subject to there being no unforeseen difficulties, intend that the merger should be finalised by the end of July 2019.

2. Response to actions points in last report

5.5 Regular classroom observations must be carried out to promote the sharing and development of pedagogic skills for all teaching staff.

There is a formal process for all staff to participate in classroom observations and to receive feedback on this process. This activity is recorded and embedded into the appraisal process. Regular meetings of academic staff provide the opportunity to share good practice and enhance pedagogic skills. This process has resulted in increased sharing of excellent pedagogic practice in a positive environment.

26.4 The Institution must introduce key performance indicators to better enable the monitoring of performance and inform strategic developments.

The monitoring of performance and year-on-year comparisons are undertaken through the annual monitoring process at course level in collaboration with the validating bodies, where applicable. Data from this course monitoring is considered at the Programme Committees and the Academic Board meetings. The outcomes and subsequent actions of these deliberations feed into the overall strategy for the Institution. The senior management board have oversight of this process at both operational and strategic levels.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

The Institution should make it clear how and whether the policies and procedures, which support its management and quality assurance, apply equally to the further education provision as well as to the higher education programmes.

The documents detailing the management and quality assurance clearly reference where they apply to higher education and further education policies and procedures. As far as possible these areas are aligned. Where differential processes are required, they are detailed in a separate further education quality assurance handbook. These documents provide a comprehensive reference point for both staff and students.

The Institution should increase focus on the sharing of good practice in delivering teaching and learning in classroom settings and encourage staff to develop their pedagogic practice in these settings.

Classroom observations are in place across all higher and further education programmes which feeds into the individual appraisals process. Examples of good practice from this process are shared at the monthly Programme Directors' Committee and associate staff training days. Additionally, there is an academic forum once a term to provide an opportunity for staff to share good practice, share outcomes from research and present papers. These sessions are filmed and stored in the staff development area in a Virtual Learning Environment. Enhanced academic practice ensures that students have a positive academic experience.

The Institution should consider standardising the evidence format across the provision so that further education follows the same pattern and format for evidencing moderation and presenting learning outcomes for courses. This will underpin the ladder of learning for students moving from further to higher education courses.

The introduction of the further education quality handbook has formalised a number of processes that were already undertaken but not necessarily formally documented. The moderation process for further and higher education operates to a similar model. The addition of module descriptors for further education courses has standardised the course information across the Institution.

The website should be refreshed to make it more contemporary and it is recommended that it includes a map of the location of Maryvale Institute, so prospective students and visitors know where it is.

The Institution employs an Information Communication Technology (ICT) Co-ordinator to undertake the day-to-day administration and development of the website. The website content has information about the programmes and the Institution and includes promotional videos and an interactive prospectus. There is a map of the location and directions detailing how to find the Institution. This comprehensive website ensures that both prospective students and other stakeholders have a good understanding of the ethos and courses available prior to any visit.

The Institution should consider emphasising the anticipated work load for students in the advance information pack.

There is information about anticipated workload clearly outlined in student information packs in both hard copy and on the website. Prospective students are given the opportunity to discuss this with both current students and staff at the Institution prior to joining. This process ensures that students are fully informed of all aspects of study prior to choosing to study at the Institution.

The Institution should consider including deadlines in the complaints and appeals policies, for the different stages in the process, to enhance their robustness.

The Institution clearly describes deadlines for their complaints and appeals process in the Institute Wide Policies, Regulations and Guidelines document. In this respect, students' expectations can be managed appropriately.

Maryvale Institute should consider producing a flow chart of academic quality management processes in order to provide an easily accessible overview for students, staff and external bodies.

The quality booklet outlines all the quality assurance processes and includes an annual quality assurance flowchart detailing the role of specific committees, programme teams and indicates how feedback from students and external examiners is incorporated into these processes.

4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

4.1 Governance, Strategy and Financial Management (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

There is a clear organisational structure and the senior management team of the Institution are fully aware of the responsibilities of their roles. This is the case across all levels of staff.

The strategic plan is reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis to respond to changes in the internal and external environment. Any proposed changes to the plan are discussed and considered through the appropriate committee and governance structure and an action plan is implemented.

The Institution has a detailed risk register which is monitored and actions are documented through the senior management board.

There is evidence of discussion involving external stakeholders in deciding on the future development of the Institution.

4.2 Academic Management and Administration (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The committee structure ensures the effective academic management and administration and is clearly defined. The remits for the different committees are clear with some focusing on academic oversight and others on management processes.

There are clear reporting mechanisms for each committee and annual reports including action plans are produced for both internal and external stakeholders.

An appropriate staff appraisal process is in place together with a staff development programme to support both academic and professional services staff development.

4.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Institution engages a wide range of highly qualified and experienced academic staff from many related disciplines to ensure that they provide a current and diverse learning environment for the students.

Students are encouraged to develop independent learning skills and support with study skills is available through the Virtual Learning Environment and directly with staff. This support is accessible to staff whilst they are at the residential sessions and through online communications.

Assessments are approved by the External Examiners prior to sharing with students. Tutors undertake internal training to ensure all assessments and marking are at the same standard.

The student handbook details appropriate policies and procedures including areas such as academic misconduct and plagiarism.

Teaching tends to make use of traditional methods and would be more engaging through the introduction of technology-enhanced teaching and learning approaches involving the use of contemporary technology.

Work is submitted through an industry standard plagiarism checking software product and there is an excellent process for student feedback which includes clear learning points for students based on their current and previous assessments.

4.4 Student Recruitment, Support, Guidance and Progression (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Both the printed publicity and marketing materials and the website provide clear information about the courses offered at the Institution. This is inclusive of the level of study, cost, entry requirements, length of course and details of the awarding bodies and accrediting universities.

The website provides detailed information about Maryvale Institute and what students can expect if they chose to join the Maryvale community.

There is a comprehensive guidance process undertaken by both academic staff and support staff at Maryvale to assist prospective students in choosing the correct course for them.

The Catholic ethos of the Institution underpins the pastoral support available to students. Students have access to support staff and academic staff both at the residentials and online whilst studying at a distance. Individual support on academic and other issues is available through the personal tutor system and students were all aware of who to contact for support.

4.5 Premises, Facilities and Learning Resources (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met

Partially Met

Not Met

Comments

The premises are fit for purpose with a good range of residential, teaching and learning and social spaces available at the Institution.

The bedrooms have recently been renovated and provide basic facilities for residential students.

There are a number of teaching rooms where furniture can be easily moved to accommodate different teaching approaches and interaction. Rooms have whiteboards and computer facilities for presentations.

There is a library on site which students can use during residentials. Students access online journals and e-books for the majority of their study requirements. In addition to the Institution's resources, some students can access the online learning resources of the awarding body.

4.6 Quality Management, Assurance and Enhancement (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met

Partially Met

Not Met

Comments

The quality management and assurance processes are clearly detailed in the quality booklet and a new quality booklet specifically for further education has recently been introduced.

The quality assurance process of annual monitoring is fully embedded into the Institution, ensuring an annual comprehensive analysis of teaching and learning and student performance on each programme. Stakeholders, such as students and External Examiners are fully represented throughout the process and can be seen throughout the feedback mechanisms. Key performance indicators by programme are considered through this process and, where required, specific action is identified to be progressed. Action plans are produced to facilitate quality enhancement and are monitored through the programme committee.

Feedback from stakeholders is gathered both formally and informally through surveys, formal meetings and student representation. The Institution responds to the feedback on a one-to-one basis or through the formal committee structure and the annual monitoring process.

Reviews of programmes and the partnerships with the awarding bodies take place every five years and provide excellent staff development and enhancement opportunities through the sharing of best practice across the sector.

4.7 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

The advice and guidance provided to prospective students is excellent. There is an information document detailing all aspects of studying at the Institution. Additionally, the opportunity to attend open days to discuss student experiences at the Institution with existing students is good practice.

Interviews with academic staff to discuss the programmes and the possible career opportunities are available to any students considering studying at the institution and is to be commended.

The systematic assessment feedback process provides an excellent development opportunity for students and supports their learning by providing clear actions for improvement with examples and detailed guidance.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

High Medium Low

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT *(to be reviewed at the next inspection)*

The Institution should consider the use of more interactive contemporary teaching approaches and the introduction of new technology for teaching at the residential.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS - FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE