

External Examiner Online Report A

CENTRE DETAILS & CERTIFICATION

REPORT DETAILS	
Report Type	First Sampling
Centre Name	MACCLESFIELD COLLEGE
Centre Number	40517
Standards Verifier (EE) Name	DR J STOCKS
AA Number	632709
Has Been Submitted	Yes

VISIT DETAILS	
Date Of Sampling	12/05/2015
Feedback Presented To	Amy White
Designation	Programme Manager

PROGRAMME EVALUATION SUMMARY			
Programme No.	Programme Title	No. of Reg.	Status
KVW45	APPLIED CHEMISTRY (QCF)	0	Released

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SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**Action Points From Last Report**

The centre have established a formal HE board to receive and ratify the attainment of students at the end of the session.
Recommendations with respect to contextualisation of higher grade descriptors and resubmissions had been implemented.

Summary of Essential Actions

No essential actions raised by the external examiner.

Summary of Recommendations

No recommendations made by the external examiner.

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General Comments

Mention any points you may wish to make, including:

comments on administration; communication with the centre; access to material needed to carry out the external examination; and comments about how the centre is meeting the expectations of the QAA Code of Practice and addressing the Academic Infrastructure.

All requested materials were made available both before and on the day of the visit. A room was made available for sampling. Students' work and course documents were available, well organised and easy to follow. The course team have prepared detailed schemes of work for all modules. These were available in the programme file which had detailed records of team meetings and policies and procedures. A course handbook included clear statements regarding late submission of work. The centre had engaged with the opportunity to submit assignment briefs for external verification prior to the visit. Minor issues relating to these assignment briefs were discussed. The centre has engaged with issues relating to the QAA code of practice and academic infrastructure via the Higher Education Review. Macclesfield is the second largest manufacturing site in the World for the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca. The company have provided advice on the selection of units in the programme. A site owned by the company has been developed at Alderley Park as a Science Park and the college has the opportunity to use modern scientific instrumentation facilities at this site (Biohub). Students have visited this session.

Areas of Good Practice

Identify any areas of particularly good practice mentioned in other sections of this report.

Excellent course file contains detailed records of all matters relating to this programme. Emphasis on practical work additionally supported by experienced technical staff. The small size of the student cohort provides regular academic and pastoral support from the programme staff. The centre for supporting the two continuing students through HNC to HND qualification.

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DETAILED COMMENTS

Management of Academic Standards

Comment on the presence of effective management procedures that are supported by appropriate systems and policies. Make specific reference to the management of any programmes run on a collaborative basis in other institutions.

Comment also on the operation of assessment meetings, including:

- the fairness and consistency of decisions
- the decision making process
- administrative support for the meetings
- the scope of the minutes of previous meetings
- the organisation and conduct of the meetings.

This is the second year of this programme. Students attend on two days a week basis. There are currently two students on the HND Chemistry course. Some students completed the HNC course last session and left. The centre were prepared to support the remaining two students through to the HND qualification. The centre hope to recruit more students for the next session to HN Applied Science programmes.

There are no collaborative arrangements with other centres for this programme.

College procedures are documented for internal verification, assessment board procedures and responses to External Examiner issues. The centre have established a formal HE board to receive and ratify the attainment of students at the end of the session.

Academic and departmental meetings minutes demonstrate the centre has an efficient system to respond to External Examiner issues.

Course board minutes from the session demonstrate that appropriate procedures are implemented with respect to attendance, conduct, accurate decisions and record keeping.

The centre has an HE Quality Manager who monitors delivery and quality issues in all HE programmes.

A course board team will meet at the end of the session to confirm attainment and discuss extenuating circumstances and present results to a formal HE Assessment Board. This meeting is chaired by the HE Quality Manager and attended by the Quality Nominee, the Head of Engineering and Technology, Liz Beardmore, who was met on this visit and members of the course team. This meeting receives administrative support and is minuted. It will meet on 4/7/15 and minutes will be made available to the External Examiner.

Effectiveness of Assessment Instruments

State, for each programme, whether the design and nature of the assessments permit the aims and learning objectives of the programme to be met and are of a standard appropriate to the qualification level.

Assessor grading was fair and consistent for all units sampled and met the programme objectives. Assignment front sheets are produced according to a common format listing outcomes, pass assessment criteria and higher grading opportunities available.

For all assignments sampled there were assignment specific contextualised statements that demonstrated the use of higher level skills.

Assignments had clear contextualised grading statements and were set in an appropriate context. The academic standards achieved by students were comparable with other centres running HN Science programmes.

Internal verification of assignment briefs and assessed work uses standard Pearson designed proforma.

The internal verification policies are documented in detail.

Feedback to students was extensive, fair and supportive.

The college has produced detailed documentation relating to assessment regulations for HN courses.

Extensive documentation is in place with respect to internal verification.

Assignment briefs are internally verified before implementation. A portfolio of current internally verified assignments was available.

The IV of assignment briefs was thorough with feedback and reflection from internal verifier to assessor. There was evidence of action following IV.

Internal verification of student work was rigorous with comprehensive feedback to the assessor. There was evidence of action following IV.

A variety of assessment modes were employed including written assignments, presentations, posters and practical work.

All assessments were accompanied with required outcomes, assessment criteria and contextualised guidance for the achievement of higher grade descriptors at M and D level.

Overall unit assignments allow students to demonstrate higher level skills, analysis, evaluation and research skills including referencing.

Assignments encourage independent learning and develop divergent thinking.

Sampling demonstrates that the aims of the programmes are being met.

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Maintenance and Audit of Records

State whether the procedure for maintaining and auditing assessment records is secure and effective.

Results are stored on individual tutors' computers and on a central programme progress record kept by the programme manager, back up hard copies are also kept by individual tutors. Provisional final grades are recorded by the programme leader and discussed at a team meeting prior to submission to the Assessment Board. Documented procedures are implemented for the final records of student achievement. A copy of the minutes of the final Assessment Board for these programmes will be made available to the External Examiner. The Programme Manager has compiled and maintained an excellent detailed Programme file containing detailed records of all matters relating to the programme.

Registration and Certification Claims

Summarise the process for ensuring that student registration and certification is accurate and monitored effectively.

All students on the course are enrolled by staff in the Examinations Office. Registration codes are given to students as part of the enrolment process. Subsequently, shortly after admission, students are registered with Pearson. Withdrawals are notified by academic staff and subsequently confirmed. A final check at the end of session confirms this procedure. Transcriptions from the final Assessment Board are checked before electronic transmission of results to Pearson by academic and administrative staff. A final check of results is undertaken once certificates are received before issue to students.

Student Support and Review

Key areas to discuss include:

- The assessment process, assessment feedback to students
- The quality of teaching, the expertise and experience of staff
- Physical resources and learning support for the programme
- Tutorial and pastoral support
- Opportunities for students to give feedback on their programme
- For HN programmes, summarise the views expressed by students, including favourable comments and any concerns raised
- Summary of discussions with staff

The two students on the programme were at work placements on the day of the visit as part of their work based investigation unit.. They were met last session and student questionnaires confirm that the students are enjoying the course and feel that it is meeting their aims. They are pleased that the centre was able to allow progression to HND level on this programme despite the low cohort.

Students understand the assessment process.

They felt the standard of teaching was high and facilities were good.

The students are fortunate that the Science staff are supported by experienced technical staff.

Laboratory technician, Jenny Morrell was met on this visit.

There is a large learning resource and library, widely used by the students, at the site which was visited previously. Staff recommend the purchase of new textbooks on a regular basis.

Lab. facilities were visited, the centre has good scientific instrumental facilities.

Students considered IT facilities adequate.

There is a dedicated HE Study room available to students.

A student handbook on the programme is available online.

Student questionnaires are regularly distributed and give feedback on their learning experience.

All students will complete an end of session student perception survey in addition to regular college student surveys.

They valued the extensive and supportive feedback from assessors on their academic performance.

They were aware of authenticity issues and appeals procedures. There have been no appeals or malpractice issues this session.

Students have benefited from the low numbers as they receive excellent 1:1 tutoring.

There were regular timetabled tutorials and pastoral support was available in the college. Regular internal reviews with tutors allow them to monitor their progress.

They value the use of the VLE by tutors to support independent learning.

Staff considered that the students benefited from the fact that there were just two students rather than lack of group momentum.