

# Common Awards Bulletin

## Editorial

Since the beginning of November, we've completed sixteen validation visits. That's sixteen folders of paperwork, sixteen long trawls through tables of assessment totals and contact hours, sixteen collections of train tickets and taxi receipts, sixteen tours of the premises, sixteen chances to compare the cakes or biscuits provided, and sixteen opening spiels and closing perorations. It has been an exhausting process, but also an exhilarating one. It is hard to summarize the experience, but I would single out two dominant impressions so far. First, it is impossible not to be struck by the sheer diversity of the TEIs – a diversity in size, complexity, organization, approach, and atmosphere that is even richer and more impressive than I had been expecting. But second, shining through that diversity, there is a shared ethos of deep, rich, attentive care for students. The highlight of each visit has been the meeting with students, and the chance to hear their irrepressible enthusiasm for their teachers and their courses – and that has been true in every TEI, without fail. The visits have left me very impressed with your existing work, and very excited about the ways in which we might be able to work together in future

Prof. Mike Higton  
Chair of Theology and Ministry

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## Meet the Common Awards Team



### Mike Higton—Chair of Theology & Ministry

#### Biography:

In 1991, at the beginning of the third year of my undergraduate degree, I made a last-minute decision to switch from maths to theology – and I haven't looked back since. I started my first teaching job in 1999 in Exeter's Department of Lifelong Learning, overseeing evening classes in theology all over the South West from Truro to Yeovil, and developing distance learning courses, in collaboration with the South West Ministry Training Course. In 2005 I moved over to the Department of Theology, where I taught modern Christian theology and the history of Christian doctrine, becoming Head of Department in 2006. In 2010, I took up a three-year secondment to the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme, to develop research programmes bringing together scholars of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and helping develop associated public education projects.

#### Key responsibilities:

In Durham, I am responsible for academic input into the University's validation of the Common Awards partnerships and programmes, and for developing collaborative research projects that bring together people from the church and university sectors to discuss the future of theological education, and of the ministry and mission that it serves



### Elena Martin—Quality Assurance Manager

#### Biography

Since completing my doctorate in Theology as an AHRC-funded Durham Doctoral Fellow at Durham University, I have worked in various posts in the areas of quality assurance, student recruitment, widening access, and postgraduate training. I also have experience of teaching Theology at Durham University and St Patrick's College, Maynooth. I am a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and have previously worked as an Auditor for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

#### Key responsibilities

As the Quality Assurance Manager (Common Awards), I am the administrative lead for the Common Awards Scheme. I work alongside Professor Mike Higton, who is the academic lead for the Scheme.

My main role is to support the governance and operation of the partnerships between the University and the Archbishops' Council and Designated Theological Education Institutions (TEIs). As part of this, I am the principal liaison between the TEIs and the University's professional support services, and the administrative lead for developing and coordinating the processes for the approval and ongoing operation of the Common Awards partnerships and programmes.

Please feel free to contact me about any aspect of the Common Awards Scheme, including: partnership and programme approval; the University's policies and quality management processes; the TEI Management Committees and the Management Board; professional and student support services.

## Meet the Common Awards Team

### Emma Collier—Common Awards Assistant and PA to Professor Mike Higton, Chair of Theology and Ministry

#### Biography

I joined the Common Awards Team in January 2014 after returning to the North East from London and work full-time as the Common Awards Assistant and PA to Professor Mike Higton, Chair of Theology and Ministry.

After graduating from an undergraduate degree in Marketing Management in 2009, I have had several years of experience within the areas of marketing, administration and programme coordination within a Higher Education context. This has most recently been within Cass Business School London's Executive Education department, and previously in both Postgraduate and Undergraduate Marketing roles at Newcastle University.

#### Key responsibilities:

- PA support to the Chair of Theology and Ministry, Professor Mike Higton
- Administration of the following processes relating to the Common Awards Scheme: coordination of validation processes, programme approval and review; student registration and enrolment; Boards of Examiners; the appointment of external examiners and University Liaison Officers; curriculum development
- Coordination of the team's events, Summer Schools, Annual Tutor Conferences, and grant-related events and activities



### Laura Goodhand—Common Awards Assistant

#### Biography

I joined the Common Awards team in September 2013, and work full-time as Common Awards Assistant. I have previously been both an undergraduate and a postgraduate student at Durham in the Department of Classics and Ancient History. My past work experience has included administrative roles in the NHS and in Occupational Health.

#### Key responsibilities :

- Administration of the following processes relating to the Common Awards Scheme: co-ordination of validation visits, programme approval and review, creation, amendment and withdrawal of modules, appointment of external examiners and University Liaison Officers
- Providing administrative support for those panels, university committees, Boards of Examiners and the Management Board that are supported by the Quality Assurance Manager, Elena Martin
- Maintaining the Common Awards Bulletin
- Updating and maintaining the Common Awards website
- Co-ordination of Summer Schools, Annual Tutor Conferences and other events

Please feel free to contact me on any aspect of Common Awards.





## Validation visits 2013-14

We have now reached the end of the validation visit cycle, having completed 16 visits to TEIs around the country between October 2013 and April 2014. The final validation visit to Lincoln School of Theology took place on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

We are very happy with how smoothly the process has run, including the document submissions and co-ordination of the visits themselves. The visit teams have reported how enjoyable it has been meeting students and staff at each TEI, and how interesting it has been to see how each TEI works. We would like to thank TEIs for all their efforts they put in to preparing their documents for submission and ensuring the validation process ran well.

## Reporting and approval

We are pleased to announce that the following TEIs have had their partnership and programmes approved by the University's Education Committee and have signed their contracts with the University:

- SEITE
- St John's College, Nottingham
- Queens' Foundation, Birmingham
- St Mellitus College
- Trinity College with Bristol Baptist College
- SWMTC
- Cambridge Theological Federation

The following TEIs were approved by the University's Quality and Standards Sub-Committee on 7th May 2014 (subject to signing the contract and, in some cases, subject to completion of a small number of outstanding conditions). These TEIs partnership proposals will be considered by the Education Committee at the end of May:

- Cranmer Hall
- Lindsfame Regional Training Partnership
- Yorkshire Theological Education Partnership
- Lancashire & Cumbria Training Partnership
- Ripon College, Cuddesdon
- Guildford Diocese (SCRTP TEI)
- St Stephen's House
- Wycliffe Hall
- Lincoln School of Theology

All outcomes will be reported to TEIs as soon as possible.

We are also pleased to report that those TEIs who wanted to apply for designated course status from HEFCE met the application deadline of 14<sup>th</sup> March 2014.



## TEI Training sessions

Between October 2013 and January 2014, the Common Awards Team ran three training sessions for staff at TEIs to help them prepare for their validation visits. The first two were held in Durham Castle and the third was held in Oxford, which was very kindly hosted by Wycliffe Hall.

These sessions provided a great opportunity for us to meet staff from TEIs in a more informal setting and to hear their questions and comments. We will be using the feedback we received from TEIs to contribute to the development of the FAQs bank on the Durham University Common Awards website.

The presentation given at each training session is available on the Durham University Common Awards website [here](#).

## Publicity and published information

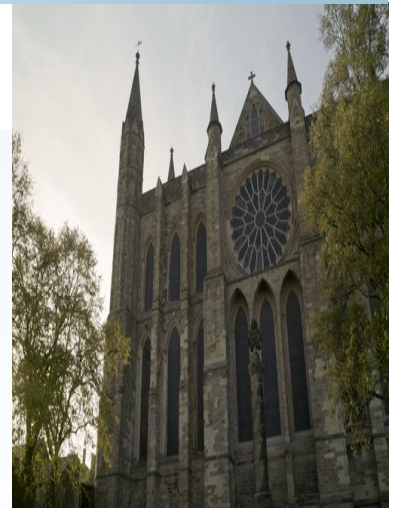
Recently a number of TEIs have requested our advice on how to refer to the new Common Awards programmes in their publicity and published information. Guidance was issued by email to TEIs in January 2014 regarding how to refer to the Common Awards programmes during the validation period, prior to the signing of their contracts with Durham University.

We have now developed a process for the consideration and approval of all published information and publicity material produced by all TEIs in relation to the new Common Awards programmes.

In the case of collaborative partnerships, the Quality Assurance Agency Code (Section B10, Indicator 18) states that although an awarding body can delegate responsibility for the production of publicity and published information, the awarding body is required to maintain effective oversight of the accuracy of all published information and publicity material relating to learning opportunities delivered with others which lead to their awards. This includes establishing clear guidelines for the process of signing-off of publicity materials produced by delivery partners and monitoring regularly all sources of information produced by other organisations (including websites and prospectuses) for prospective students and/or for students and staff involved in the arrangements.

For Common Awards, this protocol for the approval of publicity material and the use of the University's name is incorporated within Appendix 5 of the Standard Validation Contract that each TEI will sign to formalise the partnership with Durham University.

In order to ensure our compliance with these protocols, we are asking all TEIs to submit any publicity material for the new Common Awards programmes to us for consideration and approval by the Chair of the Management Board. Publicity and published information is envisaged as including the following: prospectuses, brochures, advertisements, websites and videos (but may also include other types of publicity material, including any documentation bearing the name of the University of Durham or referring to the University of Durham in the context of validation).



## Publicity and Published Information (cont.)

We understand that TEIs may be concerned about this approval process causing a delay in the scheduling and production of their publicity materials. In light of this, we are aiming to consider materials and respond to TEIs in as short a timeframe as possible. As a guideline we are aiming to return feedback to TEIs within one week of receipt.

**Publicity material can be submitted to the Common Awards Team by email to [common.awards@durham.ac.uk](mailto:common.awards@durham.ac.uk) or by post to Common Award Team, St John's College, 3 South Bailey, Durham, DH1 3RJ.**

In the future it is likely that this process will evolve, with more authority being delegated to TEIs and that we will assure our compliance with the above protocols through periodic monitoring and review of publicity materials by the Management Board. Once we have finalised a process for the ongoing periodic checking of publicity material by the Management Board for subsequent academic years, we will provide TEIs with further guidance.

**As a reminder for those TEIs who are still undergoing the approval process:** we understand that you may wish to refer to the proposed new Common Awards programmes in your publicity and course material. In common with other higher education institutions, Durham University has a specific policy regarding what may be said about prospective programmes that are undergoing an approval process. In addition, the QAA Code (Section B10, Indicator 18) requires awarding bodies to develop and implement strict protocols for the approval of publicity material and the use of the University's name, logo etc.

This means that all references to the proposed new programmes and partnership up until the point the contract has been signed will need to make explicit the current approval status of the proposals to avoid implying that the programmes have been approved and that a contractual agreement is in place.

This protocol is incorporated within the Standard Validation Contract (Appendix 5 'Protocol for the Use of the University's Name') that each TEI will sign with Durham University, and includes the following statement:

*"Details of new or revised programmes should not be advertised to existing or prospective students until final approval has been received from the University, although students may be informed that a new or revised programme is under discussion."*

We are providing TEIs with the following guidance on how to refer to the Common Awards programmes: TEIs **are** able to refer to the proposed Common Awards programmes in their publicity and recruitment material, but **they will need to make explicit the current approval status of the programmes**. This is to avoid implying that the programmes have been approved and a contractual agreement is in place before this is the case.

While the precise wording will vary depending on context, you might find the following suggested phrases useful:

*Subject to approval by, and entering into a validation agreement with, Durham University...*





## Publicity and Published Information (cont.)

*Subject to successful validation approval by Durham University, and entering a validation agreement with the University, the following programmes will be offered....*

*We are currently undergoing Durham University's validation approval processes with a view to offering our new taught courses from September 2014.*

*Courses to be offered from September 2014, subject to validation approval and entering into an agreement with Durham University.*

Similarly, details of the curriculum, programme content, length, entry criteria etc. can be provided but they should also explicitly state that these details are subject to change as part of the approval process.

This guidance set out for those TEIs who are still undergoing the approval process shouldn't prevent them from issuing offers to students. While places on the validated Durham University programmes cannot be guaranteed until after the partnership and programmes have been approved, you may wish to offer applicants a place at your institution and indicate that the offer of a place on the programme is subject to approval of the partnership and programmes.

## Admissions and APL

We are aware that the run up to next year's programmes is well under way and that TEIs are facing questions as you prepare for it. We wanted to provide some guidance on the admissions process.

Although the University is ultimately accountable for all admissions decisions, we recognise that TEIs have their own tried and tested admissions processes and extensive experience operating those processes.

Therefore our expectation is that TEIs will continue to use their existing admissions processes, and that the University will have an oversight and monitoring role of these processes and decisions through the annual and periodic review processes. We will use this system to give feedback, share good practice and provide further guidance. (For further information on the University's responsibilities and involvement in relation to validated partners please see [section 9.7.1 of the Learning & Teaching Handbook](#).)

We have the following overall expectations about your admissions processes:

that you will have a **clear written admissions policy**, setting out the processes and criteria you will use to judge whether students are capable of studying at the appropriate level;

that you will keep **clear records of all the decisions you make, the rationale for those decisions, and the evidence you use**, for the sake of annual reporting.





## Admissions and APL (cont.)

We have the following general expectations about the content of your admissions policies:

You will need to have **clearly stated standard entry requirements**, for example three A-levels or equivalent for direct entry onto a BA, or two A-levels for direct entry onto a Diploma; a 2:1 degree for direct entry onto an MA. This is not to say that you can't admit any applicants who don't meet these requirements (see below) – simply that decisions about any applicant that *does* meet them will be straightforward.

Where you *can't* satisfy yourselves that a prospective student meets these standard requirements, but you nevertheless have good reason to judge that he or she is capable of studying at the appropriate level, **we would expect you to admit them to a lower level award in the first instance**, (e.g. a Certificate instead of a BA, a PG Cert instead of an MA), ready to transfer to the higher level award subject to satisfactory progress. We would expect you to record your decision and its rationale in each case.

**You will need to have a process for making decisions about APL** (the Accreditation of Prior Learning) and **you will need to operate within the University's current principles for the award of APL** as stated in [Section 1.6 of the University's Learning and Teaching Handbook](#).

Key points to note are as follows:

APL can normally cover no more than 1/3 of a programme

The prior learning that you take into account normally needs to be "current" (i.e. to have been gained within the last five years)

Where requests fall outside these parameters, they will need to be referred to the Chair of the Management Board for approval.

Finally, **you will need to have clear processes for monitoring and making decisions about progression for all students**. This is especially important for students who have been admitted with non-standard qualifications. In the longer term, it is the track record of successful progression and achievement that will be the most important evidence to confirm the appropriateness of your admissions policies and practices.

Further information on Durham University's student admissions policy can be found in [Section 1 of the Learning and Teaching Handbook](#) and further information about APL can be found in [Section 1.6 of the Learning and Teaching Handbook](#).



## Consideration of APL requests

We are currently in the process of considering the cohort-level APL requests submitted by TEIs as part of the validation process. These requests are being considered by Professor Higton as Chair of the Management Board. A member of the Common Awards team will be in touch with you shortly (if they haven't been already) to report the outcome of your APL request to you, and in some cases to request further information or conditions to be met before the request can be approved.

Currently we are developing the process for the consideration of individual student APL requests. We hope to be in a position to provide an update on this within the next few weeks.

## Development of policies and processes

Now that the validation visit cycle for 2013/14 is almost complete, we are aware that TEIs are looking ahead to the coming academic year. Although we are still coordinating the follow-up work for the remaining 9 TEI partnership and programme proposals, which have generated a substantial workload, we are now able to focus on the Common Awards structures: the policies, processes, and governance arrangements. Although we have been doing work in this area – in liaison with Ministry Division – for quite some time now, the validation activity has unavoidably had to take priority up until this point.

We are working with a range of the University's professional support services to establish the policies and processes for the Common Awards Scheme. We are also working closely with Ministry Division to identify any processes that they might wish to incorporate into the design of the new VLE, with a view to reducing the burden on TEIs. At present, we are developing policies and processes in areas such as: registration and enrolment (which we intend to be via the VLE); individual APL requests; complaints and academic appeals; curriculum development (new modules or programmes; changes to modules or programmes; changes to programme delivery arrangements); annual review. We are also continuing to develop the structures for external examining and boards of examiners in conjunction with other professional support services at the University; clearly these are complex areas, and so we will keep you updated and consult with you as necessary.

We are also taking forward work on expanding our FAQs bank, and developing an online handbook for Common Awards policies, processes, and structures. In the meantime, as most of our policies will be based on those which we currently use at the University, you may wish to consult our online [Learning and Teaching Handbook](#) and [University Calendar](#) in conjunction with the [Quality Assurance Agency's Quality Code](#).

As things progress further, we will keep you updated on any significant developments via a series of short bulletins.

As always, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to [get in touch](#) with the Common Awards Team.





## Key contacts in TEIs

We would like to emphasise the importance of TEIs providing the us with one academic administrator in each TEI who will be the key contact for the Common Awards team. This is especially the case for complex TEIs who are made up of several partner institutions. In these instances the academic administrator would have the responsibility of circulating information regarding Common Awards to all the partners within the TEI.

If you need to update who your contacts are for the Common Awards Team, please contact us at [common.awards@durham.ac.uk](mailto:common.awards@durham.ac.uk).

## Curriculum Update

We would like to provide you with the following update on the Common Awards curriculum:

As you will be aware, the most recent approved versions of the programme documents (programme specifications, module outlines, etc.) are available on the Durham University [Common Awards website](#). The final Stage 2 Approval Panel – which met on 22<sup>nd</sup> April – approved a number of new documents that will be useful for TEIs (such as assessment criteria, guidance on assessment types, and marking coversheets), and some minor amendments to existing documents.

We will issue another bulletin with a curriculum update once all the documents are uploaded to our website and the CAVLE.

## Curriculum Development—New Modules

As part of the validation process for 2013-14 TEIs were invited to submit new module proposals. There have also been several new modules developed by Ministry Division.

New module proposals that are approved will become part of the over-arching Common Awards modules and will be available to all TEIs.

A list of approved new modules has been added to the Durham University Common Awards website [here](#). This list will continue to be regularly updated with any further new additions to the Common Awards portfolio.

Over the page is a full list of new modules that have been approved during the 2013-14 validation process.

## Curriculum Development: New Module List

Module Title	Level	Credits	Proposed by	Status
Church and Sacrament	5	10	St Stephen's House	Approved pending minor amendments
Judaism, Christianity and Islam in Encounter	5	20	Cambridge Theological Federation	Approved
Conflict Transformation in the Church	6	10	Cranmer Hall	Approved
Issues in Pastoral Ministry	6	10	Cranmer Hall	Approved
Context and Bible	6	10	Yorkshire TEP	Approved
Pastoral Psychology	6	10	St Stephen's House	Approved pending minor amendments
Biblical Theology in Context	6	10	Wycliffe Hall	Approved
Islam and Christian-Muslim Engagement	5	10	Wycliffe Hall	Approved
Reflective Practice: Inhabiting Public Ministry	6	20	SEITE	Approved
Reflective Practice: Law and the Public Minister	6	20	SEITE	Approved
Modern Thought & Theology	6	20	St John's, Nottingham	Approved
Theological Perspectives: Mental Health	6	20	Ministry Division	Approved
Reflective Practice: Mission and Ministry in Rural Contexts	6	20	Ministry Division	Approved
Reflective Practice: Relationships and Emotional Management in Ministry	6	20	Ministry Division	Approved
Reflective Practice: Inhabiting Public Ministry	7	20	SEITE	Approved
Reflective Practice: Law and the Public Minister	7	20	SEITE	Approved
Further Advanced Topic in Christian Doctrine	7	20	Ripon College, Cuddesdon	Approved
Independent Learning Project (Long)	7	20	Guildford Diocese (SCRTP & STETS) & Ministry Division	Approved
Reflective Practice: Mission and Ministry in Rural Contexts	7	20	Ministry Division	Approved
Reflective Practice: Relationships and Emotional Management in Ministry	7	20	Ministry Division	Approved







## Common Awards VLE (CAVLE)

The Common Awards VLE (CAVLE) is being developed by Ministry Division and UniServity. The VLE will function as a virtual teaching and learning community which will enable TEIs to share resources and good practice among teaching staff as well as providing a platform for students to interact. It will include facilities such as online discussion forums, assessment tasks, conferencing and video resources, allow all TEIs to offer distance learning and blended learning and will lighten the academic administrative burden for individual institutions by providing information and procedures centrally and by having shared electronic academic administrative processes (such as electronic submission of assessment with anti-plagiarism software, reporting of marks, moderation and external examination etc.).

The VLE launch event was held in London on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014 and was attended by representatives from TEIs and UniServity to enable them to see the VLE in action and to discuss the next steps in implementing the VLE in each TEI.

The period between April and August 2014 will be for training for TEIs and implementation of the VLE, and for TEIs to customise and populate their own VLE areas before the programmes begin in September 2014.

Queries regarding the VLE should be directed to David Way ([david.way@churchofengland.org](mailto:david.way@churchofengland.org)) at Ministry Division in the first instance. Further information on the Common Awards VLE can be found on Ministry Division website [here](#). Publicly accessible areas of the VLE can be viewed on [www.cavle.org](http://www.cavle.org).



## Your thoughts

We are planning on producing issues of the Common Awards Bulletin on a regular basis. We would like to hear from TEIs about any suggestions they have for future content for the Bulletin. We would also like to hear from you if you have suggestions for content you would find useful on the Common Awards website.

Please send any suggestions you have to [common.awards@durham.ac.uk](mailto:common.awards@durham.ac.uk)

You can also submit questions to our FAQs bank on the Durham University Common Awards website by following the link [here](#).

### Common Awards Team Contacts

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