

BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

Short Course Provider (SCP) Reaccreditation Inspection

ORGANISATION: Findhorn Foundation College

ADDRESS: The Park
Findhorn
Forres
IV36 3TZ

HEAD OF ORGANISATION: Melissa Godbeer

DATE OF INSPECTION: 26 and 27 October 2015

ACCREDITATION STATUS AT INSPECTION: Accredited

DECISION ON ACCREDITATION:

- Reaccreditation awarded for the full four-year period.
- Decision on accreditation deferred.
- Accreditation to be withdrawn.

Date: 26 Nov 2015

1. Background to the organisation

The Findhorn Foundation (the Foundation) was founded in north-east Scotland in 1972 and advertises itself as ‘a contemporary spiritual community practising attunement through inner listening, co-creation with nature, and service’. The Foundation has approximately 500 people in its rural community, with associated businesses and charities. Findhorn Foundation College (the College) was created in 2001 ‘to develop further and higher education programmes and partnerships, based in the experiments and experience of the Findhorn Foundation community and Ecovillage project’.

The College originally offered various short courses, of one to 14 weeks’ duration throughout the year on its spiritual, artistic and environmental principles. At the time of the full inspection in 2011, the College was responsible for the 14-week Findhorn Community Semester Course, the students for which were entirely American and Canadian undergraduates who took it as an accredited course at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, equivalent to one semester. The FCS stopped being offered from 2013-14. A problem (not related to Findhorn) had arisen between the University of Massachusetts and the intermediary organisation, Living Routes, resulting in the termination of their relationship and putting Living Routes out of business. This made it impossible to recruit students for the course. The College then sought to enter into an agreement with the University of Antioch, accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. The College was informed just before the inspection that the university no longer wishes to pursue this collaboration. The College had also been accredited to provide continuing professional development for Teaching and Learning Scotland, and the MSc course in Sustainable Community Design at Heriot-Watt University. These arrangements have also now terminated.

The College is now at something of a crossroads as they are now without any accredited or formally assessed courses. The College will seek to develop a 'study abroad' arrangement with other universities, whether in North America or Europe (and indeed has begun discussions with the University of Aberdeen) but there is the risk that the model used up till now is too expensive in the current global financial climate. The College is also therefore planning to explore the option of other certificated courses, e.g. through SQA and also of some kind of realignment with the Foundation which also offers learning experiences. A strategic review will be initiated at the November 2015 Board meeting with the aim of concluding it by April 2016. There is also a need to strengthen the management and administration team but the exact nature of such changes may be dependent on the final strategy adopted by the Board.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The College currently offers four short courses: Education Design for Sustainability, a 4-week course in partnership with Gaia Education (still generally known by its former name - Ecovillage Design Education (EDE); English in the Community; Permaculture Design Certificate; Transformation Game Facilitators Training (a 2-week course in partnership with Innerlinks). Gaia Education and Innerlinks are both training companies founded by members of the Community. A total of 62 students were enrolled on these four courses.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was held over two days by one inspector. The one course running on the days of the inspection was visited on two occasions. Meetings were held with the CEO, the Education Manager, two other teaching staff and a small group of participants. Comprehensive documentation was provided by the College.

4. Inspection history:

Inspection type	Date
Re-accreditation	26 and 27 October 2015

PART B - JUDGEMENT 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 provider.

INSPECTION AREA - MANAGEMENT, STAFFING AND ADMINISTRATION

1. The provider is effectively managed

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1.1 | The management structure is clearly defined, documented and understood, including the role and extent of authority of any owners, trustees or governing body. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| 1.2 | The head of the provider and other senior managers are suitably qualified and experienced, understand their specific responsibilities and are effective in carrying them out. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| 1.3 | There are clear channels of communication between the management and staff and those working at the delivery venue/s. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The management structure is clearly documented, although due to staff turnover and changing circumstances, the management team has had to be flexible about allocation of responsibilities. Communication channels (weekly meetings of the management team and of each programme team and a bi-monthly 'attunement sharing', are excellent.

2. The administration of the provider is effective

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 2.1 | Administrators are suitably qualified or experienced and understand their specific responsibilities and duties. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| 2.2 | The size of the administrative team is sufficient to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the provider. | <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No |
| 2.3 | The administrative support available to the management is clearly defined, documented and understood. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| 2.4 | Policies, procedures and systems are well documented and effectively disseminated across the provider. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| 2.5 | Data collection and collation systems are effective. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| 2.6 | Administrative offices are adequate in size and resources for the effective administration of the provider. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The College has excellent administrative systems and record keeping, much of it now online. The Administrator post is now vacant again. Despite being understaffed by at least one full time equivalent person, the team has coped admirably and day to day running is effective. However, the staffing situation is not sustainable and the vacancy should be filled as soon as the overall strategic direction has been clarified.

3. **The provider employs appropriate managerial and administrative staff**

- 3.1 There are appropriate policies and effective procedures for the recruitment and continuing employment of suitably qualified and experienced staff. Yes No
- 3.2 Experience and qualifications claimed are verified before employment. Yes No
- 3.3 There is an effective system for regularly reviewing the performance of staff. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Performance reviews are conducted for the (very few) full time staff. Programme team meetings are used for feedback to sessional faculty. Recruitment procedures are effective, but there is no written policy. A written policy should now be produced.

4. **Publicity material, both printed and electronic, gives a comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate description of the provider and its programmes**

- 4.1 Text and images provide an accurate depiction of the provider's location, premises, facilities and the range and nature of resources and services offered. Yes No
- 4.2 Information on the courses available is comprehensive, accurate and up to date. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Information and publicity is of a good standard but the need for a new marketing strategy is recognised. The College should proceed with its plan to develop a new marketing strategy, aligned to the overall strategy adopted.

5. **The provider takes reasonable care to recruit and enrol suitable participants for its courses**

- 5.1 Entry requirements for each course, including those relating to language ability, are set at an appropriate level and clearly stated in the course descriptions seen by prospective participants. Yes No NA
- 5.2 A formal application process ensures that participants meet the entry requirements and any claimed qualifications are verified. Yes No NA
- 5.3 The provider replies to all application enquiries promptly and appropriately and briefs all stakeholders properly on the nature and requirements of its programmes. Yes No NA
- 5.4 Any overseas recruitment agents are properly selected, briefed, monitored and evaluated. Yes No NA

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

There is a clear admissions policy. Feedback from participants on the application process was very positive.

6. **There is an appropriate policy on participant attendance and effective procedures and systems to enforce it**

- 6.1 There is a clear and published policy on participant attendance and punctuality. Yes No
- 6.2 Accurate and secure records of attendance and punctuality at each session are kept for all participants, collated centrally and reviewed. Yes No NA
- 6.3 Participant absences are followed up promptly and appropriate action taken. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

7. **The provider regularly obtains and records feedback from participants and other stakeholders and takes appropriate action where necessary**

- 7.1 The provider has effective mechanisms for obtaining feedback from participants and other stakeholders (such as staff, partner providers and employers) on all aspects of the provider's provision, including formal participant representation where appropriate. Yes No
- 7.2 Feedback is obtained, recorded and analysed on a regular basis. Yes No
- 7.3 The feedback is reviewed by management and action is taken where necessary. Yes No
- 7.4 There is a mechanism for reporting on the provider's response to the feedback to the participant body. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Feedback from participants is obtained weekly and is well documented and acted upon. At the beginning of each week, there is a 'circle' to engage with feedback from the previous week. The College plans to extend its feedback processes to staff and board members. Given that the college does not currently have any awards, there are no external stakeholders.

8. **The provider has effective systems to review its own standards and assess its own performance with a view to continuing improvement**

- 8.1 There are effective systems for monitoring and periodically reviewing all aspects of the provider's performance. Yes No
- 8.2 Reports are compiled which present the results of the provider's reviews and incorporate action plans. Yes No
- 8.3 Action plans are implemented and regularly reviewed. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The CEO reports to the board, drawing on area reports from other members of the team. She is now proposing to introduce an annual audit of the full business by a board member and/or external consultant, drawing on and collating all forms of feedback. This is a good proposal and should be implemented.

INSPECTION AREA - TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

9. Programme management is effective

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 9.1 | There is a suitably qualified and experienced programme manager or management team with responsibility for teaching, learning and assessment and the management of the body of trainers. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| 9.2 | Classes are timetabled and rooms allocated appropriately for the courses offered. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| 9.3 | The allocation of trainers to classes provides for a consistent learning experience and delivery is monitored to ensure consistency. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| 9.4 | There is an appropriate policy and effective procedures for the acquisition of teaching and learning resources. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

10. The courses are planned and delivered in ways that enable participants to succeed

- | | | |
|------|---|--|
| 10.1 | Courses are designed and delivered in ways that allow participants to develop the knowledge and skills which will be required for final examinations or assessments or which meet stakeholders' requirements. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> NA |
| 10.2 | Lessons and assessments maintain an appropriate focus on any assessment objectives or statement of learning outcomes established by the awarding body. | <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> NA |
| 10.3 | Formative assessments appropriately reflect the nature and standards of summative examinations. | <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> NA |
| 10.4 | Participants are encouraged and enabled to develop independent learning skills. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> NA |
| 10.5 | The academic backgrounds and particular needs of participants are taken into account in the classroom delivery of the course. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

This is an area of significant strength. Course and lesson plans are well documented and regularly reviewed.

11. **Trainers are suitable for the courses to which they are allocated and effective in delivering them**

- 11.1 Trainers are appropriately qualified and experienced. Yes No
- 11.2 Trainers have a level of subject knowledge, pedagogic and communicative skill which allows them to deliver the content of courses effectively. Yes No
- 11.3 The appraisal procedures for trainers incorporate regular classroom observation. Yes No
- 11.4 Trainers are supported in their continuing professional development and enabled to develop further pedagogic techniques to enhance the learning of participants. Yes No
- 11.5 Trainers respond to different learning needs of participants where appropriate, taking various learning styles into account in their planning and delivery of lessons. Yes No
- 11.6 Trainers employ effective strategies to involve all participants in active participation and to check their understanding of concepts and course content. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Classroom observation takes place but generally for new staff. There is also some informal feedback in the context of team teaching. It is recommended that the College considers introducing a peer review system.

12. **The provider provides participants and trainers with access to appropriate resources and materials for study**

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

13. **Participants receive appropriate assessment and feedback on their performance and progress, which are effectively monitored**

- 13.1 Feedback is given to individual participants tailored to meet their specific needs and constructive in its nature and delivery. Yes No
- 13.2 Courses are planned to include a schedule of assessments, the procedures and criteria for which are available in writing and in advance to participants and trainers. Yes No NA
- 13.3 Assessment outcomes are monitored to enable the identification of participants who are not making satisfactory progress and prompt intervention where appropriate. Yes No NA
- 13.4 Participants are made aware of how their progress relates to their targeted level of achievement. Yes No NA
- 13.5 Additional support or advice on alternative courses is provided to participants who are judged not to be making sufficient progress to succeed. Yes No NA
- 13.6 Participants have appropriate access to trainers outside class time. Yes No NA

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments _____

The current courses are designed to enable participants to meet their own objectives rather than to attain pre-defined standards of competence or obtain certification of interest to external users.

14. **The provider offers courses leading to accredited awards granted by recognised awarding bodies wherever appropriate**

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met NA

Comments _____

15. **There is a clear rationale for courses leading to unaccredited or internal awards**

- 15.1 There is a clear statement of the level claimed relative to the NQF/QCF and evidence that participants who receive the award meet the stated requirements for that level. Yes No NA
- 15.2 There is evidence of the extent to which the awards are accepted for the purposes of employment or further study. Yes No NA
- 15.3 External moderators are involved in the assessment process where appropriate. Yes No NA

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met NA

Comments _____

16. **There are satisfactory procedures for the administration of examinations and other means of assessment**

- 16.1 The provider complies with the requirements of the relevant awarding bodies in terms of examination security and administration where appropriate. Yes No NA
- 16.2 For internal assessment and awards, there are effective systems in place for examination security and administration, and clear procedures for participants to appeal against their marks. Yes No NA

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met NA

Comments _____

INSPECTION AREA - PARTICIPANT WELFARE

17. **Participants receive pastoral support appropriate to their age, background and circumstances**

- 17.1 There is at least one named staff member responsible for participant welfare who is suitably trained, accessible to all participants and available to provide advice. Yes No NA
- 17.2 Participants receive appropriate advice before the start of the programme. Yes No
- 17.3 Participants receive an appropriate induction and relevant information at the start of the programme. Yes No
- 17.4 Participants are issued with a contact number for out-of-hours and emergency support. Yes No NA
- 17.5 The provider has policies in place to avoid discrimination and a published procedure for dealing with any abusive behaviour. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments _____

Pastoral support is a significant strength of the College. The community focaliser for each course is the designated person for pastoral support but participants seek advice and support from any staff member with whom they have a good relationship.

18. **International participants are provided with specific advice and assistance**

- 18.1 International participants receive appropriate advice before their arrival on travelling to and staying in the UK. Yes No
- 18.2 International participants receive an appropriate induction upon arrival covering issues specific to the local area. Yes No
- 18.3 Information and advice specific to international participants continues to be available throughout the course of study. Yes No
- 18.4 Provision of support takes into account cultural and religious considerations. Where possible, participants have access to speakers of their own first language. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met NA

Comments

19. **The fair treatment of participants is ensured**

- 19.1 Participants apply for and are enrolled on courses under fair and transparent contractual terms and conditions. Yes No
- 19.2 Participants have access to a fair complaints procedure of which they are informed in writing at the start of the course. Yes No
- 19.3 Participants are advised of BAC's own complaints procedures. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The college wasn't sure how to advise participants about BAC's complaints procedures. They will now include a reference in the participant handbook with a link to the intrnet to access the BAC document.

20. **Where residential accommodation is offered, it is fit for purpose, well maintained and appropriately supervised**

- 20.1 Any residential accommodation is clean, safe and of a standard which is adequate to the needs of participants. Yes No
- 20.2 Any residential accommodation is open to inspection by the appropriate authorities, including Ofsted where participants under 18 are accommodated. Yes No NA
- 20.3 Clear rules and fire, health and safety procedures are in place, with appropriate precautions taken for security of participants and their property. Yes No
- 20.4 A level of supervision is provided appropriate to the needs of participants. Yes No
- 20.5 Separate accommodation blocks are provided for participants under 18. Yes No NA

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met NA

Comments

Residential accommodation both at the Park and Cluny is excellent.

21. **Where home-stay accommodation is organised, the welfare of participants is ensured and the provider's relationship with hosts is properly managed**

- 21.1 Due care is taken in selecting home-stay accommodation which both provides a safe and comfortable living environment for participants and is appropriately located for travel to the provider and back. Yes No
- 21.2 Any home-stay accommodation is inspected before participants are placed and is subject to regular re-inspection by a responsible representative or agent of the provider. Yes No
- 21.3 The provider has appropriate contracts in place with any hosts, clearly setting out the rules, terms and conditions of the provision. Yes No
- 21.4 Appropriate advice and support is given to both hosts and participants before and during the placement. Yes No
- 21.5 Clear monitoring procedures are in place with opportunities for participant feedback and prompt action taken in the event of problems. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met NA

Comments

22. **The provider provides an appropriate social programme for participants and information on leisure activities in the area**

- 22.1 Participants are provided with appropriate information on opportunities for participation at events and other leisure activities which may be of interest. Yes No
- 22.2 The social programme is responsive to the needs and wishes of participants. Yes No NA
- 22.3 Any activities within the social programme have been chosen with consideration for their affordability by the majority of participants. Yes No NA
- 22.4 Any activities organised by the provider are supervised by a responsible representative with suitable qualifications and experience. Yes No NA

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met NA

Comments

The college does not organise a distinct social programme for participants. However, participants have access to a very rich and diverse programme of cultural, spiritual and health-related activities organised by the Findhorn Community. Excursions to neighbouring towns are also organised, sometimes by the participants themselves.

INSPECTION AREA - PREMISES AND FACILITIES**23. The provider has secure possession of and access to its premises**

23.1 The provider has secure tenure on its premises. Yes No NA

23.2 Where required, the provider has access to suitable external premises for training purposes of a temporary or occasional nature. Yes No NA

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments _____

24. The premises provide a safe, secure and clean environment for participants and staff

24.1 Access to the premises is appropriately restricted and secured. Yes No

24.2 The premises are maintained in an adequate state of repair, decoration and cleanliness. Yes No

24.3 There are specific safety rules in areas of particular hazard (e.g. science laboratories), made readily available to participants, staff and visitors. Yes No NA

24.4 General guidance on health and safety is made available to participants, staff and visitors. Yes No

24.5 There is adequate signage inside and outside of the premises and notice boards for the display of general information. Yes No

24.6 There is adequate circulation space for the number of participants and staff accommodated, and a suitable area in which to receive visitors. Yes No

24.7 There are toilet facilities of an appropriate number and level of cleanliness. Yes No

24.8 There is adequate heating and ventilation in all rooms. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments _____

25. **Training rooms and other learning areas are appropriate for the courses offered**

- 25.1 Training rooms and other learning areas provide adequate accommodation in size and number for the classes allocated to them. Yes No
- 25.2 Training rooms and any specialised learning areas (e.g. laboratories, workshops, studios) are equipped to a level which allows for the effective delivery of each course. Yes No NA
- 25.3 There are facilities suitable for conducting the assessments required on each course. Yes No NA

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments _____

26. **There are appropriate additional facilities for participants and staff**

- 26.1 Participants have access to sufficient space and suitable facilities for private study, including library and IT resources. Yes No NA
- 26.2 Trainers have access to sufficient personal space for preparing lessons, marking work and relaxation. Yes No NA
- 26.3 Participants and staff have access to space and facilities suitable for relaxation and the consumption of food and drink where appropriate. Yes No NA
- 26.4 Participants and staff have access to storage for personal possessions where appropriate. Yes No NA
- 26.5 There are individual offices or rooms in which trainers and senior management can hold private meetings and a room of sufficient size to hold staff meetings. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments _____

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated. Yes No

PART C - SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Numbering of action points aligns with that of the minimum standards

MANAGEMENT, STAFFING AND ADMINISTRATION

Provider's strengths

Very effective management and administration, despite being under-staffed.
Excellent documentation and record keeping
Very sound QA procedures, adapted well to the ethos of the organisation

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
2.2 - The College must strengthen the administration team by appointment of at least one additional full time equivalent person	<input type="radio"/> High <input checked="" type="radio"/> Medium <input type="radio"/> Low
3.1 - The College must set out written policy on staff recruitment	<input type="radio"/> High <input type="radio"/> Medium <input checked="" type="radio"/> Low

TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Provider's strengths

Well-designed courses
Very collaborative and reflective approach to implementation
Strong focus on the learning needs and purposes of the individual

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
11.3 - The college must implement some form of lesson observation system, this could be in the form of a peer reviews	<input type="radio"/> High <input checked="" type="radio"/> Medium <input type="radio"/> Low

PARTICIPANT WELFARE

Provider's strengths

Strong ethical foundation and shared values
Real care and concern for each individual

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
19.3 - The College must inform participants of BAC's complaints procedure	<input type="radio"/> High <input type="radio"/> Medium <input checked="" type="radio"/> Low

PREMISES AND FACILITIES

Provider's strengths

Beautiful environment
Attractive and fit-for-purpose teaching, dining and residential accommodation

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
	<input type="radio"/> High <input type="radio"/> Medium <input type="radio"/> Low

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Implement plans for:
- new marketing strategy

- gathering stakeholder feedback
- annual audit by board member
- consider introducing a system of peer review of classroom practice

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

No issues identified