



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM VISIT (College)

INSTITUTION: The Interior Design School

ADDRESS: 22 Lonsdale Road
Queens Park
London
NW6 6RD

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Ms Iris Dunbar

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF VISIT: 16 January 2017

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation 23 March 2017

Background to the institution

The Interior Design School (IDS/the School) was established in 1991. Since then, it has developed a good reputation for providing intensive, short-course vocational education, which is focused on professional skills leading directly to employment in interior design and the allied creative industries. IDS is set up as a private limited company.

It has occupied premises in North London, since 2000, on a four-year renewable lease. The two storey premises, which was converted to IDS's specification, is of a high quality and is situated close to a tube station, cafes and restaurants. The first-floor classroom and studio is presented to simulate a professional studio, with the use of an adjacent area for model-making. Students are allocated a work station, with a Macintosh laptop computer. Whilst there is no lift to the first-floor, IDS can accommodate the needs of mobility-impaired students within the ground floor library.

The Managing Director (MD), who also founded the School, has withdrawn from teaching responsibilities in recent years, but retains responsibility for the management of IDS. Financial oversight is provided by the Company Secretary, using the consultancy of an educational specialist. Whilst overall responsibility for quality assurance lies with the MD, day-to-day academic management is handled by the Operations and Marketing Manager (OMM), who also coordinates and teaches some of the digital elements of the curriculum.

The MD has been active for over 25 years within national and international professional bodies and is closely associated with movements to raise the status of the interior design profession and in the defining of its educational standards. She was the founding President of the British Institute of Interior Design (BIID) and has been President of the International Federation of Interior Architects, based in the United States (US). She continues to have an active relationship with both organisations.

IDS has an established team of 15 part-time teachers for the Professional Diploma in Interior Design (the Diploma) and a further group of seven part-time teachers on the Professional Certificate in Interior Design (the Certificate), all of whom are self-employed.

Students select IDS, as a place to study, not only because of its reputation but also because of the high staff-to-student ratio, the compact duration of courses and professional focus of the programmes.

The IDS marketing strategy, which is managed by the MD and OMM, includes the use of social media sites, regular open days and one-day Inspiration Days. These are well attended. Many potential students, who attend these events, go on to apply to join IDS.

Brief description of the current provision

The programme consists of two courses, which are the Professional Certificate in Interior Design (Certificate) and the Professional Diploma in Interior Design (Diploma). Both offer internal awards and are run at NQF Level six. The inclusion, in 2015, of the word Professional in the titles of each course reflects the focus of the curriculum and underpins the positioning of IDS's curriculum within the context of the commercial sector of the interior design industry.

The modules, which form part of the part-time Certificate are Interior Basics, Interior Planning, Interior Detailing and Professional Practice. In 2015, IDS changed the study mode so that currently the four modules do not have to be taken sequentially, allowing students to negotiate their personal timetable with IDS. Classes are taught over 20 evenings, with two Saturday workshops. Formal assessment is not used and students receive a Certificate following each Module. The Interior Basics module is also run as a stand-alone Summer One Week Course.

The modules, which are taken as part of the one-year Diploma course include part one, which is Residential Design, part two, which is Commercial Design and part three, which is Career Preparation. The content of the

Part One module is similar to that in the Certificate. Teaching takes place five days a week, over 34 weeks. The modules, which must be taken sequentially, combine creative, technical and professional components as well as historic studies and computer aided design. Teaching methods used include classroom-based, demonstrations, lectures from external specialists and numerous study visits. The intensive pace of studio teaching simulates design practice and classes are timetabled to ensure that project objectives can be achieved within the taught day.

Academic support to students is provided through individual tutorials each term and through both oral and written feedback following each module. Following completion of all modules normative, guidance grades, out of five, are provided, allied to written feedback. All students completing the course receive a Diploma. An external advisor, currently from the University of Bournemouth, evaluates all Diploma work which is presented at the end-of-year exhibition and prepares a written report, copied to each student, which contributes to IDS's annual academic review.

In recent years, total student numbers have consolidated close to the classroom capacity of 18, with current student numbers standing at 14 full-time and 36 part-time. The student intake is predominantly mature and female and includes many with existing higher education qualifications, who are seeking a career change. IDS attracts a high proportion of international students, with United Kingdom (UK) residency or from the European Union (EU) or European Economic Area (EEA).

Inspection visit process

The inspection process involved one inspector for half a day. Meetings were held with the Managing Director and the Operations and Marketing Manager. A meeting was also held with two students from the Diploma course.

1. Inspection history

Full Accreditation	8 November 1999
Re-accreditation	1 December 2005
Interim visit	20 July 2009
Re-accreditation	18 January 2011
Interim visit	10 April 2013
Re-accreditation	4 - 5 February 2015

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

There have been no significant changes since the last inspection.

2. Response to actions points in last report

20.3 Students must be advised of BAC's own complaints procedure.

The BAC's complaints procedure is now integrated into the Student Complaints Procedure, which is published in the Student Handbook.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

It is recommended that the current annual progress analysis by the MD is developed into a formal report, set against fixed criteria, in order to allow a year-on-year review of the programme as well as providing a structured basis for the development of the annual strategy proposal.

IDS quality assurance processes are effective in ensuring standards are maintained. The procedures used are more robust than at the time of the last report.

However, the level of formality in the documentation of certain procedures is inconsistent and reduces the level of transparency, with which IDS establishes its annual targets for quality enhancement. Introducing more rigour into the procedures, which could include an academic committee structure, tracking data on student progress against teaching quality, a more formal documentation method for external advisor comment, and analysis of work placements and graduate destinations would increase transparency for all stakeholders involved and facilitate the establishing of targets within an annual quality cycle.

It is recommended that the School evaluate the level of effectiveness of the numerical grading system used on the Tutor Log Book feedback form, to ensure that it contributes effectively to supporting students' academic progress.

IDS has decided, following careful consideration as to its effectiveness, to retain the grading system used to provide guidance to Diploma students, which is provided alongside feedback from the lead tutor and industry critique.

It is recommended that a system is developed whereby companies who regularly offer work placements evaluate each student's performance against set criteria and this information will contribute to annual programme development.

IDS is currently developing a pro forma for employers to evaluate the work-placement performance of Diploma students. Data gathered is likely to improve communication with employers and contribute to annual quality assurance.

4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

4.1 Management, Staffing and Administration (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				

The close contact which the MD maintains with industry employers and organisations ensures that the professional focus of IDS curriculum remains current.

The MD ensures, through interview, that applicants' English language skills are sufficient to achieve the goals of the curriculum.

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
<p>During the past year, the School has increased the number of part-time teachers. All teachers are self-employed and highly experienced professionals.</p> <p>The extensive use of end-of-module student self-assessment, using well laid out forms, in conjunction with a comprehensive tutorial system ensures that the academic, as well as pastoral, needs of the students are fully met.</p> <p>Feedback from the end-of-course student questionnaires, used only on the Diploma course, includes feedback on each teacher, contributing to the School's appraisal of teaching quality.</p> <p>On-course feedback by students is not gathered. IDS is considering the introduction of end-of-module feedback questionnaires and the potential for student feedback being facilitated through the use of a student representative system.</p> <p>The School provides support for new teachers through team teaching and a system of informal teaching observation. Part-time teaching staff receive, on a daily basis, Teaching Packs which contain module requirements and information on students' special needs. Despite these packs being effective in briefing part-time teachers, students interviewed indicated concern about disparities in the level of continuity between the teaching content given on successive days.</p>				

4.3 Student Welfare (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
<p>The creative demands of selected modules are carefully structured to allow students to express their cultural backgrounds.</p>				

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				

The small scale of the premises precludes space allocation for individual student study or recreational space.

The studio, classroom and model-making space is very well laid out and equipped.

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS
The high rate at which Diploma students achieve permanent employment in companies, in which they have done work placement, is a clear testament to the professional standards required in the IDS’s curriculum.

ACTIONS REQUIRED	Priority H/M/L
None	

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
IDS academic management cycle should be more clearly stated and its documentation more rigorously structured, in order to enhance quality assurance and the level of transparency used in establishing annual targets.
IDS should consider extending the use of end-of-course student questionnaires, currently used on the Diploma course, to the Certificate course.
IDS should monitor the effectiveness of Teaching Packs used as a means of ensuring continuity between teachers, on a daily basis and make any necessary amendments.
The introduction of end-of-module student questionnaires should be considered.
The adoption of a system of student representatives, to facilitate in the gathering of student feedback, should be given consideration.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS	
Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	Yes
Further comments, if applicable	