



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM VISIT (Short Course Provider)

PROVIDER: Findhorn Foundation College

ADDRESS: The Park
Findhorn
Forres
IV36 3TZ

HEAD OF PROVIDER: Ms Melissa Godbeer

DATE OF VISIT: 8 June 2017

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued Accreditation 27 July 2017

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the provider

Findhorn Foundation College (FFC/the Provider) was created in 2001 to develop further and higher education programmes and partnerships, which are based on the work of the Findhorn Foundation community and eco village project. The Findhorn Foundation was founded in Forres, North-East Scotland in 1972 with the aim of providing a spiritual community, which practices attunement through inner listening, co-creation with nature and service. The Foundation is set up as a registered charitable trust.

The Provider is an independent not-for-profit charitable company, which was established by the Findhorn Foundation. Its Board of Directors is appointed by the Findhorn Foundation's trustees and management team. The FFC Focaliser, the equivalent of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), is the staff representative on the Board. The Board meets twice a year and provides guiding oversight for the Provider. FFC leases student residences, teaching space and staff offices from the Findhorn community.

At the time of the last BAC inspection in October 2015, FFC did not have any accredited or formally assessed courses and was running four short courses. It had plans to develop study abroad relationships with American or European universities and to explore the possibility of running courses certified by, for example, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). However, these plans have not been realised due to the strategic review, which was initiated in November 2015. It included the possibility of a rationalisation of activities between FFC and the Findhorn Foundation, which also offers learning experiences. The review examined the options of the continuation of the FFC as a separate organisation or the merger of the educational work of FFC into its parent body. This review determined that FFC should continue its work as a standalone body.

The Provider's ethos and focus is spiritual, artistic and environmental. Its goal is to engage participants in transformative education for sustainability and personal empowerment. It aims to offer skills, insight and inspiration for positive change in the world.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Provider offers a two-week short course called Sustainability: Secrets of Sustainability. FFC had planned to host the programme only but, due to circumstances beyond its control, it became responsible for the running of and teaching on the programme. The awarding body for the course is Lesley University, United States of America (USA).

The students on the programme are undergraduates on social science degree courses in the USA, for whom this programme is an additional learning experience. It is pitched at an advanced level, which is suitable for their educational background. There are five enrolled students, who have a particular interest in the Provider's ethos and in the practical application of sustainability principles. The course combines classroom teaching with a project and is formally assessed.

A four-week uncertified Learning English in Community course is also running, with 13 participants. It is designed to improve their advanced beginners or early intermediate English language skills so that they can fully participate in the Findhorn Community. It uses a combination of classroom teaching and engagement with the Findhorn College and Community.

Both courses are residential. Further courses are scheduled for later in the year, but do not currently have any students on-site.

3. Inspection visit process

The inspection was conducted for half a day by one inspector. Meetings were held with the head of the provider, other members of the staff and a group of students. A tour the premises at the park site was undertaken. The inspector also observed the students giving their end-of-programme presentations.

4. Inspection history

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Full accreditation inspection: | 9 – 10 May 2011 |
| Interim visit: | 13 October 2014 |
| Re-accreditation Inspection: | 26 - 27 October 2015 |

PART B – JUDGMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgments and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector(s) during the inspection and from documentation provided by the provider

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

The strategic review, that determined that the Provider should continue as a standalone entity, continues to have an impact. The review provided an opportunity for the staff to reflect on the best way to achieve the Provider's vision and aims and is ongoing. The head of the provider is developing a business plan, to support the strategy. External consultants and internal stakeholders are involved. The plan is expected to be ready for Board approval in the autumn of 2017.

Pilot programmes are planned for 2018. It is intended to run courses to enable the local community to become involved in delivering the provision, by means of Learning to Lead and Learning to Teach courses. The outcome of the business planning will inform the future activity.

2. Response to low action points in last report

3.1 The Provider must set out a written policy on staff recruitment.

The Provider is in the process of completing a staff recruitment policy in accordance with best practice as set out by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). This is expected to be agreed in November 2017.

19.3 The Provider must inform participants of BAC's complaints procedure.

The BAC complaints procedure is now included in the FFC Participant Handbook.

Response to medium action points in last report

2.2 The Provider must strengthen the administration team by appointment of at least one additional full time equivalent person.

An appropriate administrator has been appointed.

11.3 The Provider must implement some form of lesson observation system, this could be in the form of peer reviews.

A lesson observation system is now formalised through the introduction of a peer review system, which includes lesson observations. It is being piloted and will then be evaluated. The system makes use of a suitable template for a session observation record.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

It is recommended that the Provider implements a plan for a new marketing strategy.

This forms part of the on-going strategic review. A rebranding process is planned.

It is recommended that there is an annual audit by a board member.

This forms part of the on-going strategic review.

The Provider should consider introducing a system of peer review of classroom practice.

This is covered above in the context of classroom observation.

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 There are effective channels of communication and staff feel that their views are heard and acted upon. 3.1 While a written policy on staff recruitment is in development, it has not yet been finalised and implemented. | | | | |

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

| | Met | Partially met | Not met | |
|--|-----|---------------|---------|--|
| The standards are judged to be | ✓ | | | |
| Comments The students are very enthusiastic about their experience on the programme. The completion of reflective journals is encouraged. Sustainability students are required to devise and present a practical project relevant to the programme. During the inspection, students were observed giving presentations of these projects. The presentations were of a high quality. Students praised the high standard of the teaching. Staff appreciate the opportunities to undertake on-line professional and personal development courses, funded by FFC. An informal system of performance feedback for teachers is in place. However, it lacks structure and would benefit from being more formalised. | | | | |

4.3 Participant Welfare (spot check)

| | Met | Partially met | Not met | |
|--|-----|---------------|---------|--|
| The standards are judged to be | ✓ | | | |
| Comments The students praised teachers' interest and support for their academic and personal well-being. | | | | |

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

| | Met | Partially met | Not met | |
|--|-----|---------------|---------|--|
| The standards are judged to be | ✓ | | | |
| Comments The eco village and garden facilities at the park site are excellent. The canteen is spacious. There are designated rooms for quiet contemplation, which are in keeping with the ethos of the Provider. | | | | |

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

| STRENGTHS |
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| The Provider’s philosophy and approach are strongly supported by staff and students, who are both enthusiastic and highly motivated. |
| The positive learning culture is underpinned by effective course delivery. |
| FFC continues to actively review its strategy, business and programme portfolio in order to maintain sustainability. |

| ACTIONS REQUIRED | Priority H/M/L |
|--|-----------------------|
| 3.1 The Provider must complete the implementation of a written staff recruitment policy. | M |

| RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT |
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| It is recommended that the Provider completes the implementation of the lesson observation process across the provision. |
| The Provider should consider introducing a more formal performance feedback system for teachers. This could be linked to the organisational roll out of the lesson observation and peer review system. |

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