



## BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

### INTERIM INSPECTION (Short Course Provider)

**ORGANISATION:** IMA International Ltd

**ADDRESS:** Drummond House  
86 High Street  
Hurstpierpoint  
West Sussex  
BN6 9RE

**HEAD OF ORGANISATION:** Mr Chris Grose

**Accreditation status:** Accredited

**Date of inspection:** 2 March 2015

**ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:** Continued Accreditation 16 April 2015

## **PART A - INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Background to the organisation**

IMA International Ltd (IMA) is a private limited company whose programme of short training courses is directed towards practitioners in the field of international development. The company was founded in 1983 under the name of Ian McDonald Associates and has been owned since 2001 by the current Managing Director and his wife, who are the sole shareholders. The majority of course participants are sponsored by their employers, which include public corporations, government departments, large companies and major aid organisations. IMA has links with over 140 organisations for whom, in parallel with its well-established training programme, it offers a consultancy business focused mainly on Africa and South East Asia. The development of a partnership with a UK university is currently under consideration.

IMA owns the freehold of its administrative headquarters, situated in Hurstpierpoint, near Brighton. Courses take place in rented venues in London, at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, or overseas in Bangkok and Nairobi. BAC accreditation covers the UK provision (Brighton and London) only.

The current financial basis of operations is strong, although this follows a period of financial instability related to the 2008 economic downturn. During that period, despite maintaining satisfactory student numbers, IMA had been required to reduce its overheads, principally through a reduction in staff numbers. The Managing Director, who has extensive overseas training and capacity-building experience, maintains hands-on oversight of all aspects of the organisation, contributes on a part-time basis to the training programme and spends three months of the year on overseas business. Quality assurance related to organisational and course management aspects of the business is maintained through 44 policies contained in a Quality Manual.

IMA operates two training teams, focusing on project management skills and people management skills. Trainer recruitment processes are robust and trainer support and development includes class observation linked to appraisal, based on policies contained in the Quality Manual.

IMA's established reputation, demonstrated through regular repeat booking by participants and their sponsors, makes an essential contribution to the marketing of both the training programme and the consultancy business. The marketing campaign, which is coordinated by the Communications Manager, includes maintaining a presence at overseas trade fairs assisted through government support, direct emailing to alumni, an effective website and marketing materials strategy and ensuring that search-engine optimisation is effective.

### **2. Brief description of the current provision**

The IMA training curriculum includes seven courses which are of from five to fifteen days duration, a selection of which run more than once during the year, in either the UK or overseas. Course titles include Leadership and Management in Development, Value for Money and Theory of Change and Impact Assessment. The programme of courses has been developed in response to the increasing demand for management skills in overseas development, and certain courses are tailored to the needs of a specific sponsor organisation. The process for developing new courses is outlined within policies contained in the Quality Manual. Emphasis is placed on a 'participatory style of training', and course content can be adapted whilst the course is in progress, in response to participant feedback, which is gathered by trainers on a daily basis.

### **3. Inspection process**

One inspector visited the institute at the administrative office, Hurstpierpoint, for one morning. Meetings were held with the Managing Director, the Project Manager and the Marketing Coordinator. Classes are currently being held in Kenya and Thailand only; the next courses in the UK (Brighton and London) will be held in May and June 2015.

#### **4. Inspection history**

Stage 2 Inspection	4 December 2008
Stage 3 Full Accreditation	27 April 2009
Interim Inspection	19 April 2010
Reaccreditation	6 December 2012

## **PART B – JUDGEMENTS 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**

### **1. Significant changes since the last inspection**

There have been no significant changes since the last inspection.

### **2. Response to action points**

*Quality assurance instructions should be reviewed and brought up to date.*

A Quality Manual is currently in use containing 44 policies which cover aspects of course development and trainer recruitment and support.

*All staff qualifications should be scanned and retained electronically or on file.*

An external Human Resources company is now employed which coordinates all aspects of staff recruitment and qualifications monitoring.

*There is a need to introduce a procedure for consultant trainer recruitment and training.*

Consultancy procedures are currently outlined in policies within the Quality Manual.

*It is worth considering adding captions to some of the pictures in the participants' handbook.*

Handbooks are updated on a regular basis and information for participants is currently sufficiently comprehensive.

*It is recommended that, in view of the number of international participants, a copy of each student visitor visa is retained on file.*

This is currently included within recruitment procedures.

*With changes to the work and delivery taking place, a careful review of IMA's internal procedures and standards should be undertaken.*

Certain policies for this are contained in the Quality Manual.

*Classroom observation needs to be systematic and documented.*

The Managing Director personally conducts class observation of the majority of both new and existing team trainers, both in the UK and overseas.

*IMA should put details of achievement on an accompanying formal letter alongside the participants' certificate of attendance. (Carried forward from the last interim inspection.)*

This issue is under consideration.

*IMA should incorporate the formal complaints policy into its participants' handbook, and the policy must be emphasised during induction.*

A complaints policy is included in the Quality Manual.

*Details of the renewed lease on the premises should be recorded appropriately.*

IMA currently owns the freehold of its premises.

### 3. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements – spot check

#### 3.1 Management, Staffing and Administration

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Management team, led by the Managing Director includes two full time posts: a Lead Consultant Project Manager and a Project Manager and three part-time posts: a Communications Manager, a second Project Manager and a Finance Manager. During 2015 the appointment is planned of a Business Strategy Consultant; a post which will attract a partial government grant.</li> <li>• IMA management procedures include annual Business Strategy Meetings at which an external Finance Advisor is present, Quarterly Management Meetings for all management staff and including an external facilitator, and weekly Team Meetings which include a Skype connection to overseas staff.</li> <li>• The IMA Management System of ‘controlled’ documents includes an IMA Management Manual which outlines 44 policies in a Quality Control Manual. Policies include procedures for consultancy, course development, IT management, staff training, resourcing, marketing, human resources and course development. It is recommended that the Quality Manual is structured to separate policies which relate to staff employment from those which are organisational or related to course quality assurance. This would underpin the institute’s published values which state that participant responsiveness and quality assurance are central to the institute’s business.</li> <li>• IMA makes effective use of social media to communicate with alumni and sponsors and as a primary marketing tool. The Communications Manager works closely with an external digital specialist on the development of the website, a lively on-line Newsletter, a printed prospectus and other printed publicity materials.</li> <li>• Participant recruitment is managed by the Project Managers and includes a Skype interview of all applicants. Following the receipt of a minimum of 8 applications to a course, four weeks prior to its start date those applying are informed that the course will run.</li> <li>• An external Human Resources consultancy coordinates annual staff appraisal and ensures that staff training needs are met.</li> <li>• Administrative processes and methods for document preparation are included in policies within the Quality Manual.</li> </ul>				

#### 3.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies for trainer recruitment and support are included in the Quality Manual.</li> <li>• In order for trainers to give individual support to participants with specific training requirements, participants complete a preliminary Learning Needs Analysis which states their level of prior learning and experience.</li> <li>• Course materials are distributed using social media.</li> <li>• On-course participant feedback is gathered by trainers on a daily basis so that the content can be adjusted to ensure that courses respond to both participant and sponsor requirements.</li> <li>• Positive responses from participant end-of-course feedback, together with a 60% rate of repeat business from international sponsoring organisations demonstrate the high quality of IMA training provision.</li> <li>• Quality assurance procedures include end-of-course Evaluation team meetings which consider the results of both trainer feedback and end-of-course participant feedback.</li> <li>• After Action Reviews take place which evaluate developments either within courses or within the consultancy business.</li> <li>• A certificate is awarded to participants on demonstration of a 90% attendance.</li> </ul>				

### 3.3 Participant Welfare

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome Packs for participants arriving at a trainer venue from overseas are well presented and provide information about cultural, social and travel issues.</li> </ul>				

### 3.4 Premises and Facilities

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<b>Comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only IMA headquarters was inspected: two upper floors of the premises being used as company offices whilst the ground floor is leased by IMA as an antique shop.</li> <li>Visitors to IMA access their offices either through the ground floor shop or via a staircase from a separate external staff access at the rear of the premises.</li> <li>Health and safety management, maintenance and cleaning services are coordinated by one of the Project Managers.</li> </ul>				

## PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

### Institution's strengths

The small scale of operations and hands-on management approach by the Managing Director ensures that the management team is fully integrated into all important aspects of the company, so that staff absences do not cause disruption.

Learning Needs Agreements completed by participants ensure that participants' learning requirements are met.

The daily gathering by trainers of on-course feedback from participants ensures that course learning outcomes are met.

Printed prospectus and marketing materials are of a high quality.

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
It is recommended that the Quality Manual is structured to separate policies which relate to staff employment from those which are organisational or related to course quality assurance.	L

### COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	YES
Further comments, if applicable	