



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Short Course Provider)

ORGANISATION: Lavender International

ADDRESS: Unit 7
Penistone Station
Penistone
Sheffield
S36 6P

HEAD OF ORGANISATION: Stephen Lavender and David Lavender

Accreditation status: Accredited

Date of inspection: 17 July 2015

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: 10 September 2015

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the organisation

Lavender International NDT Consultancy Services Ltd is a long established Non Destructive Testing training centre, originally a partnership but since 18 December 1984 a limited company. The business was started in 1976 to provide independent training and examination services in NDT disciplines. Today it is a limited company with worldwide outreach and a highly regarded reputation. The training establishment is accredited by BINDT and is a Personal Certified Non Destructive Testing test centre.

All the courses are very short, between one and 15 days. NDT students from outside the EU enter the UK to undertake the courses on Short-Term Study visas. The turnover of students, including re-certification candidates, was 2600 last year.

Lavender International also offers consultancy services by highly qualified staff, including arbitration and expert witness specialities. They also offer outside agency level 3 services to companies requiring procedure writing, auditing and reviewing, and implementing appropriate standards in NDT procedures. A further smaller part of their business is as a distributor of NDT publications.

Currently Lavender International also offers NDT courses at its centres in Texas, USA and Perth, Australia. The UK provision only is the subject of this inspection and BAC accreditation.

The company continues to be mindful of both its market and competition. Consequently it is very active in evaluating its portfolio as well as developing its resource base and standing in the NDT community.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The training school caters for mature students who wish to study and be examined in various NDT disciplines or who need re-certification. All NDT students require to be re-certificated every five years. Lavender offers 11 different NDT methods at various levels and in accord with BINDT's and the American Society of Non-destructive Testing (ASNT) accreditation criteria.

Courses at various levels are undertaken in Magnetic Particle Testing, Liquid Penetrant, Visual, Ultrasonic, Ultrasonic Time of Flight Diffraction, Ultrasonic Phased Array, Radiography and Interpretation, Eddy Current, Radiation Safety, Materials Evaluation, Computed Radiography, and a course on the Introduction to NDT.

3. Inspection process

Inspection was conducted by one inspector over half a day. Meetings were held with senior staff, a student and teaching staff. Spot checks were conducted in the areas of management, teaching and learning, and welfare which included the scrutiny of a number of key documents. Tours were undertaken of both its Penistone premises and its presence on the Advanced Manufacturing Park, Rotherham.

4. Inspection history

Full inspection:	18 and 19 May 2009
Interim inspection:	16 June 2010
Reaccreditation inspection:	22 and 23 April 2013

PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgements and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector during the inspection and from documentation provided by the provider

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

UK operations have grown and resulted in the recruitment of further technical and administrative staff. The Ultrasonics Department has been relocated to an enhanced presence on the Advanced Manufacturing Park. The resulting vacant accommodation in Penistone has been refurbished to better facilitate those courses remaining on this site.

More thorough use is being made by management of statistical data derived from student views and performance.

The Quality Management System has improved following on from actions based upon a gap analysis of the existing system.

A new website has been developed and is about to be launched.

The company has gained Investors in People *Gold* standard and National Skills Academy Nuclear *Quality Provider* status.

2. Response to action points in last report

All actions and recommendations have been addressed satisfactorily.

Action points:

There must be a named person with overall responsibility for student welfare and made known to the students and staff.

The introductory letter sent to all students now identifies the Executive Manager as the Student Welfare Officer.

There must be a policy in writing stating Lavender's policy in respect of avoidance of discrimination, harassment and abusive behaviour.

The website has a "student corner" dedicated to student needs. This now includes a link to all company policies, including a suitable policy addressing *Working and Learning in a Non-Threatening Environment*.

Reference in writing must be made available to students in respect of general complaints.

BAC's complaints policy must be brought to the attention of the students.

The aforementioned "student corner" also includes an explicit link to the company's complaints policy. This in turn provides links to the complaints procedures for both BAC and its course accrediting body BINDT.

The day-time security on the main unit 7 entrance needs to be better policed with a card or code entry as a suggestion.

Visitors must be fully acquainted with health and safety regulations before allowed access to the building and should sign to this effect; a Health and Safety reminder card might be appropriate.

Receptionist cover is provided at all times. Visitors upon signing-in are ratifying that they have read and understood the health and safety provision noted on a laminated card provided by the receptionist.

Issues of shortage of space must be addressed.

The company has expanded its presence at the Advanced Manufacturing Park which it secures under an appropriate flexible licensing arrangement. This new accommodation, which is spacious, well equipped and fit for purpose, now houses the Ultrasonics Department in its entirety. The vacated accommodation has been refurbished to extend provision for those Departments remaining at Penistone.

Recommendations to the institution

The inspector suggests that a friendly letter goes out to all students, especially the new students signed by a senior member of the staff at the same time as the details for joining the course are dispatched.

See note against first action point above.

Care needs to be given when writing to overseas students as to the use of English language, particularly abbreviations.

Letters seen employ language suitable for those whose first language is not English.

The feedback forms are rudimentary and could be used in a more considered way by adding a few more questions and maybe some form of scaling. This could be used to the training establishment's advantage. Lavender may also wish to research amongst the client base with an occasional questionnaire.

The questionnaire now employed is eliciting useful feedback from students in appropriate quality and quantity.

It is recommended that issues of shortage of space are kept under consideration.

Actions noted above indicate that management have kept this matter under review in an exemplary manner.

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	✓			
Comments No change from the Full Inspection. Management is pro-active in ensuring a high quality education is provided to students. Timely responsiveness to issues identified is notable.				

3.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments No change from the Full Inspection. Discussion with a student and teaching staff provided a positive view of the learning environment provided.				

3.3 Participant Welfare

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments Discussion with a student and scrutiny of feedback sheets provided a positive view of student experiences.				

3.4 Premises and Facilities

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments The expanded facilities at the Advanced Manufacturing Park are secured under a rolling license arrangement. Notwithstanding this the company has invested significantly to ensure these premises are well-fitted out and have suitable high-end resources which provide an excellent learning environment. The accommodation released at Penistone has benefitted from refurbishment and has provided expanded space for the activities located there.				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Institution's strengths
The Company has a clear vision and this, along with a strong set of shared values and assiduous management, ensures both a good experience and sound outcomes for its students.

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
None	

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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