



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Short Course Provider)

ORGANISATION: Pamela Steele Associates Ltd

ADDRESS: Prama House
267 Banbury Road
Oxford
OX2 7HT

HEAD OF ORGANISATION: Pamela Steele, Director and Principal Consultant

Accreditation status: Accredited

Date of inspection: 19 August 2015

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: 10th September 2015

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the organisation

After a period as a sole trader, Pamela Steele Associates Ltd (PSA) was established by the Director and sole owner in May 2013 to provide research, consultancy and training to support sustainable aid supply-chain development in developing countries. Scheduled training courses of around one week's duration are organised in Oxford and overseas for adult professionals from NGOs, governments and other related agencies from many countries.

PSA rents office space in a serviced business centre in Summertown, a busy commercial and residential area north of Oxford city centre. The business centre provides reception, photocopying and other central services.

The Director undertakes most of the administration of the company and a considerable amount of the training and consultancy work. She has outsourced financial and legal matters to local Oxford firms and employs a part-time Programme Support Officer. Part-time interns undertaking graduate study or research in the University of Oxford, and sourced through the Oxford Internship Programme, provide additional administrative support. Interns are unpaid but receive expenses and allowances. One intern acts as Training Coordinator, a significant role in which he manages trainee registration, undertakes aspects of course administration and monitors trainee and course progress during Oxford courses.

The services offered by PSA include:

- an expanding programme of short training courses delivered in Oxford and other locations around the world;
- short tailor-made in-house training courses for NGOs, government agencies etc;
- research and consultancy.

The Director has extensive relevant professional experience in the area, and she draws on a team of specialist consultants (including freelance consultants, university academics and NGO practitioners) recruited to assist her in particular assignments.

2. Brief description of the current provision

PSA offered its first training course in Oxford on Systems Strengthening and Capacity Development (SSCD) in June 2014 with seven participants. This was run in the business centre where the PSA office is housed.

Over the course of the last year, the SSCD course has also been delivered in Arusha (Tanzania), Bangkok and Dubai to around 35 participants in total. The intention is to identify a series of key locations around the world where such courses can be effectively and viably operated, in addition to Oxford, which will be a key location and the administrative base. In the last twelve months, in-house courses have also been delivered for the UN in Sudan (July 2015), and for an NGO in Turkey.

A new course on Health Supply Chain Management was offered in Oxford in July 2015. This was held at St Catherine's College, Oxford where residential and teaching accommodation were provided. A course on Human Resources for Supply Chain Management is planned to operate in December 2015, also in University college accommodation. A course will be delivered in French in Rwanda in October 2015, with translated materials and the use of simultaneous interpretation.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was undertaken by one inspector in a morning visit to the offices of PSA. He met with the Director/Principal Consultant and reviewed documents.

4. Inspection history

Full inspection: 24 and 25 June 2014

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 has been considerable work to consolidate administration and aspects of quality management. As part of this, PSA secured ISO 9001 (2008) accreditation in April 2015.

Central administration has been strengthened by the appointment of a part-time Programme Support Officer.

The range of courses has been developed, with a new course in Health Supply Chain Management delivered in July 2015, and a new course in Human Resources for Supply Chain designed for delivery in December 2015. The first course to be delivered in French will operate in Rwanda in October 2015.

The business centre where PSA has its offices is no longer being used as the location for training courses in Oxford. It has been decided that courses will instead be held in Oxford University college premises.

Now the company has become more established, it has introduced online alumni groups, enabling those who have attended courses to continue interaction subsequently.

A three-month follow-up contact after the completion of courses is being introduced. This will offer professional support as well as evaluating the extent to which the course has impacted on professional practice.

PSA is investigating organisations with which it could have a productive complementary relationship. This includes the completion of a Memorandum of Understanding with a French humanitarian agency to deliver courses in French under contract.

2. Response to action points in last report

PSA has undertaken a number of initiatives to improve quality since the last inspection, notably obtaining ISO 9001 certification. The emphasis has been on the quality of course content and delivery, and participant feedback indicates that this is excellent.

However, it became clear during the discussion that certain more general aspects of administration, relating to certain specific policies and procedures, had not been completed, primarily because the Director was unclear of what was required. A proportion of the time of the inspection was spent in clarifying expectations and requirements in this regard.

Actions required

PSA must formalise the requirements for attendance, define lateness, and set out the consequences of non-compliance.

PSA is being punctilious in requiring participants to sign in for the daily sessions. Indeed there is an unnecessary repetition of basic information (such as email address) being required each day. A simplification of the procedure while ensuring its effectiveness was discussed with the Director.

Attendance requirements for issuing of an attendance certificate have not been devised; nor has lateness been defined.

Requirements for attendance, criteria for lateness and the conditions under which a certificate of attendance can/cannot be issued must be made clear in writing.

PSA must develop a trainee handbook containing essential policies and information on health and safety, discrimination, equal opportunities, attendance/lateness, grievance, smoking, drugs and alcohol, data security, dress code, etc.

PSA has expanded its materials provided to participants in advance of courses. However, the information does not include policies relating to health and safety, discrimination or equal opportunities.

In discussion with the Director, her commitment to equal opportunities and non-discrimination was clear, but there is no written policy.

The provider must devise policies to avoid discrimination and a published procedure for dealing with any abusive behaviour.

The grievance/complaints procedure must be documented and formalised.

Although there is ample evidence that comments from participants are acted upon expeditiously, there is no written complaints policy and this remains to be done. This should include reference to BAC's role in the complaints handling procedure.

For larger groups there should be provision of additional break-out training rooms, a common room and a different space for tea/coffee/lunch breaks.

The change of venue for Oxford courses has ensured that this requirement is now met.

Recommendations

The provider has considered the various recommendations made in the last report.

A number of these have been implemented, including development of flow charts for major processes, increasing focus of the website, and enhancing pre-arrival information.

The change of location of Oxford courses has removed the need to investigate the planning status of the business centre for the delivery of courses.

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	✓			
<p>Comments</p> <p>Feedback forms for the Oxford courses in June 2014 and July 2015 were reviewed. These were unanimously and uniformly enthusiastic and positive. These form part of a thorough process of feedback described by the Director. This includes inviting participants to post commendations and recommendations at the end of each day, on the basis of the day's experience. It was also reported that there is also a daily review session with participants, following which some changes are made immediately.</p> <p>The Training Coordinator has reviewed the written feedback forms for both courses in detail in a comprehensive report and analysis. The inspector saw evidence that the June 2014 report had been used to effect improvements and changes.</p>				

3.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

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

3.3 Participant Welfare

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
<p>Information on medical assistance for participants during courses in Oxford is rudimentary, and it is strongly recommended that this should be enhanced.</p> <p>Establishing contact with a medical practice able to provide non-emergency consultations to participants is strongly recommended.</p>				

3.4 Premises and Facilities

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
<p>University college premises for teaching and residential accommodation for Oxford courses provide a considerably superior environment to that of the business centre.</p>				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Institution's strengths

The Director brings considerable professional experience and expertise, and a passionate commitment to her work to improve aid provision in the developing world.

PSA draws on the services of eminent experts in the field in the delivery of its courses.

A considerable amount of qualitative improvement has taken place in the company's short history.

Feedback from course participants on the two Oxford courses was uniformly excellent.

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
Requirements for attendance, criteria for lateness and the conditions under which a certificate of attendance can/cannot be issued must be made clear in writing.	H
A written complaints policy must be produced and made available to participants. This should include reference to BAC's role in the complaints handling process.	H
The provider must devise and promulgate policies to avoid discrimination and a published procedure for dealing with any abusive behaviour.	H
The provider must develop a written policies on participant Health and Safety	H
Recommendations	
It is strongly recommended that information on medical assistance for participants during courses in Oxford should be enhanced.	
Establishing contact with a medical practice able to provide non-emergency consultations to Oxford course participants is strongly recommended.	

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	YES
<p>Further comments, if applicable</p> <p>During a review of formal polices, it emerged that PSA does not have a written Health and Safety Policy. It has relied upon the health and safety procedures of the business centre where its office is housed, and of the university college where it has held its recent course.</p>	