

BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

Short Course Provider (SCP) Candidacy / Stage 2 Inspection

NAME OF PROVIDER: New Beacon Group

ADDRESS: Beaconwood Park
Stafford
ST18 0AA

HEAD OF PROVIDER: Dr Kaijun Guo

DATE OF INSPECTION: 19 June 2018

ACCREDITATION STATUS AT INSPECTION: Unaccredited

DECISION ON ACCREDITATION:

- Accreditation awarded for six months
- Decision on accreditation deferred
- Award of accreditation refused

DATE: 19 July 2018

1. Background to the institution

The New Beacon Group (NBG/the Provider) is a privately-owned organisation that was incorporated in the United Kingdom (UK) in August 2016. It is owned by a consortium of Chinese investors led by a Chairman, who is based in Beijing, China. The Provider has a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), based in the United Kingdom (UK), who acts as the link between the Provider and the Chairman, the Investors and the Chinese market.

NBG purchased a 46-acre campus in Stafford from Staffordshire University in November 2016. The campus is based just outside Stafford town centre and close to Stafford railway station. There are two main buildings providing a range of teaching and learning facilities. These are the Beacon building and adjacent blocks and the Octagon Building. The Beacon Building consists mainly of classrooms whilst the Octagon Building is designed to be the Hub for New Businesses and the main resource centre and library. There are also student halls of residence, with 600 bedrooms. and various sports and fitness facilities.

The aim is to work closely, under a contract with the University of Wolverhampton, to provide a range of courses to establish an apprentice HUB, to provide short courses and to create an Innovation and Enterprise Centre.

The Deputy CEO, who is also based in the UK, has overall responsibility for operations, staffing and developments on the campus. There is a Planning and Resources Committee, which meets on a monthly basis to review the development of the campus. The recommendations made by this committee are submitted to the Finance Committee, which agrees any initiatives. An Academic Committee reviews educational developments and reports to the Planning and Resources Committee. The NBG board meets bi-annually to review and endorse progress and developments.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Provider offers a range of programmes, on a short course credit bearing basis, to Chinese students, who come to study for a three-month block on the campus. The courses are delivered under the brand name of China Connected. Courses on offer include Business Chinese Mandarin, Doing Business in China and Living and Working in China. Additional courses, which are delivered under the name Business Re-connected Series, are Unlock Your Creativity, Harness Your Creative Talents, Excel with your Creative Power and International Education Taster. The provider will also offer a range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) modules linked to the International Postgraduate Certificate in Education, which is validated by the University of Wolverhampton. The CPD modules to be offered are currently under development with the University.

NBG also has a contract with the Northern Consortium UK (NCUK). NCUK is a consortium of UK universities, which, through its qualifications, gives international students guaranteed access to universities worldwide. From September 2018, NBG plans to offer a programme for Chinese students, who will spend three months in the UK in order to study for the NCUK's International Foundation Year and Pre-Master's programmes. The advantage for participants is that, on successful completion, they are guaranteed a place on an appropriate undergraduate or postgraduate programme of study at one of the 16 partner universities of NCUK.

In the year 2016 to 2017, around 40 participants were enrolled on a short part-time course, called China Connected for Local Businesses. Proposals for the future include a project that will offer successful participants free set-up space and support for their new business in the Octagon Building for one year, the development of courses in Teacher Training and Accounting and offering study abroad programmes with the University of Wolverhampton.

3. Inspection process

This was a one-day inspection conducted by one inspector. Interviews were held with the CEO, the Deputy CEO, the Executive Assistant, the Director of Academic Partnerships, Head of Finance and the Business Development Officer. A tour of both the Beacon and Octagon buildings was undertaken. The inspector reviewed the bespoke student and staff management information system. Various relevant documentation was scrutinised. NBG provided the inspector with all the information required to carry out the inspection.

PART B - JUDGMENT 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 organisation.

INSPECTION AREA - MANAGEMENT, STAFFING AND ADMINISTRATION

1. The provider is effectively managed

1.1	The management structure is clearly defined, documented and understood, including the role and extent of authority of any owners, trustees or governing body.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
1.2	The head of the provider and other senior managers are suitably qualified and experienced, understand their specific responsibilities and are effective in carrying them out.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
1.3	There are clear channels of communication between the management and staff and those working at the delivery venue/s.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

NBG has effective oversight. The management structure is clearly defined. Managers fully discharge their responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning and investment in staff, accommodation and resources. The head of the Provider has extensive experience in providing educational direction and strategic planning, in order to achieve targets. There is a small team and its members work very well together in order to meet the targets set.

The CEO and Deputy CEO work very closely together in order to monitor all aspects of the Provider's performance. They are both experienced academics. Minutes of meetings held by the Planning and Resources Committee confirm the high priority given to the quality and standard of education, which meet the minimum standards set by the University of Wolverhampton and NCUK.

2. The administration of the provider is effective

2.1	Administrators are suitably qualified or experienced and understand their specific responsibilities and duties.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2.2	The size of the administrative team is sufficient to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the provider.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2.3	The administrative support available to the management is clearly defined, documented and understood.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2.4	Policies, procedures and systems are well documented and effectively disseminated across the provider.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2.5	Data collection and collation systems are effective.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The senior administrator works very closely with the senior managers to ensure the smooth running of the organisation. Although the size of the administrative team is small, it is sufficient to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the Provider. Administrators have the necessary qualifications and experience to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

The Staff Handbook is comprehensive and contains all the necessary information, including in relation to health and safety.

The bespoke database management system provides effective data collection and collation systems to assist in monitoring and evaluating the participants.

The University of Wolverhampton and NCUK provide all the appropriate academic policies and handbooks for course delivery, to ensure that all procedures are standardised.

3. The provider employs appropriate managerial and administrative staff

3.1 There are appropriate policies and effective procedures for the recruitment and continuing employment of suitably qualified and experienced staff. Yes No

3.2 Experience and qualifications claimed are verified before employment. Yes No

3.3 There is an effective system for regularly reviewing the performance of staff. Yes No

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Appropriate checks are carried out prior to appointment, for example checking qualifications, getting references, checking previous employment history and right to work in the UK.

Staff performance review documentation includes appropriate areas, such as a training needs analysis, to ensure that continuing professional development is provided on an on-going basis. There is a new staff probationary period that includes performance reviews. The probationary and appraisal policies are up-to-date and relevant.

4. Publicity material, both printed and electronic, gives a comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate description of the provider and its curriculum

4.1 Text and images provide an accurate depiction of the provider's location, premises, facilities and the range and nature of resources and services offered. Yes No

4.2 Information on the courses available is comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date. Yes No

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

4.1 The website has a few omissions and inaccuracies in the information provided. References are still made to the previous name held by NBU as well as courses that are no longer offered. The website is currently under development so that it provides more comprehensive, accurate and detailed information. which is current and relevant. It is expected to be completed by September 2018.

The brochures and course guides follow the frameworks specified by the University of Wolverhampton and NCUK.

5.	The provider takes reasonable care to recruit and enrol suitable participants for its courses			
5.1	Entry requirements for each course are set at an appropriate level and clearly stated in the course descriptions seen by prospective participants.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA
5.2	A formal application process ensures that participants meet the entry requirements and any claimed qualifications are verified.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA
5.3	The provider replies to all application enquiries promptly and appropriately and briefs all stakeholders properly on the nature and requirements of its programmes.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA
5.4	Any overseas recruitment agents are properly selected, briefed, monitored and evaluated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Most students, in the first instance, will be from China. The formal application process will be conducted in China by both Mandarin and English-speaking personnel, such as the Director of Academic Partnerships. The proposed procedure for participant enrolment is rigorous and includes initial assessments carried out during the pre-enrolment period. Entry requirements, stipulated by the University of Wolverhampton and NCUK, are followed through with all participants tested through the various universities' English Language tests and/or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) system. A face-to-face interview is held either in the offices in China or through an online meeting facility.

Advice and guidance will be provided to the student prior to arrival in the UK. This will enable participants to settle in quickly with minimal disruption to classes.

6. There is an appropriate policy on participant attendance and effective procedures and systems to enforce it

6.1	There is an appropriate, clear and published policy on participant attendance and punctuality.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
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This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Policies and procedures to monitor attendance, including making timely contact with participants missing classes, are clearly outlined in the Student Handbook. NBG has also adopted the attendance policy of the University of Wolverhampton as part of standardising procedures.

An electronic student tracking and management system is currently being developed and should be operational by September. Once this is up and running student attendance monitoring will follow the University's procedure.

INSPECTION AREA – PARTICIPANT WELFARE

17. Participants receive pastoral support appropriate to their age, background and circumstances

17.1	There is at least one named staff member responsible for participant welfare who is suitably trained, accessible to all participants and available to provide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
17.2	Participants receive appropriate advice before the start of the programme.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
17.3	Participants receive an appropriate induction and relevant information at the start of the programme.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	

17.4	Participants are issued with a contact number for out-of-hours and emergency support.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
17.5	The provider has policies in place to avoid discrimination and a published procedure for dealing with any abusive behaviour.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
17.6	Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and are regularly reviewed to keep all participants safe.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA
17.7	Effective arrangements are in place to protect participants from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

17.1 There is currently no designated pastoral support officer responsible for participant welfare. However, there are plans to appoint a suitably qualified member of staff responsible for student welfare by September 2018.

Plans are in place to establish a student support centre in the main learning resources area from January 2019. This will further enhance welfare provision and student support.

The induction procedure is comprehensive and appropriate to prepare participants for their studies. There is very good 24-hour security around the premises.

All policies, procedures and measures to prevent bullying and discrimination are good and sensitive to cultural and linguistic diversity. Planned enrichment activities are of a high quality and appropriate. The University of Wolverhampton's code of conduct will also be followed.

The policy and strategy to prevent radicalisation and extremism are very good. There are appropriate references to online resources and the policy is updated each year. All staff and students have the policy included in their handbook. Students and staff are given information on the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism during induction.

18. International participants are provided with specific advice and assistance

18.1	International participants receive appropriate advice before their arrival on travelling to and staying in the UK.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
18.2	International participants receive an appropriate induction upon arrival covering issues specific to the local area.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
18.3	Information and advice specific to international participants continues to be available throughout the course of study.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
18.4	Provision of support takes into account cultural and religious considerations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met NA

Comments

The Director of Academic Partnerships is Mandarin speaking and is responsible for providing all participants with specific advice and assistance prior to arrival in the UK. Individual participants' additional support needs are accurately identified with additional support given to reflect cultural and linguistic diversity.

There are designated prayer rooms and prayer mats provided for participants.

19. The fair treatment of participants is ensured

- | | | | |
|------|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 19.1 | Participants apply for and are enrolled on courses under fair and transparent contractual terms and conditions. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 19.2 | Participants have access to a fair complaints procedure of which they are informed in writing at the start of the course. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met**Comments**

Participants will be enrolled under the University of Wolverhampton and NCUK's regulations and terms and conditions. The terms and conditions and the complaints procedure meet requirements. The refund policy is fair. The Student Handbook contains relevant information on complaints and appeals.

20. Where residential accommodation is offered, it is fit for purpose, well maintained and appropriately supervised

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|------|--|---|--|
| 20.1 | Any residential accommodation is clean, safe and of a standard which is adequate to the needs of participants. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 20.2 | Any residential accommodation is open to inspection by the appropriate authorities, including Ofsted where participants under 18 are accommodated. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA |
| 20.3 | Clear rules and fire, health and safety procedures are in place, with appropriate precautions taken for security of participants and their property. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 20.4 | A level of supervision is provided appropriate to the needs of participants. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 20.5 | Separate accommodation blocks are provided for participants under 18. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA |

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met NA**Comments**

Arrangements for accommodation through halls of residence are appropriately managed and registered in accordance with national requirements. Student residential buildings are of a very high quality.

Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are carried out on all personnel who are working with the participants in the buildings. Although the Provider does not enrol participants under the age of 18, this provides an additional protective measure if other providers use the facilities or halls of residence.

Clear rules and guidelines are displayed on noticeboards and the residents' handbook includes all relevant aspects of health and safety. Each block has a residential tutor, who is fully trained to undertake supervisory duties at the student residence.

21. Where home-stay accommodation is organised, the welfare of participants is ensured and the provider's relationship with hosts is properly managed

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|------|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 21.1 | Due care is taken in selecting home-stay accommodation which both provides a safe and comfortable living environment for participants and is appropriately located for travel to the provider and back. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 21.2 | Any home-stay accommodation is inspected before participants are placed and is subject to regular re-inspection by a responsible representative or agent of the provider. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 21.3 | The provider has appropriate contracts in place with any hosts, clearly setting out the rules, terms and conditions of the provision. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 21.4 | Appropriate advice and support is given to both hosts and participants before and during the placement. | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

21.5 Clear monitoring procedures are in place with opportunities for participant feedback and prompt action taken in the event of problems. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met NA

Comments

22. The provider provides an appropriate social programme for participants and information on leisure activities in the area

22.1 Participants are provided with appropriate information on opportunities for participation at events and other leisure activities which may be of interest. Yes No

22.2 The social programme is responsive to the needs and wishes of participants. Yes No NA

22.3 Any activities within the social programme have been chosen with consideration for their affordability by the majority of participants. Yes No NA

22.4 Any activities organised by the provider are supervised by a responsible representative with suitable qualifications and experience. Yes No NA

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met NA

Comments

Arrangements are in place to provide a full and comprehensive social and enrichment programme with effective oversight, when term commences in September 2018.

INSPECTION AREA – PREMISES AND FACILITIES

23. The provider has secure possession of and access to its premises

23.1 The provider has secure tenure on its premises. Yes No NA

23.2 Where required, the provider has access to suitable external premises for training purposes of a temporary or occasional nature. Yes No NA

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Land registry and ownership title deeds confirm security of tenure.

24. The premises provide a safe, secure and clean environment for participants and staff

24.1 Access to the premises is appropriately restricted and secured. Yes No

24.2 The premises are maintained in an adequate state of repair, decoration and cleanliness. Yes No

24.3	There are specific safety rules in areas of particular hazard (e.g. science laboratories), made readily available to participants, staff and visitors.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA
24.4	General guidance on health and safety is made available to participants, staff and visitors.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
24.5	There is adequate signage inside and outside of the premises and notice boards for the display of general information.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
24.6	There is adequate circulation space for the number of participants and staff accommodated, and a suitable area in which to receive visitors.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
24.7	There are toilet facilities of an appropriate number and level of cleanliness.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
24.8	There is adequate heating and ventilation in all rooms.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

All sites provide an excellent and safe learning environment. The campus has excellent facilities and levels of security.

The maintenance of the fabric of the premises is excellent including the levels of heating, lighting and ventilation.

Policies relating to health and safety and first aid are displayed in classrooms and communal areas.

Washroom and toilet facilities are sufficient in number for both male and female participants and are available on every floor.

The Octagon Building, which will be a designated learning centre hub is currently under refurbishment.

25. Training rooms and other learning areas are appropriate for the courses offered

25.1	Training rooms and other learning areas provide adequate accommodation in size and number for the classes allocated to them.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
25.2	Training rooms and/or any specialised learning areas (e.g. laboratories, workshops, studios) are equipped to a level which allows for the effective delivery of each course.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
25.3	There are facilities suitable for conducting the assessments required on each course.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Classrooms are very well equipped with up-to-date technology and high quality facilities.

26. There are appropriate additional facilities for participants and staff

26.1	Participants have access to sufficient space and suitable facilities for private study, including library and IT resources.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
26.2	Trainers have access to sufficient personal space for preparing lessons, marking work and relaxation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
26.3	Participants and staff have access to space and facilities suitable for relaxation and the consumption of food and drink where appropriate.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA

26.4	Participants and staff have access to storage for personal possessions where appropriate.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
26.5	There are individual offices or rooms in which trainers and senior management can hold private meetings and a room of sufficient size to hold staff meetings.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
26.6	Administrative offices are adequate in size and resources for the effective administration of the provider.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Appropriate areas for relaxation and the consumption of food and drink are scheduled to open in September 2018.

Office accommodation is excellent and of a good size.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated

Yes No

PART C - SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Numbering of action points aligns with that of the minimum standards

MANAGEMENT, STAFFING AND ADMINISTRATION

Provider's Strengths

Management is highly successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating highly qualified staff and ensuring they are suitably trained and experienced for their roles and meeting the needs of the participants.

Actions Required	Priority H/M/L
4.1 The official website must be reviewed in order to address inaccuracies and omissions and to provide accurate and detailed information of the courses on offer.	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low

PARTICIPANT WELFARE

Provider's Strengths

The Director of Academic Partnerships is of Chinese origin and is, therefore, able to provide participants with support that is sensitive to cultural and linguistic diversity.

Actions Required	Priority H/M/L
17.1 The Provider must appoint a designated participant welfare staff member who is accessible and able to provide advice and guidance.	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low

PREMISES AND FACILITIES

Provider's Strengths

Excellent premises for teaching and learning which were part of the University of Staffordshire.

Actions Required	Priority H/M/L
None	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

To be reviewed at the next inspection

None

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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