BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

College ODBL Full Inspection

NAME OF INSTITUTION: Institute for Optimum Nutrition

ADDRESS: Ambassador House
Paradise Road
Richmond
London
TW9 1SQ

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Ms Christina Mansi

DATE OF INSPECTION: 20 & 22 September 2018

ACCREDITATION STATUS AT INSPECTION: Unaccredited

DECISION ON ACCREDITATION:

☒ Accreditation awarded for the full four-year period

☐ Probation accreditation

☐ Decision on accreditation deferred

☐ Award of accreditation refused

DATE: 29 November 2018

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

The Institute of Optimum Nutrition (ION/the Provider) is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. ION was set up in 1984 as a private college delivering one of the first courses on nutritional therapy. It was owned by a single proprietor. In 1992, the governance changed from a sole proprietor to a charity with a Board of Trustees. The Board has a Chair and four other trustees. The trustees are also non-executive company directors, who have the right to attend the annual General Meetings in order to review the accounts and vote on any changes to the governance documents. The trustees delegate the running of the charity to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO is supported by a senior management team made up of the Dean, the Finance Manager and the Business Manager. The senior management team reports to the Board of Trustees on performance.

The charity's objectives, as set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association, are to advance the education of the public and health professionals in all matters relating to nutrition and the preservation and protection of health of the general public by giving advice and assistance and where necessary treatment through nutrition. The primary means by which ION seeks to meet its educational objective is through the training of registered Nutritional Therapists in the principles and practice of optimum nutrition, as complementary to orthodox medicine.

The activities of ION are conducted in accordance with the guidance set by the regulator, Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CHNC), along with its accrediting body, Nutrition and Lifestyle Medicine Nutritional Therapy Education Commission (NTEC) and the professional body, the British Association for Nutrition and Lifestyle Medicine (BANT).

The Provider's main office is based in Richmond Upon Thames in South West London. The Nutritional Therapy Science Access Course and clinical practice training of the Nutritional Therapy Diploma course are delivered in the training rooms in Richmond. There are four clinic rooms and two training rooms and a resource library in Richmond. Weekend sessions are delivered in central London at the Ambassador Hotel in Bloomsbury.

2. Brief description of the current provision

ION offers courses in Nutritional Therapy from Levels 4 to 6. The Nutritional Therapy Science Access Course is offered at Level 3 for learners, who need to have a background in science. The qualifications offered are the NTEC accredited Nutritional Therapy Diploma, the Nutritional Studies Certificate, which is non-practicing and the Nutritional Therapy Science Access Certificate. All these courses can be undertaken by learners on a part-time basis. The duration of the diploma courses can range from three to six years and the science access course from six months to two years. The Nutritional Therapy Diploma course was originally a two-year part-time course and has been expanded to three years part-time. Half of the third year is dedicated to supervised clinical practice supported by taught modules.

Since November 2010, ION has been a centre accredited for the Nutritional Therapy Education Council of the United Kingdom. It is also an approved centre of the awarding organisation, QUALIFI, who have endorsed the Level 6 modules of the diploma, since September 2018.

Courses are offered through online, distance and blended learning. They are delivered through the provision of recorded videoed materials, webinars and the screening of lectures by livestreaming.

ION also provides Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to the general public by means of food demonstration and education days. One of these courses is recognised by the Nutritional Therapy Education Commission. ION also provides clients with access to supervised training clinics and offers learners opportunities to conduct clinic observations.

During the time of the inspection, there were 283 full-time and 60 part-time learners enrolled. The majority were female. In general, the majority of ION's learners come from the UK and a minority are from other countries, including other European countries, Australia, United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Africa and the United States of America. All learners are over the age of 18.

There are three intakes each year for the Diploma and Nutrition Studies Certificate and five intakes each year for the Nutrition Therapy Science Access Certificate. Enrolment is on the basis of previous learning and experience.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was carried out by one inspector over two days at the Richmond premises and the Ambassador Hotel in Bloomsbury, London. Meetings were held with trustees, the CEO, the Dean, the Business Manager, the administration team, the clinical practitioners, teachers, nutritional therapists, supervisors, admissions team, head of courses, year and module team leaders and the digital designers who oversee the online provision. A tour of the Richmond premises was carried out and a range of online and video recordings of training sessions on film were observed. Teaching and learning observations were conducted and interviews were held with teachers and team/module leaders and a group of year two students. A meeting was also held with the digital team who were capturing the sessions on film. Various documentation was scrutinised. The availability of the information provided to the inspector was very good and the team co-operated extremely well with the inspector throughout 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 institution.

INSPECTION AREA - MANAGEMENT, STAFFING AND ADMINISTRATION

1.   The institution 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.	☒ Yes	☐ No
1.2	The head of the institution and other senior managers are suitably qualified and experienced, understand their specific responsibilities and are effective in carrying them out.	☒ Yes	☐ No
1.3	Senior managers have an understanding of the special requirements of online, distance, and blended learning.	☒ Yes	☐ No
1.4	There are clear channels of communication between the management and staff, especially those working remotely.	☒ Yes	☐ No

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

Comments

The Provider has a clearly defined management structure. This is documented by means of an accurate organisation chart that clearly sets out the staff hierarchy and job roles which are supported by job descriptions. The role and authority of the trustees/directors are set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The Chair of ION has undertaken governance training and has considerable experience in the organisation and development planning of charities. The CEO holds a clear vision for ION. She has extensive experience in managing charitable organisations and guiding them through decision making. The CEO is very supportive of the team and works hard to ensure all staffing needs are met. The Dean and the Business Manager are highly committed. The Dean is an experienced academic and qualified nutritionist, who carries out specific responsibilities to support learners prior, during and post course delivery effectively.

The head of Course (NTDC) and Year 3 leader are currently undertaking a master's degree in online distance and blended learning. The head of curriculum holds a Nutritional Therapy Diploma and is thoroughly familiar with the special requirements of online, distance and blended learning.

Effective channels of communication between the management and staff include face-to-face meetings and an online video conference platform. Monthly recorded academic team meetings are held at the office in Richmond. Staff supervisory meetings are held regularly. All remote working staff have access to ION video calling facility and access to a computer software suite which enables them to work together as one.

2.   The administration of the institution is effective

2.1	Administrators are suitably qualified or experienced and understand their specific responsibilities and duties.	☒ Yes	☐ No
2.2	The size of the administrative team is sufficient to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the institution.	☒ Yes	☐ No
2.3	The administrative support available to the management is clearly defined, documented and understood.	☒ Yes	☐ No

2.4	Policies, procedures and systems are well documented and effectively disseminated across the institution.	⊠ Yes	☐ No
2.5	Data collection and collation systems are well documented and effectively disseminated.	⊠ Yes	☐ No
2.6	Student and teaching staff records are sufficient, accurately maintained and up-to-date.	⊠ Yes	☐ No
2.7	The institution has a robust security system and policies in place for protecting the data of its students and teaching staff.	⊠ Yes	☐ No
2.8	The institution has processes through which the institution verifies the student who registers on the programme is the same student who participates on and completes and receives the credit.	⊠ Yes	☐ No
2.9	The institution has access to the services of an experienced Information Technology (IT) technician who can ensure that systems are operative at all times and provide support to students, teaching staff and staff working remotely.	⊠ Yes	☐ No
2.10	Staff are available to assist students to resolve issues of a general and/or technological nature. All enquiries from students are handled promptly and sympathetically.	⊠ Yes	☐ No

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

Comments

Administrators undergo a thorough and robust recruitment and assessment process that ensure suitability for the post.

There is a team of nine dedicated administrators who support the organisation. This team effectively supports the current number of freelance staff and students, prior, during and post course delivery. It is also sufficient for the day-to-day administration of the provision. Teachers and students stated that the administrators were highly effective in their roles and inspection results confirmed this view.

A central repository of all organisational policies and procedures is effectively maintained by the Business Manager. These are reviewed regularly by the approving subcommittees for currency and relevancy. The policies and procedures are included in the staff handbook. The handbook is securely stored on the internal computer network and all staff have access.

Data collection and collation systems are effectively maintained by specifically allocated technical and administrative leads. Policies have been reviewed to comply with up-to-date data protection regulation and staff have undertaken appropriate training in this regard.

Learner records are accurately maintained across a series of centralised spreadsheets and electronic folders managed by dedicated technical and administrative leads. Teacher records are retained within the Human Resource department and are managed by both the administrator and Business Manager.

Data security is undertaken seriously by management. All electronic files require password access with hard copies kept securely. This security is further supported by training staff on the importance of data protection. Documentation scrutinised confirm that this process is effective.

International learners are interviewed by video and are obliged submit a high-quality scan of their passport upon enrolment. This is to verify registered learners on any programme.

Staff, including those working remotely, have 24 hour access to a helpdesk provided by external IT consultants, who also offer one-site support twice a month at the office.

Learners have direct access to the course administration office staff who assist with all general and technical queries. IT support for both staff and learners is excellent.

3.   The institution 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	The institution has a robust teaching staff recruitment system which is designed to ensure the safety of the students. The recruitment process for teaching staff working remotely includes a face-to- interview using a suitable online communication platform.	☒ Yes	☐ No
3.4	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

ION has detailed and appropriate staff recruitment policies. These include a robust recruitment policy for all freelance teaching staff. Interviews are conducted by the experienced team managers and are moderated by either the Business Manager or the CEO. The recruitment process is administered fairly and objectively by a dedicated administrator.

The Provider has a clearly identified area on their internal computer network to store securely staff information regarding their experience and the verification of their qualifications. References are carried out prior to job confirmation.

Candidates are assessed for suitability using a range of competency based assessments and lecture presentations. Permanent academic staff are interviewed in person at the office. Remote workers are interviewed for suitability using the face-to-face video conferencing platform.

The Provider has a clearly structured performance review system in place for both full and part-time staff. Permanent staff members receive a six to eight weekly performance review which includes lesson observations. The supervision and performance review pro forma documentation is very detailed and includes details of staff CPD.

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

4.1	Text and images provide an accurate depiction of the institution'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

ION has excellent publicity material for its training provision. This includes informative video presentations, detailed prospectuses, application packs and destination success stories from previous students. There is an informative magazine published quarterly by the Provider dealing with health-related issues.

All publicity material and resources are reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure currency and accuracy. Materials are professional and include accurate representations of the provision in line with standards set by the Competitions and Marketing Authority of the UK.

5.   The institution takes reasonable care to recruit and enrol suitable students 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 students.	☒ Yes	☐ No

5.2	A formal application process ensures that students meet the entry requirements and any claimed qualifications are verified.	☒ Yes ☐ No	
5.3	Students are properly briefed on the nature and requirements of the courses for which they apply, and all application enquiries responded to promptly and appropriately.	☒ Yes ☐ No	
5.4	Any overseas recruitment agents are properly selected, briefed, monitored and evaluated.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ NA	
5.5	Students receive a proper initial assessment which includes language ability to confirm their capability to complete the courses on which they are enrolling	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA	
5.6	Students are made aware of the necessary level of digital literacy required to follow the stated programmes.	☒ Yes ☐ No	
5.7	The institution makes it clear to applicants that they are responsible for checking that they have the skills and knowledge required to study on the chosen course.	☒ Yes ☐ No	

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

Comments

The Provider is highly committed to ensuring that learners are enrolled on the right course that meets their needs. Entry requirements are appropriately set and clearly stated in the prospectus. The learner agreement is available online for learners to check suitability and the agreement is discussed with learners prior to application interviews.

There is a clearly documented formal application process. This includes verification of stated qualifications, transcripts, dated correspondence and copies of any other required documentation.

Learners are in regular contact with the administrators prior to, during and post the application process. The contact methods include webinars, open events, webchats and e-mail exchanges. Learners are kept informed of the progress of their application and receive a thorough induction at the start of their course. Meetings with learners confirmed the effectiveness and timeliness of the application process.

Learners are made aware of the necessary level of digital literacy required during the pre-course enrolment period.

Learners are also made aware through open events, webinars and in the learner agreement that they are responsible for checking they have the skills and knowledge required to study on their chosen course.

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

6.1	There is an appropriate, clear and published policy on student attendance and punctuality.	☒ Yes ☐ No
6.2	Accurate and secure records of attendance and punctuality at each session are kept for all students, collated centrally and reviewed at least weekly.	☒ Yes ☐ No
6.3	Student absences are followed up promptly and appropriate action taken.	☒ Yes ☐ No

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

Comments

ION has a clear and documented attendance policy. This is up-to-date and reviewed at least annually. There is clear reference to learner attendance in the handbook. Attendance for clinical practice in years 2 and 3 is mandatory.

Attendance is effectively monitored by the module leaders. Copies of all registration records are securely stored by the administrators. Attendance at clinical practice is recorded centrally by the administrators. The administrators also monitor learner engagement through the use of an online analytics platform.

Unexplained absences are rare. When they occur, they are followed up effectively by the year and course leaders.

7.	**The institution regularly obtains and records feedback from students and other stakeholders and takes appropriate action where necessary**		
7.1	The institution has effective mechanisms for obtaining feedback from students and other stakeholders (such as staff, partner institutions and employers) on all aspects of the institution's provision, including formal student representation where appropriate.	☒ Yes	☐ No
7.2	Feedback is obtained, recorded and analysed on a regular basis.	☒ Yes	☐ No
7.3	The feedback is reviewed by management and action is taken where necessary.	☒ Yes	☐ No
7.4	There is a mechanism for reporting on the institution's response to the feedback to the student body.	☒ Yes	☐ No

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

Comments

ION has a wide range of effective methods of obtaining feedback from learners and other stakeholders, for example, module forums, ad hoc questions to improve learner experience and a 'Have Your Say' button on the Virtual Learning Platform (VLP).

The staff are highly committed to using feedback to aid improvements. This was confirmed by staff and learners. Feedback is discussed at the Academic Review Board meetings and analysed to direct future improvements.

In addition, the Dean and the CEO employ a very interactive approach which allows for teachers and learners to offer feedback at any stage in their training programme. This is highly effective in aiding immediate improvements.

Learner feedback is reviewed at the Academic Team Meetings, the Academic Review Board meetings and at the Education Committee meetings.

The Provider's responses to the feedback are posted on the VLP and also in the annual monitoring report.

8.	**The institution has effective systems to review its own standards and assess its own performance with a view to continuing improvement**		
8.1	There are effective systems for monitoring and periodically reviewing all aspects of the institution's performance.	☒ Yes	☐ No
8.2	Reports are compiled at least annually which present the results of the institution's reviews and incorporate action plans. Reports include analysis of year-on-year results on student satisfaction, retention, achievement, examination results and completion rates.	☒ Yes	☐ No
8.3	Action plans are implemented and regularly reviewed, with outcomes reported to the management.	☒ Yes	☐ No

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

Comments

Effective monitoring and performance review, which assess the Provider's own quality standards, are undertaken at Board and Committee meetings. Performance is linked to the Business Plan which is also reviewed annually.

External moderators review academic performance and consistency of approach annually. The reports from these audits are up-to-date and securely stored on the internal computer network.

A report, which includes an evaluation of all training courses, annual surveys, financial audit, staff and student feedback analysis, is presented to the senior management team and to the board of trustees.

INSPECTION AREA – TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

9.   Academic management is effective

9.1	There is a suitably qualified manager with experience in online, distance and blended learning who has responsibility for teaching, learning and assessment and management of the teaching staff.	☒ Yes	☐ No
9.2	Classes are timetabled and rooms allocated appropriately for the courses offered.	☒ Yes	☐ No
9.3	The allocation of teachers to classes provides for a consistent learning experience.	☒ Yes	☐ No
9.4	There is an appropriate policy and effective procedures for the acquisition of academic resources.	☒ Yes	☐ No

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

Comments

The academic management is extremely effective. The Dean, the head of NTDC and the head of the science access course are experienced and skilled in delivering online distance and blended learning courses and also in the management of teaching, learning and assessment. All members of staff are highly qualified and experienced in managing the team of freelance teachers.

Timetables are congruent with the number of hours outlined in the prospectus. Timetables and course schedules are produced a year in advance to consider student needs and personal requirements such as child care arrangements. There are clearly documented reports for all communications and outcomes.

All modules are clearly timetabled and planned effectively with appropriately allocated start and end times. Each module is taught by the module leader who is also part of the academic team. The module leaders are also involved in the creation and the continual minor modification of the course and they co-ordinate the work of the marking team. This leads to consistency in marking and moderation.

Module leaders and teaching staff submit all plans and required resources to the Dean for review. This system is effective and allows for the effective review of the teaching and learning resources in line with the course aims and objectives. The teaching and learning policy appropriately supports the Provider's strategic plan and course requirements.

Students confirmed that the lessons are clearly timetabled on the online analytics platform and planned effectively to meet their needs.

10.   The courses are planned and delivered in ways that enable students to succeed

10.1	Courses are designed and delivered in ways that allow students to develop the knowledge and skills which will be required for final examinations or assessments.	☒ Yes	☐ No
10.2	Programme designers make effective use of appropriate teaching aids and learning resources.	☒ Yes	☐ No
10.3	Lessons and assessments maintain an appropriate focus on any assessment objectives or statement of learning outcomes established by the awarding body.	☒ Yes	☐ No
10.4	Formative assessments appropriately reflect the nature and standards of summative examinations.	☒ Yes	☐ No
10.5	Students are encouraged and enabled to develop independent learning skills.	☒ Yes	☐ No
10.6	Any required coursework and revision periods are scheduled in advance.	☒ Yes	☐ No

10.7	The academic backgrounds and particular needs of students are taken into account in the classroom delivery of the course.	☒ Yes ☐ No
10.8	The institution uses appropriate and readily accessible technology to optimise interaction between the institution and the student and enhance instructional and educational services.	☒ Yes ☐ No

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

Comments

The design and delivery of all the training courses are standardised by the Provider to meet the quality assurance requirements set by the UK National Occupational Standards. This allows for students' needs to be thoroughly evaluated at the required level. It also allows for the internal and external assessment requirements to be planned in detail, for any re-submissions to take place appropriately and for timely certification.

Schemes of work are used for all training courses. The teaching and assessment strategy allows for the use of differentiated training methodologies in the delivery of online modules, for example, webinars, online forums, anatomical and anthropometry equipment and video and audio recordings. All planning documentation is standardised across the modules and courses and levels to aid consistency for the team of freelance teachers.

Ongoing formative assessments are used to set targets throughout the academic year. These are closely mapped against the qualifications' assessment criteria and methods. Lessons and assignments are aligned to the learning outcomes which are then aligned to the level descriptor. All reports are stored safely on the internal computer network.

All modules have pre-arranged formative tasks that are aligned to the learning outcomes. These effectively guide skills development and achievement in the summative assessments. Formative tasks are supported by study groups and forum discussions which aid learner development.

Learners are continuously encouraged to develop independent learning skills. Each module specification outlines the required number of hours for independent study. Embedded within each module is a successive development of academic and reflective skills. The module leaders use the internal intranet system to engage with learners. They also use this online system to post announcements and to prompt independent study. Learners reported that the online study support mechanism was very effective in their learning and they had progressed to become more confident and independent since enrolling at ION.

All assessment submissions are clearly planned in advance and learners have access to these at the start of the module. These effectively support learners with managing their study time.

The academic background and particular needs of learners are taken into account in the lesson delivery. Learners requiring additional support have access to the academic support tutor who helps them on a one-to-one or group basis.

The main tool for communication in the delivery of online modules is the online VLP. Learners also have access to a suite of computer software to help them with the learning. The VLP is very effective in supporting and engaging all learners.

11.   Teachers are suitable for the courses to which they are allocated and effective in delivering them

11.1	Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced.	☒ Yes ☐ No
11.2	Teachers have a level of subject knowledge, pedagogic and communicative skill which allows them to deliver the content of courses effectively.	☒ Yes ☐ No
11.3	The allocation of teaching staff to courses provides for a consistent learning experience and delivery is monitored to ensure consistency.	☒ Yes ☐ No
11.4	Delivery methods are sufficient to attain the stated programme objectives and intended learning outcomes; suitable supplementary study aids have been considered where appropriate, whether via investment in technology, additional teaching staff support,	☒ Yes ☐ No

issuing extra study materials or offering face-to-face learning sessions.

11.5	Teachers have an understanding of the special challenges and demands of online, distance and blended learning.	☒ Yes	☐ No
11.6	The appraisal procedures for teaching staff incorporate regular monitoring of teacher feedback.	☒ Yes	☐ No
11.7	Teachers are supported in their continuing professional development and enabled to develop further pedagogic techniques to enhance the learning of students.	☒ Yes	☐ No
11.8	Teaching staff are properly and continuously trained with respect to provider policies, student needs, instructional approaches and techniques, and the use of appropriate instructional technology.	☒ Yes	☐ No
11.9	Teachers respond to different learning needs of students where appropriate, taking various learning styles into account in their planning and delivery of lessons.	☒ Yes	☐ No
11.10	Teachers employ effective strategies to involve all students in active participation and to check their understanding of concepts and course content.	☒ Yes	☐ No

This standard is judged to be: ☒ Met   ☐ Partially Met   ☐ Not Met
Comments

There is a robust and clearly documented lecturer recruitment process. Academic staff are expected to hold qualifications which are at least the equivalent to the level they are teaching. Most academic staff hold higher level qualifications in their subject specialism. Clinical teaching practice staff are required to be in practice for a minimum of three years prior to teaching at ION.

Lecturers are contracted based on the demand for modules. The Provider has a robust system to allocate lecturers to training courses. The system is based on learner needs and the skill and experience of lecturers. ION uses team based curriculum design to explore pedagogic approaches to practice based teaching. Lessons are regularly observed resulting in a better teaching and learning experience for learners.

Course module leaders are the point of contact for all aspects of module provision allowing for a consistent approach to learning.

The diversity of delivery enhances learning effectively. With the VLP, learners have excellent access to course guides, materials and teaching sessions. This enables them to study online anywhere, anytime with direct links to a database system consisting of supplementary learner support materials. They also are supported online by the academic support teacher on study skills and reflective practice development. The support includes group workshops held online. Additional study aids are provided in the form of interactive e-units, curated video links and links to additional reading material online.

Teachers are trained in the delivery of online programmes with the majority managing online provision for over three years. Staff feel very well supported in the use of the VLP to conduct sessions and support learners. They have access to both in house and externally provided online learning staff development programmes, which are also shared online in learning conversations and during team meetings. Teachers have a very good understanding of the demands of teaching using e-learning platforms for delivery.

Six weekly staff supervision and performance management reviews enable staff to effectively carry out their duties.

The staff development policy is very detailed and comprehensive. Teachers are very well supported regarding any mandatory training requirements. This support may be financial or allowing time to undertake further or additional training, such as support with undertaking a master's programme in nutrition.

The ongoing and continuous supervision of the staff includes peer observation, teaching performance assessment and student feedback. The staff are also updated in the use of the latest additions to the VLP.

In the lessons observed, lecturers use a range of teaching styles to engage and motivate all learners. Different learning needs are met by the diversity of teaching and learning activities used within modules across all the courses. Work based clinical activities, online forums, clinical practice role-plays and webinars are used to ensure participation and check understanding of threshold concepts.

12. **The institution provides students and teachers with access to appropriate resources and materials for study**

12.1	Appropriate resources and materials for study are available to the students and teachers.	☒ Yes	☐ No
12.2	Commissioning of course materials is managed effectively, and materials are checked to ensure standardisation and consistency across the provision.	☒ Yes	☐ No
12.3	Course materials are designed for a specific and clearly stated level of study and include appropriate support when necessary.	☒ Yes	☐ No
12.4	Course materials are appropriately presented and sufficiently comprehensive to enable students to achieve the programme objectives	☒ Yes	☐ No
12.5	Course materials are accurate and reflect current knowledge and practice and are regularly reviewed and revised.	☒ Yes	☐ No
12.6	The institution makes effective provisions for students to access conventional and online resources.	☒ Yes	☐ No

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

Comments

Excellent resources are used to support teaching and learning. Online lecture recordings are made available from the start of each module. Anatomical models and anthropometry equipment are used appropriately. Both teachers and learners are given access to all materials.

Heads of courses manage the commissioning of course materials effectively to ensure consistency across the provision.

Course module materials are level specific and appropriate for both online and face-to-face delivery.

Module leaders are responsible for updating materials and links to resources. Video recordings are renewed yearly to ensure currency.

There is a well-stocked reference library at the office for student and staff use.

Online resources are excellent and include additional access to research resources supplied by the BANT Centre of Excellence. Students also have access to external libraries such as the Wellcome Trust.

13. **Students receive appropriate assessment and feedback on their performance and progress, which are effectively monitored**

13.1	Courses are planned to include a schedule of assessments, the procedures and criteria for which are available in writing and in advance to students and teachers.	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA	
13.2	Assessment outcomes are monitored to enable the identification of students who are not making satisfactory progress and prompt intervention where appropriate.	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA	
13.3	Students are made aware of how their progress relates to their targeted level of achievement.	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA	
13.4	The institution takes appropriate steps to identify and discourage cheating and other misdemeanours, and to penalise offenders.	☒ Yes ☐ No	

13.5	Additional support or advice on alternative courses is provided to students who are judged not to be making sufficient progress to succeed.	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA
13.6	Oral and written feedback is given to individual students on a regular basis, tailored to meet their specific needs and constructive in its nature and delivery.	☒ Yes ☐ No
13.7	Students have appropriate access outside class time to teachers or personal tutors for academic support.	☒ Yes ☐ No

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

Comments

All courses are planned in advance to include a schedule of assessments. These are available in writing and distributed to learners and teachers in advance.

Assessment outcomes are monitored closely using a standardised system to enable the identification of learners who are not making satisfactory progress. Prompt intervention by the academic support tutor is made where appropriate.

Adult learners set their own targets as part of their professional development plan. This is discussed with academic team heads and progress is monitored using assignment feedback. Learners and leturers are made fully aware of progress relating to the learners' targeted level of achievement.

ION has clearly documented policies regarding academic malpractice. Staff and learners have access to these in the associated handbooks. Learners are aware of the academic integrity policy and the penalty for any breaches.

Additional advice and support are appropriate and learners are aware of alternative career changes if necessary.

Learners confirmed that they receive regular feedback on their progress on all written assignments. Feedback is also given to the learner cohorts through a webinar. Individual feedback sessions on clinical practice are thorough and formally recorded.

Learner access to personal tutors is excellent. Staff contact details are readily available and accessible through the online platform.

14.	**The institution offers courses leading to accredited awards granted by recognised awarding bodies wherever appropriate**	
14.1	For courses leading to the award of a UK degree, the institution has a formal agreement with a recognised UK degree-awarding body.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA
14.2	For courses leading to other UK awards, the awarding body is recognised by the relevant regulator.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA
14.3	For courses leading to the award of an overseas degree, the institution has a formal partnership agreement with the overseas degree-awarding body, which is itself accredited by a recognised national agency.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA

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

Comments

15. **There is a clear rationale for courses leading to unaccredited or internal awards (this does not apply to the provision of certificates of attendance only)**

15.1	There is a clear statement of the level claimed relative to the RQF and evidence that students who receive the award meet the stated requirements for that level.	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA
15.2	There is evidence of the extent to which the awards are accepted for the purposes of employment or further study.	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA
15.3	External moderators are involved in the assessment process where appropriate.	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA

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

Comments

The Nutritional Therapy Diploma Course is an internal award. Quality Assurance Agency level descriptors are used to determine the level of each module and its assessment. Thus, claims regarding the stated level are made in line with Ofqual quality standards. ION has met the quality standards and has obtained the certificate of school approval by Qualifi, the standards regulator.

Learners confirmed that progression opportunities were excellent in the field of nutrition and they could also progress to post-graduate qualifications at various universities.

External verifiers quality assure the integrity and assessment of the qualifications on offer. This process is well documented and available for scrutiny.

16. **There are satisfactory procedures for the administration of examinations and other means of assessment**

16.1	The institution complies with the requirements of the relevant awarding bodies in terms of examination security and administration.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ NA
16.2	For internal awards, there are effective systems in place for examination security and administration, and clear procedures for students to appeal against their marks.	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA

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

Comments

There are effective systems in place for examination security and administration and clear procedures for learners to appeal against their marks. Systems include the secure storage of assessments, a policy and handbook that outline the appeals procedure and clearly documented processes for the conducting of internal assessments.

17. **There is appropriate provision of advice for students intending to proceed to employment or higher/further education**

17.1	Students have access to advice from an appropriate staff member on further study and career opportunities.	☒ Yes ☐ No
17.2	If the institution offers courses preparing students for higher education, they have access to prospectuses and to advice from a designated staff member both on selecting courses and institutions and on the application process.	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA

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

Comments

Learners have a well-planned careers guidance programme. All academic staff dedicate time to this and it includes the head of clinic for clinical practice opportunities. Regular one-to-one reviews are clearly linked to progression and employment opportunities.

Learners confirmed that they are highly supported with their progression. This results in excellent opportunities for the graduates to be employed, to start their own business or to progress to higher level post-graduate qualifications. Learner destination data is recorded.

INSPECTION AREA – STUDENT WELFARE

18.   Students receive pastoral support appropriate to their age, background and circumstances

18.1	There is at least one named staff member responsible for student welfare who is suitably trained, accessible to all students and available to provide advice and counselling.	☒ Yes	☐ No
18.2	Students receive appropriate advice before arrival.	☒ Yes	☐ No
18.3	Students receive an appropriate induction and relevant information upon arrival.	☒ Yes	☐ No
18.4	Instructions and suggestions on how to study and how to use the tutorial materials are made available to assist students to learn effectively and efficiently.	☒ Yes	☐ No
18.5	Students are issued with a contact number for out-of-hours and emergency support.	☒ Yes	☐ No
18.6	The institution has policies in place to avoid discrimination and a published procedure for dealing with any abusive behaviour.	☒ Yes	☐ No
18.7	Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and are regularly reviewed to keep all students safe.	☒ Yes	☐ No ☐ NA
18.8	Effective arrangements are in place to protect students from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.	☒ Yes	☐ No
18.9	The institution ensures that students understand any system requirements and have access to appropriate technical advice to assist with technological problems which are the institution's responsibility.	☒ Yes	☐ No
18.10	The institution supports and encourages peer-interaction through a variety of communication channels including social media.	☒ Yes	☐ No

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

Comments

There is a designated academic support tutor who is very well trained to provide advice and counselling. The academic support tutor also provides additional study skills support.

Learners receive appropriate advice before arrival. They undergo a comprehensive applications process prior to enrolment. This ensures that students are recruited onto the right course that meets their needs and allows them to complete successfully.

Learners receive a thorough induction and relevant information upon arrival. For those learners unable to attend the induction, this is conducted through a recorded webinar. Orientation induction events are videoed and available online.

During induction, learners are introduced to the VLP and given a virtual tour of all the facilities available online in order to enable them to learn and use these learning tools effectively and efficiently. Learners were very complimentary of the online materials available and the ease in using these for learning.

All learners have access to a contact number for emergency purposes.

ION has clear and documented policies in place to avoid discrimination, to deal with inappropriate behaviour and to set out clearly what is expected of the learners. These are clearly accessible in both the staff and learner handbooks.

Safeguarding training is required for all staff who engage with learners and clients. The safeguarding policy is detailed and comprehensive.

Effective arrangements are in place to protect learners from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. These are clearly documented in the relevant policies and associated handbooks. Academic staff have undertaken a suitable online training course. Appropriate risk assessments are in place to identify potential risks.

Arrangements to support learners through the use of IT are excellent as are the instructions on how to use the Study Skills Hub on the VLP. Additional technical support is provided by the course administrator and study guides in the 'Frequency Asked Questions' page and help guides.

Peer-to-peer interaction is initiated at induction with the formation of study groups. Learners are encouraged to engage in forum activities and cohort social networking groups using the Provider's Study Support Hub. This is an excellent tool to support learner networking and interaction.

19. International students are provided with specific advice and assistance

19.1	International students receive appropriate advice before their arrival on travelling to and staying in the UK.	☒ Yes	☐ No
19.2	International students receive an appropriate induction upon arrival covering issues specific to the local area.	☒ Yes	☐ No
19.3	Information and advice specific to international students continues to be available throughout the course of study.	☒ Yes	☐ No
19.4	Provision of support takes into account cultural and religious considerations.	☒ Yes	☐ No

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

Comments

Specific advice on travelling to the UK and obtaining visas is provided by ION including information about the climate and living and learning in Britain. As learners only stay for a couple of days during their taught sessions, advice and guidance are given on accommodation and preferential rates are negotiated and secured at the Ambassador Hotel in Bloomsbury, where teaching takes place. Learners find this very helpful.

An induction takes place on the first day with additional online orientation module access.

Learners are informed, at open events and in the learner contract, that they are required to take account of the interests of both male and female learners and for those with special dietary needs. Appropriate cultural and religious consideration for others is expected.

20. The fair treatment of students is ensured

20.1	Students apply for and are enrolled on courses under fair and transparent contractual terms and conditions.	☒ Yes	☐ No
20.2	Students have access to a fair complaints procedure of which they are informed in writing at the start of the course.	☒ Yes	☐ No

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

Comments

There is a clearly documented, fair and transparent application process and a well explained refund policy.

Learners are informed of the complaints procedure during the enrolment process. Learners confirmed they had been treated fairly and the Provider considers their safety, health and well-being to be of utmost importance.

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

21.1	Any residential accommodation is clean, safe and of a standard which is adequate to the needs of students.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
21.2	Any residential accommodation is open to inspection by the appropriate authorities, including Ofsted where students under 18 are accommodated.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA	
21.3	Clear rules and fire, health and safety procedures are in place, with appropriate precautions taken for security of students and their property.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
21.4	A level of supervision is provided appropriate to the needs of students.	☐ Yes ☐ No	
21.5	Separate accommodation blocks are provided for students under 18.	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA	

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

Comments

22. **Where home-stay accommodation is organised, the welfare of students is ensured and the institution's relationship with hosts is properly managed**

22.1	Due care is taken in selecting home-stay accommodation which both provides a safe and comfortable living environment for students and is appropriately located for travel to the institution and back.	☐ Yes ☐ No
22.2	Any home-stay accommodation is inspected before students are placed and is subject to regular re-inspection by a responsible representative or agent of the institution.	☐ Yes ☐ No
22.3	The institution has appropriate contracts in place with any hosts, clearly setting out the rules, terms and conditions of the provision.	☐ Yes ☐ No
22.4	Appropriate advice and support is given to both hosts and students before and during the placement.	☐ Yes ☐ No
22.5	Clear monitoring procedures are in place with opportunities for student 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

23. **The institution provides an appropriate social programme for students and information on leisure activities in the area**

23.1	Students are provided with appropriate information on opportunities for participation at events and other leisure activities which may be of interest.	☐ Yes	☐ No
23.2	The social programme is responsive to the needs and wishes of students.	☐ Yes	☐ No ☐ NA
23.3	Any activities within the social programme have been chosen with consideration for their affordability by the majority of students.	☐ Yes	☐ No ☐ NA
23.4	Any activities organised by the institution 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

INSPECTION AREA – PREMISES AND FACILITIES

24. **The institution has secure possession of and access to its premises**

24.1	The institution has secure tenure on its premises.	☒ Yes	☐ No ☐ NA
24.2	Where required, the institution has access to suitable external premises for academic or non-academic purposes of a temporary or occasional nature.	☒ Yes	☐ No ☐ NA

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

Comments

ION has secure tenure agreements on its premises. Associated contracts and agreements are securely stored in the office.   The Provider holds weekend tutorials and face-to-face session delivery at the Ambassador Hotel in Bloomsbury. The hotel is excellent in terms of the facilities for learners and IT staff to video the sessions.

25. **The premises provide a safe, secure and clean environment for students and staff**

25.1	Access to the premises is appropriately restricted and secured.	☒ Yes	☐ No
25.2	The premises are maintained in an adequate state of repair, decoration and cleanliness.	☒ Yes	☐ No
25.3	There are specific safety rules in areas of particular hazard (e.g. science laboratories), made readily available to students, staff and visitors.	☐ Yes	☐ No ☒ NA
25.4	General guidance on health and safety is made available to students, staff and visitors.	☒ Yes	☐ No
25.5	There is adequate signage inside and outside of the premises and notice boards for the display of general information.	☒ Yes	☐ No
25.6	There is adequate circulation space for the number of students and staff accommodated, and a suitable area in which to receive visitors.	☒ Yes	☐ No
25.7	There are toilet facilities of an appropriate number and level of cleanliness.	☒ Yes	☐ No

25.8	There is adequate heating and ventilation in all rooms.	☒ Yes ☐ No

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

Comments

Access to the premises in Richmond is secured by an entry phone system and by access control with a security desk at the main reception to the building. Access to the hotel in Bloomsbury is safe with closed-circuit television footage and a 24 hour reception front desk.

The facilities in both locations are spacious, well ventilated, effectively maintained and very clean.

The Provider has very clear guidelines for staff and learners in the appropriate handbooks that outline the health and safety requirements.

There are clear notices regarding fire, health and safety procedures throughout both premises.

Both buildings have large circulation areas. Waiting areas for staff and visitors are welcoming with appropriate notices on food, health and well-being.

There are appropriately allocated toilet facilities that are clean and maintained daily.

Heating, lighting and ventilation in the premises in Richmond are excellent.

26. Classrooms and other learning areas are appropriate for the courses offered

26.1	Classrooms and other learning areas provide adequate accommodation in size and number for the classes allocated to them.	☒ Yes ☐ No
26.2	Classrooms 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.	☒ Yes ☐ No
26.3	There are facilities suitable for conducting the assessments required on each course.	☒ Yes ☐ No

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

Comments

All classrooms and learning areas provide highly effective accommodation for the number of learners enrolled. There are two interconnecting rooms in Richmond which can accommodate practical and theory based lessons and assessments.

Consultation rooms at Richmond are equipped with video equipment allowing for video observations.

Clinical practice assessments take place in the consultation and observation rooms in the Richmond premises. These are very well equipped to conduct such assessments.

Learners and lecturers confirmed that the learning areas are well maintained and effective for all course delivery and assessment requirements.

27. There are appropriate additional facilities for students and staff

27.1	Students have access to sufficient space and suitable facilities for private study, including library and IT resources.	☒ Yes ☐ No
27.2	Teaching staff have access to sufficient personal space for preparing lessons, marking work and relaxation.	☒ Yes ☐ No

27.3	Students and staff have access to space and facilities suitable for relaxation and the consumption of food and drink where appropriate.	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA
27.4	Students and staff have access to storage for personal possessions where appropriate.	☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA
27.5	There are individual offices or rooms in which academic staff and senior management can hold private meetings and a room of sufficient size to hold staff meetings.	☒ Yes ☐ No
27.6	Administrative offices are adequate in size and resources for the effective administration of the institution.	☒ Yes ☐ No

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

Comments

Staff have access to effective additional facilities including a separate reception area, break areas, private staff and clinic rooms. Learners also have access to a common room during lessons if needed and suitable areas for refreshment breaks and lunch breaks.

As the majority of lecturing staff work from home, facilities in Richmond meet staff and learner needs well.

Learners and staff keep personal belongings in coin return lockers.

There are a number of rooms that can be used for meetings with staff and learners. Administration offices are of a good size and very well equipped for the allocated number of staff working in Richmond.

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

Institution's Strengths

Leadership and management are very effective in discharging their delegated responsibilities in line with the aims of the Provider.
Leadership and management are highly effective and successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating high quality staff and ensuring that they are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of all learners.

Actions Required	Priority H/M/L
None	☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low

TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Institution's Strengths

Teaching, learning and assessment are of a very high quality overall.
The VLP for the delivery of online distance and blended learning modules is used extremely effectively to enable learners to make very good progress.
Outcomes for learners are excellent.

Actions Required	Priority H/M/L
None	☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low

STUDENT WELFARE

Institution's Strengths

Support for learners is outstanding with clear evidence that the support provided is having a real impact on their achievement and progress.

Actions Required	Priority H/M/L
None	☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low

PREMISES AND FACILITIES

Institution's Strengths

The arrangements in place to ensure the health and safety of learners and staff are highly effective.

Actions Required	Priority H/M/L
None	☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

To be reviewed at the next inspection

None

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS