BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION
(Online, Distance & Blended Learning)

PROVIDER: TEFL.org

ADDRESS: 18 Alexander Place
                            Inverness
                            IV3 5BX

HEAD OF PROVIDER: Mr Joe Hallwood

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 30 October 2019

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation   20 Feb 2020

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1.   Background to the provider

TEFL Scotland Limited (the Provider) is a private limited company offering a range of online and classroom short courses in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). The Provider was incorporated as TEFL Scotland Limited (Ltd) in 2008. The brand name has changed several times and is currently TEFL.org. The name of the registered company remains TEFL Scotland Ltd.

The Provider's aims and objectives are to provide learners with the training, tools and support they need to become confident and inspiring TEFL teachers.

The Provider is owned by its two founders and directors, one of whom is the Managing Director. The other director is also Head of the Provider. The directors are supported by managers with responsibility for online courses, classroom courses, Information Technology (IT) and marketing and sales.

The head office is based in the city of Inverness. Classroom courses are delivered in hotels throughout the United Kingdom (UK) and overseas. BAC accreditation relates to the online provision and the UK classroom provision.

2.   Brief description of the current provision

Training courses are provided online and face to face and are at Levels 2 and 5 on the Training Qualifications UK (TQUK) framework. All courses are part-time. Learners have a choice of course delivery. Thirty per cent of UK-based learners choose an online course, 60 per cent of UK learners take a combination of online and classroom learning and 10 per cent of UK-based learners or a classroom course.

The shortest Level 2 certificated course lasts for 120 hours. It can be taken either as an online course or as a combined course with a classroom component. Longer Level 2 courses include additional classroom teaching or online components, depending on learners' choices. The advanced Level 5 course includes further online teaching and extra components as well as an optional classroom component. Learners taking combined courses can take the online and classroom sections of the course in any order. Classroom courses are delivered in a two-day 20-hour weekend course or a three-day 30-hour weekday course.

Specialist ten-hour courses in Teaching Business English, Teaching English Online, and Teaching Young Learners are available for learners who have completed a course lasting a minimum of 120 hours at the Provider or elsewhere. Learners with a prior TEFL qualification can also purchase specific components of the 120-hour course according to their requirements.

The Provider also delivers bespoke on-site and online training sessions for schools and colleges.

There were 9,754 learners enrolled at the time of the inspection. Approximately 20 per cent of the total were enrolled on the Level 5 course. All learners are part-time. Most learners are UK-based, followed by learners based in the United States and Ireland. Just over half of learners are female, and the average age is 29. A very small minority of learners are under the age of 18. There were 15 learners under 18 at the time of the inspection.

Enrolment for online courses is on a continuous basis. Learners enrol for classroom courses at the time and venue which is most convenient for them. The Provider does not specify entry requirements other than strongly recommending prior TEFL exposure before undertaking a stand-alone classroom course or a specialist course. The majority of learners have an undergraduate or postgraduate degree.

3.   Inspection process

The inspection was undertaken by one inspector over one day at the head office in Inverness. Interviews were conducted with the Head of Provider who is also the Director, Online Courses Manager, Senior Classroom Tutor, tutors, and students. The inspector scrutinised relevant documentation and inspected the head office premises. The Provider fully cooperated with the process and the required information was made readily available and clearly presented.

4.   Inspection History

Inspection Type	Date
Full Accreditation	8-9 & 13 July 2013
Interim	18 September 2014
Re-accreditation	30 May, 3-4 June 2017

PART B – JUDGMENTS AND EVIDENCE

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

1.   Significant changes since the last inspection

The Level 5 course was introduced in March 2019. Learner performance and feedback are being tracked and the annual graduate survey will provide data about this cohort. The new course provides learners with additional opportunities to expand their skills.

The Provider has developed two new platforms since the previous inspection. The Learning Management System includes an increased amount of video material so that learners can watch more material as well as read it. This supports different learning styles. The Customer Relations Management System has increased administrative functionality and the speed of transactions.

The secondary office in Edinburgh where IT support and website design were undertaken has been closed for commercial reasons, with staff now working from home and regularly communicating with head office staff to ensure effective administration.

The Provider has rebranded from TEFL Org UK to TEFL.org to better reflect its international strategy.

The Administration Manager has left, and her responsibilities are currently being performed by the directors and the administrative team. The Provider is considering whether to recruit to the post.

2.   Response to actions points in last report

14.2 14.3 The data collection system must be reviewed so that a structured approach is adopted to the use of the available statistical information.

Useful available data is collected and used effectively for organisational improvement. The quality monitoring process includes an annual graduate survey. This enables the gathering of detailed data about the learner demographic, learners' experience of online, combined, classroom and specialist courses and their job-hunting and subsequent posts. The process is used to identify any issues that need to be investigated or addressed. The analysis of this information is an effective platform for strategic and business planning.

24.5 Learners must be provided with clear information on how to raise issues relating to bullying and harassment and about the BAC complaints policy.

The Provider is developing an anti-bullying and harassment policy for learners. There is an online link to the BAC complaints procedure so learners can easily access the information if they wish to make a complaint.

24.7 The Provider must provide clear guidance on mitigating the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

The Provider has not developed a policy or procedures or implemented training to protect learners against radicalisation and extremism.

3.   Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

It is strongly recommended that an application form is incorporated into the online booking procedure so that learners can submit their details electronically and provide additional useful information to TEFL.

The Provider has reviewed this recommendation, which suggested that they introduce more screening of applicants before admission in order to assess suitability. The Provider decided that in a competitive market seeking further information would act as a deterrent to potential learners and would require additional staff

resources. Learner and tutor feedback and monitoring of learners' progress provides evidence that learners admitted under current procedures have the necessary ability to achieve course objectives.

Staff contracts should include a sign-off indicating that the staff member has read the Staff Handbook.

There is a comprehensive staff handbook, and staff are required to sign a form confirming that they have received it, read it, and understand its contents. This signed form is then returned to their line manager.

It is suggested that a record of tutor monitoring and observation is retained on file.

An online tutor monitoring and observation log is retained on file and regularly updated. This enables the Provider to systematically check this information and address any tutor development needs.

TEFL is recommended to consider undertaking the process to get its qualifications appropriately recognised in terms of their levels.

The Provider has assessed its Level 2 qualification against the TQUK framework and awards an internal TEFL Org certificate. The Level 5 certificate is awarded by TQUK. The Provider's qualifications are therefore appropriately recognised in terms of their levels.

4.   Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

4.1	Management, Staffing and Administration (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: ☒ Met   ☐ Partially Met   ☐ Not Met

Comments

Administrative staff are very positive about the experience of working for TEFL. They commented favourably on the communication with management both informally and at regular meetings which keep them up to date with developments. A staff survey provides them with another opportunity to provide their views. The staff were unsure as to whether the survey would be repeated, and they felt that doing so at regular intervals would strengthen communication.

Tutors were very positive about the experience of working for TEFL and praised the effective communication and support from the Head of Provider, Online Courses Manager and Senior Classroom Tutor.

Tutors reported that they found an electronic chat room very useful for sharing information about courses and educational topics but reported that tutors on online courses and on classroom courses were not able to use the chat function between themselves, as the online course and classroom course areas were separate. They reported that this inhibited their opportunities to share good practice through the chat room.

The Provider's offices in Inverness are satisfactory in terms of size and resources to support effective administration. Fire extinguishers are now fixed to the wall.

4.2	Teaching, Learning and Achievement (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: ☒ Met   ☐ Partially Met   ☐ Not Met

Comments

All the learners interviewed were very positive about their experiences, praising the high quality of the online and classroom components of the courses and of the tutors.

A minority of learners suggested that a two-day classroom course of 20 hours was too compressed and that this reduced their enjoyment of, and benefit from, the experience. A minority on the combined course also felt that it would have been beneficial for them to do the online part of the course first to build the foundation for their classroom experience. Ensuring that the length and scheduling of the classroom courses is appropriate would ensure that all learners have the best possible learning experience.

Learners reported that while the Provider's policy is that feedback must be given within 48 hours, in many cases detailed feedback from assignments was received on the same day as the submission of the assignment. This enables them to track their progress effectively and incorporate feedback into their learning.

4.3   Learner Support (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: ☒ Met   ☐ Partially Met   ☐ Not Met
Comments

Learners were very positive about the quality of the technology and the content of the Provider's online courses, and about the assistance they received if any issues arose. They reported that course materials were well presented and enabled them to achieve course objectives.

4.4   Management of Quality (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: ☒ Met   ☐ Partially Met   ☐ Not Met
Comments

There is an effective process in place for monitoring the quality of classroom learning. Learners' feedback about the tutors, course content, venues and customer service is analysed by the administration team and the Senior Tutor using an appropriate monitoring system. When any aspect of provision scores less than a specified number, the system flags it. The Senior Tutor will then discuss the issue with the tutor or venue and agree the changes that need to be made.

In the event that the feedback scores do not improve, the services of the tutor or the venue will be discontinued. While ratings are generally high, the Provider has occasionally had to take this action. This monitoring means that the quality of the classroom teaching is effectively maintained.

The Online Courses Manager oversees the quality of the online courses. He monitors learner performance and satisfaction. He reviews learners' course scores and the learner feedback that is collected by e-mail, online or face-to-face. He addresses any concerns with online tutors. The Online Courses Manager is working on developing a more formal framework. However, the formal process that is currently in place for classroom teaching is still under development for online teaching. Quality assurance of online courses is therefore less structured, and the analysis of data is not carried out systematically.

4.5   Premises and Facilities – face-to-face component (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: ☐ Met   ☒ Partially Met   ☐ Not Met
Comments

Documented learner feedback on the quality of the classroom courses is excellent, with learners very satisfied with the premises and facilities of the hotels which are used. This confirms that the Provider has access to suitable premises for face-to-face delivery.

The Provider's website has detailed and helpful information about the classroom courses. This ensures that learners receive appropriate advice before arrival and are equipped to derive maximum benefit from the course.

24.5 The Provider does not have a policy or procedures on abusive behaviour and this means that learners are not adequately protected against this risk.

24.7 The Provider does not have a policy and procedures on radicalisation and extremism and this means that learners are not adequately protected against these risks.

4.6   Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

The Provider's flexibility in terms of the method of course delivery and the range of available components means that learners can choose to take the course which best suits their learning styles and career goals.

Detailed and prompt feedback to learners promotes effective learning.

The Provider analyses learner satisfaction against all the key aspects of classroom courses, enabling it to take appropriate action if provision is falling short.

The annual graduate survey enables the Provider to monitor key aspects of its provision and take appropriate action.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

24.5 The Provider must ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to protect all learners against the risks of abusive behavior.	☒ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low
24.7 The Provider must ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to protect all learners against the risks of radicalisation and extremism.	☒ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT *(to be reviewed at the next inspection)*

TEFL should consider surveying staff for their views regularly, providing an additional way for staff to make their voice heard and contribute to the Provider's development.

It is recommended that TEFL considers integration of the two online forums for online and classroom tutors, enabling them to discuss common issues and challenges with all their colleagues in the interests of staff development and sharing good practice.

The Provider should consider obtaining feedback from learners about the length of the two-day classroom-based course and use it to evaluate whether the duration of the course is sufficient to meet learners' needs.

The Provider should consider obtaining feedback from learners about the order of the online and classroom components of the course. This should be used to evaluate whether the Provider should encourage learners to undertake some online course content first to provide a foundation for the face-to-face teaching.

It is recommended that the Provider introduces its classroom delivery monitoring system into the online course components to promote systematic quality assurance.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS - FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE