



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Short Course Provider)

PROVIDER:	Oxford Spires Summer School
ADDRESS:	Flat 253, Lauderdale Mansions Lauderdale Road London
HEAD OF PROVIDER:	Ms Shu Shu Wong
ACCREDITATION STATUS:	Accredited
DATE OF INSPECTION:	26 September 2020
ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:	Continued accreditation, 26 November 2020

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the provider

The Oxford Spires Summer School (the Provider) is the trading name of the Academy of Law and Economics Limited (Ltd). It was incorporated on 25 April 2016 as a private limited company. It runs an unaccredited, university-level programme during the summer months in specialist subject areas. It also runs an English language programme for participants who require additional English support.

The Provider's offices are located in west London. All programmes are delivered at Oxford University, in St Edmund's Hall.

The Provider has two aims. These are to inspire young minds and to help participants to keep calm and learn. The latter aim is printed on the t-shirts that the participants wear during summer school events. The primary goals of the summer school programme are to give participants a competitive advantage in attaining their place and improving their performance at their chosen university.

The Provider has one Director, who is also the owner of the company. The Director is supported by a Strategy Manager, an Academic Director and a Programme Coordinator. The Strategy Manager is also the Head of the Data Science, Artificial Intelligence and Economics programme.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Provider offers two programmes. These are the Law and Economics Advanced Programme (LEAP) and Step Towards English Proficiency (STEP). The LEAP programme is divided into two specialist streams, the first is Law, Business and International Relations and the second is Data Science, Artificial Intelligence and Economics.

LEAP is an advanced and highly specialised programme, while STEP is designed for participants who hope to further consolidate and develop their English language skills, while also gaining a basic understanding of the LEAP subject areas. Both programmes are designed for participants aged 16 and over and are run in parallel, normally from late July until mid-August each year.

The courses run for two weeks, on a full-time and face-to-face basis. They include some in-depth analysis of key concepts in the subjects studied.

There were no participants on either programme during the inspection. Normally, participants come from a very wide range of countries including Abkhazia, Canada, Germany, France, Switzerland, Slovakia, Russia, China the United Arab Emirates, the United States of America and Japan, as well as the United Kingdom (UK). Historically, the majority of participants are aged between 16 and 17 and some are recruited through the short-term study visa route.

The Provider recruits participants on a rolling basis. The number of participants on each programme is deliberately kept small with the intention of providing a bespoke experience for them. Participants should already be studying at an appropriate level, in this case at high school advanced level, and aiming for university. In addition, in order to fully access the teaching, participants should have an adequate command of English that is assessed before enrolment through an online video conference interview.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was carried out remotely, over half a day, principally by electronic video conferencing. Interviews were held with the Proprietor, the Academic Director and Strategy Manager, a teaching staff member, who is also the Programme Coordinator, and two past participants. Various documentation was scrutinised. The Provider's staff and past participants engaged fully with the inspection process.

4. Inspection History

Inspection Type	Date
Stage 2	20 February 2014
Stage 3	13 August 2014
Interim	15 July 2015
Re-accreditation	9-10 August 2018

PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE

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

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

One of the previous proprietors is no longer a director and shareholder, but continues to provide occasional guest lectures. The Provider now has only one director who owns the company.

A Strategy Manager was appointed in 2018. He also leads the Data Science, Artificial Intelligence and Economics stream of the LEAP programme.

The Provider's office address has changed from south east London to the current one in west London.

The Oxford Investment Programme is no longer offered.

2. Response to actions points in last report

8.2 The Provider must further develop an annual report that captures all aspects of its performance.

A comprehensive annual report is produced providing summaries of participant numbers, gender and nationality, feedback on teaching delivery and material and the overall course experience of participants, including non-academic elements such as the suitability of meals and visits. The report provides a useful graphical representation of participant feedback and, as a result, provides an effective overview of participants' responses to the performance of each member of the teaching staff.

The annual report focuses on specific points and issues which need to be addressed and consequently enables future courses to benefit from the feedback obtained from participants and any resulting improvements.

8.3 The Provider must develop an annual improvement plan, deriving from its annual report, which details its actions and enables the setting of appropriate targets for its staff.

The annual report identifies action points which are consolidated into an annual action plan. The plan clearly identifies the staff member responsible for each action. The actions need to be addressed by the start of the following year's programmes although no specific deadlines are provided. The annual improvement plan focuses senior staff's attention on the gaps that need to be filled in the programmes and on their delivery. As a result, the outcome of the plan effectively enhances future participants' experience.

11.3 The Provider must extend its observations of teaching so that annual observation reports, which highlight strengths and areas for improvement, also include actions for continued development.

A report is produced relating to the annual observations of teaching that are carried out. The report draws together participant reviews of teaching staff members' performance and sets out teaching strengths, areas for improvement and actions for continued development.

The report also links with action points set out in the annual report and the annual action plan where appropriate. Therefore, the annual observation report acts as an effective aide to identify key areas for improvement in teaching delivery, a recent example of which is the provision of hand-out materials in advance to enable participants to assimilate their content before lectures take place.

11.4 The Provider must create opportunities for the sharing of best practice so that the very best teaching is more formally recognised and its impact is extended to other teachers.

A shared folder, which contains lecture material, has been placed on an electronic platform to assist with the sharing of good practice. Regular discussion takes place between teaching staff while the course is in operation

enabling the sharing of ideas and reflection on what went well or what could be improved in class. This enables greater awareness of alternative pedagogic approaches and encourages teaching staff to continue to share experiences and ideas. Any alternative pedagogic approaches which are implemented are monitored and maintained, developed or withdrawn for future cohorts depending on their impact.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

The Provider should review its policies and procedures to ensure that all steps are taken to improve the Provider's capacity to grow and further improve, for example, through the collation of lesson observation information.

Policies and procedures are reviewed before the start of the new programmes, usually in December or January before enrolment documentation is sent out to prospective participants. Policies and procedures, alongside the outcomes from lesson observations, are also reviewed at the conclusion of each programme and any changes are shared with the teaching staff. This enables the Provider to help staff identify effective ways of addressing any common areas of difficulties that are experienced by participants. It also helps the Provider to keep up to date with regulatory changes and enables it to establish alterations to procedures which need to be made in order to effectively manage larger group sizes.

It is recommended that the recruitment procedures for staff include formal interview processes.

The Provider has established a robust recruitment process which includes a formal interview. This enables the Provider to satisfy itself with regards to the suitability of new staff members for the programmes.

It is recommended that staff receive an annual performance review which takes good account of data and evidence and sets targets for improved performance.

An annual performance review takes place, which includes consideration of deficiencies and how performance may be improved. The performance review draws evidence from participant feedback and teaching observations. The targets for improved performance are automatically set for the next delivery of the programmes.

It is recommended that the Provider collates and uses a more exhaustive range of evidence and data to evaluate its effectiveness.

The participant feedback process is robust and feedback is now collected electronically rather than in hard copy. The resulting data allows for an in-depth analysis and is capable of being rigorously analysed through the electronic platform. The effect of this is that the Provider is able to analyse data in more detail and set action points as appropriate.

It is recommended that, as already proposed by the Provider, the Provider registers for the DBS renewal service.

The Provider has not yet registered for the Disclosing and Barring Service (DBS) renewal service because it was unable to deliver its programmes in 2020. It will register for the service in time for the next cohort.

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

The current management structure operates very effectively. The Provider has produced a comprehensive Staff Handbook which contains appropriate policies relating to staff behaviour, child protection, health and safety and a staff disciplinary and grievance procedure. This presents staff with clear guidance on what is expected of them and how to deal appropriately with any issues that might arise whilst they are

undertaking their duties. The Handbook also contains a helpful frequently asked questions section to provide more guidance for staff.

An annual review of policies and procedures takes place. This ensures that the policies and procedures are maintained up to date and that the Provider is compliant with regulatory requirements.

Clear feedback on teaching delivery, the teaching material and the overall course experience of participants is collated and analysed. The Provider makes good use of this in its annual reports and action plans and in the development and design of the programmes which have appropriate content and popular extra-curricular activities.

Participants are advised of actions that have been or will be taken following receipt of their feedback where appropriate. In most cases, though, actions taken will impact on the subsequent cohort.

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

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

Comments

Course management is effective as evidenced by the continuing high demand for the programmes and the positive comments from the participants interviewed. The goal of the Provider is to present programmes which give participants a feel of what studying at a prestigious university is like. The teaching material relates to relevant curricula that are typical of what might be studied at first year university level.

The curriculum includes practical applications, as well as theoretical concepts, and opportunities are provided for participants to present material to the rest of the cohort. Guest lecturers, often practitioners, are invited to deliver aspects of the programmes. As a result, participants receive a well-grounded experience of student life, as well as gaining an insight into practical applications of theory. Previous participants say the programmes also helped them to develop their self-confidence. Inspection findings confirm this view.

Feedback to participants is provided on a formal and informal basis. During tutorials, teaching staff have the opportunity to provide participants with feedback either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis. Feedback to participants is tailored to their particular needs and emphasises what they need to do to improve. Grades of performance are provided to participants by the teaching staff. An award is made according to the grades received by the best participant.

Participants have good access to staff outside class time, for example, they are taken to theatres and museums and receive effective guidance on those occasions as appropriate.

An internal unaccredited award is made at the end of the programme to each participant. This encourages participants to achieve high standards. The feedback they receive helps to boost their confidence and self-esteem.

4.3 Participant Welfare (spot check)

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

Comments

Participants receive very good pastoral support to meet their needs well.

Clear guidance is given to participants and their parents on the care and welfare arrangements. This provides them with reassurance about how the safety of the participants will be assured while on the programmes both on campus and outside, when undertaking excursions and visits.

The participants are provided with information about keeping safe as part of their induction. The handbooks, which contain welfare information, have some inaccuracies, reference some procedures which lack clarity and, in places, identify staff members who no longer work for the Provider.

International participants are provided with clear advice on British culture and customs. All participants are treated fairly. Residential accommodation is provided by the University and is of a very high standard.

Very good attention is paid to safeguarding by the Provider. There is a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) responsible for participant welfare. All staff have enhanced DBS checks. The participants are effectively supervised whilst in the residential accommodation. There is a strict time by which participants must register their presence with staff at night. In addition to the Provider's staff, there are University staff onsite 24 hours a day.

The DSO carries out extensive training of staff in child protection and safeguarding and follows this up with a short test which ensures that staff are effectively trained in safeguarding procedures. Not all the relevant staff have up-to-date evidence of an appropriate level of safeguarding training as their certificate has recently expired.

Staff are appropriately trained in preventing radicalisation and extremism. However, there is no supporting policy and a formal risk assessment has not been carried out.

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

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

Comments

The programmes are held in accommodation provided by St Edmund's Hall, Oxford University. This accommodation is appropriate to meet the Provider's requirements and is very safe and secure.

Separate facilities, apart from the teaching rooms, are provided for staff to work and for relaxation.

Participants have access to online facilities and social media through the university's wireless system.

Administrative offices are fit for purpose.

4.5 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated. Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

A very well-organised programme that has a clear focus on the Provider’s aims.

Staff are well supported by the Provider in carrying out their roles.

Staff are well qualified with strong subject knowledge and provide excellent support to the participants.

Safeguarding is recognised as a priority with strong measures in place to protect participants who feel safe and well looked after whilst studying on the programmes.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

The Provider must ensure that all staff have up-to-date evidence to show that they are trained in safeguarding to the appropriate level.	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
The Provider must provide a policy and risk assessment for the protection of participants from radicalisation and extremism.	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low

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

It is recommended that the Provider identifies deadlines by which action plans should be completed within the annual report.

The Provider is recommended to register for the DBS update and renewal service.

The participant handbooks should be reviewed to ensure they are accurate, clear and up to date.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS - FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE

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