BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

College Stage 3 Re-accreditation Inspection

NAME OF INSTITUTION: Azad University (IR) in Oxford

ADDRESS: Stroud Court
Oxford Road
Eynsham
Witney
OX29 4DA

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Dr Reza Fadayevatan

DATE OF INSPECTION: 6 & 8 April 2021

ACCREDITATION STATUS AT INSPECTION: Accredited

DECISION ON ACCREDITATION:

☒ Re-accreditation awarded for the full four-year period

☐ Probation accreditation

☐ Decision on accreditation deferred

☐ Award of accreditation to be withdrawn

DATE: 27 May 2021

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

Azad University (IR) in Oxford (AUO/the Institution) is the United Kingdom (UK) campus of Islamic Azad University (IAU), Iran, which is a not-for-profit private university. AUO has received Privy Council approval for its university title, although it does not intend to award its own degrees in the UK. The Institution offers courses in different subjects based on the available courses at the parent university.

The Oxford campus on which AUO is based is located approximately five miles from Oxford city centre and provides residential, teaching and administrative accommodation on a nine-acre site. The in-house teaching capacity is for approximately 150 students and there are on-site residential facilities for about 30 students.

AUO's aims are to exercise a strategic role within the IAU university system, spearheading innovation and experimentation in teaching, and creating links with UK universities. AUO's main objective is to provide high-quality education and research to applicants from Iran, particularly to graduates of IAU who are undertaking postgraduate study.

AUO is headed by a visiting Vice-Chancellor, who provides oversight and communication with the parent university. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, who has day-to-day responsibility for AUO, works closely with the Vice-Chancellor and other colleagues in Iran, and is based at the AUO campus.

The Oxford campus is also the location for two other related brands, each constituted as a limited company but owned by the Iranian parent university. These operate as divisions of AUO and form part of the BAC-accredited activities. Oxford Language College (OLC) offers English language tuition to the visiting Iranian students, as well as courses for visiting groups from elsewhere. Oxford International Collaboration Centre (OICC) leads IAU's efforts to link with international universities and to provide training courses for faculty. OICC also offers consultancy services to other branches of IAU, although these are not subject to BAC accreditation.

Although the Oxford campus was established in 2003, policy changes resulted in a considerable period when no courses were running. Managerial and strategic changes in 2019 resulted in plans to set up new courses. A one-week English language course was run, and work was undertaken on the building. Plans to commence on-site training in 2020 were disrupted by international travel restrictions, and courses had to be postponed. Consequently, AOU is just beginning to deliver courses, currently only online, and is at the beginning of the academic cycle. Recruitment of new UK-based staff has been delayed until face-to-face courses resume. Systems and procedures are being developed in readiness for the resumption of on-site teaching. Course delivery began in February 2021.

There have been significant changes in senior management at AUO since the last inspection. The Vice-Chancellor was appointed in spring 2019 from within IAU, and the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor was appointed in autumn 2020. Course delivery began in February 2021 with four online classes.

2. Brief description of the current provision

At the time of the inspection, four online five-week courses were running. These courses were two Teacher Development courses with two sessions a week, one Business English course with one session a week, and one course in Discussing Islamic Art, Aesthetics and Visuality, with two sessions a week.

AUO offers a range of short modular courses, which are taught in English. These are a maximum of six months' duration and are designed for cohorts of about 50 students from within the network of IAU campuses in Iran. The courses are available for undergraduate, Masters and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students who have already completed the first year of their degree programme. Students gain credits for these AUO courses, which are based on courses at the home university, and contribute towards their final IAU degree. Students are drawn from a wide variety of disciplines, including business, law, architecture, accounting, technology and psychology.

In addition, AUO offers short courses for professionals that are specially requested by interested professional bodies or individuals.

During the inspection, 54 students were enrolled, of whom 15 were male and 39 were female. AUO does not accept students under the age of 18 years. The majority of students come from Iran. Other countries represented are Canada, United States of America (USA), UK, Egypt, Pakistan, China, Poland, Austria, Germany, India, Kuwait and Greece.

Start times for on-site programmes are generally September and January. In the current circumstances, delivery has been moved online, and courses started in February and March 2021.

Entry requirements include a formal application process, which varies according to the course. Some courses are developed for qualified teachers, some are for business employees at managerial level, and others focus on specific areas of interest. Details of entry requirements for specific courses are made clear in the course prospectus on the website, which specifies that students must be over the age of 18. Students from the parent university are specially selected and have already completed an entrance examination.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was conducted remotely by one inspector over two days. Interviews were held with the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, teaching staff, the Information Technology (IT) and Web Services Consultant, and the Maintenance and Health and Safety Co-ordinator. Teaching and learning sessions were observed and the virtual learning platform was viewed. Documentation was scrutinised. The inspector was provided with a video tour of the premises and facilities, which included the teaching and residential accommodation. The staff of AUO were very open and helpful during the inspection and co-operated fully with all requests for information.

4. Inspection history

Inspection type	Date
Stage 2	15 October 2014
Stage 3	19 August 2015
Interim and Supplementary	27 April 2017
Stage 2 Re-accreditation	17 December 2018

PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgements and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector(s) during the inspection and from documentation provided by the 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 management structure is clearly defined in an organisation chart. AUO is headed by a visiting Vice-Chancellor, who provides effective oversight and communication with the parent university in Iran. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor is based at the Oxford campus and has day-to-day responsibility for AUO.

Senior managers have experience in university management in Iran and the UK. They are highly academically qualified, effective in the execution of their responsibilities, and committed to developing systems that will benefit the students.

The special requirements of online, distance and blended learning (ODBL) are well understood by managers. A virtual learning platform is used effectively, and learning resources are available through a Learning Management System (LMS). Although it is early days and the LMS is still being developed, this is a real strength and has enabled students to study effectively and obtain access to course materials.

Channels of communication are clear and there are effective arrangements for remote working that include e-mail, meeting platforms and social media. Regular meetings take place and communication is clear and effective. Consequently, staff feel connected to the Institution even when they are working remotely.

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

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor has taken responsibility for many administrative tasks during this period of remote working, supported by a small team of part-time administrators who are appropriately qualified and experienced, and are clear about their specific duties and responsibilities.

The size of the team is sufficient for the current courses at AUO and enables efficient day-to-day operations. Currently, AUO is able to access remote support from other campuses of the parent university. Administrative support is clearly understood and currently involves supporting the Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

Policies and procedures are in the process of being revised. Those currently in place are sufficient for the current provision of online courses, and the Institution is working hard to ensure that procedures are fully in place, disseminated and understood as student numbers expand and on-site teaching resumes.

2.4 Nevertheless, all policies and procedures are still not fully completed and disseminated.

The current data collection and collation systems are sufficient for the current levels of course activity, and systems for future growth are under development. Student and teaching staff records are accurate and up to date and appropriately maintained. The Institution has appropriate security systems in place that effectively protect all data.

The identity, qualifications, history of study and experience of students who enrol on short courses are checked and verified by AUO.

The Institution has access to an experienced IT technician who ensures that the systems are functioning efficiently and supports remote working and study for staff and students.

There are staff available to help students with technical issues, and enquiries are handled promptly and supportively. If the teaching staff are unable to resolve an issue, students are referred to the IT technician.

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 that is designed to ensure the safety of the students. The recruitment process for teaching staff working remotely includes a face-to-face 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

Policies and procedures for staff recruitment are appropriate and effective in supporting the appointment of suitably qualified and experienced staff. The qualifications and experience of new staff are verified, currently by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, before contracts are signed.

Recruitment processes are effective in ensuring student safety, and the selection process includes an interview, either face to face or remotely using a video platform.

The Prop Vice-Chancellor has regular contact and oversight of his small team of staff and performance management is effective.

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

The website is attractive and user friendly. Text and images accurately describe the courses on offer. Images of the campus and its buildings and facilities provide an accurate depiction of the Institution and give prospective students a good idea of the facilities.

Course information is clear, comprehensive and up to date, and provides sufficient information to enable potential students to make informed choices.

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 are 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

Entry requirements are set at an appropriate level for each course. For example, some courses are developed for qualified teachers, some are for business employees at managerial level, and others focus on specific areas of interest. Details of entry requirements for specific courses are made clear in the course prospectus on the website, which specifies that students must be over the age of 18.

There is a formal application process. Students from the parent university are specially selected and have already completed an entrance examination. The qualifications, history of study and experience of students who enrol on short courses are checked and verified by AUO.

Effective systems are in place to ensure that students fully understand the course content and requirements. All application enquiries receive a prompt response. The appropriate and clear response times are one day for the initial response, two days for the Course Co-ordinator to respond and provide further clarification of individual courses, and four days to verify qualifications and experience before enrolment.

The overseas recruitment agent has been briefed in three separate meetings and accesses appropriate information on the website.

All students complete an initial assessment, which includes an English language assessment. Students complete an English language test before the course, and when the course starts. This informs lesson planning and enables teaching staff to make appropriate preparations.

Students are made aware of the necessary level of digital literacy in course information and receive an induction 24 hours before the first session to check access. As a result, many issues are ironed out at the beginning and students are able to follow their chosen course of study.

The Institution ensures that students recognise their responsibility for determining their own suitability for the course. Pre-course information clarifies the necessary English language levels, qualifications and experience.

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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

There is a clear policy on attendance and punctuality in the student handbook.

Accurate and secure attendance records are well maintained. Students must log in for online courses, which provides an effective electronic record of attendance. This is monitored effectively on a daily basis.

Student absences are followed up promptly by teaching staff. If it becomes necessary, there are arrangements in place for the English Language Institute in Iran to follow up some of its students who are on online courses.

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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

Effective mechanisms are in operation to obtain feedback from students. There are student questionnaires and a student representative in each class who liaises between the management and the students. As a result, students are able to make their views known.

Suitable arrangements to obtain feedback from the parent university, agents and partner organisations are being developed and will be used when courses finish.

Feedback from students is recorded after the first session and near the end of the course. Students are also encouraged to e-mail their teacher to express their views and raise any issues.

Feedback from students is regularly reviewed by the management, who liaise with the teaching staff. Necessary action is taken as appropriate.

Class representatives have set up a student social media group and this is used as a channel of communication. Students raise issues, which the representative discusses with management, and the response is conveyed through the group chat. Consequently, students are made aware of the actions taken in response to their feedback.

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

A good start has been made, but systems for monitoring and reviewing the quality of the Institution's performance are not yet fully developed as courses have only just started. All class sessions are recorded and made available on the virtual learning platform and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor currently conducts frequent informal lesson observations, but these are not recorded. A formal lesson observation template has been drafted, and there are plans to use this in a professional dialogue to agree areas for development with action points. Student feedback is analysed and fed back to lecturers, and action is taken to address any issues raised.

8.1 Quality assurance systems are not yet fully in operation and lesson observations and appraisals are not formally recorded.

A self-evaluation report has been completed and has resulted in clear action points for improvement. It is too early in the teaching delivery cycle to enable analysis of full datasets or to conduct year-on-year analysis.

Areas for development identified in the self-evaluation are being effectively addressed. This includes action plans to complete the development of policies and procedures, and to record lesson observations and link them to appraisals.

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 Pro-Vice-Chancellor, who is suitably qualified, has taken responsibility for the development of the ODBL courses, with the support of IT experts who work within the parent university. The teaching staff are managed supportively and have all received training on using the LMS, a virtual learning platform that includes video recordings of all sessions and relevant resource materials.

Classes are timetabled appropriately and take account of time differences in various geographical locations, which enables students to access courses at convenient times.

Teachers allocated to classes are very well qualified in the subjects they teach and provide a consistent learning experience. As a result, students are stretched and challenged by the course content and express high levels of satisfaction. Inspection findings confirm this view.

9.4 Courses have only just started and a procedure for the acquisition of learning resources has not yet been formalised to enable teaching staff to request resources to stimulate and facilitate learning.

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 that 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

Courses are well designed, with the specific needs of students in mind. This enables students to develop appropriate knowledge and skills in their chosen subject area. Where final assessments are in place, delivery effectively supports students' achievement.

Effective use is made of learning resources, which are available on the LMS together with slides and recordings of sessions. This provides opportunities for students to revisit the course content and reinforce their learning.

Lessons maintain an appropriate focus on learning outcomes, and where applicable, assessment objectives, although opportunities are missed to focus on learning outcomes at the start of the session.

In the courses that lead to summative assessment, formative assessments are used well to monitor learning and help students prepare.

Students are encouraged to develop independent learning skills through independent study, and, on some courses where appropriate, produce portfolios.

Courses that require the completion of coursework and assessments are publicised with the course schedule in advance, so that all students are aware of the deadlines.

Courses are designed around the needs of the students. Teaching staff take the academic backgrounds of students into account in the preparation of their learning programmes.

AUO uses technology that is accessible in the countries where students are living. This is further consolidated by the LMS, which can be accessed remotely. Students are able to interact through learning platforms, e-mail and social media groups.

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, and pedagogic and communicative skills, 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, issuing extra study materials or offering face-to-face learning sessions.	☒ Yes	☐ No
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

Teaching staff are highly academically qualified and are experienced in course delivery, including online learning. Teachers have excellent subject competence, and very good communication and teaching skills, and consequently courses are delivered effectively.

The appropriate allocation of teaching staff ensures a consistent learning experience for students, which is regularly monitored to assure quality.

Delivery methods enable students to meet the intended learning outcomes. Supplementary resources are available on the LMS. A system of one-to-one tutorials is currently being considered to further enhance students' learning experience.

Teachers understand the challenges of online learning and are continuously expanding their expertise as they become more experienced, with support as appropriate.

Teachers are supported in developing their expertise in using the LMS. It is intended to provide further appropriate support to address teachers' ongoing Continuous Professional Development (CPD), including pedagogic techniques, at a future suitable stage in the academic cycle. So far, teaching staff have received training in the use of instructional technology.

Teachers respond to differing learning needs by using auditory and visual approaches. In the most effective teaching sessions, teachers use interactive learning strategies and encourage student participation very well. Not all teachers present learning outcomes at the beginning of the session. This limits students' ability to see the big picture of what they are studying before looking at the detail or assessing how well the outcomes are met.

Courses are delivered at a level that meets the needs of the students well. The vast majority of courses ensure that students actively participate, and a range of teaching and learning strategies are employed to involve all students. In a minority of sessions, a didactic style is employed, which limits student involvement to listening or asking an occasional question. Larger groups in online sessions make interaction difficult and strategies are not always employed to facilitate smaller group interaction.

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

Teachers have developed their own courses and resources. Learning materials are available to students on the LMS.

Course materials have been developed by the teachers responsible for the design and development of the courses and are meeting students' needs very well. Regular informal observations, undertaken by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, ensure that high standards are maintained.

All course materials are suitable for the level and content of the course for which they are designed, and students are able to seek further support from the teacher and the LMS. The comprehensive and well-presented course materials enable students to achieve the programme's objectives. Materials are newly developed, up to date and reflect current expertise and practice.

AOU provides excellent access for students to the virtual learning platform. On site, there is a comprehensive library, with a wide range of books and journals and several computer labs.

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

Courses are planned to include a schedule of assessments where this is appropriate. Course plans and assessment schedules are available to the students in advance on the LMS, which enables them to prepare.

Assessment outcomes are monitored by teaching staff to enable intervention where appropriate if students are not progressing.

Students receive feedback from teachers that enables them to understand their progress and identify what they need to do to improve.

The student handbook describes the procedures in place to discourage and penalise cheating. When university courses resume, there is an intention to purchase software that identifies plagiarism.

Additional support and advice is available for students who are not making good progress.

Students receive constructive oral feedback during sessions and written feedback through e-mail.

Teachers make themselves available to students outside class time for academic support and to answer queries. There is initial planning to use tutorials to further support this process.

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

Courses do not lead to UK degrees or awards.

AUO has an agreement with the parent university in Iran and a memorandum of understanding with the Iranian University of Medical Sciences.

15. There is a clear rationale for courses leading to unaccredited or internal awards

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

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

Procedures for the administration and security of examinations and assessments are compliant with the requirements of the awarding university.

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

Currently, students have access to careers advice and progression to further studies from the parent university.

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 that 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

In this period of the delivery of online courses, while awaiting the resumption of face-to-face teaching, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor has taken on a welfare role. He is the Designated Safeguarding Lead and has undertaken Level 3 training. There are plans to appoint a Welfare Co-ordinator when on-site teaching resumes.

Students receive clear and comprehensive advice before arrival through the website, e-mail correspondence and the student handbook. This enables them to gain a clear idea of facilities and resources.

Outline planning for on-site inductions when students arrive covers a tour of the premises and the campus, and includes information about the local area, as well as health and safety and academic information.

Information for students regarding course details and access to learning resources includes an induction on the use of the virtual learning platforms and the LMS, which enables them to settle into their learning programme quickly.

Students on site are issued with a 24-hour number for emergency support from AOU personnel and also emergency telephone numbers for within the UK. Notices promoting these numbers are prominent in the building.

Policies are in place to deal with discrimination and abusive behaviour.

18.8 Arrangements to mitigate the risks of radicalisation and extremism include an appropriate policy and an outline risk assessment. However, not all staff have completed training on preventing radicalisation and extremism.

Appropriate advice is given to students on the online learning systems at the start of each course, and as a result, they understand the system requirements. Students also have access to appropriate support with technological problems.

Peer interaction is encouraged through social media, and class groups are set up by student representatives to enable students to interact informally with each other.

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 continue 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

There is comprehensive advice on the website to inform prospective students about travel and other arrangements, including accommodation, before their arrival in the UK.

Students receive practical advice on topics such as clothing, visas and travel, and the student handbook contains information specifically relevant to international students. This helps students to settle into a new environment.

The induction programme for newly arrived international students includes information on issues in the local area and places to visit in Oxford. Currently, all courses are online, and students receive support on web-based systems.

International students are able to access advice throughout their course of study. Academic staff make themselves available to answer student queries and clarify issues.

AUO has made provision for students from a variety of backgrounds and cultures. There is a multi-faith prayer room and support from first-language speakers.

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
20.3	Students are advised of BAC's own complaints procedure.	☒ Yes	☐ No

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

Comments

There are fair contractual terms and conditions for enrolment that are made clear to students when they apply. Terms for the refund of fees are clear.

Students have access to a fair complaints procedure, which is described in the student handbook.

Advice is given to students regarding BAC's complaints process in the student handbook.

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 that is adequate for 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 the 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

Residential accommodation is clean and well maintained. It is provided within the main building and in an annexe in the grounds. Male and female students are accommodated separately. Rooms contain two or three beds and wardrobes and, in some rooms, bedside tables. It is just adequate for groups of students on short courses, but needs to be revamped when it is possible to welcome students on longer courses back on site. There is a small kitchen with a kettle,

toaster and microwave oven to enable students to make their own snacks. There are bathrooms and showers and a laundry room. All meals are provided in the canteen.

21.1 There are no reading lamps, chairs, or desks for study and three occupants in some rooms makes personal space cramped.

Effective measures have been taken to ensure the security of students, and access to residential accommodation requires a security code. Arrangements to mitigate the risk of fire include fire extinguishers, fire exit signs, first-aid stations, and health and safety information. Although there are currently no students in residence, information regarding evacuation checkpoints and the identity of trained first aiders is missing and must be included. Individual lockable storage facilities have not yet been provided which will compromise the security of students' possessions.

Supervision provided is appropriate to the needs of the students.

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 that 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 reinspection 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 are 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 in events and other leisure activities that 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

Students are given information regarding local events. Activities such as group walks, barbeques and film evenings are planned, which will allow students to relax and enjoy their leisure time. There are also sports facilities in the grounds.

Students are able to make their own choices regarding which activities they do. A programme of excursions and trips to London and around Oxford at no extra charge has been planned and a packed lunch is included.

Activities will be supervised by academic and health and safety staff to ensure students' safety and enjoyment. This will give students who are visiting the country the opportunity to see a little of the UK.

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

The Institution owns the campus building, grounds and all facilities.

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 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 is restricted and secure with access by keypad. The three-storey period building is set in its own grounds and has formerly been used as a boarding school. There is an entrance hall, and a reception area that leads to administrative offices and teaching rooms.

The premises are clean, tidy, well maintained and in good decorative repair.

The student handbook contains health and safety information.

25.4 Arrangements to provide general guidance on health and safety to visitors are not yet in place.

Signage is clear and there are notice boards for the display of information.

Circulation space is appropriate to the number of staff and students and there is a welcoming hall in which to receive visitors.

Toilets are available on every floor and there are separate facilities for men and women.
Rooms are well heated and ventilated, with good windows and natural light.

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 that 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

The premises provide good accommodation that is conducive to learning. There are three classrooms and three computer laboratories as well as meeting rooms and, in separate annexes, conference and research facilities.
Classrooms are well equipped with tables and chairs and are very suitable for group learning.
Specialised learning areas are equipped with multimedia projectors and whiteboards and there are good computer facilities.
The facilities are suitable for conducting assessments as appropriate.

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

There is sufficient space for students to work in the well-stocked library, computer rooms and classrooms, which provide good opportunities for students to study. There is also a student common room.
Teaching staff have adequate personal space for lesson preparation and marking.
There are good areas for relaxation, with a pool table, facilities for table tennis and games, exercise equipment, a television and sofas. Staff have access to a kitchen area with a kettle and microwave. Students have all meals provided in the canteen, which has a separate small kitchen area where students can make themselves a drink or a snack.

No storage for personal possessions is provided, and staff and students are advised to keep their belongings with them in the main teaching and recreational areas.

There are areas that are used for private meetings and attractive rooms that are sufficiently large for staff meetings.

Administrative offices are spacious and well equipped and very suitable for the needs of the Institution.

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

Managers are committed to provide effective systems to benefit students and to provide a high-quality learning experience. An effective Learner Management System provides an excellent learning platform for session recordings and resources to enable students to learn and make progress.	
Actions required	**Priority H/M/L**
2.4 All policies, procedures and systems must be fully documented, regularly revised and effectively disseminated across the Institution to ensure continuous quality improvement.	☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low
8.1 Effective systems must be further developed to monitor and review all aspects of AUO's performance including recorded lesson observations and appraisals.	☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low

TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Institution's strengths

Teaching staff are highly qualified academically with excellent subject knowledge. Students are very satisfied with their learning experience.	
Actions required	**Priority H/M/L**
9.4 AOU must institute a formal procedure for the acquisition of academic resources.	☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low

STUDENT WELFARE

Institution's strengths

There is a clear ethos of care for students and a commitment to providing effective processes to ensure students' well-being.	
Actions required	**Priority H/M/L**
18.8 AUO must strengthen arrangements to protect students from risks associated with radicalisation and extremism by further developing its risk assessment and ensuring that all staff complete the appropriate training.	☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low

PREMISES AND FACILITIES

Institution's strengths

AUO has well-maintained buildings set in attractive grounds, which provides a pleasant environment for students. Teaching areas provide an environment for students that is conducive to learning. A good range of facilities provides opportunities for students to relax and enjoy leisure activities.	
Actions required	**Priority H/M/L**

21.1 The Institution must ensure all students in residential accommodation have equal access to sufficient space, furniture, lighting, and study facilities to ensure their comfort and facilitate study.	☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low
21.3 AUO must improve health and safety signage before accommodating students, to include evacuation meeting points, and the names of trained first aiders, and give students access to lockable storage facilities.	☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low
25.4 Arrangements to provide guidance and ensure the health and safety of visitors and students must be provided when visitors arrive.	☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

To be reviewed at the next inspection

AUO is recommended to further develop systems for regularly reviewing the performance of staff.

The Institution is recommended to finalise suitable arrangements to obtain feedback from all relevant stakeholders.

The Institution is recommended to develop robust systems to collect, collate and analyse data to enable whole-institution, year-on-year analysis.

It is recommended that the Institution develop plans for one-to-one student tutorials to support students' learning experience and progress.

It is recommended that learning outcomes for each session are clearly presented to facilitate the monitoring of achievement in classes.

The Institution should consider strategies for maximising the use of interactive learning activities to increase student participation and engagement.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS