



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Online, Distance & Blended Learning)

PROVIDER: Western International College

ADDRESS: Office 106
Longcroft House
2–8 Victoria Avenue
London
EC2M 4NS

HEAD OF PROVIDER: Professor Cedric Bell

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 29 November 2022

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation, 18 May 2023

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the provider

Western International College Limited (WINC/the Provider) is a privately owned, educational provider that was established in 2016 and is based in central London in the United Kingdom (UK). WINC is part of the Knowledge Group, which has been operating in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) since 2008. The scope of the inspection and British Accreditation Council (BAC) accreditation are limited to the provision offered from the UK.

The Provider aims to help its learners gain world-respected qualifications and to enrich their lives in a variety of disciplines, including Business Management and Accounting. The Provider targets markets worldwide, drawing learners primarily from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the Indian subcontinent.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who is based in the UAE, is the sole proprietor. The day-to-day management of the Provider in London is delegated to the Operations Manager, the Registrar and the Academic Co-Ordinator. The staff undertaking these roles report directly to the Principal, who, in turn, reports to the CEO in the UAE.

The role of Vice-Principal has been discontinued, with the duties of that role being shared out amongst the remaining members of the management team. A new post of Business Development Manager has been created.

The Provider moved to its current location in London in August 2022 after taking the strategic decision to focus its efforts on online learning only, rather than in-person delivery. The current office is within a shared block of serviced offices. The Provider has an office for staff members, and there is bookable space available in the building for larger meetings.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Provider offers diplomas in Business Management and Accounting ranging from Level 4 to Level 7. These are accredited by the Awards for Training and Higher Education (ATHE) awarding body. Accreditation was awarded in October 2016, and the programmes offered are all independent, self-study courses, with remote tutor support. ATHE supplies all summative assessments for these programmes. There are very few learners on these ATHE courses.

In addition, the Provider is accredited, since September 2019, to run the University of Bolton's courses. It currently offers a Master of Business Administration (MBA) top-up degree, a Master of Science (MSc) in Accountancy and Financial Management top-up degree and a Bachelor of Science Honours (BSc Hons) degree in Business Management and a Bachelor of Engineering (BEng) Top-Up degree in Software Engineering.

The courses that are offered in conjunction with the University of Bolton are provided exclusively online via live, synchronous delivery. The programmes are contracted under franchise arrangements, with all assessment methods, programme specifications and module specifications written by the University of Bolton. The University of Bolton has educational oversight of the programme.

All courses are online or provided via distance learning, with no provision for in-person delivery.

At the time of the inspection, there were 145 learners enrolled, with 142 on the University of Bolton courses and three on the ATHE courses. The majority of WINC's learners are male. All learners are aged over 18 years and come from a wide range of countries. Countries represented include Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, Malaysia and China.

Detailed entry requirements, such as prior educational qualifications, are set for each course. Each of the courses has three intakes a year, in September, January and May. Courses are delivered over two semesters. Each semester lasts for an average of 15 weeks and constitutes 10-to-12 weeks of teaching, feedback and assessment.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was carried out onsite over one day by one inspector. The inspector held meetings with the Principal, the Registrar and the Academic Co-ordinator. Online meetings with two groups of tutors and a group of learners were held. Observations of a live, online, synchronous class and a range of recorded classes were also completed. A wide range of relevant documentation was scrutinised. The Provider was well prepared for the inspection and co-operated fully.

4. Inspection history

Inspection type	Date
Full Accreditation	18 & 19 October 2016
Supplementary	13 January 2017
Interim	12 July 2018
Supplementary	13 November 2018
Re-accreditation	26 & 28 September 2020

PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgements 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 Provider has changed premises since the previous inspection. The Provider feels that the new premises are more in keeping with its branding.

There has been a change in personnel. The Vice-Principal left the Provider in April 2022. The role was discontinued, and the duties of the role were shared out among the existing staff. In addition, a new post of Business Development Manager has been created.

2. Response to action points in last report

There were no action points identified in the previous inspection report.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

It is recommended that the Provider's current staff appraisal system is formalised to ensure that all staff are reviewed in a timely manner.

The Provider has effectively formalised its staff appraisal system. A new policy has been developed that entails a review of its staff each year and a review of tutors each semester. Appraisals have already been carried out. The appraisals of tutors entail an observation of their teaching and include a focus on the quality of feedback given to the learners. Tutors find the appraisal system supportive and inspection findings confirm this. The appraisal policy is to be reviewed annually.

It is recommended that the British Accreditation Council (BAC) complaints policy, and instructions on how to access it from the Provider's website, are more clearly highlighted to learners.

The BAC's complaints policy, and instructions on how to access it, are now clearly available on the Provider's website. Learners can now move directly from the Provider's website to the BAC complaints policy. Learners can also contact BAC directly from the Provider's website.

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 Provider is effectively managed. The management structure is clear and well understood by staff. The responsibilities of each member of staff are clearly identified and communicated. Managers are well qualified and experienced in their roles, especially in regard to the requirements of distance and online learning.

The administration of online and distance learning is effective. Learners are enrolled efficiently online via the University of Bolton's learner portal. This also deals effectively with learner administration and data management. The Provider has established a wide range of methods of internal communication. Management meetings are held regularly and work to a standard agenda. Administrative meetings with the Provider's partner organisation, the University of Bolton, are also held regularly and support good opportunities for collaboration. As a result, WINC's courses run smoothly.

The Provider recruits suitably qualified and experienced staff. The recruitment process for tutors includes an observation of their teaching abilities. There is an effective system for completing appraisals of the performance of its staff, including regular observations of course delivery by tutors. Consequently, high standards are maintained.

The Provider's website gives a comprehensive and accurate description of the online and distance learning offered. It provides detailed information about the Provider's full range of courses, including methods of delivery, assessment and costs. WINC's website is easy to navigate. Prospective learners therefore have enough information to make an informed decision as to whether the courses suit their needs.

The Provider has a wide range of effective systems in place to monitor its own performance with a view to continuous improvement. The management team liaises with link tutors from the University of Bolton, who provide guidance and updates. A Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) meets regularly and allows for learners to discuss and initiate improvements.

Learner feedback is sought at the end of each lesson and after each module. Key performances indicators established with the university around attendance and learner performance are scrutinised. External auditors from the University of Bolton visit the Provider and report back frequently. The Provider, therefore, has appropriate systems in place for the continuous improvement of the provision.

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Programme management is effective. Training sessions are timetabled appropriately, despite the challenges of the multiple time zones involved across the world. The allocation of tutors provides a consistent learning experience, with one tutor being responsible for each course. Consequently, tutors build up a supportive rapport with their learners.

Courses are well planned and designed in such a way that enables learners to succeed. High-quality course materials are supplied by the University of Bolton and these are augmented by WINC's tutors. As a result, the materials remain current and focused on the needs of the learners. The vast majority of class sizes are appropriate. A small number of classes have large numbers of learners and this can make it difficult for tutors to give sufficient individual attention to learners during the lessons.

Tutors are highly qualified and experienced. They are enthusiastic and have a supportive rapport with their learners. They employ a learner-centred pedagogy and engage their learners through discussion and by using real-life, contemporary issues in their teaching. They use a wide range of effective teaching methods and

assessment strategies and give timely and useful feedback. A system of one-to-one or small-group tutorials allows for more individualised additional support. As a result, learners confirm that they are confident of their success on their chosen course.

A very small number of learners arrive late for their lessons and a few learners are engaged in other activities, such as driving, during teaching sessions. Consequently, these learners do not gain the full benefit from their lessons.

Procedures for the administration of assessments are effective. All assessments are undertaken in line with the awarding bodies' guidelines.

4.3 Learner Support (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Learners receive support that is appropriate to their age, background and circumstances. The course enrolment process is comprehensive, transparent and supportive of applicants. Appropriate entry criteria are easily accessible on the Provider's website. Prospective learners are also able to email the Provider with any further queries. As a result, learners have sufficient information to make an informed choice.

An efficient learner induction includes a compulsory study skills lesson with advice on how to access resources, how to avoid plagiarism and how to upload work on time. Consequently, learners are prepared effectively to start their courses.

The services provided meet the reasonable needs of the learners. Each learner has one-to-one or small-group tutorial time in which to resolve academic, general or technical issues. In addition, the Provider supports peer interaction through the effective use of social media, including group chats.

Learners have access to a fair complaints procedure, including information about BAC's complaints procedure.

Programme materials are appropriate to the medium of delivery and are effective. All courses are designed by the awarding bodies. Individual lessons have well-focused learning aims that are achieved by a wide range of differing supporting activities. High-quality course materials are designed for each module in line with the specifications from the awarding body. All lessons are recorded and are available online to learners for further reference. As a result, independent study is encouraged effectively.

The technology used to deliver the programmes is effective. A well-established platform is employed for the delivery of the Provider's programmes. Learners confirm that the technology is easy to use and is dependable. Learners on the University of Bolton's programmes have additional access to the university's technical support team if necessary.

Learners apply for, and are enrolled on, courses under fair and transparent terms and conditions.

4.5 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

The Provider has a strong commitment to continuous improvement, with both effective internal and external systems to monitor its performance.

Learners benefit from courses that are well planned, well resourced and taught by knowledgeable and enthusiastic tutors.

All lessons are recorded and made available to learners online for further reference in order to encourage independent study.

Learners benefit from individual and small-group tutorials in which they receive additional effective support.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

High Medium Low

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

It is recommended that the Provider establishes a policy regarding the maximum class size allowable so that tutors can always provide individual attention to the learners.

It is recommended that the Provider takes appropriate steps to ensure that learners are on time for their lessons and realise that their class activities should be their sole focus at the time of delivery.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE
