# BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

## Online, Distance and Blended Learning (ODBL)
## Full Inspection

**NAME OF PROVIDER:**                    Masters Design Lab

**ADDRESS:**                             85 Great Portland Street

London

W1W 7LT

**HEAD OF PROVIDER:**                    Mr Lior Zelering

**DATE OF INSPECTION:**                  13, 14 & 16 June 2023

**ACCREDITATION STATUS AT INSPECTION:**  Unaccredited

**DECISION ON ACCREDITATION:**

☐ Accreditation awarded for the full four-year period

☒ Probation accreditation

☐ Decision on accreditation deferred

☐ Award of accreditation refused

DATE:    28 September 2023

**PART A – INTRODUCTION**

### 1. Background to the provider

Masters Design Lab (the Provider) is a privately owned organisation that offers accredited, online distance learning courses within the sector of graphic design, photography and similar creative fields. The Provider was established in December 2020. The Provider is based in the United Kingdom (UK) and incorporated in Canada. The Provider offers diplomas and certificates in Graphic Design, Photography and other related subjects.

Masters Design Lab has a registered office address as Great Portland Street, London, where it hires office facilities as and when required, for example for in-person meetings. All the Provider's day-to-day managerial, teaching and administrative activities are conducted online.

The Provider aims to educate individuals globally about graphic design and photography and to offer collaboration opportunities with practising designers and photographers from around the world. Its mission is to provide high-quality design education by connecting aspiring designers with master designers. Additionally, Masters Design Lab aims to offer learners a flexible approach to study patterns, continuous feedback and mentoring opportunities.

Overall governance is provided by the owner, who has the role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and responsibility for day-to-day management. He is supported by the Programme Manager, Head of Admissions and an Academic Adviser.

### 2. Brief description of the current provision

Masters Design Lab offers courses in graphic design, photography and industry-related subjects. Examples of courses include Colour Theory, History of Graphic Design, Image Manipulation and Creative Thinking. All courses are delivered and assessed via online platforms.

Learners can join in both self-paced courses and studio classes. Studio classes provide weekly or fortnightly online, live teaching sessions. Learners select their own study pattern, programme duration and any additional courses. Course provision responds to learner demand and changing industry practice.

At the time of the inspection, the Provider was running five studio classes, together with additional courses that the learners can select to create their chosen programme. These courses include, Grids and Layouts, History of Graphic Design, Image Manipulation (Photoshop) Design Portfolio, Creative Thinking, Composition, Copywriting, Text and Image, Marketing and Strategy, Storytelling, Branding and WordPress.

All courses are accredited by the European Centre of Independent Certification in E-Learning (ECICEL) and CPD UK and are recognised by the European Association for Distance Learning (EADL). The Provider also offers internal certificates and diploma courses in graphic design and photography.

Thirty-eight learners were studying with the Provider at the time of the inspection. All learners are over the age of 18 and the majority are aged between 24 and 40. The majority of learners are female. Learners come from 17 countries comprising the UK, Belgium, Canada, Hong Kong, Denmark, France, Germany, Jamaica, Kenya, Lithuania, Netherlands, Qatar, Saudia Arabia, Serbia, South Africa, United Arab Emirates and the USA.

There are enrolment points approximately every two months that generate a cyclical pattern of delivery. Learners are required to demonstrate an interest in graphic design and a willingness to commit to the course study requirements. Learners must have access to appropriate computer hardware. Graphic design software knowledge and skills are acquired during the courses. Learners must possess good conversational English language skills to be enrolled on all courses.

### 3. Inspection process

The inspection was undertaken over three days by one inspector. One day was carried out on site at the Provider's registered address and two days took place online. The inspector held meetings with the CEO, the Academic Adviser, the Head of Admissions and the Programme Manager. Meetings were also held with learners, tutors and two learner support staff members. The inspector observed a range of live and recorded online teaching sessions. A wide range of documentation was provided electronically for scrutiny. The Provider co-operated fully with the inspector throughout the inspection process.

**PART B - JUDGEMENT 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 provider.

**INSPECTION AREA – MANAGEMENT, STAFFING AND ADMINISTRATION**

**1.      The provider 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 provider and other senior managers are suitably qualified and/or experienced, understand their specific responsibilities and are effective in carrying them out. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No |
| 1.3 | There are clear channels of communication between the management and others working for the organisation, including those working remotely. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No |
| 1.4 | The provider has a written statement of its mission and goals that effectively guides its activities and is communicated to all stakeholders and effectively implemented and regularly reviewed. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No |
| 1.5 | The provider has a written risk management strategy that includes financial planning and data breaches and that is effectively implemented and regularly reviewed. | ☐ Yes  ☒ No |

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

**Comments**

Masters Design Lab has a clearly defined management structure that is documented in an organisation chart. The organisational structure is communicated effectively to staff, tutors and learners. The owner, who acts as CEO, maintains close operational oversight of the management of the provision. As a result, all staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

The CEO and management team are effective in carrying out their responsibilities. The CEO has extensive experience in graphic design and an education background, with a good understanding of the current creative arts sector. Professional, collaborative relationships are maintained with practising graphic designers. Consequently, the CEO is able to reflect the best of industry practice in the management of the Provider.

Frequent and highly effective use is made of a variety of online communication platforms by all managers and staff within the provision. All managers maintain regular contact with the CEO, teaching and administrative staff, and learners. All communication methods, such as telephone calls, email, messaging and the use of group messaging systems, are successfully used to ensure that there are excellent communication channels between the staff. As a result, the management of the Provider can respond rapidly to all aspects of programme delivery.

The Masters Design Lab's mission is well communicated to all stakeholders. The mission is continually reviewed in order to confirm that the Provider is meeting its aims on an ongoing basis. As a result, the implementation of this mission is highly effective.

The Provider has a written risk management strategy. This strategy articulates the financial risk of low enrolment numbers, increased course and advertising costs, and the non-resolution of concerns raised by learners.

1.5 The management of the risk of data breaches is not included in the risk management strategy. As a result, there are no identified plans to mitigate the impact of any data breaches.

**2.      The administration of online, distance and blended learning is effective**

| 2.1 | Administrators are suitably qualified and/or experienced, understand their specific responsibilities and duties and are effective in carrying them out. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
|---|---|---|
| 2.2 | The size of the administrative team is sufficient to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the provider. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 2.3 | The administrative support available to the management and learners is clearly defined, documented and understood. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 2.4 | Administrative policies, procedures and systems are up to date, thorough, well documented and effectively disseminated across the provider. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 2.5 | The working environment is fit for purpose and suitably resourced for the effective administration of the provider. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 2.6 | Data collection and collation systems are effective in supporting the administration of the provider, including the logging and monitoring of tutor and learner interaction. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 2.7 | Learner and tutors' personal records are sufficient detailed and regularly updated. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 2.8 | The provider has a robust security system and policies in place for protecting the data of its learners and tutors. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |

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

**Comments**

The administrators are well qualified and support the Provider's activities effectively. Their effectiveness is enhanced due to the fact that they have experience in the creative arts sector as well as related higher education qualifications. The administrators are skilled in maintaining frequent and appropriate contact with managers, tutors and learners.

The number of administrators is sufficient for the current learner numbers. Day-to-day running of the Provider is well managed, and staff are responsive and flexible to ensure that there is sufficient cover for any staff absence. As a result, the Provider is able to manage its administration well.

Job descriptions are clearly defined, and lines of reporting and responsibility are well understood.

Administrative policies and procedures are effective. The systems used are sufficient and communicated well across the Provider. Systems are appropriate for current learner numbers.

All the administrative staff work from home and have good remote access to any records and procedures that they need. Staff are aware of their responsibilities for their own health and safety and ensure that they create the most appropriate working environment in their homes, for example by using appropriate furniture to ensure their comfort. Administrative staff enjoy working remotely and can fulfil their role successfully in the organisation.

Data collection and collation systems are effective in supporting the administration of the Provider, including the logging and monitoring of tutor and learner interaction. Record-keeping of learners' administrative interactions is effective. The records are maintained on a rolling spreadsheet, where dates and actions are recorded for scrutiny.

Learners' personal records are sufficiently detailed and appropriate for the online delivery of their courses. Each record includes additional details of all communication channels that are available for learners and the Provider to maintain contact with each other. Tutors' personal records retain appropriate information. Highly detailed curricula vitae, staff appraisal records and staff invoices are retained.

All learner and tutor data are securely stored and protected via password-protected systems. These passwords are changed every three months.

**3.     The provider employs appropriate staff**

| 3.1 | There are appropriate policies and effective procedures for the recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced staff that include, for self-employed staff, a signed performance service level agreement. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
|---|---|---|
| 3.2 | Appropriate checks, including of experience and qualifications, are carried out before recruitment, and accurate records are maintained. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 3.3 | The provider has a robust tutor recruitment system that 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 all staff that incorporates regular monitoring of tutors' feedback to learners. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 3.5 | All staff are appropriately supported in their continuing professional development. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |

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

**Comments**

Effective policies are in place to support the recruitment of appropriate staff. These include a detailed staff recruitment policy that covers all stages of recruitment. All staff are self-employed and working under a suitable freelance mentor contractual arrangement, within which staff sign a performance service level agreement.

Appropriate checks of qualifications and experience are made prior to recruitment. Records are maintained accurately.

The tutor recruitment system is good. All prospective teaching staff are interviewed via online platforms, and their professional experience and promotional material are reviewed. Tutors are also required to deliver an online session in the form of a visiting lecture presentation. This session is reviewed by the CEO and Programme Manager in order for them to make a professional judgement on prospective tutors' online pedagogic skills. Consequently, the Provider can make a well-informed decision as to the recruitment of staff.

The CEO and Programme Manager undertake performance reviews of all staff. Records are retained using a set of appropriate performance indicators. The feedback from learners is included in the review process.

All staff are encouraged to continue with their own professional development. The Provider's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) policy applies to Master Design Labs tutors and team members. It is recognised that different career stages and fields of study benefit from various different types of CPD. However, details of the training undertaken are not centrally logged to ensure that full records are maintained.

| 4. | **Publicity material gives a comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate description of the online, distance and blended learning offered** | |
|---|---|---|
| 4.1 | Text and images used in publicity materials provide an accurate depiction of the provider's facilities and the range and nature of the resources and services offered, including, where appropriate, location and administrative premises. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 4.2 | Information on programmes is comprehensive and accurate. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 4.3 | The provider's key policies are accessible through the website. | ☐ Yes ☒ No |

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

**Comments**

The Provider's website is well presented and provides a comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate description of the online, distance and blended learning offered. The information on the website is detailed and accurate.

Learners can view details of the range of programmes, see examples of learners' work and read specific features of the delivery of courses. The information provided on the application and fee payment process is presented clearly. Prospective learners are also able to access professional, industry-related articles and videos on a range of design subjects.

The information on the content of the various programmes is comprehensive and accurate. Learners are informed as to the duration and content and how many courses make up each programme. Each programme clearly identifies the number of additional workshops that are included in the cost of the programme.

4.3 Key policies are not accessible via the website. As a result, potential learners and tutors are unable to have access to the detail of key policies prior to enrolment or employment.

### 5. The provider has effective systems to monitor its own standards and assess its own performance with a view to continuous improvement

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5.1 | There are effective systems for monitoring and periodically reviewing all aspects of the provider's performance. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 5.2 | The provider has effective mechanisms for obtaining feedback from learners and other stakeholders, such as staff, partner providers and employers, on all aspects of the provider's provision. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 5.3 | Feedback is obtained, recorded and analysed on a regular basis. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 5.4 | The feedback is reviewed by the management and appropriate action is taken. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 5.5 | There is a mechanism for reporting to the learners what the provider has done in response to their feedback. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 5.6 | Reports are compiled at least annually that include the results of the provider's performance reviews, an analysis of relevant data, including learner feedback, and action plans. | ☐ Yes ☒ No |
| 5.7 | Action plans are implemented and regularly reviewed, with outcomes reported to senior management. | ☐ Yes ☒ No |

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

**Comments**

There are effective systems for monitoring and periodically reviewing all aspects of the Provider's performance. The Provider monitors its own standards continually and is highly responsive in identifying any areas to improve its performance. As a result, actions are taken rapidly in order to improve the quality of the provision.

The mechanisms for the collection of feedback on all aspects of the Provider's provision and from all stakeholders are effective. Feedback is collected via frequent and accessible contact between managers, tutors and learners making use of a good range of appropriate online platforms. As a result, the Provider has good, detailed knowledge as to the views of all its stakeholders.

The collection and recording of feedback are effective. Rolling spreadsheets retain details of comments received, and notes are made on actions taken. As a result, the Provider has a good understanding of the views of its stakeholders. The management continually reviews any feedback that it receives and responds rapidly to meet the needs of the learners and staff.

The communication to learners about the actions taken in response to any feedback is effective and rapid. Learners are informed of any actions taken as a result of their feedback, using the online platforms.

The Provider's performance is reviewed and monitored effectively by the CEO and managers. This monitoring is carried out by means of ongoing close scrutiny and discussion of the quality of the provision, making use of appropriate data, including learner feedback. The Provider is developing additional performance monitoring processes, including suitable templates, to enhance these reviews.

5.6 Reports are not currently complied at least annually. As a result, the Provider's performance reviews, analysis of data and any action plans are not yet used to provide an overarching performance report and to enable its performance year on year to be effectively scrutinised.

The CEO and managers are effective in developing actions in response to any performance issues that have been identified. Actions are continually being identified and implemented in an ongoing and responsive way. As a result, improvements in the Provider's performance are being made.

5.7 Action-planning lacks a formal reporting process. As a result, the actions taken and the reporting on progress made in completing those actions are not formally documented to enable the effective review and identification of ongoing themes

## INSPECTION AREA – TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

### 6. Management of the programme is effective

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 6.1 | There is an effective manager or management team with experience of online, distance and blended learning who has responsibility for programme delivery and management of the teaching, learning and assessment team. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No |
| 6.2 | The allocation of tutors to programmes provides a consistent learning experience, and delivery is monitored to ensure consistency. | ☐ Yes  ☒ No |
| 6.3 | Realistic deadlines and schedules, including revision periods, are set and communicated well in advance to learners. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ NA |
| 6.4 | Delivery methods and programme design ensure that the programme objectives and intended learning outcomes are effectively achieved. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No |
| 6.5 | The programmes' content is regularly reviewed and reflects current knowledge and practice. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No |
| 6.6 | Programmes are designed in ways that allow learners to develop the knowledge and skills required for final examinations and/or assessments or that meet the needs of the learners and other stakeholders. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ NA |
| 6.7 | The commissioning of individual course content and materials is managed effectively and is checked to ensure standardisation across the provision. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No |
| 6.8 | Learners have appropriate access to staff for academic and/or learning support. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No |

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

**Comments**

The management of the programmes is highly effective. All aspects of course material preparation, session planning and the allocation of staff are well managed. The additional technical challenges of managing the delivery of ODBL are supported well and any identified issues, for example relating to connection and access to software and online teaching platforms, are resolved rapidly. The availability of and accessibility to this support from the management are excellent.

The consistency of the quality of the learning materials is good. Consistency is ensured in the online studio classes. All tutors follow a common session plan. This framework is enhanced by tutors adding additional materials and referring to their own professional practice. All online teaching sessions are recorded and reviewed by managers.

6.2 The monitoring of online delivery is not always effective in identifying where tutors would benefit from developing a wider range of online delivery methods to enhance their existing high-level skills and the consistency of the learning experience.

Learners receive a well-structured study plan, with clearly identified assessment information so that they know what is required and by when. Each cohort is provided with a calendar that contains details of the live sessions, for example the time, week, day and tutor. The calendar also depicts the weekly task due dates. As a result, learners have a clear schedule of activities available to them.

The delivery methods of online live sessions, access to recorded sessions and frequent and accessible contact with tutors ensure that the intended learning outcomes can be achieved. The flexible delivery model allows learners, who are not able to follow a rigid course structure, to achieve their intended outcomes.

The content of the programmes is detailed and thorough. The content is reviewed informally by the CEO, Programme Manager and the teaching staff. The teaching staff are all practising graphic designers, photographers or working in other creative arts areas, where they retain their business practice. Consequently, the programmes' content reflects current knowledge and practice.

The design of the programmes is good. The design allows learners to develop their skills incrementally, with increasingly challenging tasks required as the courses develop.

The development of individual course content and materials is well managed. All course information is available via the Masters Design Lab portal. The information for each course includes a brief overview of the course and the course goal and outcomes. The delivery pattern and assignments and mark schemes are explained clearly.

Learners have a range of effective methods to access staff for academic guidance and support. Learners can request an unlimited number of short, individual sessions with specific tutors via an online booking system. Tutors are available for additional, longer support sessions with learners by individual arrangement. As a result, learners receive excellent academic and learning support.

| 7. | **Tutors have an appropriate level of subject knowledge and pedagogic skill relevant to online, distance and blended learning** | |
|---|---|---|
| 7.1 | Tutors are appropriately qualified and/or experienced. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No |
| 7.2 | Tutors demonstrate an understanding of the challenges and demands of online, distance and blended learning. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No |
| 7.3 | Tutors have an appropriate level of subject knowledge and pedagogic and communication skills that allows them to deliver the programmes effectively. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No |
| 7.4 | Tutors are appropriately trained with respect to provider policies, learner needs, teaching and instructional approaches, and the use of the technology. | ☒ Yes  ☐ No |

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

**Comments**

Tutors are experienced in the delivery of ODBL programmes. In addition, all tutors have extensive professional experience in graphic design and related creative industries. They have a range of experience in running their own design businesses and working in other relevant organisations. This ensures that their knowledge is up to date and that they can bring this knowledge into their teaching.

All tutors have an appropriate level and range of academic qualifications. In addition, some tutors maintain links with, and teach on, a range of courses in higher education establishments via online platforms. As a result, learners have access to highly qualified and experienced tutors, who have an excellent level of subject knowledge.

From the observations carried out, most tutors are also highly effective in the deployment of their pedagogic and communication skills.

A minority of lessons delivered would benefit from the use of a wider range of pedagogic and communication skills to ensure that all learners are effectively engaged through out their course.

Tutors receive clear information on the policies of the Provider. Training relating to learner needs and teaching approaches is effectively delivered. Tutors receive excellent support to meet all their training needs in the effective use of online platforms. As a result, tutors are well prepared to deliver their programmes effectively.

**8.     Tutors respond to the individual learning needs of learners**

| 8.1 | The academic and/or professional backgrounds and particular support needs of learners are taken into account in the planning, design and delivery of the programmes. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
|---|---|---|
| 8.2 | Learners are encouraged and enabled to develop independent learning skills. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 8.3 | Tutors employ effective strategies to check learners' understanding of concepts and programme content. | ☐ Yes ☒ No |

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

**Comments**

The backgrounds of learners are considered when planning, designing and delivering programmes. Learners are enrolled from a wide range of backgrounds, education levels and experience. The programme content has a wide range and mix of topics and a range of appropriate assessment methods, which gives all learners the opportunity to be successful. As a result, individual support for learners is effective.

Learners are successful in developing their independent learning skills. The broad approach taken in the studio classes provides learners with a good opportunity to develop their own interests and to explore different areas in graphic design and related subjects.

Tutors employ effective strategies to check learners' understanding of concepts and programme content.

8.3 In some lessons, the strategies used to check understanding are not sufficiently effective to ensure that tutors know whether all learners have a clear understanding of the subject matter covered.

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

| 9.1 | Programmes include a schedule of assessments, the procedures and criteria for which are available in writing and are provided in advance to learners and tutors. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |
|---|---|---|
| 9.2 | Assessments maintain an appropriate focus on assessment criteria and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |
| 9.3 | Ongoing assessments appropriately reflect the content and standards of any final assessments. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |
| 9.4 | Learner assessment is guided by grading policies that are consistent and well communicated, with a robust, fair and effective marking system that ensures assessments are returned to learners in a timely manner. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |
| 9.5 | Progress and assessment outcomes are monitored to enable the identification of learners who are not making satisfactory progress, and timely interventions take place if required. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |
| 9.6 | Feedback is given to individual learners on a regular basis, tailored to meet their specific needs and constructive in its nature and delivery. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 9.7 | Learners are made aware of how their progress relates to their target level of achievement. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |
| 9.8 | Timely advice and guidance on alternative programmes are provided to learners who are judged to be making insufficient progress. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |
| 9.9 | The provider takes effective steps to identify and discourage cheating and plagiarism and takes effective action. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |
| 9.10 | Tutor and learner assessment submissions are monitored, and appropriate action is taken if the timeliness of these falls below expectations. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |

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

**Comments**

Learners receive appropriate assessment and feedback on their performance and progress, which are effectively monitored. Prior to commencement of their course, all learners and tutors are able to view, via the Provider's portal, well-prepared schedules of weekly topics and assessment details.

Learner assessment is highly effective. Assessments are well matched to the course content and clearly identify the learning outcomes. The ongoing assessments give learners a secure foundation on which to prepare for, and be successful in, their final portfolio presentation.

The grading criteria are clear for all assignments and are available to the learners at the start of their course. The Provider matches alphabetical grades to grade descriptors. This grading is consistent throughout all courses. Feedback to learners is rapid. As a result, learners are able to establish how well they have achieved the learning outcomes.

Learners benefit from continual tutor feedback on their work. The positive impact of the feedback is enhanced by reviews and critiques from the learners' peers. Formal feedback is constructive and supportive and also presents the learners with suggested improvements for future practice.

The process of keeping learners informed regarding their progress towards the target level of achievement is highly effective. Tutors, support staff and the Programme Manager all contribute to a range of appropriate communication methods with the learners and keep learners informed on the progress being made. As a result, learners are well informed of their progress.

The management of learners who make insufficient progress is implemented well. Learners who are judged to be making insufficient progress with the quality of their work are offered frequent opportunities to take advice and guidance from tutors and support staff. In the rare event that a learner and the Provider arrive at an agreement that the standard of work required to complete the course is too ambitious for the learner's ability, the Provider will make a full refund of all course fees to the learner.

The Provider takes effective steps to identify and discourage cheating. All learners have access to the plagiarism policy, which provides straightforward definitions and expectations of acceptable behaviour. The plagiarism policy cross references the code of practice for learner discipline. Tutors continually monitor the authenticity of learners' work. Learners are made aware that any plagiarised submissions will result in the learner failing the course.

The Provider manages both timely and delayed submissions effectively. The Provider's policy of giving learners autonomy as to how and when they want to complete the course results in some learners delaying their submissions. Tutors, learner support staff and learners are in frequent dialogue with each other about any delays to specified submission dates and the process is well managed.

---

**10.    The provider offers courses leading to accredited awards granted by recognised awarding bodies**

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

**Comments**

All courses are accredited by the European Centre of Independent Certification in E-Learning (ECICEL) and CPD UK and are recognised by the European Association for Distance Learning (EADL).

---

**11.    There is a clear rationale for programmes leading to unaccredited or internal awards**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 11.1 | There is a clear statement of the level claimed relative to the relevant national qualifications framework, for example the RQF, CQFW or SCQF in the United Kingdom, and evidence that learners who receive the award meet the stated requirements for that level. | ☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☒ NA |

| 11.2 | There is evidence of the extent to which the awards are accepted for the purposes of employment or further study, such as learners' destination data, employer feedback, learner testimonials and success stories and post-course questionnaires. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |
|---|---|---|
| 11.3 | External moderators are involved in the assessment process. | ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ NA |

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

**Comments**

| The Provider does not claim any level relative to the relevant national qualifications' framework.<br><br>Learners are able to use their portfolios to enhance their employment opportunities.<br><br>External moderators are not involved in the assessment process. |
|---|

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

| 12.1 | The provider complies with the requirements of the relevant awarding bodies in terms of assessment security and administration. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |
|---|---|---|
| 12.2 | For internal awards, there are effective systems in place for assessment security and administration. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |
| 12.3 | For internal awards, there are clear procedures for learners to appeal against their marks. | ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ NA |
| 12.4 | There is an authentication process that enables the provider to verify that the learner who is registered on the programme is the same person who attends, completes the programme and receives any programme credit. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |

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

**Comments**

| The Provider complies with all requirements of the awarding bodies in terms of assessment security and administration.<br><br>The systems for assessment security and administration of the internal awards are appropriate and effective for the method of delivery. Learners are given details of the assessments early in their courses and have time and the necessary support to develop their ideas. The development of their portfolios, through working on their assessments, is an essential element of their programme.<br><br>12.3 There is no clear procedure for learners to appeal against their marks.<br><br>The identity of the learners is confirmed by matching passport details to the images of learners in online interviews. This is confirmed by frequent online meetings between admission staff and the Programme Manager.<br><br>The tutors are closely involved in the development of the learners' individual assessments from initial ideas to final presentation. As a result, tutors are able to confirm the authenticity of each learner's assessment. |
|---|

**INSPECTION AREA – LEARNER SUPPORT**

**13. The enrolment process is comprehensive, transparent and supportive to applicants**

| 13.1 | The provider ensures that the specific programmes on which learners are registered are likely to meet the learners' expectations and needs. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
|---|---|---|
| 13.2 | Applicants are provided with sufficient information to make an informed decision on the suitability of the programmes and their delivery methods and can discuss any concerns before enrolment. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |

| 13.3 | Enrolment and application documentation is easily accessible and simple to complete and submit. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
|---|---|---|
| 13.4 | The provider replies to all application enquiries in line with its appropriate target response times. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 13.5 | Entry requirements for each programme, including those relating to language ability where applicable, are set at an appropriate level and clearly stated in the programme descriptions read by prospective learners. | ☐ Yes ☒ No ☐ NA |
| 13.6 | The provider takes reasonable steps to ensure that learners accepted for programmes meet any enrolment requirements and that any claimed qualifications are verified. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |
| 13.7 | The provider makes it clear to applicants that they are responsible for checking that they have the digital literacy and system requirements necessary to study on their chosen programme. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 13.8 | The provider has effective systems to identify learners who have special educational needs and/or disabilities requiring additional learning support or other any reasonable adjustments so that these can be put in place. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 13.9 | Learners apply for and are enrolled on programmes under fair and transparent contractual terms and conditions, which include appropriate refund arrangements and a cooling-off period. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |

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

**Comments**

The programme design process is well developed and effective. Course design is led by the CEO, in dialogue with the Academic Adviser and practising designers. As a result, the programmes have both relevant and innovative graphic design content as well as academic rigour and meet the learners' expectations and needs.

The Provider gives a comprehensive range of information about the content, delivery and assessment pattern of the courses. Details as to how the courses can be combined to make each programme are clearly stated. All learners are offered the opportunity of being able to drop into live sessions prior to enrolment and experience the delivery of online sessions. Tutors are available to discuss their courses with prospective learners. A variety of successful methods of communication are used to support prospective learners. As a result, all applicants can make a well-informed decision about the suitability of the programmes.

The enrolment and application processes are fit for purpose and undertaken online. The online forms are straightforward and only require essential information to be provided. Learners can contact the Provider at any stage of the application and enrolment processes to receive guidance on the completion of the online forms. As a result, all applications and enrolments are administered efficiently.

All application enquiries are replied to in a timely way. As a result, learners are able to progress their application rapidly.

Entry requirements for each programme are well understood by the CEO and management team. Learners are recruited on the basis of their interest in graphic design and related industries, and their potential and willingness to learn, rather than academic qualifications. Learners are required to agree to a commitment of 15 to 20 hours of study. These factors are clearly identified during the application process.
Prospective learners are required to have good levels of spoken and conversational English language skills. The Provider makes appropriate decisions as to the standard of spoken and conversational English language skills of applicants, using evidence from the various online interactions. As a result, all enrolled learners are able to communicate sufficiently at this level.

13.5 Prospective learners' reading and writing levels are not reviewed during the application process. Consequently, not all the learners may have the required level of English language skills in order to successfully complete the essay-based assessments on the course.

The enrolment and application processes are successful in ensuring that learners are made aware that they are responsible for their initial digital literacy. Hardware and software requirements at the start of the learners' studies are clearly outlined. Instructions on how to install specific, industry-related software are clear. As a result, learners are able to commence their programme effectively.

The Provider has an effective method of identifying any learners who may have additional needs that may prevent them from completing their course successfully. This information is collected during the admissions process. Learners receive an appropriately worded letter from the admissions team that specifically encourages them to self-disclose any information that could affect their ability to complete their studies. The Provider has an efficient tracking system in place to capture this data and to arrange and provide additional support and to monitor the progress of the learner. Consequently, learners with any additional needs are supported well.

The Provider is effective in ensuring that the enrolment process is fair and transparent. Terms and conditions are clearly set out in the contract between the Provider and learner. Within this contract, the cancellation and refund policy clearly identifies what actions the Provider will and will not take and the responsibilities of learners in respect of refund arrangements and a cooling-off period.

### 14. Services provided meet the reasonable needs of learners

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 14.1 | Staff are available to assist learners to resolve issues of a general and technical nature, and all enquiries from learners are handled promptly and sympathetically. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 14.2 | The provider supports and encourages peer interaction through a variety of channels, including social media and virtual learning environment platforms. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 14.3 | Staff monitor the online activity of learners and tutors and take action promptly if there are concerns about cyberbullying or other online risks to learners. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 14.4 | Learners have access to a fair, written complaints procedure of which they are informed at the start of the programme. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 14.5 | Learners are advised of BAC's complaints procedure. | ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ NA |
| 14.6 | Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place for learners under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults, which are regularly reviewed. | ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒ NA |
| 14.7 | A suitable policy and effective arrangements are in place to protect learners from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. | ☐ Yes ☒ No |

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

**Comments**

Masters Deign Lab provides learners with frequent and highly competent support in resolving any general and technical issues. The level of technical support given is wide ranging and covers all the communication platforms used. All tutors are available to contribute to this support with regard to specific, industry-related software. All enquires are handled rapidly. As a result, all learners are able to continue with their studies effectively.

Interaction between learners is an effective and integral part of the programmes. Learners can access a bi-weekly virtual discussion forum for learners. They also participate in informal sessions where they discuss each other's portfolio development and provide constructive feedback. Learners also develop and improve their own critical analysis skills and benefit from considering the views of others.

The monitoring of online activity on the communication platforms is good. The Programme Manager has a regular presence on the platforms and reviews all communications on the channels for which the Provider is responsible. As yet, no action has had to be taken. This activity is supported by a clear anti-cyberbullying policy for all staff and learners.

Learners have access to a fair, written complaints policy that is included in the contract they sign before they commence their studies. The Provider does not advise its learners about the British Accreditation Council (BAC) complaints procedure as it is not currently accredited by BAC.

The Provider does not enrol any learners under the age of 18 years or vulnerable adults.

The Provider has a clear policy on preventing radicalisation and extremism and an appropriate risk assessment record.

14.7 Not all staff have undertaken awareness training regarding preventing radicalisation and extremism.

## 15. Programme materials are appropriate to the medium of delivery and are effective

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 15.1 | Programme designers make effective use of appropriate teaching and learning resources. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 15.2 | Programme materials are designed for a specific and clearly stated level of study and include appropriate support material. | ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ NA |
| 15.3 | Programme materials are appropriately presented and sufficiently comprehensive to enable learners to achieve the programme objectives. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 15.4 | Programme materials are regularly reviewed and revised to ensure that they are accurate and reflect current knowledge and practice. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 15.5 | Instructions and guidance on how to study and how to use the learning materials are made available to assist learners to learn effectively. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |

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

**Comments**

The programme designers ensure that the teaching and learning resources are of high quality and cover all the necessary content to complete the specific course effectively. Each online session plan has prepared resources and a clear outline of learning objectives.

Tutors can enhance the course delivery with their own additional images and discussion points. Therefore, learners are able to benefit from the creative occupational skills of the tutors and view high-quality presentations.

The learning objectives of each session are met effectively. The materials are of good quality and present learners with challenging concepts to discuss. The range of material is wide, giving all learners the opportunity to achieve their programme's objectives.

The process of reviewing course materials is fit for purpose. The Provider uses the frequent dialogue between the CEO, Programme Manager and tutors to enable all parties to discuss all aspects of programme delivery. This is an effective way to review the course materials. Learners are also able to benefit from the use of materials that reflect current knowledge and practice.

Technical support is available for the duration of the courses. Responses and the resolution of any issues requiring technical support are rapid. The learners benefit from a useful guide, with helpful details on how to access the portal and use the range of learning materials that are available. This support provides excellent assistance to learners and, as a result, they are able to learn effectively.

## 16. The technology used to deliver the programmes is fit for purpose and effective

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 16.1 | The provider uses appropriate and accessible technology to optimise the interaction between the provider and the learner. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| 16.2 | The provider ensures that the materials and learning resources can be easily accessed by learners and checks this regularly. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |

| 16.3 | The provider has access to the services of an experienced technical support provider that ensures systems are operative at all times and provides appropriate support to tutors and staff working remotely. | ☒ Yes ☐ No |
| --- | --- | --- |

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

**Comments**

The use of technology and communication channels is excellent. The entire provision is managed and delivered via online platforms. The Provider uses a range of technology effectively, for example the enrolment process generates email messages automatically. Communication between the Provider and learners is rapid and responsive.

The Provider has put in place excellent learner support strategies through which learners are contacted on a regular basis. Part of this communication is to check that learners are able to access and use all materials and learning resources.

The Programme Manager is available to train and advise on all aspects of the communication platforms used. All staff are highly skilled in managing their own technical support as it is essential for their continuing professional practice. The Provider gives access to systems and data using cloud-based storage. Tutors and staff are well supported on all technical issues and highly effective in working remotely.

**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**

**Provider's strengths**

Communication between the CEO, managers and all other staff is excellent and, therefore, appropriate decision-making takes place and actions are undertaken rapidly.

The CEO has a clear and aspirational vision of the mission and aims of the provision that is effectively shared among the management, teaching and support teams.

The Provider employs highly qualified and experienced staff who retain professional relationships and business interests within the graphic design and related creative industries sector.

The publicity materials are attractive and informative and provide clear details on course content and the flexible delivery so that learners can make a well-informed judgment on the suitability of the curriculum offer.

| Actions required | Priority H/M/L |
|---|---|
| 1.5 The risk management strategy must include details of the risk management of data breaches. | ☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low |
| 4.3 Key policies must be made accessible on the website. | ☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low |
| 5.6 Performance review reports must be compiled at least annually. | ☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low |
| 5.7 Action plans must be formally documented. | ☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low |

**TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT**

**Provider's strengths**

Programme structure, content, assessment information and materials are communicated well to the delivery team to ensure that staff have a good understanding of the structure of the courses, what they need to teach and clarity about how it will be assessed.

Tutors share their own experience and professional practice to enhance the delivery of online teaching sessions, giving learners relevant and valuable insights into current working practices in the industry.

Tutors use a range of effective methods to support learners' progress so that learners receive excellent support and are well equipped to achieve the learning outcomes of their course.

Learners receive high-quality and frequent feedback as their assignments develop from initial concept to the final submission and this ensures that they are able to improve these useful transferrable skills.

| Actions required | Priority H/M/L |
|---|---|
| 6.2 The monitoring of online delivery must be improved so that it effectively ensures the consistency of the learning experience. | ☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low |
| 8.3 The strategies used to check understanding in lessons must be enhanced to ensure that tutors know that all learners have a clear understanding of the subject matter covered. | ☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low |

**LEARNER SUPPORT**

**Provider's strengths**

Prospective learners can review course content, the course structure and assessment requirements and take part in online live sessions and talk to tutors before making a final decision on their enrolment to ensure they make well-informed decisions about their application and enrolment.

Learners have good access to staff who can resolve general and technical issues rapidly so that they make good progress with their studies.

Highly effective communication methods are maintained between all staff and learners, and as a result learners receive frequent advice and excellent support to help them to achieve the learning outcomes of their course.

| Actions required | Priority H/M/L |
|---|---|
| 12.3 All learners must have access to a procedure to appeal against their awarded marks. | ☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low |
| 13.5 The Provider must review the entry requirement for the standard of English language skills to include reading and writing skills. | ☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low |
| 14.7 The Provider must ensure that all staff have undertaken training to protect learners against the risks of radicalisation and extremism. | ☐ High ☒ Medium ☐ Low |

**RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

To be reviewed at the next inspection

It is recommended that details of the training undertaken by staff are centrally logged to ensure that full records are maintained.

The Provider should consider reviewing the quality of all its online lessons in order to identify and implement the most effective ODBL delivery methods, including a wider range of pedagogic methods.

**COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

**THE INSPECTION WAS CARRIED OUT BY:**

| Sue Arnold | Lead Inspector |
|---|---|