



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Short Course Provider)

PROVIDER: The Tailoring Academy Ltd

ADDRESS: George Street
Macclesfield
SK11 6HS

HEAD OF PROVIDER: Mrs Brita Hirsch

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 10 July 2023

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation, 23 November 2023

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the provider

The Tailoring Academy Ltd (the Academy/the Provider) is a privately owned organisation that offers a regulated diploma and non-regulated short courses in bespoke tailoring. British Accreditation Council (BAC) accreditation is for the non-accredited short courses only.

The Provider is located in a former silk mill in Macclesfield, a market town in Cheshire that is a historic centre of the silk industry in England. The premises are newly renovated and furnished to a high industry standard of specialist machinery and equipment, resulting in a contemporary and professional working environment.

The Provider aims to provide training in bespoke tailoring to a high standard to participants both in the United Kingdom (UK) and internationally, with a strong focus on the delivery of practical craft and pattern construction skills, which are sought after in the sector but hard to find in the current training market.

The sole proprietor is also the Director, who is also the sole internal Assessor. The Director is supported by two Trainers, who have subject-specific vocational qualifications as well as academic qualifications in subject-related fields.

The Tailoring Academy was founded in 2018 in response to a growing demand for bespoke tailoring training in the UK. It became the first training provider to be accredited to deliver a regulated, specialist qualification at Level 5, which was designed by the UK Fashion and Textiles Association (UKFT) and the Savile Row Bespoke Association (SRBA) to participants over the age of 18 years.

Three key changes have taken place since the previous inspection: the Assistant Trainer has left, leaving just one Lead Trainer; the Provider is now accredited to recruit international participants aged over 18, and the Provider has two newly approved short courses by the UKFT, resulting in the Provider now being an Education Partner of the UKFT.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Provider currently offers seven training courses, of which only the full-time, diploma course at Level 5 is accredited. The accredited Level 5 course is delivered on site at the Academy from September to July. The Provider also now offers two short courses, which have been approved by the UKFT, to international participants between September and July. The Provider also offers two online courses and one in-person course in pattern construction and tailoring, ranging from three hours to 34 weeks.

At the time of the inspection, seven participants were registered on the full-time diploma course at Level 5, which is not accredited by BAC. A further six participants were registered on one of the new international courses, and 22 participants were registered on the online tailoring course, which runs over 34 weeks. All participants were over the age of 18. The majority of participants were female and from the UK. Other countries represented were the United States of America, Italy, Denmark, Canada and France.

Enrolment for the Level 5 provision takes place annually in September. For the new international courses, there are two enrolment points in September and February. Summer school enrolment typically starts in March each year, and enrolment for online courses is on a continuous basis throughout the year.

The Tailoring Academy premises can accommodate a maximum of 16 participants for the full-time and new international courses, a maximum of six participants for the summer school, and a maximum of 25 participants for the online course, although online courses usually consist of up to 10 participants due to the specialised subject area.

The new international courses require participants to have a qualification in a subject-related field at Level 3. The online and summer school courses have no formal entry requirements.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was conducted in person over one day, by one inspector. Meetings were held with the Director, the Lead Trainer and participants. One training session was observed on the Academy's premises and two recorded online training sessions were reviewed. A tour of the premises was also undertaken. Hard-copy and electronic documentation was scrutinised. All documentation requested was made available, and all staff participated positively throughout the inspection.

4. **Inspection history**

Inspection type	Date
Full Inspection	13, 15 & 17 June 2022

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

Since the previous inspection, the Provider has launched two new courses aimed at international participants. Both of these courses have recruited one cohort of participants and have been delivered since September 2022. One of these courses was still being delivered at the time of the inspection.

In May 2023, the Assistant Trainer left the Academy. At the time of the inspection, the Director was in the process of recruiting a replacement.

The Tailoring Academy has been appointed as an Education Partner with the UKFT, which works with Further Education (FE), Higher Education (HE) and training providers to ensure that the next generation of talent is equipped with the very latest skills for the fashion and textiles industry. This is a significant achievement in the industry that raises the professional profile of the organisation and the aspirations of potential applicants.

2. Response to action points in last report

4.3 The Provider's key policies must be accessible through the website.

The Provider's key policies are now clearly signposted and accessible under each course description on the website.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

It is recommended that observations of training sessions are formally recorded.

The process of observations undertaken by the Director has now been implemented for both in-person and online training sessions. The process is formally recorded using appropriate documentation. The Lead Trainer confirmed that this improved process is supportive for their personal and professional development.

It would be useful if information regarding the course language of delivery was clearly stated on the Provider website for prospective participants.

It is clearly communicated under each course description on the website that courses are delivered in English.

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

Management, staffing, and administration are effective for the type of provider and size of the provision.

The staff hierarchy is clearly stated on the organogram, and staff have clear job descriptions that contain sufficient detail.

The Provider has appropriate electronic systems in place to store and monitor all required quality assurance documentation efficiently. This includes job descriptions for all staff. Job descriptions clearly outline all roles and responsibilities for all levels of staff.

The Provider has an effective management and administration system in place that aids the productivity and efficiency of programme planning, delivery and evaluation.

The Provider has a sufficient number of quality assurance policies in place. These have been reviewed this year by the Director.

The Director oversees the recruitment of staff. The Academy has detailed and appropriate staff recruitment policies. These include policies on legal checks, academic references and the verification of qualifications for all staff.

The recruitment of staff depends on their academic qualifications and experience in their subject specialisms. Staff experience and qualifications are appropriately verified by the Director before employment contracts are issued.

Communications between staff are excellent, with well-documented, regular meetings and associated staff activities before, during and after programme delivery.

Administration is effective for staff and participants. Before programme delivery, this is undertaken by the Director, and once participants are enrolled and in attendance, this is also supported by the sole Trainer. The role of Assistant Trainer also supports these processes as needed.

Recruitment is mostly from word of mouth as the Provider has an excellent reputation within the industry for this type of provision. The Provider website is also very engaging and up to date and is informative regarding programme details.

A formal application process ensures that participants provide all required information before registration. This is verified at registration before participants start any training course. The Director also arranges further communication with prospective participants to ensure that they meet any required entry criteria.

The Provider has a clear and appropriate attendance and punctuality policy in place that is communicated to participants before they enrol. Attendance is recorded daily and at every session. As the programmes are delivered on site, with the majority of international participants living close by, cases of unauthorised absence or poor punctuality are rare. Any such incidents are followed up promptly by the Director.

The Provider's course evaluation process is used effectively as a tool to review the training provision. The review process considers both staff and participant feedback. In addition, several annual reports are published that evaluate all aspects of the Provider's performance, resulting in effective action-planning.

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Director leads the delivery of all training courses and is currently supported by the sole Trainer. Support will also be provided by an Assistant Trainer, once this post is filled. The small team of experienced staff ensures that the teaching, learning and assessment of all courses are effectively managed.

All training courses are carefully planned and designed to reflect participants' needs and subject-specialist areas. They are regularly reviewed and updated to support their continuing currency and to prepare participants for any assessments. Participants receive detailed training materials at the beginning of their courses, including all training schedules and deadlines. This results in participants being well informed of their assessment deadlines, enabling them to manage course requirements and work very effectively.

Training staff are highly qualified and have extensive experience in their subject areas and in delivering in-person and online programmes. The allocation of training staff to courses provides for a consistent learning experience for participants, and delivery is monitored effectively to ensure consistency.

An effective feedback format provides comprehensive information on how formative assessment content meets the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Participants receive effective feedback that informs them of their strengths and areas to improve. This is constructive and informative and results in participants being aware of their progress and which skills and knowledge need further development. In addition, participants also have access to training staff outside their scheduled classes.

4.3 Participant Welfare (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Director is responsible for participant welfare and is suitably experienced and qualified. The Director is supported by experienced training staff who can provide information, advice and guidance, as well as other relevant pastoral support if required.

UK and international participants receive full information and guidance regarding their programmes prior to arrival. The Provider regularly communicates with participants during the application and enrolment stages to ensure that participants can make informed choices before registering on any course.

All participants receive an induction either before, or as part of, the first session of any course. This is a standardised activity that can be amended to suit participants' needs and the delivery method. The induction activity is welcoming, engaging and informative. It includes relevant and appropriate information, including expectations regarding participants' behaviour, and health and safety.

There is a fair and transparent registration procedure for all in-person and online training courses. Participants are provided with clear contractual terms and conditions that are signed and dated by participants before the course begins. There is an appropriate refund policy in place.

A suitable policy and effective arrangements are in place to protect participants from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. This is inclusive of a risk assessment for the prevention of radicalisation and extremism. All staff have received training on how to protect participants from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

Participants have access to a fair complaints procedure, about which they are informed as part of the induction. The complaints procedure is also accessible from the course handbooks and includes clear reference to BAC's complaints procedure.

The Director and training staff provide all participants with appropriate information regarding opportunities or events that may be of interest to them based on their academic and subject interests. These could be in the local area for in-person participants or via online access for online participants.

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Provider has a secure tenancy agreement for its head office and course delivery premises.

The head office premises provide a safe, secure and clean environment for staff. There is appropriate, secure access to the head office through the main building on the ground floor. The Provider is located on the third floor of the building with offices, a kitchen and an open-plan practical teaching area.

Training areas are well equipped and allow for the effective delivery of a range of teaching methods, including practical workshops. The Provider supports participants effectively by providing all resources required for its training courses, such as industry-standard specialist equipment, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), audio-visual equipment, interactive whiteboards and projectors.

Staff and participants have access to suitable additional facilities at the head office, including office space for staff, communal break-out areas and private meeting rooms.

4.5 Online, Distance and Blended Learning (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Provider has a suitable management structure and expertise in place to manage, staff and administer online courses. The Director leads all online course management and is currently supported by the Lead Trainer.

Staff involved in training are suitably qualified and experienced in their fields of expertise. They have undertaken training, making use of the Provider's online applications that are used for delivery. This ensures that training programmes are delivered to a high standard.

Trainers are subject experts and work with the Director to ensure that varied delivery methods are used to enhance the online learning experience and to ensure that all participants are engaged and responsive.

Initial communications with participants clearly state the level of digital literacy required for any training course. Information regarding the expected level of digital literacy is also communicated as part of marketing information, and all the required joining instructions and technical requirements are included in the welcome materials.

The Provider has effective systems in place to ensure that participants are well informed and supported regarding the required study methods for the online courses. All participants receive a standardised induction at the start of their programme. This is supported by a course handbook, which is comprehensive and includes instructions and suggestions on how to study using the Provider's choice of online applications.

The Provider uses a reputable and common online application to deliver training courses. This facilitates and supports appropriate interaction between trainers and participants and serves to support learning.

All staff involved in the administration and delivery of the training courses have sufficient knowledge to provide technical support to participants. In addition, there is an experienced Information Technology technician who can be contacted during or outside programme delivery times.

4.6 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

The Provider has recently invested in high-standard ICT equipment to allow live training demonstrations to take place in the studio spaces. Participants confirmed that this approach greatly supports independent learning and the development of practical skills.

The introduction of live, virtual online training follows the highly effective in-person model, and this ensures that all participants have access to real-time staff demonstrations, live interaction and an immediate response to queries at any training session.

The Provider uses ongoing feedback from trainers and participants to ensure that programmes are designed in ways that support all participants to succeed.

The training team ensures that its members are up to date with developments in the fashion and textiles industry, including any professional opportunities available, and this provides participants with currency and an advanced training experience.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
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RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT *(to be reviewed at the next inspection)*

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COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE

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THE INSPECTION WAS CARRIED OUT BY:

Lesley Davis	Lead Inspector
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