

new chief executive appointed

The British Accreditation Council is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Stephen Vickers as its new Chief Executive.

Stephen has worked in educational assessment and compliance for much of his career. He spent 15 years at the University of Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations, followed by 3 years at the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. From there he moved to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, where he worked on monitoring the performance of awarding bodies.

From 2000 - 2006, he served as Chief Executive of NEBOSH (the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health), the leading awarding body in safety, health and the environment. His tenure coincided with a period of rapid growth for NEBOSH, including expansion around the globe and the attainment of accredited awarding body status with QCA.

Stephen holds a BA in Politics from Sussex University, an MA and PhD in International Studies from Warwick, and a PGCE from Lancaster. He sits on the RE Council for England and Wales, is Vice-President of the United Nations Association's Southern Region, a member of the Anti-Slavery Society, a Fellow of the Institution of Chartered Secretaries and of the Chartered Management Institute, and a Magistrate.

On taking up his new post, Stephen said, 'I am delighted to join the British Accreditation Council. It has a much needed role in identifying and encouraging excellence in private sector colleges and higher education institutions. Students, their families, awarding bodies and others have a need to know where to find excellence.'

Stephen praised his predecessors, Dr Caroline Bucklow and Mr Robin Laidlaw. 'Robin shaped the BAC from a small organization dealing



Dr Stephen Vickers, new Chief Executive of the British Accreditation Council

with just 30 colleges to its current significant position. I'm delighted he has agreed to stay on as Head of Inspection Services. Caroline, despite her brief tenure, laid foundations for the governance and relationship reforms required for BAC's expansion. They're hard acts to follow: I'm looking forward to the challenge.'

sharing news and benefits of the BAC

Welcome to the first edition of our regular newsletter. Some readers will encounter the British Accreditation Council for the first time through these pages; others will already know our work, and be glad to see our name and influence spread to a wider audience of both students and learning providers. It is our intention that future issues of the newsletter will

- highlight examples of best practice in independent further and higher education;
- profile some of the institutions that have obtained BAC accreditation;
- describe some of the benefits that BAC accreditation brings;
- promote relationships between the BAC and complementary organisations, in the UK and beyond.

If you have any comments, suggestions, information, announcements - and especially pictures - that you think would be of interest to our readers, please send them to george@the-bac.org.

what does the British Accreditation Council do?

Established as a registered charity in 1984, the British Accreditation Council is the national accrediting body for independent further and higher education in the UK. We are independent of government and of the colleges we accredit.

BAC accreditation is recognised by the Department for Education and Skills and the Home Office as indicating that a college is a legitimate education provider. While we are not a regulatory body in the sense of being authorised to carry out inspections on behalf of the government, colleges must satisfy our inspectors that they meet statutory requirements in health and safety, employment law, observance of visa requirements and child protection (up to the age of 18 in the UK).

Any college which is seeking full BAC accreditation should normally have been in operation for at least 2 years, but a system of early accreditation allows colleges to be considered for an initial period of 12 months.

We offer accreditation for overseas colleges which formally collaborate with a UK HE awarding body (accreditation being restricted to programme elements offered at HE level). We also consider colleges offering overseas qualifications where the institutions are in common ownership with a BAC-accredited college in the UK. The BAC accredits over 200 colleges in the UK and 30 or so overseas, including the Czech Republic, France, Pakistan, UAE, Bulgaria, Greece, India, Germany, Spain & Switzerland.

BAC takes up membership of INQAAHE

The BAC has become a member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE). The purpose of the INQAAHE (established 1991, with its secretariat in Dublin) is to collect and disseminate information on current and developing theory and practice in the assessment, improvement and maintenance of quality in HE. It is intended that the Network will

- *promote good practice in the maintenance and improvement of quality in higher education;*
- *facilitate research into the practice of quality management in higher education, and its effectiveness;*
- *be able to provide advice and expertise to assist the development of new quality assurance agencies;*
- *facilitate links between accrediting bodies, especially insofar as they operate across national borders;*
- *assist members to determine the standards of institutions operating across national borders;*
- *permit better-informed international recognition of qualifications;*
- *assist in the development and use of credit transfer schemes to enhance the mobility of students between institutions within and across national borders;*
- *alert members to dubious accrediting practices and organisations.*

forthcoming seminars

Commencing in autumn 2006, the BAC will be mounting low cost, one-day information seminars on three areas of significance to all colleges that apply to meet our accreditation. These are: occupational safety and health, employment law and child protection. We will also be holding free briefings periodically for colleges considering accreditation. For details of these events, email seminars@the-bac.org

listening to our colleges

The BAC recently completed a survey of its accredited colleges, soliciting views on a number of significant issues, such as methods of inspection, the usefulness of the inspection report, benefits of BAC accreditation, and potential additions to BAC's services. We'll be sharing the results more fully, and considering their implications, in forthcoming editions of this newsletter.

United Kingdom Register of Learning Providers

The United Kingdom Register of Learning Providers (UKRLP) is the 'one-stop' portal for the Department for Education and Skills, intended to be used by government departments, agencies, learners and employers as a means of sharing key information about learning providers. The UKRLP offers the facility for providers to update their information in only one place and then share this across agencies such as the Learning and Skills Council, the National Learning Directory, the Higher Education Statistics Agency, the Higher Education Funding Council for England and UCAS.

It should be noted that UKRLP itself plays no part in quality assurance or accrediting in any way the learning provision of any provider.

Since registration for the project opened on 1 August 2005, the UKRLP has grown rapidly, and now numbers over 10,000 providers.

The UKRLP held a successful national consultative event in Birmingham in June. This meeting was called to review progress to date, and to preview forthcoming planned developments as the project moves into its third stage in August this year. Among 20 stakeholders represented at this event, the British Accreditation Council was represented by Stephen Vickers.

To learn more about UKRLP and how it can benefit a variety of learning providers and students, visit the project website: <http://project.ukrlp.co.uk>

new UK migration system will affect international students

While there is general agreement that students and workers coming to this country from abroad make a positive contribution to our economy and culture, there is also growing concern that the system that is meant to control the flow of migrants to the UK is no longer working. HM Government has therefore set out proposals for a new points-based approach as part of its five year strategy, *Controlling Our Borders: Making Migration Work for Britain, Five Year Strategy for Asylum and Immigration*.

Applicants will find the new system easier to understand and more consistent, the public will have confidence that the system is not being abused, and it will be more straightforward for entry clearance officers and caseworkers to administer.

Prospective students will need to provide a certificate of sponsorship from an approved educational institution when making their application. This will act as an assurance that they are able to do a particular course of study, and intend to do so. The sponsor's rating will determine whether applicants receive more or fewer points for their certificate. In order to sponsor students, educational institutions will need to apply to the Home Office, satisfy its requirements, and accept certain responsibilities to help with immigration control. It appears likely at this stage that BAC accreditation will enable colleges to gain entry to the Home Office's approved list.

Future BAC newsletters will carry more information for UK colleges sponsoring international students.

obtaining advice about visas for entry to the UK

The British Accreditation Council cannot offer advice to prospective international students about applying for a visa. We wish to stress that it is illegal for any organization or agency to offer advice on visa applications unless they are registered with the Office of the Immigration Service Commissioner. While anyone who are hoping to come to the UK as international students should initially seek advice from the institution in which they hope to

enrol, there are two very helpful websites which we would recommend as first ports of call: the UK government's own website includes guidance on whether a visa is required, and describes the process by which one can be obtained: (www.ukvisas.gov.uk); the United Kingdom Council for Overseas Student Affairs has very useful guidance on living in Britain and an FAQ section on studying in the UK on its website (www.ukcosa.org.uk).

*To find out how we can help you, contact:
The British Accreditation Council
44 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4LL
phone 020 7447 2584 fax 020 7447 2585 email info@the-bac.org
visit our website: www.the-bac.org*

who does what at the BAC

The British Accreditation Council is managed by a Chief Executive, who is responsible to the Directors and Council. There is a small administrative team, mainly based at our Head Office in London.

- *Chief Executive: Stephen Vickers JP, MA, PhD, PGCE, FCMI, FCIS*
- *Head of Inspection Services: Robin Laidlaw MA*
- *Head of Administration: Sarah Richmond BA*
- *Senior Administrator (Inspections and Accreditation): Gina Hobson BSc, PhD, PGCHE*
- *Administrative Secretary (Inspections and Accreditation): Clare Baker*
- *Secretary: Karin Adolfsson BA*
- *Special Projects Author: George Ballentyne MA*

Inspections are carried out by a body of some 30 self-employed inspectors covering a range of subject areas, led by the Head of Inspection Services and the Chief Inspector. The BAC is governed by its Council which comprises individuals and nominees of stakeholder organisations and major bodies closely involved with the maintenance of standards in British education, including the Association of Colleges, the British Council, the Council of Validating Universities, Universities UK, the Chartered Institutes, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and UKCOSA. The Council meets twice a year, normally in May and November. The current Chairman of Council is Tim Cox MA, MEd. For practical purposes, Council gives delegated authority to two committees which monitor and implement the BAC's work:

- The Executive Committee constitutes the Trustees and Directors of the charity. It provides strategic direction for the BAC. The Committee meets about four times a year.
- The Accreditation and Recognition Committee receives inspection reports and takes decisions on the award or withdrawal of accreditation. It regularly reviews the criteria used by inspectors. The current Chair of the Committee is Diane Billam. The Committee meets five times a year.

Ron Tuck takes up new post

Ron Tuck MA, the BAC's Chief Inspector since 2002, is leaving to take up a post with Cambridge Education. He came to the BAC having been a Chief Inspector for Education in Scotland and Chief Executive of the Scottish Qualifications Authority. We have been fortunate to have gained from Ron's skill and experience over the last four years, not to mention his willingness to travel to far-flung parts of the world (including the Khyber Pass). It is good to know that Ron is willing to continue to work for the BAC on an occasional basis as a Senior Inspector. It is expected that the Council will authorise the Chief Executive to advertise for a new appointment shortly.



Ron Tuck, BAC's Chief Inspector since 2002

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