



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM VISIT (College)

INSTITUTION: Academy of Forensic Medical Sciences

ADDRESS: 117 Charterhouse Street
London
EC1M 6AA

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Professor Peter Vanezis

Accreditation status: Accredited

Date of visit: 14 October 2016

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

The Academy of Forensic Medical Sciences (the Academy/AFMS) was established in 2010, to build on existing provision, offered by Queen Mary University, St. Bartholomew's Hospital (Barts) and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry (LSMD). The Academy was established to further the interests of justice in society through the pursuit of excellence in education and training in the forensic medical sciences, both nationally and internationally.

The Academy is a private company, limited by guarantee. Its administration offices are located close to the Barts and LSMD campus in Charterhouse Square in the City of London. The Academy has established a number of international links, for example it maintains close ties with the International Committee of the Red Cross and medical institutions in Hong Kong, Greece, Norway, Italy, Cyprus and Malaysia, the last of which recognises AFMS's programmes and offers government funding to students attending its courses. The Academy's Director and Chairman is a leading figure in this medical academic field, with an established and recognised reputation in both research and practice. He previously headed a department at the University of Glasgow and is a Professor at Queen Mary University where he contributes to Masters level programmes and research.

The Board of Directors has responsibility for the strategic direction, finance and staffing of the Academy and it meets every two months. An Academic Advisory Board (AAB), the members of which are recognised experts in the field of forensic medical science and its allied disciplines, acts in a consultative capacity ensuring that standards and the quality of provision are maintained. In addition, a Subcommittee for Academic Development (SAD), whose members are taken from the AAB, oversees the academic programmes, policies and procedures of the Academy and this meets twice a year.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Academy offers a range of postgraduate programmes, predominantly part-time and short courses, delivered in different learning modes throughout the year. These are as follows:

The Diploma Course in Forensic Human Identification. This is an intensive one week course which looks at all the main areas of the identification of the body at different stages of decay. The Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine, the Association of Anatomical Pathology Technology, the Institute of Civil Protection and Emergency Management and the Bar Standards Board awards CPD points upon successful completion.

Medical Negligence course: Doctors in trouble? – An update on Clinical Negligence and Duty of Care for Healthcare Professionals. This is a one day course which provides doctors and health care professionals with an up-to-date and comprehensive overview of some of the issues in medical negligence and information about the General Medical Council's revalidation process.

Management of the Dead Course. This course offers participants an understanding in, and practical knowledge about, the main aspects related to the management of the dead in armed conflicts and catastrophes, including consideration for the needs of bereaved families.

Diploma Course in Forensic Medical Sciences. This course aims to deliver core knowledge in the forensic medical sciences so that those attending will have a better understanding of the principles involved in the various specialist areas as well as awareness of the broad scope of the field. The Bar Standards Board, the Institute of Civil Protection and Emergency Management, and the Association of Anatomical Pathology Technology award CPD points upon successful completion of the course.

Fellowship in Forensic Medical Science. The fellowship course and examination principally aims to assess the candidate's knowledge of forensic pathology and human identification and their ability to apply that knowledge in the practice of the speciality. The fellowship is recognised by the Specialty Board of Medicine in Malaysia and other far eastern countries. Upon successful completion, candidates will be awarded Fellowship of the Academy of Forensic Medical Sciences.

Diploma in Medical Jurisprudence Training. This course offers support to pathologists in forensic pathology to satisfy the requirements for eligibility to sit for the Diploma in Medical Jurisprudence offered by the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries.

The Academy has been formally accredited as an approved learning provider by the Enhanced Learning Credits Administration Services (ELCAS) in the Ministry of Defence Enhanced Learning Scheme.

At the time of the inspection, six full-time and thirteen part-time students were enrolled on the Academy's programmes. None of the students are under the age of 18. Admission to all the Academy's programmes is at postgraduate or post-qualification level, with the entry requirement being a university degree in medicine, law, science, social sciences or related studies. Students come from a variety of backgrounds including medical pathologists, general practitioners, emergency medical staff, forensic medical examiners, dentists, nurses, solicitors, barristers, police officers, coroners, forensic scientists, toxicologists and paramedics.

Courses are held once a year, with enrolments taking place throughout the year. Students attending Barts and LSMD are also entitled to attend the Academy's lectures, while the Academy offers online learning for the Diploma in Forensic Human Identification Course, the Diploma Course in Forensic Medical Sciences and the Management of the Dead course.

3. Inspection visit process

A half day inspection was completed in one afternoon by a single inspector, during which an interview was held with the Director and the Course Administrator. A visit was also made to the Academy's administration offices and teaching facilities on the Barts and LSMD campus. Documentation, including course descriptions, staff records and the Academy's policies and procedures and online course content, was scrutinised by the inspector. At the request of the inspector, the Registrar, who was unavailable at the time of inspection, emailed through further documentation after the inspection.

4. Inspection history

College Candidacy/Stage 2 Inspection: 8 April 2015

College Full Inspection/Stage 3: 8 October 2015

PART B – JUDGMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgments and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution.

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

The Academy is presently developing a Masters level degree in Forensic Medical Sciences in co-operation with the European University of Science in Cyprus. It is anticipated that the first enrolment will happen in October 2017.

2. Response to actions points in last report

8.2 AFMS must introduce an annual report and action plan.

An annual report, with an accompanying action plan, was not available.

16.2 AFMS must complete the development of a formally documented system for the administration of examinations and a published appeals policy.

The academy has a comprehensive, published policy for the administration of examinations, together with a published appeals policy, both of which are available on online.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

It is therefore recommended that AFMS should now produce formal job descriptions for its main full and part-time administrative staff and that, linked to these job definitions, AFMS should introduce a more formal performance appraisal discussion for its staff on an appropriate periodic basis. An outline of the appraisal procedure should be included in the list of policies and the staff handbook.

AFMS has produced formal job specifications for its full and part-time administrative staff. It has also introduced a comprehensive formal performance appraisal with accompanying documentation, to be completed on an annual basis. The appraisal information and documentation is available to staff on a centrally accessible drive.

It is recommended that, as intended, the website includes information regarding the facilities and resources available to students studying with AFMS.

Information about the facilities and resources available to its students is now shown on the Academy's website.

It is recommended that AFMS informs students (e.g through the Blackboard online learning platform) of actions taken as a result of student feedback.

Student feedback is shown on the Academy's website together with information about the actions taken in response to the feedback received.

4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

4.1 Management, Staffing and Administration (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be		✓		
<p>Comments</p> <p>Communication in the Academy is close and direct and the management team is well established. A full-time Registrar and full-time Course Administrator have responsibility for the administrative and course management aspects at the Academy. Regular meetings take place between members of the management team. AFMS must introduce an annual report and action plan. The annual report must include an analysis of year-on-year results on student satisfaction, retention, achievement, examination reports and completion rates.</p> <p>There are four members of permanent staff at the Academy. The Director, who is the only full-time member of teaching staff, and is a world-renowned expert in the field of forensic medical sciences. In addition, the Registrar who oversees admissions, admission enquiries, student records, quality assurance, management of assessment and day-to-day administration. The Course Administrator is responsible for management of the courses and a single full-time administrator is responsible for secretarial duties. The Academy also employs approximately 80 lecturers who are specialist academic experts working on a freelance consultancy basis.</p> <p>The Subcommittee for Academic Development (SAD) should meet twice a year, as stated in its terms of reference. One of those meetings could be carried out remotely through using telecommunication facilities.</p>				

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<p>Academic management is led by the Director, assisted, in administrative aspects, by the Registrar and the Course Administrator. Lecturers are very highly qualified and include eminent and experienced academics in the forensic medical sciences field.</p> <p>Academic resources are provided through the close association with Barts and LSMD. The Academy makes significant use of an online learning platform, with course notes, slides and audio and video recordings available to students. Lectures are also transmitted live to allow overseas students to attend. The Academy uses technology to enable students to ask the lecturers questions during the lectures with answers being given in the live transmission. Students also have online access to all course content for two years. This includes a number of core textbooks which have been uploaded to the Academy's website. Students are also encouraged to use the Library at Barts and the British Library. As the courses offered by AFMS are postgraduate, many of its students work in the area of forensic medical sciences and they are accustomed to learning independently.</p>				

4.3 Student Welfare (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<p>Comments</p> <p>The students attending the Academy are mature students with a fluent command of English. The academy does not provide accommodation for its students but, for those seeking accommodation, advice is given on suitable local estate agents.</p> <p>The Academy's provision is further complemented by the organisation of study visits to forensic laboratories, courts, a Coroner's office, post-mortems, the Pathology Museum and the Natural History Museum to illustrate and experience practice. In addition, the Academy offers a study group and a Journal Club for the presentation of academic papers.</p>				

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<p>Comments</p> <p>The Academy's administrative offices, although small, are secure and well maintained. The Academy's students mainly use the teaching accommodation provided through an agreement with Barts and the LSMD. All rooms are equipped with overhead projectors and video conferencing facilities. Students can also use the study spaces, library, social spaces and refreshment facilities normally found on a university campus. Staff and students also have access to an office in the main Barts and LSMD building, which is used by the Academy's in-house staff.</p>				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Strengths
Leadership, both academic and administrative, is strong and effective.
The Academy's close links with established medical education providers, in particular Barts and the LSMD, are a significant strength.
In addition, the Academy's ability to employ highly qualified, well respected lecturers on its courses is a considerable strength.

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
8.2 AFMS must introduce an annual report and action plan. The annual report must include an analysis of year-on-year results on student satisfaction, retention, achievement, examination reports and completion rates.	M

Recommended areas for improvement
The Subcommittee for Academic Development (SAD) should meet twice a year, as stated in its terms of reference. One of those meetings could be carried out remotely through using telecommunication facilities.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS	
Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	YES
Further comments, if applicable	
None	