



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (College)

INSTITUTION: Bishopsland Educational Trust

ADDRESS: Dunsden
Reading
RG4 9NR

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Penelope Makower

Accreditation status: Accredited

Date of inspection: 11 December 2014

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION: Continued Accreditation 29 January 2015

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

The Bishopsland Educational Trust (BET) is a residential, postgraduate institute, providing courses in silversmithing and jewellery. Although its scale of operations is small, over the 22 years since its inception over 160 students (referred to as 'members of the course') have successfully completed its courses. It has gained an excellent reputation internationally as an educational provider in this sector. Its 46-week course provides a bridge between an academic training and a professional career and combines technical with professional skills, focused on its members becoming self-employed, designer-makers. The BAC accreditation has now also allowed BET to recruit from overseas to six-month programmes based on the 46-week course. Members of these courses may, if they so wish, progress to a year long programme. Courses are now graded and require members to develop work to a professional standard as assessed by the Principal and a tutor, for exhibition and sale at craft fairs and other events organised by the Trust.

Achievement levels are matched to appropriate criteria and have been high. In 2013, HRH the Prince of Wales presented BET with an award for excellence in craft education. A significant proportion of members continue to postgraduate education such as at the Royal College of Art, whilst some take up teaching posts. All are expected to continue as designer-makers. Data compiled over the period since BET's inception indicates that some 63% of Fellows, as graduates are known, remain fully active as designer-makers and achieve high rates of success in winning competitions, sales of work and showing work in exhibitions.

Teaching commenced in 1993 prior to the establishment of the institute under its current name. BET has been a Limited Company since 2001, becoming a Registered Charity in 2002. The institute was founded by the current Principal and Vice Principal who manage the day-to-day running of the Company. The Principal continues to have oversight and coordination of all tutoring, also combining teaching activity with a range of other duties, including Academic Manager, Pastoral Care Officer and Health and Safety Manager. The Vice Principal combines institute management with financial oversight. A new appointment of Director of Operations and Development has been made whose role is focused on working with the Founders and Trustees to develop and deliver a successful transition following the retirement of the Founders. The incumbent appears to have been successful in this regard and will complete her term of office at the end of 2014. The institution is now more robust and has better systems in place for management purposes. A new CEO is to be appointed and two other personnel have been appointed on a consultancy basis to address matters relating to recruitment, strategy and fundraising.

A Board of Trustees, who meet several times a year, has six members, all of whom are Directors of the Company and the Vice Principal holds the post of Secretary to the Trustees. Academic management is through a series of formal and informal meetings between the tutors and the Principal, in her capacity as Academic Manager.

All members must be over 18 at the start of the course, be residential and carry an undergraduate qualification. However, members are accepted with BTEC qualifications combined with industry experience. A significant proportion are already qualified up to postgraduate level and some to doctoral level. Annual recruitment has fluctuated between an optimum of 12 graduates and six. Prior to 2007 the member profile included overseas, non EU/EEA members. Senior managers are in discussions with certain universities in China, directed towards establishing a relationship which will culminate in the recruitment of Chinese students (see below). Success has been achieved in establishing a range of sponsorships for members from a number of sources, including the Arts Council England SE, and a system of generous bursaries is made available to members.

The BET premises, located in open countryside, three miles from Reading, are set in a complex of converted farm buildings set around a main farmhouse which is also the residence of the Principal and Vice Principal. They

provide tutors with lunch on a daily basis in the main farmhouse and tutors can also use the dining space in the farmhouse for study preparation. The farmhouse houses a kitchen dedicated solely to members' use which can also be used for meetings and social events. Members use a well-equipped workshop which is open for twelve hours each day, and additional jewellery workshop facilities have been opened. An exhibition gallery is sited above the main workshop and members have access to a small photographic studio. Up to twelve members can be accommodated in a series of bedrooms and bathrooms in different outbuildings, and two one-bedroom apartments are also available. Further building work has been undertaken with the completion of two residential units which can accommodate up to six members. These are well appointed and have good heating systems. Security on site for the exclusively mature group is maintained on a trust basis, each member having keys to their own accommodation and also to rooms for communal use.

2. Brief description of the current provision

Programmes include one 46-week course and two six-month programmes (based on the 46-week course) to cater for overseas members. A Certificate is given to those who have successfully completed programmes and the work is graded according to established criteria. Following graduation members automatically become alumni, or Bishopsland Fellows. With the exception of a week at Christmas, teaching is continuous throughout the year. The curriculum requires that course members produce work to a professional standard for the annual Christmas exhibition, and for subsequent exhibitions throughout the year, culminating in the Bishopsland 'Retrospective' at the end of the programme. The integration of skills training with professional practice is set in the context of the published Bishopsland Standard set of ten 'aims', which stipulate the level of skills and professionalism to which members should aspire. A successful Outreach Programme has been developed which introduces crafts skills to children in schools and other organisations two or three times a year and classes are taught by the members, providing them with a further opportunity to learn new skills.

3. Inspection process

This interim inspection, by one inspector, took place over one half-day. Meetings involved the Principal, Vice Principal, Director of Operations and Development, and one Trustee. Two Chinese representatives were also present at meetings in order to learn more about BET and the subsequent relationship which they hoped to establish. To this end, a high quality booklet has been produced indicating the work undertaken at BET and the standards required.

4. Inspection history

Full inspection: 16 and 17 October 2013

PART B – JUDGEMENTS 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 institution

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

BET has now introduced two six-month programmes to its curriculum. These are based on the 46-week programme and have been established to recruit members from overseas.

As noted above, changes include the addition of two new residential units which can comfortably accommodate up to six members. These units are carpeted and contain suitably-sized bedroom accommodation, cooking and bathroom/shower facilities. They have been tastefully decorated and are conveniently located within the overall campus. The facilities are now ready for use and are appropriately heated.

The work of all members is now graded at the successful conclusion of their courses. Three grades may be awarded according to established criteria. It was also agreed that a "Further Comments" section should be included within the grading document to be completed as and when necessary.

2. Response to action points in last report

The Website should be developed further to ensure potential applicants are provided with a more comprehensive description of the course set against an annual timetable.

An intensive project has been completed in order to update the website. Fine tuning is still taking place. However, course descriptions have been more accurately given and, so far as is possible, these are based on known resources at the time. The year group also help to shape their programme. The programme schedule may also be refined as a result of weekly group meetings.

Following members' comments it is recommended that more detail is provided at the outset about ongoing materials and equipment costs which members are required to meet in order to fulfil the requirements of the course.

General and material costs are discussed with the Vice Principal before places on the programme are taken up. A Precious Metal Fund is maintained which offers bursaries of £300 per person on the programme. This provides students with funds for the purchase of silver, subject to the procedures for the approval of designs by the Principal and tutors.

On equipment costs, it is thought that there may have been some misunderstanding and all necessary equipment is provided by BET.

Mechanisms should be developed for recording actions taken following feedback gathered from weekly member meetings, so that all parties concerned are informed.

Weekly group meetings are recorded and a copy of each note is retained by the Principal. A second copy is posted on the workshop noticeboard. This policy appears to have worked well.

Priority should be given to resolving current discussions which focus on the non-assessed nature of the course, aimed at establishing assessment criteria for student progression at key stages of the course.

An assessment scheme has been successfully trialled. This is now being implemented and is based on assessments made after various public events at which work is shown.

Members receive oral feedback on a weekly basis within the one-to-one tutorial system. Tutor reports on members are prepared by the tutor but members do not have access to these records. The format for tutor reports was perceived to vary considerably. . . BET should ensure that students receive written feedback at intervals to be decided, and that the written feedback follows a stipulated format.

Tutor notes are recorded and maintained centrally. The challenges and feedback are recorded for each member of a course and a copy given to each privately.

BET should take measures to ensure that existing units of residential accommodation are adequate for members' needs and of a consistent standard as those found in educational establishments elsewhere.

These problems appear to have been dealt with as satisfactorily as is possible. The structure of some of the Grade 2 listed buildings makes it impossible to convert them to modern standards in all respects. Nonetheless, efforts have been made to improve living areas and see also above in relation to the new accommodation which has been built.

Note: Overall, BET appears to have made a most positive response to the issues raised in the last report.

3. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements – spot check

3.1 Management, Staffing and Administration

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments Since the recent full inspection, senior managers have taken appropriate action to develop the curriculum and to market programmes overseas. In the current economic climate this has not been easy. However, the institution is now in a position to move forward, particularly as action has been taken to assist with fundraising, recruitment and the development of appropriate strategies generally.				

3.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				

3.3 Student Welfare

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				

3.4 Premises and Facilities

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments See above				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

<p>Institution’s strengths</p> <p>An increasing mature curriculum of international renown.</p> <p>High quality outcomes as evidenced by success at public events.</p> <p>A passionate philosophy to maintain and improve standards.</p> <p>Robust attempts to provide greater systemisation of management information.</p> <p>A very high level of member support as provided by the one-to-one tutorial system.</p> <p>Excellent pastoral care.</p>

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
There are no actions required, but it is recommended that BET continues to develop links with overseas establishments.	

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	YES
Further comments, if applicable	