



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (College)

INSTITUTION: Emerson College

ADDRESS: Hartfield Road
Forest Row
East Sussex
RH18 5JX

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Dr John Lees

Accreditation status: Accredited

Date of inspection: 10 June 2015

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation 9 July 2015

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

Emerson College (the College), an international centre for adult education, was founded in 1962 by the educational pioneer in Steiner Waldorf education, Francis Edmunds, and occupies a large rural site about five miles south of East Grinstead. Over the years, the College has built up an inspirational programme of courses. The courses are based on the work of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) whose philosophy, known as anthroposophy, describes pathways of personal development and finds practical applications in education, art, science, language, history and agriculture. For fifty years, graduates of these courses have gone on to found and work in Steiner Waldorf schools, biodynamic farms and centres of learning of anthroposophy all over the world.

The College is a charitable company, the Trustees of which are elected by an Association whose members (59 in total) include past and present members of staff and other stakeholders who have a close interest in the College.

Following financial problems in 2010, a new Trustee Board of four created a devolved federated structure for the running and administration of the courses and began to develop non-educational activities on the campus to provide a 'cushion' for the educational activities of the College. The College primarily became a conference centre and a host for independent courses. The Board increased its membership between 2010 and 2012 and a review of the management structure and courses has taken place. It has appointed an Executive Co-ordinator and divided the College into three schools.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The College currently provides two main courses: a three-year course in Visual Arts and Sculpture accredited by Crossfields Institute, previously through Edexcel; this is at levels 4 and 5. This is a well-attended and flagship course. A revised full-time course at level 5 Diploma in Sustainable Agriculture - Biodynamic and Organic Practice and Management is being developed to commence in September 2015. This is also being put together with the support of Crossfields Institute.

There are also part-time courses in Anthroposophic healthcare, psychotherapy and holistic baby and child care.

Whilst there are other courses undertaken at the College some, such as Story Telling, are hosted but not directly overseen by the College insofar as curriculum and accreditation.

3. Inspection process

The inspector spent the morning and early afternoon at the College and interviewed the principal officers and met with some of the tutors and students. A swift tour was made of this extensive campus and the inspector scrutinised the records with particular emphasis on student feedback.

4. Inspection history

Full accreditation:	22 Nov 1995
Re-accreditation:	8 May 2001
Interim	17 Jan 2006
Re-accreditation:	4 and 5 Dec 2007
Supplementary	1 Oct 2008
Supplementary	20 Nov 2008
Supplementary	20 Jul 2010
Re-accreditation	18 and 19 Jun 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

The College has scaled back its main courses although it has now introduced more part-time courses. The inspector was informed that the courses once overseen by Edexcel have now been passed over exclusively to Crossfields Institute, the awarding body.

With the new head responsible for educational development, the College is seeking international links as well as in-house courses, both full-time and part-time. A problem of finding the right people to head-up particular courses is proving to be a demanding exercise.

It is the understanding of the inspector that tutors are expected to undertake CPD on a regular basis; as a corollary to this there must be more classroom observation both by the head of education and the tutors' peer group.

Since the last BAC inspection, the Schools Inspection Service has inspected (March 2015) and followed up with a most satisfactory report.

2. Response to action points in last report

Student feedback mechanisms must be formalised with reports submitted to the Trustee Board.
Student feedback is well documented, analysed and with reports passed forward to the Board.

A system of regular staff appraisals should be introduced.
Admin staff have a formal appraisal with their line manager.

The Trustees should introduce a formal independent educational monitoring system for unaccredited courses.
The inspector was led to believe that unaccredited courses are outside of Emerson's direct jurisdiction; for example, the course in Psychotherapy is accredited by Goetheaneum in Switzerland. The International School of Storytelling is overseen also by an external body, the College being the facilitating centre for the course.

Students should be advised of the BAC complaints procedure.
This is now in place.

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 It is evident from discussion that the management team is very focused on ensuring that the College and the students succeed. The administration and feedback systems are overseen by a highly experienced officer and information is well documented. Staffing numbers are sufficient, although finding the right people at the right price is proving difficult in certain areas. The employment of teaching staff of the right persuasion and ability can be protracted.				

3.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
<p>The teaching staff are well qualified, highly committed and experienced; this is reflected in the comments made to the inspector both by the tutors and the students. Additionally, this is demonstrated in the work sampled and comments on marked work. There are clear schemes of work on a session-by-session basis. A good interface with the students is evident.</p>				

3.3 Student Welfare

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
<p>The student population is diverse in terms of nationality and age (all over 18 years), mature and there seems to be good feedback, showing dedication and a passion to succeed.</p>				

3.4 Premises and Facilities

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
<p>The campus/estate is extensive, wide-ranging and fragmented with a series of buildings, some historic in various states of repair but overall acceptable, well signed, with health and safety features much in evidence.</p>				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Institution’s strengths

There is a very dedicated, focused and cohesive management and tutoring team with vision to develop the College.

Students seem very pleased to have the opportunity of learning in part by way of a different philosophical mind-set as they development new skills through their self-development.

The College has a strategic plan that is regularly reviewed and progress carefully monitored at various levels across the senior personnel. It was pleasing to see a wider vision within the plan as the College seeks to develop its special educational approach and increase its student cohort.

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
Classroom observation by the head of education must be undertaken periodically with feedback to the tutor.	M

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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