



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (International HE)

INSTITUTION: Mediterranean College, Athens

ADDRESS: 8 Pellinis Street
11251 Athens
Greece

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Mr Sofoklis Xinis

Accreditation status: Accredited

Date of inspection: 30 April 2014

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION ON ACCREDITATION: Accreditation continued 10 July 2014

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

Mediterranean College was founded in 1977 and later acquired by the Xinis Group, within which it forms a higher education business brand, with a main campus in Athens and a second campus in Thessaloniki. First accredited by the BAC in 2001, the College passed through a number of partnerships in previous years. At the time of the reaccreditation inspection in 2011 the College was in the process of changing from Teesside University to University of Derby as awarding body for a range of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. The Ministry of National Education recognises and certifies what it refers to as post-secondary educational provision, and established a national qualifications framework in 2010. The Athens campus is situated in a pedestrian precinct in a safe and pleasant area in central Athens with good transport facilities. The Thessaloniki campus is also located in the city, in an older quarter that is quite congested but nonetheless attractive as a study centre.

2. Brief description of the current provision

Following changes in Greek law, the Athens and Thessaloniki provisions now operate as separate entities. The Athens provision is part of the Attiko Network of Education PC while the Thessaloniki provision is delivered by Ekpaideftiki Voreiou Ellados PC. At the time of the interim inspection the Athens operation employed nine full-time permanent and 42 part-time temporary teaching staff supported by 24 administrative and four ancillary staff. The Thessaloniki provision is delivered by six full-time permanent and 32 part-time temporary teaching staff supported by eight administrative and three ancillary staff.

Following the phasing out of University of Teesside programmes, the University of Derby is the awarding body for all programmes. The College offers programmes at BA, BSc, MA, MSc and MBA levels across a wide range of subjects: business, computer science, education, engineering and psychotherapy. At the time of the interim inspection there were 300 full-time and 131 part-time students enrolled in Athens and 130 full-time and 63 part-time students enrolled in Thessaloniki. The vast majority of undergraduate students are studying full-time while all postgraduate students are studying part-time. Just over a quarter of students in both Athens and Thessaloniki are enrolled on postgraduate programmes.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was undertaken by one inspector in half a day in Athens. The inspector did not visit the Thessaloniki site. The inspector had a meeting with the Managing Director, Academic Director and Academic Operations Director. The inspector inspected the premises and scrutinised documentation relating to the College's response to the previous inspection report and developments within the College since the last inspection.

4. Inspection history

Full inspection	Athens 25 January 2001
Interim inspection	Athens 4 February 2002
Full inspection	Athens 16 and 17 November 2006
Supplementary inspection	Thessaloniki 11 May 2007
Interim inspection	Thessaloniki 29 April 2010
Full inspection	Athens and Thessaloniki 18-20 May 2011

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

Changes in Greek law have meant that, since September 2013, an institution defined as a college can offer only programmes that lead to the award of university degrees. Thus, the College's portfolio no longer includes Edexcel and London Centre of Management programmes. To accommodate sub-degree programmes the company has formed a separate entity, Mediterranean Professional Studies, which can offer vocational programmes, such as HNDs. It will share the existing premises with the College.

Like all other educational institutions in Greece, the adverse financial situation has impacted on the College. In addition, the transfer of sub-degree provision to the new sister company has contributed to reduced staffing and student levels. As a consequence there has been a significant reduction (from 65 to 42) in part-time teaching staff since the full inspection in 2011, although this has been accompanied by a slight increase in the numbers of all other staff employed. A similar pattern is found in Thessaloniki where the only significant change has been a reduction in the number of part-time teaching staff from 41 to 32. The changes have meant that student numbers in Athens have fallen from 470 to 300 full-time students and from 264 to 131 part-time students. In Thessaloniki the number of full-time students has fallen from 195 to 130 and part-time students slightly, from 68 to 63.

2. Response to actions points in last report

The 2011 full accreditation report listed a number of Requirements and Recommendations. The College has made a positive response to these.

Requirements that must be met before the first inspection after accreditation

The College must ensure that actual attendance meets the minimum standards specified.

The College employs an electronic attendance register to ensure prompt alerts of absences. College policy is clear that a minimum of 80 per cent attendance per module is required and there is a staged response to absences, including telephone contact, a warning letter and a formal warning from the Academic Committee. The College informed the inspector that the rapid identification of absences and more rigorous enforcement of follow-up action has led to improved attendance patterns. The next full inspection will provide an opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of these changes.

The College must bring together its policies on equal opportunities and the avoidance of discrimination so as to give them greater prominence in handbooks and publicity.

The College has made some progress on this issue. The College has inserted a brief statement on equal opportunities in the College Bulletin (prospectus) and the staff handbook also has a statement, in Greek. Information is also provided on the website. However, the information remains somewhat fragmented and there is scope for further consolidation of the various statements and policies. It is suggested that the statement in the College Bulletin be expanded and that in the Internal Regulations (colloquially known as the Student Handbook) document Section C 5 'Students with Health Problems' be prefaced with an equal opportunities/special needs statement to put it in context. Similarly, the statement about respecting others' rights in Section A1.1 of the Internal Regulations document, together with more explicit reference to non-discrimination, could usefully be included in a more comprehensive, all-embracing statement.

2.2 Recommendations to institution

The inspectors recommended inclusion of a summary of College health and safety policies and key operational procedures in its staff and student handbooks.

This has been done. A comprehensive guide to health and safety policies and procedures has been drawn up. It occupies three pages in the Internal Regulations document and includes names of nominated staff.

Notices should be moved from the backs of doors to adjacent walls to facilitate evacuation in an emergency.

This has been done in all rooms seen by the inspector, except the Alan Turing laboratory. The College has undertaken to ensure that it is relocated to the adjoining wall. The Thessaloniki site, to which the original comments pertain, was not visited.

A warning not to use the lifts in case of fire should be posted prominently at the lift entrances.

This has been done for the Athens site. It is reinforced by advice in the health and safety section in the Internal Regulations document.

It is recommended that contractual boundaries for acceptable conduct between the College, the university partner and College students be reviewed with the College's legal advisors.

The College confirms that it '...fully abides by the academic/student progression/quality procedures of the partner university as stated in the contract and official documents [...] that adhere to the contract.'

An international application form is used for overseas students who ask for evidence of English proficiency, but applicants should be asked to provide information about any special needs or medical conditions.

This has been done. Furthermore, the forms (one for undergraduate and one for postgraduate applications) now require the signature of the applicant and the interviewer to confirm what, if any, special needs have been declared.

The College should ensure rigorous monitoring of programme delivery so as to deal with weaknesses and share best practice.

The College employs a comprehensive range of formal and informal means to monitor programme delivery. The emphasis, however, is on quality assurance rather than quality enhancement and there is scope for using the information gathered to share and promote best practice. This could be achieved by, for example, a programme of regular lunchtime staff development seminars and the cascading of information gleaned from external conference attendance. Such College activities would usefully complement those undertaken in conjunction with the University of Derby and the College's own annual conference devoted to teaching and learning.

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				
Management continues to be effective and forward-looking.				

3.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
The College continues to explore means of enhancing the student learning experience through close working links with the University of Derby and its own annual Teaching and Learning Conference.				

3.3 Student Welfare

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
The College offers considerable support to its students although the communication of this information could be presented in a more coherent and cohesive manner.				

3.4 Premises and Facilities

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
The Athens site has a welcoming reception area and is suitably equipped. The Thessaloniki site was not visited.				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Institution's strengths

The College has made a constructive approach to the previous inspection report. It undertakes comprehensive monitoring of programmes through informal and formal means and has adapted to meet the challenges presented by the economic downturn and changes in Greek legislation.

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
The College is recommended to consolidate its information on equal opportunities and non-discrimination in order to present a more coherent, cohesive picture	M
The College may wish to explore further internal opportunities for sharing good practice such as a regular programme of staff development seminars	L

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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