



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Short Course Provider)

ORGANISATION:	Oxford Summer Courses Ltd
ADDRESS:	Registered office: 5 Hilmanton Lower Earley Reading Berkshire RG6 4HN
HEAD OF ORGANISATION:	Mr Harry Hoare and Mr Robert Phipps, Directors
Accreditation status:	Accredited
Date of inspection:	8 August 2014

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation 4 September 2014

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the organisation

Oxford Summer Courses (OSC or the Company) was established in January 2010 by its two directors, both Oxford graduates, who wished to provide opportunities for others to experience aspects of life at Oxford University. Initially a limited liability partnership, it became a registered company (Oxford Summer Courses Ltd) in March 2012. OSC provides academic summer courses in Oxford in a wide variety of subjects (including sciences, humanities, law, literature, mathematics, creative writing, medicine, philosophy, politics, psychology, theology, classical civilisation and international relations). Courses are offered in two-week units, although a small number of students compose a four-week course from two sequential courses. All students receive individual tutorials in a chosen subject (with the possibility, therefore, of tailoring teaching to their specific interests and needs) complemented by small group seminars (maximum of six students) in those subjects.

Residential accommodation, some teaching and recreational facilities are provided in one or more colleges of the University of Oxford and all tutors engaged teach for the University or colleges. Some teaching, particularly of individual tutorials, also takes place at other locations within the University, arranged by tutors. After using premises in a number of colleges, all courses in 2013 and 2014 were based in Somerville College, Oxford. Breakfast is provided in the College, students buy their own lunch and eat out as a group for dinner, at a variety of local restaurants. A celebratory meal completes the course. A full social and cultural programme is also included.

Students are drawn from a wide variety of countries, notably from the Middle East and Asia, with significant enrolments also from the UK and USA. Numbers have grown in each of the five years of summer courses, from an initial enrolment of 40 in 2010 to 128 in 2013, and 169 in 2014.

The two directors currently work part-time for OSC, combining their OSC duties with full-time positions elsewhere. They undertake all administration outside the summer period at home. The Admissions/Course Administrator works part-time, also from home, in the period up to the start of courses.

2. Brief description of the current provision

OSC has continued its expansion from four weeks in 2013 to six weeks in 2014, when three two-week course blocks were offered to a total of 169 students. Separate courses are offered for high school students (aged 16-18) and for students aged 18-21, at undergraduate level. The adult (22+) course offered in previous years is no longer being provided. In 2014, as in 2013, the base for the courses was Somerville College, Oxford, where students were accommodated and where some teaching took place.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was undertaken by one inspector during a half-day visit to the summer course site in Somerville College. He met there with the two directors and reviewed documents provided.

4. Inspection history

Full inspection: 25 and 26 July 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 provider

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

The course period was extended by two weeks to a total of six weeks in 2014.
Student numbers continue to increase, largely by word of mouth and use of social media.
The adult course (for students aged 22+) is no longer being offered.
The role of Academic Director has been assumed by another person for 2014.

2. Response to action points in last report

Requirements

The following were requirements to be addressed by the time of the next inspection.

Policies and procedures in some areas must be more fully developed and documented.

Policies and procedures have been strengthened and more thoroughly documented. These were seen in the following areas: Health and safety, Sickness and absence, Educational visits, Attendance, Abusive behaviour, Safeguarding, Complaints.

Policies must be more thoroughly disseminated to staff, students and other stakeholders, as appropriate.

Policies and procedures are now disseminated to staff in writing or at meetings. It is recommended that comprehensive student and staff handbooks are compiled. Some documents could usefully be posted to the website for parents of prospective students to see.

Policies and procedures relating to staff recruitment must be strengthened, formalised and documented.

These procedures have now been strengthened. OSC does not advertise posts, but depends upon word of mouth recommendations or direct approaches. Job applicants submit a CV and covering letter. They are interviewed by one of the directors, although for some last minute appointments by the Academic Director. Notes are kept of interviews. References are obtained by email. Reference requests do not specifically enquire about suitability of the person to work with young people, and this is strongly recommended.

Although staff recruitment procedures are now established, they have not been documented, and this should be done, particularly as a number of people may be involved in recruitment at different times.

Qualifications and experience of tutors must be verified, including taking up references on all staff.

Tutors are required to provide original qualification certificates, copies of which made by OSC were seen. References are taken up, through which experience is verified.

The system for reviewing performance of staff must be strengthened and made more robust.

Classroom observation has been introduced for tutors.
Appraisal forms for residential deans are completed by assistant course directors at the end of each course. These are not provided to the members of staff concerned and are primarily used in relation to rehiring. Informal feedback is provided throughout.
It is recommended that procedures are considered to provide systematic feedback to all staff.

Student attendance requirements must be set out in writing in relevant documents for students and parents.

An “attendance policy” has been introduced, but this is based on that of a day school, and is primarily concerned with registration at different times during the day. It does not address class attendance, although expectations are made clear at the initial course briefing. A written statement setting out expectations on attendance at classes (and activities) is still required. This would signify clearly to parents and students the seriousness of the academic programme.

Tutors notify non-attendance by phone at the time and the absence is investigated. Tutors email the Academic Administrator at the end of each day with attendance records for the day. These records are collated centrally.

A system for classroom observation must be finalised and implemented.

A system of observation of tutors has been introduced, undertaken by the former Academic Director, and completed sheets for some tutors were seen. These provided well informed, apposite comments. Observation of remaining tutors was scheduled in the latter part of the courses.

Parents and students must be informed in writing about OSC's complaints procedure.

A written complaints procedure has now been developed. This needs tightening up in a number of regards. It is recommended, for instance, that it should make clear the distinction between course directors and company directors as two escalating levels of response. Mention must be made of the possibility of referring unresolved complaints to BAC.

Procedures for dealing with incidents, accidents, medical situations and emergencies must be strengthened, formalised, and documented.

Written procedures have been devised for sickness and absence and for educational visits. A form is now completed on which details of emergency contacts are provided. Report forms for medical situations and accidents have been devised, and were in use.

Recommendations

It was recommended that the provider:

- *takes particular care in any references to the University of Oxford in its publicity materials, particularly as many students may have preconceptions about academic courses operating in Oxford.*

There is a clear and unambiguous statement on the website regarding the relationship to the University of Oxford.

- *establishes a single system for tracking enquiries and applications to which all relevant staff can have access*

A well thought out flow chart has been developed for the stages in the enrolment process. Data and documents are stored in Google documents, and consideration is being given to collation of information in a database.

- *considers interviewing all prospective students on the adult (21+) course.*

The course for older students, aged 22+ is no longer offered.

- *obtains academic recommendations for under 18s before rather than after acceptance on a course.*

Academic references are obtained before money is received by OSC.

- *obtains medical information at three stages: before acceptance (for those conditions that may affect the ability of the provider to offer a course); after acceptance and before arrival (questionnaire); and on arrival by confirmation by the student.*

A short but effective medical questionnaire has been introduced, completed before arrival. Emergency contact details are also obtained on a new form.

- *cross-references student attendance requirements and absence procedures in job descriptions and duties of tutors and residential deans.*

Job descriptions for tutors, residential deans and assistant course directors included responsibilities for ensuring attendance, recording attendance and reporting absences, in line with the attendance policy.

- *elicits more systematic student feedback during the course in writing or orally (for instance by short review sessions with tutors at the end of each seminar session or ensuring that every student is spoken to by a senior member of staff within the first few days of the course).*

Informal oral feedback from students is obtained during the course, and a form is completed at the end of the course.

The use of a simple student feedback questionnaire at an early stage of the course is recommended, focusing on those aspects of the course that can be adjusted during the course itself. This enables systematic feedback to be obtained in all areas, including evidence that there are no concerns.

- *considers establishing more formalised and systematic reviews after each summer, drawing on feedback and input from all sources.*

A series of review meetings was held at the end of the 2013 session. This included meetings of the directors with pastoral staff, and with the Course Administrator.

- *formulates professional development initiatives for tutors, including peer observation, collation of good practice and useful tips, input to classroom observation sheets, and training sessions.*

This has not yet been addressed but will be kept under consideration.

- *requires tutors to write a report on each student at the end of a course.*

Tutors are now required to write reports for those students requesting them. It was recommended that tutors be required to write on all students, and it was agreed that this would be implemented with immediate effect.

- *devises written guidance to students on essay writing, including source citations and plagiarism.*

Some outline guidance is given in an introductory talk, and tutors offer additional guidance.

The inspector considered that written guidance would still be useful, and this recommendation stands.

- *provides fuller general information to students prior to arrival (on the website and/or in other materials).*

Fuller general information is now provided in the form of a Welcome Pack, a welcome e-mail and by making available various policies. The preparation of a comprehensive Student Handbook is recommended.

- *issues guidance and directions on health and safety matters to students in writing.*

Students are provided with the health and safety policy.

- *establishes more robust procedures and protocols for ensuring child protection and safeguarding.*

The procedures in place for safeguarding are now stronger (see also Compliance with statutory requirements below).

- *arranges furniture in teaching rooms to facilitate interaction and, where appropriate, note taking from a board or projection.*

This recommendation is being borne in mind. In 2014 better teaching rooms were used, enabling movement of desks and chairs into different arrangements.

- *considers providing a central study room.*

One of the tutorial rooms was set aside for private study on two days each week, when not being used for teaching.

- clearly designates one person with health and safety responsibility.

On site responsibility for health and safety was delegated to the Academic Director, who was first aid trained, undertook fire risk assessments and conducted fire drills. Given the seasonal nature of the business and the fact that the two directors principally work in other positions during most of the year, it is recommended that consideration is given to year round health and safety responsibility by appointment of a year round administrator, and/or by involvement of a health and safety professional to support any seasonal staff with delegated health and safety responsibility.

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				
Policies and procedures have been strengthened in a number of areas. However, some procedures which are well established in practice are not documented. This makes review more difficult. A systematic approach to document procedures is strongly recommended, particularly as the Company wishes to continue to expand and develop.				
There is now a clear and useful flow chart for stages in the enrolment of students. A similar approach to other areas would be beneficial.				
In some cases practice does not follow written procedures, and work must continue to ensure congruence of written policies and procedures and actual practice.				
The directors are ambitious for the Company to expand and develop. Currently, both have full-time posts elsewhere during most of the year, although one director is planning to scale down his workload slightly to free up more time for company administration. Each takes responsibility for one two-week block in the summer, with another member of staff assuming responsibility for the third two-week block. The appointment of a year				

round administrator, to provide continuity between the preparation and delivery periods, and between courses would facilitate qualitative improvement and growth of the company, and is suggested.

3.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments Arrangements for academic administration during the courses involved the Academic Director (a second year undergraduate), academic administrators with the former, and highly qualified Academic Director undertaking classroom observation. Academic administration may be more effectively undertaken by appointment of an Academic Director qualified to undertake teaching observation and provide a credible lead and support to tutors on teaching, and this is recommended.				

3.3 Participant 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				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Institution's strengths

The provider

- offers carefully devised courses combining a variety of rich experiences for students
- has an energetic, able and ambitious senior management
- offers teaching by highly able and enthusiastic tutors
- ensures that there is a great deal of personal and individual attention to students and their learning
- ensures close attention is paid to personal needs of students
- fosters a relaxed, informal but rigorous, purposeful and challenging learning environment
- arranges a diverse and full programme of social and cultural activities
- offers courses in a most pleasant environment which is highly appropriate for the nature of its courses.

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
Although staff recruitment procedures are now established, they are not fully documented and this must be done.	M
A written statement setting out expectations on attendance at classes (and activities) must be produced and disseminated.	M
Mention must be made in the complaints procedure of the possibility of referring unresolved complaints to BAC.	M
Preparation and documentation of policies and procedures must continue to be strengthened, and congruence ensured between what is written and what is done.	M
Recommendations	
It is recommended that comprehensive student and staff handbooks are compiled.	
The appointment of an Academic Director qualified to undertake teaching observation and provide a credible lead and support to tutors on teaching is recommended.	
It is recommended that consideration is given to year round health and safety responsibility by appointment of a year round administrator, and/or by involvement of a health and safety professional to support any seasonal staff with delegated health and safety responsibility.	
Reference requests do not specifically enquire about suitability of the person to work with young people, and this is strongly recommended.	
Review of the complaints procedure is recommended, for instance, clarifying the roles of course directors and company directors.	
The use of a simple student feedback questionnaire at an early stage of the course is recommended, focusing on those aspects of the course that can be adjusted during the course itself.	
It is recommended that OSC devises written guidance to students on essay writing, including source citations and plagiarism.	
Professional input from people with expertise in the areas of Health and Safety, Academic management, and Child Protection and Safeguarding is recommended.	
It is recommended that the safeguarding policy is reviewed and fully attuned to the situation at OSC.	
It is recommended that information on care of students and residential rules provided to parents/guardians is expanded in detail, depth and extent and consideration is given to making this available before enrolment.	
It is recommended that references to DBS disclosures and other checks is made in job advertisements, in	

job descriptions, in correspondence relating to staff recruitment, and in interview forms.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	YES
Further comments, if applicable	
<p>OSC's arrangements to ensure safeguarding of young people under the age of 18 were reviewed.</p> <p>A safeguarding policy is in place. This has been based upon a policy from elsewhere, and includes some inconsistencies and references which are irrelevant to the OSC context. It is recommended that the policy should be reviewed and fully attuned to the situation at OSC. Input from a person with professional experience in this area would be beneficial.</p> <p>DBS disclosures for staff were seen. It was reported that on occasions when last minute staff vacancies arise, it has been possible to fill these with people for whom DBS disclosures are already available.</p> <p>Risk assessments have been undertaken for premises and activities.</p> <p>Training in safeguarding is limited. One of the directors has responsibility for safeguarding and has briefed himself on the area using online sources. He then provides training for staff during introductory meetings. Input to policies, procedures and contributing to training from a person with more extensive training and experience in this area, for instance an experienced head of boarding in a boarding school, is recommended.</p> <p>Information to job applicants on safeguarding was reported to be provided at interview and before appointment. However, best practice ensures that information on safeguarding forms part of advertisements and correspondence with prospective applicants. It is recommended that references to the DBS disclosures and other checks is made in job advertisements, in job descriptions, in correspondence relating to staff recruitment, and in interview forms.</p> <p>Some information to parents/guardians of students under 18 is given in the Welcome Pack, welcome e-mail and in response to specific queries. It is recommended that this information is expanded in detail, depth and extent and consideration is given to making this available before enrolment.</p> <p>There is no homestay provision.</p> <p>Rules regarding care of under 18s in residential accommodation are provided in the briefing shortly after arrival. It is recommended that rules are made available to prospective parents and students before enrolment, so that the care regime is clear ahead of time.</p> <p>Overall responsibility for safeguarding is part of the responsibilities of one of the directors. The director concerned does not have any expertise or experience of the area acquired in other contexts. As indicated above, it is recommended that OSC draws upon input from someone with experience and training in the area.</p>	