BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM VISIT
(Independent Higher Education)

INSTITUTION: CITY College

ADDRESS: 24 Proxenou Koromila Street
546 22 Thessaloniki
Greece

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Mr Ioannis Ververidis

DATE OF VISIT: 16 May 2018

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION ON ACCREDITATION: Continue accreditation 19 July 2018

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1.   Background to the institution

CITY College (CC/the Institution) was founded in 1989 by the G. E. Strategakis Organisation. It is based in the centre of Thessaloniki, Greece. It operates in Greece as a private higher education college, which is responsible for its own financial autonomy and governance. It is the provision of this college in Thessaloniki that BAC accredits.

The relationship between CITY College and the UoS began in 1993 with the validation of programmes delivered by the Institution. A formal affiliation agreement with the University was implemented in 1997. CITY College became the International Faculty (IF) of the University of Sheffield in 2009 and, in this context, is called the International Faculty-CITY College, Thessaloniki. Students can enrol with CC to complete a UoS degree programme. This is the provision that BAC accredits. At the same time, the Institution, through its status as an International Faculty of UoS, is a satellite campus of the UoS and students can enrol through UoS to complete their degree in Greece. This provision is not accredited by BAC as it does not accredit the International Faculty of UoS. Students from both enrolment routes attend the same courses.

CC's mission is to maintain the highest standards of quality as a Higher Education Institution employing staff who work at the frontiers of academic enquiry and follow the developments of the real world in order to educate students to become experts in their disciplines. Its guiding principles are excellence, ambition, engagement, collegiality, resourcefulness, resilience, ability, diversity, and sustainability.

CC is headed by a Principal and three Vice Principals for Teaching and Learning, sometimes described as Director of Learning and Teaching, the Vice Principal for Research Innovation and External Relations and the Vice Principal for Marketing Recruitment and Student Affairs. They are all members of the UoS Senate, which is the academic authority that oversees the UoS's teaching and research, academic quality and standards and the admission and regulation of students.

CC has two buildings, both in the city centre less than a kilometre apart. The Leontos Sofou Building includes the departments of Business Administration and Economics, and Computer Science, student and alumni affairs, computer laboratories and support, library, conference and lecture rooms and study and social space. The Psychology Department and the English Studies Department, including its English Language Support Unit (ELSU), are based in the Strategakis Building. The latter hosts the South-East European Research Center (SEERC) and the Senior Administration offices.

2. Brief description of the current provision

At undergraduate level, CC offers honours degrees in Business Studies, Computer Science, Psychology and English Language and Linguistics. All can be taken in three or four years and are full-time. There are specialist tracks in Finance and Accounting, Management, Marketing and Hotel and Hospitality in Business Studies. Other specialist tracks are Informatics and Internet Computing in Computing Science. The honours degree in Business Studies has the largest number of students, with 113 on the three-year course and 87 on the four-year course.

At master's level, CC offers Master of Science (MSc) degrees in Management and Management with specialisations, Banking and Finance, Counselling Psychology, Cognitive Neuropsychology and Advanced Software Engineering with specialisations. Master of Arts (MA) degrees in Marketing Advertising and Public Relations, Digital Marketing and Social Media, Applied Linguistics with Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, Translating and Interpreting, Counselling Psychology with a practical placement, and Clinical Neuropsychology are also offered. These can be taken full or part-time. CC also offers an Executive Master of Business Administration (MBA), the largest master's level programme with 131 students, all part-time.

CC has four academic departments. These are Business Administration and Economics, Psychology, Computer Science and English Studies. Prospective students apply directly to CC. Each department's academic committee makes the decision regarding the applicant's acceptance. Successful applicants are notified through a formal

letter issued directly by the University of Sheffield. Admission to CC bachelor's and master's programmes requires a good secondary education certificate or primary degree respectively and a certified good command of English. Applicants who have completed their secondary education or primary degree in English are exempted, but otherwise entrants must demonstrate satisfactory performance in a recognised English language test.

Applicants for an undergraduate programme who are exempt or fulfil the criteria for very good language performance can complete their degree in three years. All three-year programmes are taught in English. Students whose English is good enough to be admitted but who need time to enhance fluency enter the four-year degree stream. During the first two years, teaching on the four-year stream is in Greek and English, except in English Language and Linguistics, where all teaching is in English.

The same course curriculum and assessments are applied to students on three and four-year courses, with the four-year stream including additional teaching and learning in academic English language skills. This is so all students are prepared for the entirely English teaching of Level 2 and Level 3, which are the last two years of the undergraduate course. Postgraduate teaching is in English, and advanced English language skills are required.

CC staff take part in the supervision of doctoral students across the Balkan region through the South-Eastern Europe Research Centre, an overseas research centre of the University of Sheffield, established as a non-profit legal entity.

Student numbers have stayed steady over the past year and risen since 2016. At the time of the inspection, there were 771 students in Thessaloniki, of whom 606 are full-time and 165 are part-time.

3.   Inspection visit process

An inspection was conducted for half a day by one inspector. Meetings were held with the Director for Learning and Teaching, the Faculty Manager of Accreditation, Programme Review and Student Engagement and with teaching staff. There were two lesson observations and discussions were held with students studying business administration and psychology. Relevant documentation was scrutinised. The Institution co-operated well with the inspection.

4.   Inspection history

Re-accreditation inspection:	1-2 December 2016
Interim inspection:	2 May 2014
Re-accreditation inspection:	2-3 May 2012
Interim inspection:	27 April 2010
Re-accreditation inspection:	13-14 November 2006
Interim inspection:	10 February 2002
Full accreditation inspection:	31 November-1 December 2000

PART B – JUDGMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgments 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

A new senior position of Faculty Manager of Accreditation, Programme Review and Student Engagement was established in 2017. The postholder is in charge of all Faculty and department audits and accreditations by external bodies and the University of Sheffield reviews and combines that role with Head of the English Studies Department. CC was already strong in this area, with a Learning and Teaching Quality Assurance Unit (LTQAU), and the creation of this post and the high calibre of the postholder reflect CC's emphasis on quality assurance.

2. Response to action points in last report

There were no action points in the previous report.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

The Institution might consider whether an element of externality in the composition of its Executive Board could further enhance its deliberations.

CC does not currently intend to introduce externality into the Executive Board. The recommendation was discussed at the Administrative Board and the final decision was made by the owner. CC does not believe that the recommended change would be appropriate for a private institution.

CC takes stakeholder views into account, for example, via the Industrial Advisory Board (IAB), which includes business and industry representatives. As CC is also the UoS International Faculty, this means that it is part of an organisation whose governing body, the University Council, has a majority of non-executive lay members. This recommendation has been fully considered but CC should keep under review the possibility of introducing more externality into the Executive Board or other committees.

Formal performance appraisal arrangements should be extended to all the administrative staff.

While it is possible for administrative staff to have an informal discussion with their line managers, there are no clear appraisal criteria for them. Nor is there a framework or process to implement a development plan after a formal evaluation. CC staff have acknowledged the lack of progress in implementing this recommendation for its 49 full-time administrative staff. CC stated that grades of CC administrative staff do not correspond with those of the UoS so that the UoS appraisal model cannot be directly transposed to CC. CC has found defining outcomes for the assessment of administrative staff to be difficult. The Executive Board and Administration Board have discussed the issue and intend to pursue it. However, it has not been implemented, pending definition of expected outcomes for administrative roles and the development of a process for individual action plans. This is still an important issue for CC to tackle.

There is some confusion between the use of the terms policy and procedure and the Institution could explore possible ways of differentiating between statements of overall intent, which are policies, and descriptions of operational tasks, which are procedures.

CC has found this quite challenging, since most of its documents describe the agreed policy together with the processes and procedures for implementation. It follows UoS conventions on the matter. The Institution has followed this recommendation each time documentation has come up for review and has made sure the title of

the document reflects its purpose and contents. However, implementation is ongoing, and the majority of the CC documents have not yet been reviewed in this way.

Visitors to both sites should receive some initial information or briefing about health and safety, including fire prevention and fire evacuation arrangements.

This recommendation has been implemented and an appropriate health and safety instruction leaflet has been produced. It includes accident and emergency regulations, including fire safety.

4.   Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

4.1   Governance, Strategy and Financial Management (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments The governance structure of the Institution, internally and in relation to the UoS, is clear and on the website. This provides transparency for potential students, current students and staff. Areas where the general regulations of the UoS apply and where the CC regulations are different are set out clearly in CC's Ordinances and Regulations (O and R) document. For example, the O & R makes it clear that UoS regulations for fees do not apply, and that there are additional specific attendance regulations. This provides the necessary clarity and avoids any confusion that could result from CC's IF status. CC students must sign a declaration undertaking to observe the O and R. There is a Faculty Strategy 2016 to 2021, which was agreed in September 2016, which builds on the aspirations and direction of the University's Strategic Plan 2016 to 2021. Actions to achieve the goals are monitored through the committee system. This provides for a clear alignment between University and CC strategy while enabling adaptation for local CC needs.				

4.2   Academic Management and Administration (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments The College Administration Board (CAB), comprising the Principal and three vice-principals, determines the main polices and strategies of CC, monitors the running of the departments and manages the budget and personnel functions. The CAB is advised by a wider CC Executive Board, whose membership includes departmental and senior administrative heads. The Executive Board reports both to CAB and the UoS Executive Board. CC is also represented on UoS-wide bodies, including for example the committees or subcommittees for Learning and Teaching, Ethics, Research and Innovation, Enhancement and Strategy and Quality and Scrutiny. This provides a mechanism for CC to take part in the decision-making of the UoS. The responsibilities of the University and CC committees and sub-committees are well-defined and documented. Committee membership and remits are on the website and provide a clear understanding of CC's academic management and administration structure. The titles Vice Principal of Teaching and Learning/Faculty Director of Learning and Teaching are used interchangeably, for example, in the terms of reference for the Quality Strategy and Enhancement Committee and should be used consistently.				

4.3   Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

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

Comments
The students are very positive about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Although students receive a detailed coursework submission semester map, scheduling assignments towards the end of the academic year leads to a clash with studying for examinations. Students recognise that this is to some extent inevitable, given the need for coursework to test an understanding of the topic. However, they would welcome a review of coursework distribution.

The UoS is a member of the Russell Group of UK research-intensive universities, and this is reflected in CC's interdisciplinary research focus. CITY College students can access research scholarships through the University's Sheffield Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) scheme, which offers a funded opportunity for undergraduate students to work on a research project in the UK during the summer vacation. The students commented that they were able to tap into current research through research-active teachers, and that the research activity of CC staff enriched teaching and learning.

4.4   Student Recruitment, Support, Guidance and Progression (spot check)

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

Comments
CC's admission processes mean that the students who enrol are appropriately equipped for the programme. Requirements are set out on the website and admissions staff are available for advice. Students whose English language skills require improvement access additional help, resources and facilities.

The students are very positive about the personal tutor system, which is delivered through scheduled meetings and open-door support. Students also praised the approachability of the heads of department. They knew about and appreciated CC's range of student support services.

Attendance at lectures and tutorials is compulsory. Attendance is recorded and weekly e-mails to students highlight absences and the specified allowable limit. There are appropriate sanctions for poor attendance. The regulations are clear and enable absence problems to be identified and tackled.

4.5   Premises, Facilities and Learning Resources (spot check)

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

Comments
CITY College, not the University, is responsible for the provision of administrative and learning resources, equipment and facilities. The premises, facilities and learning resources are satisfactory.

A plan for obtaining additional space for classrooms and offices is at an early stage and CC should ensure that the location, premises, facilities and the range and nature of resources and services offered at any new building are appropriate.

CC does not provide residential accommodation, but student services maintain a register of accommodation in Thessaloniki and advise on accommodation issues.

4.6   Quality Management, Assurance and Enhancement (spot check)

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

Comments
The main body for quality assurance is the Quality Strategy and Enhancement Committee, supported by the LTQAU.

CC participates in the University's periodic review process, in which an independent panel of critical friends, including external members, visit a department or school every five years and review key quality indicators. The Faculty monitors the department's subsequent progress.

The CC has an Annual Reflection (AR) process in which each department considers programme delivery and student experience during the previous academic year. The University Learning and Teaching Committee considers generic and institutional issues arising from the ARs. ARs are a useful tool for analysing and comparing the performance of departments within CC and of CC as a whole within UoS.

The Institution has produced a CC Profile, which is a comprehensive consolidated source of information about key aspects of CC such as its structures, admissions, programme design, approval and review, teaching and learning and assessment as of January 2018. The Profile provides a useful compilation designed primarily to inform quality assurance and enhancement.

Each department has a Studet-Staff committee. The annual or semester report of this committee includes a review of the previous year's student feedback. Students also get written feedback on their feedback, with departments providing responses to staff or student committees' opinions and requests and on the actions taken.

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS
CC benefits from being the International Faculty of a large and reputable UK University. It has access to university-wide policies, procedures and practices whilst having the independence to tailor its provision for the Greek environment. The relationship is, therefore, a positive one for CC. There is a very evident and exemplary emphasis on quality assurance and enhancement, shown by the new senior level appointment, the process review system, the annual reflection process, the 2018 CC profile, and the attention to student feedback. It demonstrates CC's commendable commitment to self-examination and external evaluation to identify strengths and weaknesses, monitor follow-up action and share good practice. CC emphasises and supports student and staff research.

ACTIONS REQUIRED	Priority H/M/L
None	

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
CC should keep under review the possibility of introducing more externality into the Executive Board or other committees.
CC should continue to work towards a formal appraisal system for administrative staff on the basis of identified administrative core competencies.
CC should continue to review documents to ensure that there is a clear differentiation between a policy and the procedures to implement it.
CC should ensure the consistent use of either Learning and Teaching or Teaching and Learning in documentation when referencing the Director.
CC should consider whether course work distribution results in avoidable clustering of assignments.
CC should ensure that the location, premises, facilities and the range and nature of resources and services offered at any new building are appropriate.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS	
Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	YES
Further comments, if applicable	