



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (College)

INSTITUTION:	Le Cordon Bleu Ltd
ADDRESS:	15 Bloomsbury Square London WC1A 2LS
HEAD OF INSTITUTION:	Mr Alan Swinson
Accreditation status:	Accredited
Date of inspection:	27 July 2015
ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:	10 September 2015

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

Le Cordon Bleu International has its origins in a 19th century French weekly publication, *La Cuisinière Cordon Bleu*, which, in 1896, established a school in Paris. A London school, L'Ecole du Petit Cordon Bleu, was established in Paris by Rosemary Hume, a former student, in 1933, and operated under the trademark registered by the Paris organisation. The school's reputation was such that, by 1953, it was invited to create what the world now knows as 'coronation chicken'. In 1984, the international organisation was acquired by M. André J Cointreau, and was eventually registered in Amsterdam as Le Cordon Bleu International BV. Today, Le Cordon Bleu has a presence in more than 20 countries, with approximately 50 schools worldwide, operated directly or with universities, governmental institutions or other partnerships. The institute in London (LCBL or the School) is directly operated by Le Cordon Bleu. Though some regional variations exist, most schools offer culinary programmes in *Cuisine*, *Pâtisserie* and *Boulangerie*. Le Cordon Bleu International also offers management courses at Bachelor and Masters degree level (but not yet in London).

Following the BAC inspection in 2010, when 235 students were enrolled, the school continued to grow. In January 2012 it relocated from its former address in Marylebone Lane to larger premises in Bloomsbury Square that has six storeys, including a basement and a roof garden, where herbs are grown. It has D1 planning consent and is held on a long lease. Entry is controlled at reception by fingerprint readers. There are four classrooms, a library and study area, two demonstration rooms, four state-of-the-art training kitchens and a training *boulangerie*. There is also a café on the ground floor, offices, changing rooms and a suitable number of male and female WCs. The stated maximum total capacity of all teaching rooms is 364.

LCBL holds an Investing in Quality (IIQ) licence from NCFE with whom the school shares the responsibility for monitoring the quality of its higher education and learning, and which validates its mapping of its main courses at QCF levels 3 and 4. Since the licence was first awarded in March 2010, NCFE has conducted a cycle of twice-yearly monitoring and reapproval visits. In its reports, the NCFE quality adviser has been consistently complimentary about the school's academic policies and procedures. In February 2012 LCBL underwent a Review for Educational Oversight by the QAA. The review team reported that confidence and reliance could be placed on the management of the School and its provision. Monitoring visits (February and October 2013) reported that acceptable progress had been made on dealing with QAA recommendations.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The minimum age of students at LCBL is 18. Most are in the late teens to mid-twenties age range, but a significant number of older students enrol. The courses are vocational and most students are looking towards a career in the hospitality industry, many as professional chefs. About 25% of the enrolment over the last 12 months have entered the UK on a Tier 4 Visa and about 25% on a Short-Term Study Visa.

The main core courses consist of the three 11-week levels in *Cuisine*, *Pâtisserie* or both subjects. There is continuous assessment, and an examination at the end. Completion of the three levels results in the award of *Le Diplôme de Cuisine* or *Le Diplôme de Pâtisserie*. The combination of both subject diplomas results in the award of *Le Grand Diplôme*. Each level takes about three months and there are four intakes a year. Each level is certificated and not all students take all levels or both courses. Courses are delivered through a balanced programme of demonstrations, supervised practical work and lectures on theory, with formative and summative assessment. The full three-level *Cuisine* diploma involves 600 hours of organised study over 33 weeks and the *Pâtisserie* diploma 510 hours of organised study. A typical weekly schedule for *Cuisine* students would be three demonstrations and three practical classes giving 18 hours of organised study; for *Pâtisserie* students it would

comprise two demonstrations, two practical classes and one technical lecture giving 15 hours of study. Food safety in catering is now taught at levels 2, 3 and 4.

As well as the core courses, LCBL offers a number of short gourmet and taster courses lasting one or more days. It also offers condensed *Cuisine* or *Pâtisserie* diploma courses, paced over six months so as to be accessible to those on Short-Term Study visas. These fast-track courses involve up to an average of 30 hours of organised study a week, including Saturdays.

3. Inspection process

The inspector made a morning visit during which he met with both the Culinary Arts Director and the Academic Development and Compliance Manager. Subsequent meetings were held with the Admissions Manager, the Planning and Examinations Officer and the administrator responsible for the school's VLE system. The visit included a tour of the extensive and impressive facilities, including the roof garden and public café.

4. Inspection history

Full inspection: 29 and 30 October 2008

Interim inspection: 1 March 2010

Full inspection 2 and 3 December 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 School has continued to develop its provision within the framework of higher education provision in the UK.

2. Response to action points in last report

Clarify hours of organised study as an average guidance figure and the status of stated QCF equivalence.

- Summary printed and online course information specifies the number of guided learning hours; a more substantial brochure published by LCBL qualifies those hours as a minimum, and representing an 'average'.
- Published information now states that each course has been "benchmarked against the . . . QCF level descriptors."

The study hours and QCF levels have been clarified.

Students must be issued with an out-of-hours contact number for emergency support.

Emergency contact numbers (medical, police, etc.) are given as part of the induction process.

Students must be advised of BAC's own complaints procedure.

The BAC complaints procedure is published as part of the induction process.

The previous report offered four recommendations, and evidence was provided that they had been addressed. The following developments were noted: internal documents are now dated to remind the administration when issued and when due for review, and graduates are invited to complete an exit questionnaire on completion of an LCBL diploma. The inspector was given a demonstration of the virtual learning environment, which offers each registered student access to a relevant set of learning materials with which to prepare or to revise, and also to gain access to his or her assessment record.

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 A review has been conducted of the School's committee structure and a report is awaited. This will have a bearing on a strategic decision on institutional and course validation. It was noted that a sub-committee of the Academic Board, the Teaching and Learning Committee, which has as its focus the sharing of best pedagogic practice, now meets more regularly and is considered more operational.				

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				
It was reported that student representatives are now more visible to their peers and that efforts are made to report back on actions taken in response to student feedback.				

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 London campus plays a leading role in the work of the worldwide network of Le Cordon Bleu institutions which, in turn, build on a well-established tradition. The School is effectively managed and staffed by permanent, well-qualified, experienced professionals. Courses are carefully designed according to well-developed syllabuses and are effectively delivered. Formative and summative assessment is thorough and there are effective systems for external validation and the moderation of results. Welfare provision is appropriate to the needs and age of the students enrolled. The premises have been generously designed and equipped for presentation of the courses, offering a pleasant, professional environment for students and staff.

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
None	

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

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