

BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (College)

INSTITUTION: Le Cordon Bleu Limited

ADDRESS: 15 Bloomsbury Square
London
WC1A 2LS

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Mr Emil Minev

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 7 December 2018

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation 28 March 2019

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

Le Cordon Bleu (LCB/the Institution) is a limited company and is based in central London. It is part of the international network of Le Cordon Bleu schools. The parent company is Le Cordon Bleu International BV, which is registered in the Netherlands.

LCB aims to inspire students to develop a passion for the culinary arts, wine and management under the direction of their Chef Instructors.

Le Cordon Bleu was founded as a culinary arts school in Paris in 1895. In 1933, a former student helped to open a school under the Le Cordon Bleu name in London. This was closed during the Second World War but reopened after the end of the war, in Marylebone, central London. Since it was established, the international reputation of Le Cordon Bleu group has spread rapidly and it now has a presence in 20 countries with 35 international schools, attended by 20,000 students a year. Students are taught by a team of experienced chefs and lecturers, the majority of whom have extensive experience in the culinary and hospitality industry, including at Michelin-starred restaurants and luxury hotels. Many are winners of prestigious awards. BAC accreditation is for the school in London only.

The Institution moved to its current premises in Bloomsbury Square in 2012. It has seven floors, including a roof garden. The cafeteria on the ground floor is open to the public as well as the students.

Since the last inspection, LCB has started to deliver a degree jointly with Birkbeck, University of London. This degree is a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in Culinary Industry Management, which started in October 2018. The course leads to a University of London degree awarded by Birkbeck.

2. Brief description of the current provision

LCB offers a wide range of face-to-face programmes in culinary arts, wine, management and hospitality. The majority are delivered over a period of three months. The Diplôme de Cuisine is an integrated programme composed of three certificates at basic, intermediate and superior levels, each of which takes three months. Integrated programmes are offered including Culinary Management and Internship Pathway options which take up to 15 months in total. The Grand Diplôme is the most prestigious culinary qualification at Le Cordon Bleu, combining study of the Diplôme de Cuisine and the Diplôme de Pâtisserie. This accredited professional chef diploma can be completed in nine months of full-time study.

Students enrol at four set points during the year for these courses and are required to have a level of English at a minimum of B2, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). LCB also offers short programmes of one day, which vary during the year. These include programmes such as Wine Essentials, Cuisine Techniques and Mastering Macaroons.

At the time of the inspection there were 371 full-time students and 15 part-time students enrolled. All were over 18 years of age and the majority were in their twenties and were female. The countries, from which the largest number of students come, are the United Kingdom, India, China and the United States of America. The remaining students come from 63 other countries.

3. Inspection process

The interim visit was conducted by one inspector over one day. Meetings were held with the Academic Director, the Academic Development and Compliance Manager and the Culinary Arts Director. The inspector held discussions with a group of students and a group of teaching and administrative staff. A tour of the premises was carried out. The inspector observed part of one demonstration and one practical class. Documentation was scrutinised. All

documentation requested was supplied in a timely manner and was easily accessible. The inspector had the full co-operation of all staff for the inspection.

4. Inspection History

Inspection Type	Date
Full Accreditation	29-30 October 2008
Interim	1 March 2010
Re-accreditation	2-3 December 2013
Interim	27 July 2015
Re-accreditation	26-27 October 2016

PART B – JUDGMENTS AND EVIDENCE

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

A BBA in Culinary Industry Management has been developed with Birkbeck, University of London. The first cohort of 12 students started in October 2018.

An internship programme has been developed. This allows students to undertake a three-month internship following their studies. It has grown from two students in 2016 to more than 140 currently, in various stages of preparation, and on placement with internship partners.

A new Level 3 Certificate in Wine and Beverage Studies has been developed, approved internally and accredited. It is planned for delivery in 2019.

An application for registration has recently been made to the Office for Students.

2. Response to actions points in last report

25.5 *Fire exit signs must be displayed in all rooms.*

Fire exit signs have been put up in all rooms and are clearly visible to staff and students. Consequently, they would know where to go in the case of an emergency evacuation.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

With the increase in staff numbers and in view of the multiplicity of staff matters it is suggested that thought be given to introducing a Human Resources officer.

A Human Resources Officer has not been recruited because it is considered that the current staff can deal appropriately with the human resources matters that arise.

It is recommended, for transparency, that BAC's name and logo is used on LBC's promotional material.

The BAC logo is now on the website.

It is considered that in view of the maturity of the student cohort, and their responsibility to own their learning, there could be a case for their individual attendance record being available through their personal student portal.

The student portal includes access to the student's attendance record.

Notwithstanding the fact that student accommodation is through third parties, occasional feedback as to its standard would be helpful.

The end of term survey requests feedback on students' accommodation, when in private rental or hostel accommodation. To date, no comments have been received that have warranted any action.

Consideration be given to a meet and greet policy for students arriving by air at London's airports.

LCB considers it impractical to arrange a meet and greet service for students arriving by air. The students arrive individually at different times, and have previously been supplied with information about how to travel from the

different airports in to London. This decision will be reviewed if a significant number of requests are received for such a service.

It is accepted that LCB undertakes career development for students but further opportunities to develop work experience might be considered.

Opportunities for work experience for students have been developed through the Internship Pathway programmes. These support students with specific career advice throughout their studies and allow them to undertake a three-month internship on graduation.

Currently the administration area, including chef lecturers, is tight for space and whilst there are benefits with working closely more room would be helpful for staff productivity, including consideration of a separate office for the Principal.

The current open-plan office remains unchanged, and all the directors and the Principal have workspaces among the wider team, which includes chef lecturers. This facilitates communication and collaborative working. Private meeting spaces are available for sensitive meetings. Therefore, the current space is adequate and fit for purpose.

4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

4.1 Management, Staffing and Administration (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met

Partially Met

Not Met

Comments

Clear channels of communication between staff allow for everyone to be aware of developments. The experienced administrators have clear roles, which are well understood. This supports the effective running of LCB. Policies are documented in the Quality Manual and the Staff Handbook. They are suitably understood, so supporting a shared understanding of the provision.

Staff performance is reviewed in an annual appraisal, with a six-monthly review. This ensures that staff members are likely to achieve their goals. It also effectively supports individuals' development and improvements to the provision.

The website is of an excellent standard and includes detailed and up-to-date information on the courses on offer. In this way, students are able to make informed choices. Students are briefed on course requirements prior to application and evidence is required of language ability, so as to ensure likelihood of success.

The attendance and lateness policies are known to all students. Attendance requirements are high, and any absences are followed up promptly. Consequently, attendance rates are excellent.

Students report that the punctuality policy is not being consistently implemented, so reducing the effectiveness of the policy.

Quality systems are excellent. Feedback is gained from students in their tutorials and in an end-of-course questionnaire. This data is collated and analysed, with action being taken, as appropriate. Minutes are taken of the regular meetings with the Student Focus Groups. These minutes are circulated to staff and put on the student portal so that everyone is appropriately informed. These quality systems lead to detailed action planning, which is carefully monitored. The measures in place support the continuing improvement of the provision.

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Courses are designed and delivered so as to enable students to succeed. They are supported by high quality manuals for all courses across Le Cordon Bleu group of schools. These are regularly updated to ensure their relevance. In this way a standardised curriculum is delivered.

Students are enabled to develop independent learning skills through the course design. They are expected to take their own notes of the recipes and from the demonstrations they observe. Their success at making the dishes thereafter is supported by their effectiveness in taking these notes.

Chef Instructors have all achieved highly as chefs in the industry. LCB requires them to undertake a teaching qualification to give them the knowledge and confidence to teach. Consequently, the highest standards of teaching and specialist knowledge and experience are made available to students. The teaching observed during the inspection was of an excellent standard. Chef Instructors were engaging and students motivated to learn.

Students are required to keep a student evaluation journal to better understand their on-going progress. At the end of every practical, students have a one-to-one debrief with the Chef Instructor. At the end of the course, after the examination, students have an individual debrief. These measures support the students' development and allow them to be aware of their progress and achievement. The excellent academic software used throughout the organisation allows for reports on student assessments to be uploaded daily. As a result, the staff are up-to-date with students' progress.

LCB courses have been verified against the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) and are accredited by national awarding organisation NCFE. This allows for a clear understanding of the levels of courses for employment purposes or for moving to another course, including in the Le Cordon Bleu group. LCB has a formal agreement with Birkbeck, University of London for the joint delivery of their new degree for which LCB supplies the practical training and related culinary modules and Birkbeck the management and business content. The degree is awarded by the university.

The internship pathway is highly effective in affording students relevant experience in a range of quality institutions in the sector, with which LCB has excellent links. LCB is able to support students in the search for employment, matching students with the right type of institution in order to fulfil the students' aspirations. As a result, the internship pathway has grown very quickly and is effectively enhancing the high standards of the provision.

4.3 Student Welfare (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Students are provided with excellent academic support from the Chef Instructors and can access personal support if required. However, students are unaware of who specifically to go to if they have a personal problem when the Chef Instructors are not available, thus reducing levels of support. The vast majority of students reported that they did not need access to pastoral support.

A suitable policy relating to bullying is in place. Due to the nature of the hierarchical system of staff in kitchens, bullying is an area of concern for the hospitality sector. Therefore, to further support the anti-bullying policy, staff have attended a development workshop from a specialist organisation to support a deeper understanding of mental health issues.

On arrival, students receive an appropriate induction, which helps them settle in quickly. A Student Handbook specifically aimed at international students is sent to international students before arrival. The majority of the information in the handbook relates to accommodation. This reduces the usefulness of the document in

supporting international students to know about different aspects of life in London. However, advice is available from staff during their course, if necessary and the general Student Handbook contains much useful information.

A buddy system is used which has a positive impact for new students at the start of the course. However, this is not implemented consistently as it depends on the availability of one member of staff, who might not be available. This limits the effectiveness of the system.

An informative monthly student newspaper keeps students briefed on developments in the LCB group of schools.

Chefs have all undertaken a first aid course, with a minority being Advanced First Aiders. This effectively promotes the safety of students and staff.

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Access to LCB is appropriately secured through an excellent security system which reads individual fingerprints.

The premises are clean, bright and in an excellent state of decoration. Standards of heating and ventilation are appropriate. The spacious reception area is suitable for receiving visitors. Consequently, the premises provide an extremely comfortable working and learning environment.

Guidance on health and safety is of high importance for both staff and students. Information is made available to students at induction and in the Student Handbook. The Staff Handbook contains relevant information. In this way the safety of all is promoted.

The two demonstration rooms and five kitchens are furnished to extremely high standards, allowing for the effective delivery of courses. The cafeteria on the ground floor and an outside space, which can be used in the summer, provide a suitable environment for staff and students to consume food. The food provided is high quality and is prepared on site.

A student relaxation area is appropriately equipped. A small library offers students a quiet place to work. These facilities effectively support the needs of students.

4.5 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

The high standard of the course manuals effectively supports the curriculum, which is standardised across all the institutions in the group.

The system of collating and analysing feedback and the associated action planning clearly highlight areas that need improvement to support on-going improvements in the provision.

The premises provide an excellent working and learning environment.

The internship programme provides students with a high-quality experience.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT *(to be reviewed at the next inspection)*

It is recommended that all staff consistently implement the punctuality policy so all students are treated equally and to support the improvement of punctuality.

Management should review the support available for students, especially in relation to personal issues, to ensure that they are adequately supported throughout their course if needed.

The Institution should consider reviewing the Student Handbook for international students to ensure its suitability in terms of usefulness of information provided.

It is recommended that the buddy system is offered consistently at the start of each term to all students who sign up to the programme in order to support their settling in.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS - FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE