

BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Independent Higher Education)

INSTITUTION: Boston Media House

ADDRESS: Head Office
137 11th Street
Parkmore
Johannesburg 2196
South Arica

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Mr Mike Thoms

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 11-12 April 2019

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation, 16 July 2019

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

Boston Media House (BMH/the Institution) is a private higher institution which specialises in the field of media studies. Courses are delivered in Pretoria and Durban with the head office site of delivery located in Johannesburg.

The vision for BMH is to provide the best quality education and training in an exciting and modern environment. This is to enhance, uplift and continuously improve the quality of media and design education and training in South Africa. The aim of the Institution is to provide vocationally oriented education in the fields of media, design and communication.

Boston Media House is governed by a Board of Directors (BoD) which has five members, four of whom are also shareholders in the company. The Board also acts as the Board of Directors for Boston City Campus and Business College (BCC). The institutions share a number of central services, including Human Resources (HR), finance, marketing, public relations, Information Technology (IT) support and registry. They are the subject of separate BAC inspection reports.

BMH was established in 1994 as a division of BCC at a campus in Sandton, Johannesburg, which remains the main point of delivery. In 2010, two further campuses were opened in Arcadia, near Pretoria and in Umhlanga, near Durban. In January 2017, the Umhlanga campus was closed, and provision moved to a site in central Durban which is also used by BCC.

BMH is registered with the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) as a Private Higher Education and Further Education Institution. It is accredited by the national Council of Higher Education (CHE), the body responsible for the accreditation of higher education programmes and providers in South Africa.

At the time of the inspection, the BoD was discussing the potential for further consolidation of the two brands, BMH and BCC, but no decision has yet been made.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Institution offers one Bachelor's degree in Business Administration in Media Operations Management, a Diploma in Media Practices and two short courses, in Radio Presenting as well as Production and in Television Production. It also offers a Short Learning Access Programme. All programmes are available both full time and part time.

The CHE has given approval for two further programmes to be offered, a BA in Broadcast Journalism and a Diploma in Radio and Television Production. Registration with the South African Qualifications Authority is awaited before the final DHET registration can be completed and students recruited.

At the time of the inspection there were 1743 full-time and 120 part-time students registered on the programmes. There is an expected further intake of students in the summer semester. Just over half of the students are female. The majority of students are South African citizens, with a very small minority from neighbouring African countries. All students are over the age of 18.

There are currently 15 full-time and 48 part-time teaching staff, 13 full-time management staff, 40 administrative staff and 30 other staff such as cleaners and security guards.

The standard entry requirement is a National Senior Certificate (NSC) or equivalent. For the Bachelor's and Diploma programmes, applicants must also have an appropriate endorsement, indicating some relevant specialist studies. All NSC applicants must be at least 18 years of age. Applications can be made at any time during the year, and entry is at the beginning of each semester. The academic year runs from February to December.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was undertaken over one and a half days by one inspector. One day was spent at the Durban campus and a half day at the Johannesburg campus and Head Office. Meetings were held with senior staff, students, teaching staff and non-teaching staff in Durban, as well as with senior staff in Johannesburg. Parts of two teaching sessions were observed at the Durban campus. Documentation provided in support of the response to the Action Points and Recommendations was scrutinised. A tour of the Durban campus was undertaken. The information supplied to support the inspection was comprehensive and the Institution was cooperative and open in its approach to the inspection.

4. Inspection History

Inspection Type	Date
Full Accreditation	5-7 March 2018

PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgments and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution.

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

There have been no substantial changes to the Institution since the original accreditation inspection. However, the BoD is currently considering the potential for consolidation of the BMH and BCC brands to form a single new institution. This has approval in principle from the DHET. A Strategic Management Committee has been established to explore the proposal in more detail.

2. Response to actions points in last report

10.2 Contracts of academic staff must include the requirement to undertake one or more of the following: research, scholarship and professional practice, to ensure that the provision fully meets the expected standards

The academic staff contracts do not include a requirement to undertake any of the following: research, scholarship or professional practice. However, the Institution has identified the need for a capacity building approach and has identified external expertise to assist them in establishing this. In this regard, the Institution has decided to establish a Research Committee is being created to take forward appropriate steps in order to meet this action point. This is an appropriate and considered approach to meeting the key indicator.

10.4 BMH must articulate protocols and guidance on the allocation of financial support for staff research and professional activities and ensure the guidance is clearly accessible to all staff, in order to enhance transparency

While some support is available for staff wishing to pursue research, this is not formalised, although academic staff understand how to apply for funding and indicated that they had applied successfully. The current arrangement is appropriate although it is anticipated that the newly established Research Committee will take responsibility for formalising the research funding policy.

25.4 BMH must better integrate the operation and academic sides of programme review in order to obtain full benefit from the DHE reports

A new senior committee has been established to ensure that both a qualitative and quantitative analysis of programmes is undertaken. New templates have been developed for course and programme annual review. A centralised survey system has been developed to capture all feedback systematically. These templates are currently being trialled and will be implemented for this academic year, by December 2019. This will ensure that a comprehensive approach to programme quality is undertaken.

26.3 BMH must develop a system to ensure that stakeholders are systematically informed of the action taken in response to their feedback

Regular reports are made to the Student Management Committee and to staff meetings. Posters are displayed around the campuses outlining actions taken. An Annual Report is being developed for external publication to ensure that all those interested in the development of BMH are kept informed. Staff responsible for liaison with employers are required to provide feedback information. Students felt that the system enabled them to feel that their views are taken seriously.

27.2 27.3 BMH must take forward plans to capture enhancements systematically to ensure no opportunities are lost to enhance provision

In 2018, a new shared Academic Planning and Development Unit (APDU) was established to provide support for quality assurance and enhancement. The establishment of the APDU to oversee the delivery of the Institution's

own Improvement Action Plan (IAP) ensures that there are clear lines of responsibility for setting targets and developing action plans. Together with the revised committee structure and the improved data capture and analysis tools, this ensures that enhancement is central to all activity.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

BMH is encouraged to use the outcomes of the new information management system to capture more systematically the views of staff and students, and to ensure it brings all the data together in one area thus maximising the benefits of the considerable expertise of staff, the views of students and of the information systems so as to ensure no opportunities are lost for enhancing the provision

The Institution has introduced a number of new processes, templates and structures to ensure that all data captured is now considered systematically. This will provide a sound basis for future programme reviews.

It is recommended that BMH enables students to submit assignments on-line to alleviate the necessity for them to travel to the campus for the purpose of handing in an assignment

The Institution has begun trialling this option. For many students, on-line submission is not possible as internet access is not available at home. However, BMH is continuing to consider how to support students in this way.

It is recommended that BMH extend opening hours, particularly on Tenth Street, to provide better computer access for students to complete their work

The Institution has extended the opening hours of specialist facilities for the periods leading up to the submission date for assignments. It also opens premises during periods when the electricity is cut off in certain areas to limit the demand on the grid. Students appreciate the assistance this gives them in preparing assignments.

The institution should provide consistent and clear information about the bursary scheme, the criteria attached to it and the application process to ensure all students are fully aware of the opportunity they offer and when they can apply

A clear and comprehensive handbook has been published giving detailed information on the bursary scheme and how to apply. Students indicated that they knew about the bursaries and the system.

It is recommended that BMH maximise the potential of IT resources to provide blended learning opportunities so that students who have constraints on attendance have greater flexibility for studying the theoretical aspects of their course

A trial has been undertaken in using on-line only and blended learning for some courses. Further work is being undertaken to examine the potential. The Institution is known for the practical and work-oriented delivery of courses, which require student attendance and participation. The lack of internet for most students at home also limits the potential for extensive use of on-line resources.

BMH is recommended to actively promote the benefits to students of organising their own clubs and societies

Students are encouraged to come forward with ideas for clubs and societies and are introduced to those which already exist during induction. This has led to students enthusiastically taking up the opportunity, with clubs such as the Movie Club, through which students watch and then debate the technical aspects of the chosen film. One interesting initiative is the establishment of a safe space that provides an opportunity for new students or those with problems to be mentored and advised by older students. Students found this a very useful aid to their studies.

It is recommended that BMH makes sure that the Academic Management Committee reviews the programme accreditation annual reports so as to engage institutional stakeholders more fully in the process of management and review

A number of actions have been undertaken, ranging from the preparation of the Annual Report to the establishment of a new Academic Board to ensure that there is wider participation in quality assurance and enhancement.

4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

4.1 Governance, Strategy and Financial Management (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Institution is led by a strong and effective Board which is now enhanced by the development of an Academic Board and Strategic Management Committee (SMC) to consider future structures and priorities and oversee quality enhancement. The Board provides clear direction for the Institution and is supported by an Academic Board which operates effectively to ensure that academic quality is maintained. The new SMC is tasked with concentrating in particular on ensuring that any future structure maintains the individual character and quality of each partner. This provides a clear and effective division of responsibilities

The environment for higher education in South Africa is highly regulated, requiring institutions to establish equal opportunity policies and meet specific quotas in the areas of gender, disability and ethnicity.

4.2 Academic Management and Administration (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The increasingly collaborative role of the Academic Managers is appreciated by tutors as supporting their delivery and professional development. The Academic Managers coordinate and lead the development of teaching, learning, and assessment tasks, in each subject area, to ensure that provision is consistent across the three campuses of the Institution. They have overall responsibility for content and provision of learning materials. Tutors are strongly supportive of the collaborative way in which the Managers are now working to achieve this.

4.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Teaching staff were supportive of the Academic Conferences held each semester which provide an opportunity to learn about new developments in teaching, learning and assessment, which improves performance in the classroom.

10.2 The academic staff contracts do not include a requirement to undertake research, scholarship or professional practice. A Research Committee is being created to take forward appropriate steps in order to meet this action point and to support and encourage the academic staff to undertake this activity. This is an appropriate and considered approach to meeting the key indicator.

10.4 There is funding available to support research, and staff indicated that they had applied successfully for this. It is intended that the new Research Committee develops a formal policy and procedures for funding research and scholarship.

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

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

New guides have been developed for students on matters such as the bursary scheme, accommodation, and information for international students. These guides are comprehensive and well written, and students indicated that they find them helpful.

4.5 Premises, Facilities and Learning Resources (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

A refurbishment programme is in progress at the Durban campus which will further enhance both the learning facilities and other facilities such as bathrooms. A recent comprehensive survey of library resources and provision has informed the policy for the further development of the library.

4.6 Quality Management, Assurance and Enhancement (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The establishment of the APDU and the development of action plans to deliver the IAP form a sound basis for further quality enhancement.

4.7 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated. Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

The IAP provides a comprehensive self-assessment together with a clear action plan which enables progress to be measured effectively.

The APDU is effective in supporting the delivery of the IAP.

Teaching staff have a strong industry background and provide up-to-date learning for students.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

10.2 The Institution must ensure that contracts appropriately encourage the academic staff to undertake one or more of the following: research, scholarship or professional practice.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low
10.4 A policy and procedures for funding research and scholarship must be developed.	<input type="checkbox"/> High <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low

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

BMH should continue to develop its research capacity and expand opportunities for staff to undertake research and scholarship.

The Institution should continue to examine the potential for blended learning and the use of technology in learning.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS - FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE

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