



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Independent Higher Education)

INSTITUTION: IMI International Management Institute

ADDRESS: Seeacherweg 1
6047 Kastanienbaum
CH 6047
Switzerland

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Professor Theodore Benetatos

DATE OF INSPECTION: 4 September 2019

ACCREDITATION STATUS AT INSPECTION: Accredited

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: 28 November 2019

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

International Management Institute (IMI/the Institution) is a family-owned, private company, which is located in the outskirts of Luzern in Switzerland. The Institution was established in 1991.

IMI's campus is located a few miles outside Luzern in a largely residential area but within easy access to Luzern. Most students are resident on campus with some students residing in external accommodation organised by IMI.

IMI delivers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes which aim to provide its students with a high-quality learning experience, encompassing academic, professional and personal development. This provision aims to prepare them for careers in the hospitality and service industries as well as wider business industries with the addition of business programmes in 2019.

The composition of the staff is international, with its members representing about 20 nations and educated mainly in the United Kingdom (UK) or the United States of America (USA). The Board of Directors comprises three family members, including the President and Vice-President and one member of staff.

Similarly, the student body composition is international with a particularly significant number coming from south and south-east Asia. The Institution is making inroads to the African and South American markets with a view to expanding the number of students coming from these geographical areas.

The programmes have a significant practical component, which require students to spend periods of time in paid internships, in Switzerland or abroad. The Institution has thus developed strong partnerships with a wide range of organisations, who are drawn mainly from the hospitality industry and who work with IMI in the provision of these internships. Teaching is conducted exclusively in English.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Institution has three collaborative partners, the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH) for Level 7 programme in hospitality and events, Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) for its tourism, hospitality and business programmes, including a Master in Business Administration (MBA) which is currently being phased out, and Oxford Brookes University (OBU) for its programmes in the culinary arts. The provision with MMU and OBU, which is delivered under validation agreements, was revalidated in 2018 and both partners subjected IMI to periodic reviews in 2018. The revalidation and periodic review events all resulted in positive outcomes. The centre accreditation with CTH was renewed successfully also in 2019.

The provision, which is delivered exclusively face-to-face, is designed to facilitate student progression from a starting point on IMI's own Level 3 Certificate in International Hotel and Tourism Management through a range of linked diploma, higher diploma and bachelor programmes, to MBA level. Students may exit with the relevant qualification at any of the stages of their studies. The final bachelor stage of the MMU awards offers students the opportunity to pursue one of five pathways. The OBU provision leads to a single Bachelor of Arts (BA) award. All students study full-time.

IMI is currently further widening its portfolio by gaining approval from Luzern Canton to offer a three-year Swiss professional degree. This programme is now in its third year and is up for federal recognition in 2020.

At the time of the inspection, there were 110 students enrolled. There are 77 undergraduate students and six MBA students enrolled on MMU programmes, 27 on OBU programmes and six on the CTH programme. The majority of the students are female and a very large majority of the students fall within the age range of 18 to 25

years. The majority of the students originate from South East Asian countries with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Russia, Ukraine and Saudi Arabia providing one or two students each.

Undergraduate programmes typically enrol four cohorts a year and postgraduate programmes enrol two cohorts a year.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was conducted by a senior inspector over the course of one day. The inspection included meetings with senior management, academic and support staff, students and teaching staff. One teaching observation took place and a review of a wide range of documentation was undertaken. The Institution was wholly co-operative both before and during the inspection and all meetings were held in a collegiate manner.

4. Inspection History

Inspection Type	Date
Full Accreditation	6-7 April 2009
Interim	21 June 2010
Re-accreditation	15-16 April 2013
Interim	17 February 2016
Re-accreditation	13-14 June 2017

PART B – JUDGMENTS 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

IMI delivers high-quality programmes which effectively prepare its students for careers in hospitality and tourism. The main change which has taken place since the last inspection concerns the diversification of its portfolio of programmes in support of the Institution's strategic aim of sustaining and increasing the size of its student population. This has resulted in the introduction of programmes in business and management from September 2019. The full impact of this will not be felt until September 2020 because of the nature of the first year of study which is common across the whole portfolio of undergraduate provision. Therefore, IMI is planning relevant staff development and recruitment which includes the appointment of a specific Business and Management Programme Leader to coincide with this time frame.

This change necessitated the review and revalidation of all IMI's MMU-validated provision, including the MBA, which took place in 2018. At the same time, a similar revalidation of its OBU provision took place but with very minor revisions. Periodic reviews also took place with both these collaborative partners during 2018. The reports of these reviews were both wholly positive with a raft of commendations, no conditions and only minor recommendations.

One minor change concerns the delivery of the MBA. This was previously delivered over 12 months with six months being taught on campus and the remaining six months being devoted to the completion of the dissertation which was undertaken off campus and normally back in the students' home country. This has now been revised so that students spend the entire 12 months on campus. This has the benefit of enabling IMI to enhance its support for students undertaking the dissertation and also enables students to remain in Switzerland and work for one year after graduation. Part of a strategic decision, the MBA programme has been cancelled and will be replaced with a pathway-based Master of Science programme. This will also be validated and will provide more flexibility in recruitment as well as programme diversity.

The Level 7 programme awarded by CTH, which at the time of the last inspection had not recruited students, has been revised and in September 2019 recruited a small number of students. The aim of this provision is to attract students who are eligible for a postgraduate programme but who do not have the necessary work experience required by an MBA.

IMI has approval from the Luzern Canton to offer a three-year Swiss professional degree and has successfully recruited up to year 3 on the programme. This development is regarded as being prestigious and testimony to the high professional regard with which the Institution is placed within the Swiss higher education context.

2. Response to actions points in last report

There were no action points in the last report.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

It is recommended that the Institution considers individual actions points in the round, rather than standalone issues, in order to reflect the wider picture. This would aid identification of key development priorities across programmes and the formation of action plans to address these wider issues.

This recommendation has been addressed as evidenced by specific reference to the consideration of individual actions points in the round within the 2017 to 2019 Business Plan and the monitoring of relevant action plans. This clearly demonstrate the Institution's holistic approach to recording and monitoring required actions.

IMI should complete the process of updating all documentation to include IMI's new title.

This recommendation has been addressed and the Institution is following its own formal procedures which are contained within its quality management manual. This assures the accuracy of all published information.

IMI is recommended to accelerate its implementation of the staff appraisal scheme to cover all staff, part time and full time, and to remove the option for staff to defer for one year.

IMI has clarified its appraisal scheme which is articulated within the staff handbook. This provides for annual appraisals for all staff, although, in practice, appraisals tend to take place every two years with an option for an annual appraisal to take place at the request of either appraiser or appraisee. The appraisal template is very detailed and provides for an initial assessment by the staff member and takes into account a variety of external feedback including that received from students and external examiners.

The Institution should clarify the nature of the teaching observation scheme and ensure that all staff undergo observation.

IMI's teaching observation process is now clearly outlined within its quality manual handbook and this requires peer observation to take place for all teaching staff annually. The process is comprehensive and includes a pre-meeting between observer and observee to discuss the learning and teaching strategy of the module and the details of the session to be observed. A detailed pro-forma is used to record the observation and a post-observation meeting provides the opportunity for a discussion about the merits of the session and what could be developed for the future. Whilst the outcomes remain confidential between the observer and the observee, IMI is satisfied that the process provides for the sharing of good practice and team meetings provide a forum for this. The outcomes of teaching observation are not, however, taken into account through the appraisal process.

IMI should consider devising a means of capturing and sharing the valuable work placement experience among other students and staff.

The Institution has implemented a number of measures aimed at capitalising on the outcomes of work placement for the benefit of staff and students. Students returning from work placement now present their experiences to new students during induction week. Several times a year, students are invited to write testimonials about their experience which are then shared. Organisations providing work placements, who attend the IMI careers fairs, are encouraged to talk about their experiences of having an IMI student with them. The employer post-placement student evaluation is shared across the Institution including at staff team meetings. Finally, the Institution has joined an online sharing platform specifically for the hospitality industry through which staff and students can seek feedback from students and organisations about work placement experiences.

The Institution should consider providing more feedback guidance on student submitted work to show what they need to do to improve.

One key development is beginning to enhance the quality of feedback and this is the implementation of a marking sheet which is produced for each assessment and which clearly details the assessment criteria, marks to be awarded for each area and a clear descriptor matching each grading band. There is also space for individual written comments. The most recent external examiner reports for the MMU provision include wholly positive comments about the marking systems generally and in particular the quality of feedback making comments such as informative and detailed feedback. Students also commented favourably on the quality of the feedback, stated how helpful it is to them in future assessments and praised the use of the marking sheet. Work remains to be done, however, with regard to the OBU culinary arts provision where the use of the marking sheet has not been universal resulting in adverse external examiner comments for one module.

It is recommended that IMI consider ensuring greater consistency in students' access to academic tutorials across programmes.

Formalised tutorial sessions are now included in programme timetables and formal sessions for matters such as referencing and academic writing are scheduled during induction. Students are satisfied with the tutorial arrangements provided for them.

IMI should examine the feasibility of installing an electronic security system in the library to allow extended access to the provision.

This matter has been explored by IMI with the result that it has been found to be neither feasible nor financially viable given the size of the Institution. Accessibility is not an issue and students commented favourably on the access they have to learning resources where most are available online.

IMI should monitor practice in the sector to ensure that students continue to have access to industry-standard software.

New hardware and software of industry standard has been installed as appropriate. The Institution's close links with industry mean that it is able to keep up to date with Information Technology (IT) developments and ensure that its programmes reflect these.

It is recommended that the Institution enhances briefings for work placement employers to obtain wider ranging feedback, not only on the individual student but also on the programme's characteristics, such as the knowledge and skills base, and IMI itself.

IMI has continued its practice of obtaining feedback from employers via an evaluation form at the end of each work placement and, through this, it also seeks feedback on wider matters. Furthermore, employer feedback of a more general nature is sought during the careers fairs and through the ongoing dialogue IMI has with those in the industry. The planned establishment of an advisory committee, that will meet annually and comprise of five to six employers, will further enhance the opportunities to gain feedback.

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 approach to the formulation of the strategy has continued with extensive consultation taking place during the formulation stages involving staff, students and external stakeholders. MMU commended IMI, during the recent revalidation, for its leadership and strategic planning.

The completion of the annual review which reflects on internal audits, stakeholder feedback, the general performance of the organisation within its environment and the assessment of its progress in achieving its objectives and targets, results in a comprehensive and critically evaluative report and is clearly a strength of IMI's overall governance and management.

Similarly, the approach to risk management is comprehensive and detailed.

4.2 Academic Management and Administration (spot check)

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

Comments

The Institution continues to benefit from effective administrative and academic management which is supported by the implementation of a range of comprehensive policies and procedures. These are clearly outlined in the quality management manual and the staff handbook.

4.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

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

Comments

Students continue to comment positively on their experiences of learning and teaching at the Institution which they describe as engaging. They particularly praise the dedication of their tutors, the easy access they have to them and appreciate the industry-specific experience which they bring to the classroom.

MMU also commended IMI, at its revalidation, for the academic support it offers students and the personalised feedback which they receive. The work placement is found to be highly beneficial in enabling students to understand the relationship between theory and practice and their experiences are well utilised within the modules.

Peer observation takes place as a matter of course but the small size of the academic staff base makes communication across programmes and modules relatively easy so that good practice can be shared. Academic staff take an effective, self-reflective approach to their teaching which benefits the enhancement of teaching practice across the Institution and regular team meetings contribute effectively to this.

The use of the newly introduced marking sheet is contributing positively to the overall rigour of the assessment marking process and is a clear strength.

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

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

Comments

IMI is continuing its approaches to the recruitment and admission of students with the aim of ensuring that it recruits students with the appropriate qualifications and motivations to benefit from their academic experience.

The Institution employs well tried and tested processes to ensure that students, who are entirely international, are well inducted and supported throughout their time at IMI.

Students commented favourably on the support they receive and the family atmosphere which they find so helpful. MMU commended IMI, during the revalidation process, on its exemplary pastoral support.

4.5 Premises, Facilities and Learning Resources (spot check)

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

Comments

IMI occupies a pleasant campus which provides staff, students and visitors with a safe and secure environment. Students commented favourably on the facilities which they have at their disposal and the access to learning resources.

4.6 Quality Management, Assurance and Enhancement (spot check)

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

Comments

The Institution's approach to academic quality management continues to ensure that it seeks and addresses feedback from students, formally monitors the delivery of its modules and programmes, and operates a secure assessment regime which includes effective processes for internal and external moderation.

Of particular note is the unit tutor review reports which are completed at the end of the delivery of each module and which are provided to the external examiner.

The positive outcomes of the revalidation with MMU and the periodic reviews with MMU and OBU are testimony to the Institution's professional approach to the management of quality and the sustaining of academic standards.

4.7 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated. Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

The leadership of IMI, the strategic planning process, and the production of the annual review report which is based on sound data. This enables the Institution to assess its performance and effectively plan for the future.

The critical and self-reflective approach taken by teaching staff and the way in which this facilitates the sharing of good practice.

The close professional supporting relationship between staff and students who value the calibre of academic staff and the easy access they have to them which enhances their personal and academic progress.

The progress made on enhancing feedback to students on assessment and in particular the implementation of the marking sheet which ensures that students receive detailed feedback to help them improve performance in subsequent assessments.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

High Medium Low

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

It is recommended that IMI keeps the peer observation scheme under review to ensure that good practice continues to be identified and disseminated.

The Institution is recommended to consider the benefits of enabling the outcomes of peer observation to feed into the staff appraisal process.

It is recommended that IMI ensures the comprehensive use of the marking sheet on all modules in the culinary arts provision.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS - FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE