

BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (College/ODBL)

INSTITUTION: Institute for Optimum Nutrition

ADDRESS: Ambassador House
Paradise Road
Richmond
London
TW9 1SQ

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Ms Christina Mansi

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 8 November 2019

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: 30 January 2020

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

The Institute of Optimum Nutrition (ION/the Provider) was established 35 years ago. It is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee offering a range of diploma and short courses in nutrition. Its work is directed by the Board of Trustees, consisting of a Chair and five other trustees. The trustees delegate the work of the charity to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO is supported by a management team consisting of the Dean, the Finance Manager and the Business Manager. The senior management team reports to the Board of Trustees.

The charity's objectives are to advance the education of public and health professionals in all matters relating to nutrition and to the preservation and protection of health of the general public by giving advice and assistance, and where necessary treatment, through nutrition. The primary means by which ION seeks to achieve its objectives is through the training of registered Nutritional Therapists in the principles and practice of optimum nutrition, as complementary to orthodox medicine.

The Nutritional Therapy Diploma course is conducted in accordance with the guidance set by the regulator, the Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council (CHNC), together with its accrediting body, the Nutrition and Lifestyle Medicine Nutritional Therapy Education Commission (NTEC) and the professional body, the British Association for Nutrition and Lifestyle Medicine (BANT). ION also provides a non-accredited science access course.

The Provider's main office is in Richmond upon Thames in south west London. The Nutritional Therapy Science Access course and clinical practice training of the Nutritional Therapy Diploma course are delivered in training rooms in the premises in Richmond. There are also four clinic rooms and a library on the premises. Weekend sessions are delivered in central London at the Ambassadors Hotel in Bloomsbury.

2. Brief description of the current provision

ION offers the Nutritional Therapy course exit is at Level 6. The Nutritional Therapy Science Access course is offered at Level 3 and provides students with the science background needed to progress to the Nutritional Therapy Diploma course. The Nutritional Therapy practicing diploma is NTEC accredited with an intermediate award in Nutritional Studies Certificate, which is non-practising. ION also offers a non-accredited Nutritional Therapy Science Access certificate. All these courses are delivered part-time. The duration of the diploma courses can range from three to six years and the science access course from six months to two years. Half of the third year of the diploma is dedicated to supervised clinical practice supported by taught modules.

The Provider is a centre accredited by the Nutritional Therapy Education Council of the United Kingdom and since September 2018 has been an approved centre of the awarding body QUALIFI, which has endorsed the Level 6 modules of the diploma.

Courses are delivered face to face and through the provision of video materials, webinars and the live streaming of lectures. ION also provides clients with access to supervised training clinics and offers students opportunities to conduct clinic observations.

ION also provides Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to the general public by means of food demonstration, education days, nutrition and allied professions. This provision does not form part of BAC accreditation.

At the time of the inspection, there were 374 full-time and 60 part-time students enrolled. The majority are female and come from the United Kingdom. A minority are from other countries, particularly from Europe. All students are over the age of 18 years.

Students may enrol for the diploma course in September, which is delivered face to face and online, and in February which is delivered online only. The access course offered in October and January is delivered face to face and online while the course offered in May is delivered online only. Enrolment is on the basis of prior learning and experience.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was conducted by one inspector over one day. Meetings were held with senior managers, teaching and administrative staff. A meeting with students took place online. A clinical consultation and feedback session were observed via a video link. A tour of the premises was carried out. Documentation was scrutinised. All documentation requested was supplied on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and was easily accessible. The inspector had full cooperation of all staff for the inspection.

4. Inspection History

Inspection Type	Date
Full Accreditation	29 November 2018

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

There were no significant changes since the last inspection.

2. Response to actions points in last report

There were no actions points in the previous report.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

There were no recommendations in the previous report.

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

The management structure of the Provider is clearly defined and is understood by all staff. Senior managers are suitably qualified and experienced, resulting in a well-run organisation.

Clear channels of communication exist between management and staff. Regular staff meetings take place, which staff consider highly effective in keeping them up to date. Weekly team meetings provide opportunities for updates and feedback on activity. However, regular team meetings do not consistently occur in all teams to ensure that all staff are well supported.

Administrators are suitably experienced and understand their specific duties, allowing for the effective running of the Provider.

Staff performance is reviewed every six to eight weeks. Setting of goals supports both individual and organisational development and drives up standards in the provision.

Information provided in the prospectus and on the website is detailed and gives a comprehensive description of the provision. The information allows students to make appropriate choices of course. However, the information is inaccurate in stating that the British Accreditation Council (BAC) accredits the courses.

Entry requirements are set for both the diploma and access courses and made available in publicity materials. Applicants who do not have qualifications in a science subject are required to follow the access course before being accepted onto the diploma course so as to support their achievement.

Students commented on the detailed and helpful information given prior to enrolment which helped their understanding of the courses and course requirements.

For students whose first language is not English, a score of 7.0 is required in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) for entry onto the diploma course and 6.0 for entry onto the access course.

Feedback on the provision is obtained through twice yearly meetings of the student and staff liaison group, through student support groups organised on social media, and via the online forums. These mechanisms are

highly effective in keeping management up to date with student views. The minutes of the student and staff liaison group meetings are reviewed by managers and appropriate action taken to support the driving up of quality standards. Students are suitably informed of action taken via online postings.

A detailed annual report includes information on student satisfaction, retention, achievement and completion rates. This helpfully keeps managers and trustees informed of the developments and successes of the provision.

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

A highly experienced and knowledgeable academic management team, that includes the Dean, the Head of Courses, Head of Science Access, Year Leaders, and Module Leaders, ensures the high quality of courses delivered. Training clinics and academic support workshops take place in the Richmond premises and face to face classes at a hotel in Bloomsbury. In this way, appropriate rooms are allocated for the different elements of the courses.

Course planning takes into account the different types of students on the courses, with flexibility to extend the diploma, if necessary. Courses are delivered to allow students maximum access to information through lecture recordings, VLE, live streaming, webinars and workshops. The quality of the lecture recordings is very high and clear outcomes support effective learning. Learners reported that the VLE was not always easy to negotiate, though changes have been made to make it more user friendly. Learners consider that the VLE has too much information, with some not being relevant and that information is not always uploaded quickly enough. As a result, learning is not as effective as it could be. Inspection findings confirm this view.

Each module delivered is supported by an interactive unit, which has click-through resources to further embed learning. Consequently, students are motivated and develop a good understanding of the topics.

Academic support on offer is excellent. Students are guided to develop study skills, with particular focus on essay writing, research and referencing, and managing case studies. This is reinforced by activities on the VLE, which has an effective study skills section. Consequently, students are supported to develop independent learning skills.

The Provider is particularly attentive to any additional learning needs of students. The Support Manager provides extra support for these students. Teaching staff have been trained on how to identify such students to ensure maximum possibilities of success.

Teachers are suitably qualified. Their excellent subject knowledge allows them to deliver courses to a high standard. This was confirmed by students.

Staff feel well supported in relation to their continuous professional development. They are offered the opportunity to obtain a master's degree. For those interested, management training is offered. This results in the ongoing development of staff.

Assessment schedules have deadline dates. There are also deadline dates for marking and returning work which are produced at the start of each course. As a result, students are well informed. They are carefully guided through the formative assessments, where constructive feedback is given online. This enables a clear understanding of the requirements for summative assessments. Any student who is not making satisfactory progress is appropriately supported to ensure standards are met. As a result, students are clear about what is required to achieve.

4.3 Student Welfare (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Students receive detailed information and relevant advice about their course prior to the start. On arrival, an effective induction covers learning online, so students are supported from the beginning on how to study independently and effectively. Consequently, students have a thorough understanding of how to approach their learning.

A system is in place whereby each course has learning communities on social media which allow students and teachers to communicate easily during and after the course. Not only does this offer support to the members of the groups, but it also stimulates debate and allows for academic guidance. This has proven to be extremely successful.

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

On weekends, it is necessary for the Provider to rent external premises for training courses to be delivered face to face. Conference rooms at a central London hotel are used. These provide effective and easily accessible accommodation.

Access to the Richmond premises is suitably secured through a security system that reads identity cards. The modern premises are in an excellent state of repair, decoration and cleanliness. Adequate signage allows staff and students to know what to do in the case of an emergency. The Provider's reception is spacious and provides a suitable area to receive visitors. Standards of ventilation and heating are appropriate.

Two interconnecting training rooms can accommodate up to 30 students. Four clinical consultation rooms are connected externally via camera and audio, so consultations can take place at a distance.

A small reference library allows students to consult specialist books. A tea point and kitchen are available for staff and students to use for the preparation and consumption of food and drink. Students have lockers for the storage of personal possessions. Rooms are available for staff to have private meetings or to hold staff meetings. The vast majority of teaching staff work from home. The large open-plan back office suitably accommodates those staff members who work in the office. Consequently, the premises provide an extremely comfortable working and learning environment.

4.5 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

Teaching, learning and assessment are excellent supporting students to achieve effectively.

The support provided for students is outstanding, ensuring everyone has the best chances of succeeding.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

ION must ensure that all teams have consistent opportunities to be updated and to receive feedback on activity.	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
References to BAC accrediting courses must be removed from all publicity to ensure accuracy of information.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
Further action must be taken relating to the VLE so that it is easier for students to use it in order to enable high standards of learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low

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

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS - FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE