

BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Independent Higher Education)

INSTITUTION: Markfield Institute of Higher Education

ADDRESS: Ratby Lane
Markfield
Leicestershire
LE67 9SY

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Dr Zahid Parvez

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 9 December 2019

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation 26 March 2020

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

Markfield Institute of Higher Education (MIHE/the Institution) is a privately-owned Institution offering undergraduate taught and post-graduate taught and research programmes in the study of Islam. It is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The Institution is located on a nine-acre site approximately six miles from the centre of Leicester. There are conference and residential facilities as well as teaching and learning facilities on-site.

A board of six non-executive Directors monitors the Institution's performance and provides oversight of operational aspects, such as the financial and human resources operations. MIHE is managed by the Principal, who is supported by a small management team who have oversight for specific functions in the Institution.

MIHE's mission is to contribute to the development of scholars so that they have a broader, deeper and critical understanding of Islam in the modern contemporary context. It aims to equip them with the skills to act as a bridge in developing understanding between Muslim communities and the Western societies they live in, and to make positive contributions to addressing current and emerging challenges of contemporary societies.

The Institution was established by the Islamic Foundation in 2000 and the curricula of all courses is based around the study of Islam, including Islamic Studies, Islamic Education and Philosophy.

Since the last inspection, there have been a small number of staff changes, including the recruitment of four new academic staff and the creation of a new role of Student Support Officer.

2. Brief description of the current provision

Undergraduate taught and post-graduate taught and research programmes are offered. The programmes include Bachelor of Arts (BA) Honours in Islamic Studies, the Bachelor of Arts (BA) Honours in Islamic Studies with Arabic, the BA Honours in Islamic Finance and Accounting, Master of Science (MSc) in Islamic Economics, Finance and Management, the Master of Arts (MA) in Islamic Studies, the MA in Islam and Sustainable Development, the MA in Islam, Pastoral Care and Counseling, and the Master of Education (MEd) in Islamic Education: New Perspectives. These programmes are validated by Newman University in Birmingham.

Additionally, there are research programmes leading to the award of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). MIHE is actively seeking a new validating university for its research degrees. MIHE also offers a Certificate in Muslim Chaplaincy, which is a non-accredited qualification.

At the time of the inspection, 84 students were studying at the Institution, with most registered as full-time students. The majority of students are male and come from the United Kingdom. The remaining students come from European Union countries, including Belgium, France, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain. There are no students under the age of 18. Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and previous educational and career experiences.

There is no typical entry route into MIHE, provided that the entry standards set by the Newman University are met. Application is via the website and most students enrol in September of the academic year although there is provision for enrolment at the end of January.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was carried out by one inspector over one day. Meetings were held with a number of staff, including the Principal, the Finance and Human Resources Manager and Academic Course Leaders. Meetings also took place with a group of students. Two classes were observed. Various documentation was scrutinised and a tour of the premises took place. MIHE was very well prepared for the inspection and fully co-operated with the inspector.

4. Inspection History

Inspection Type	Date
Stage 2 inspection	3 December 2009
Stage 3 inspection	13 July 2009
Re-accreditation	19-20 November 2013
Interim	14 September 2015
Full Accreditation	17-18 October 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

There have been some changes to the staff since the last inspection, with the recruitment of four new teaching staff and the creation of a new role of Student Support Officer who provides day-to-day support to students at the Institution. These appointments, and the recent creation of a Student Council, which provides a clear voice for students, have resulted in an increased focus on the Institution's future growth and aim of supporting students and actively including them in course development.

With regard to the provision, the Institution has reviewed all of its courses, with a number of its Master's degree programme named Pathways, that is named degrees, being revised to provide more socially relevant areas of study. For example, the MA in Islam and Sustainable Development and the MA in Islam, Pastoral Care and Counseling.

The Institution is currently considering the possibility of extending the availability of its provision by delivering a number of its courses at a centre in East London.

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 MIHE continue its drive to improve wireless communication networks on the campus.

A new dedicated internet line has been installed at the Institution which has significantly improved internet access. As a result, students and staff report that there has been a very noticeable improvement in wireless communication, with very good speed and access now being reported throughout the campus.

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 has a clear organisational structure and strategy for the development of its higher education provision. The Board of Directors undertakes risk management planning and effectively provides oversight of all financial and human resources considerations.

The Academic Board, which includes two Directors as members, reviews the Institution's academic performance, often in conjunction with its partner university. As a result, the Institution has in place the resources to maintain its current high quality of education and has been successful in introducing and developing a number of successful specialist higher education programmes based around the study of Islam.

The Directors, Principal and other academic and administrative staff are very well qualified and experienced. They fully understand their specific responsibilities and are highly effective in carrying them out.

Channels of communication between the management and the staff are good, with weekly formal meetings and an informal open-door policy of access to senior managers. Consequently, staff and students indicate that there is clear provision for stakeholders to inform the strategic direction of the institution and to raise

any issues that they might have.

4.2 General and Academic Management and Administration (spot check)

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

Comments

The quality of general and academic management is very good. Four academic course leaders and a small number of administrators provide day-to-day support to the senior team.

A well-developed committee and management structure are in place and articulated through a clear organisation chart which is shared throughout the Institution and fully understood by staff and students. Committees meet regularly and have clear terms of reference, with appropriate reporting lines. As a result, there are effective systems to initiate and implement policies to meet the Institution's needs, and to monitor their operation. The structure operates very smoothly and successfully due to the clearly defined roles and responsibilities and well-developed lines of communication.

Administration policies and procedures are well documented, with key documents available on the Institution's website and in staff and student handbooks. In addition, the Institution's online platform and module handbooks provide clear procedure documents relating to course requirements and assessment. Staff and students confirm that all are aware of where to find key documents.

There are regular staff meetings where the academic programmes are reviewed. Weekly meetings are held between academic staff and management to maintain oversight of individual courses and their delivery. Minutes of meetings and action plans are clearly recorded.

Staff are encouraged and supported in their research and professional development, resulting in a continuous output of published research in Islamic Studies.

The information provided in online and other promotional materials matches programme specifications and other course materials. In meetings with students, they confirmed that they were given accurate information about the programmes prior to joining, including what the course involved and the costs they would be likely to incur. Inspection findings confirm this view.

4.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

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

Comments

The curriculum is carefully planned and meets the different needs and aspirations of students. The range of courses and levels available fully meets students' academic interests and provide good progression opportunities for further study within higher education. Consequently, students report that they are happy with their chosen course and enjoy their studies.

Teachers are very well qualified, highly experienced and have an in-depth understanding and knowledge of their subject.

Lessons are well planned and include the requirements of relevant module descriptors and fully cover stated intended learning outcomes. Lesson planning documents and lesson observations demonstrate that teachers are effective in using a mixture of group and individual activities to engage students, keep their interest and effectively support their learning.

The high expectations of teachers ensure that all students are consistently challenged and well supported to meet their learning goals.

The use of technology to enhance learning in the classroom is highly developed and is used well to stimulate students to explore ideas and further develop their understanding of the subject.

Teachers are effective in encouraging and developing students' independent learning skills and relationships between the tutors and the students are highly positive. As a result, students progress well within their lessons, and report that they are very happy with the standard of teaching on their course.

Comprehensive course materials are available to students via the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The materials are of a high quality, up to date and accurately reflect current knowledge and practice. Staff and managers confirm that materials are regularly reviewed by academic staff.

Detailed assignment briefs provide clear and well written tasks which are effectively linked to learning outcomes. Tasks allow a full range of grades to be achieved and are clearly linked to the relevant module grading criteria. All assessment briefs follow comprehensive procedures for internal and external moderation at both pre- and post-assessment stages to ensure that they fully cover the stated intended learning objectives.

Students are able to access a detailed online assessment schedule for their course which provides clear assessment and assignment submission dates and examination revision periods. Students confirm that they are aware of the nature and timing of the assessment of their course, together with any revision periods. As a result, assessment is highly effective.

Appropriate procedures are in place to discourage and penalise students who cheat or submit work that is deemed to have been plagiarised. A clear and appropriate plagiarism and academic misconduct policy is contained in the module handbooks. All written assessment is put through commercial software to confirm originality.

4.4 Student Support, Guidance and Progression (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Students receive good support. High levels of support and a comprehensive induction and system of progress reviews ensure that students' personal and academic development is reviewed regularly. A new Student Support Officer has been appointed, and a Student Council formed, which further enhances the existing support available to students to meet their individual education and personal needs. As a result, students report that they are well supported, know who to go to if they have a personal problem and feel confident to approach members of staff for help.

Students have access to appropriate careers advice and guidance, including progression to further study, from experienced members of staff. However, there is limited access to specialised career advice. As a result, detailed guidance in some very specialised areas is not always available.

Students report that there is a strong culture of mutual respect, integration and tolerance at the Institution. A wide range of policies and procedures reinforce this culture and the expectations of behaviour and conduct. Inspection findings confirm this view.

Student progress is carefully monitored in tutorials and seminars, with each student being allocated a personal tutor who is responsible for the regular review of their progress. Tutors and managers monitor assessment outcomes and make prompt intervention where appropriate. Students report that they know how they are progressing and are very pleased with their progress.

4.5 Premises, Facilities and Learning Resources (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Institution has very good facilities to ensure the effective delivery of the courses and the comfort of its staff and students.

The premises are well maintained, decorated, clean and provide a safe learning and working environment. Toilets are adequate in number, clean and well maintained. Heating and ventilation are good.

Classrooms are well equipped, adequate in number and size and effectively support learning. The Institution has a number of suitable areas to conduct examinations.

Academic and administrative staff have access to appropriate space to undertake their duties and meet with students. The provision for students and staff to consume food and drink is appropriate and a number of areas are provided for them to relax. A number of rooms are available for academic staff and managers to hold meetings.

The provision of online materials is very good, with all course materials and other relevant materials effectively linked to the programmes of study. The library of over 40,000 volumes is considered to be a major national and international resource for scholars of Islam. Materials within the library stock are regularly reviewed to ensure that they meet the needs of both students and academic staff. The library is staffed by an appropriate person, is spacious and provides a comfortable area for independent study or group work. A clear lending policy is in place and open times are sufficient and reflect the needs of the students. As a result, students are highly satisfied with this aspect.

4.6 Quality Management, Assurance and Enhancement (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Quality assurance is rigorous. The Institution undertakes regular and systematic monitoring of its operations. Partnership meetings are held annually with the validating University to discuss the previous year's performance. Annual course meetings are undertaken which effectively reviews each course and module and results in any changes to the curriculum delivery that may be needed. Other monitoring systems include the consideration of student progress using the external examiner reports. As a result, leaders and managers successfully identify priorities for improvement.

Self-evaluation is well developed, resulting in a clear and realistic analysis of strengths and areas for development, and targets for action or further research. Student feedback is regularly and systematically collected through questionnaires and discussions with students. This feedback is effectively analysed, shared with staff and managers and used regularly to inform teacher development, academic action planning and the identification of the Institution's priorities. Student performance data is available and summarised to ensure key issues are highlighted for leaders and managers.

4.8 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

The Institution is well governed, with the board of directors providing effective oversight and strategic direction.

Teaching is very effective and results in high levels of student progress.

Students are very well supported by the Institution’s comprehensive pastoral systems.

Quality assurance is rigorous and ensures regular and systematic monitoring of the Institution’s operations.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

High Medium Low

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

The Institution is recommended to review student’s access to specialised and suitably qualified careers staff.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS - FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE