

BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (College)

INSTITUTION: Bishopsland Educational Trust

ADDRESS: Bishopsland
Dunsden
Reading
RG4 9NR

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Mrs Penelope Makower

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 10 January 2020

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation, 21 May 2020

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

Bishopsland Educational Trust (BET/the Institution) provides residential courses in working with precious metals and jewellery. The Institution was registered as a limited company in 2001 prior to becoming a registered charity on 1 October 2002. Teaching commenced in 1993. It is located in a rural setting near Reading.

The Institution's mission is to provide training for postgraduates in the fine and applied arts and crafts and to provide guidance on becoming independent artists, craftspeople and designers. BET seeks to be a centre of excellence and expects high standards of endeavour and achievement from its students.

The Institution was founded by the current Principal and her husband, the former Vice Principal. The Principal continues to have oversight of the management and coordination of the Institution, including managing the day-to-day running of the provision and functions such as health and safety. The Institution has appointed a silversmith, who is also a graduate of the Institution, to support the Principal.

A permanent Director of Finance and Administration was appointed in 2015. The Director of Finance and Administration has responsibility for financial management and reports to the Board of Trustees, which meets three times a year. In addition, there are monthly finance meetings with the Finance Sub Committee. The Board of Trustees is made up of eight members, all of whom are Directors of the company.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Institution offers a 46-week course that provides a bridge between academic training and a professional career. It combines technical and professional skills and focuses on supporting students to become independent practitioners. BET also recruits students from overseas on a six-month programme, which is based on the 46-week course. A certificate is given to those who successfully complete both programmes.

The courses are designed to help newly established self-employed silversmiths and jewellers to develop their technical skills and their businesses. Design and technical skills, and individual creativity are developed through personal projects, alongside business skills.

Following graduation, students automatically become alumni or Bishopsland Fellows. With the exception of a week's break at Christmas, teaching is continuous throughout the year.

The curriculum requires that those attending the courses show their work at the annual Christmas exhibition and at subsequent exhibitions throughout the year. These exhibitions culminate in the Bishopsland Retrospective event in the summer.

At the time of the inspection, the Institution had ten students enrolled, five from the United Kingdom (UK), and five international students who came from Australia, Poland, South Korea and Taiwan. The majority were female.

All applicants for the courses must be over 18 years of age and should normally have a relevant undergraduate qualification. However, applications are considered where applicants may not have completed an undergraduate qualification but have developed relevant skills through experience. All applicants enrol at the start of the academic year in September, having previously been interviewed to ensure that they meet the skills and entry requirements.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was conducted by one inspector over one day. Meetings were held with the Principal, the Director of Finance and Administration and the Administrative Assistant. Meetings also took place with the students and a tutor. A telephone interview took place with a second tutor. The inspection also involved a tour of the premises,

including a review of the student accommodation, a teaching observation in one of the workshops and scrutiny of a range of documentation. The staff cooperated well throughout the inspection.

4. **Inspection history**

Inspection type	Date
Full Accreditation	16-17 October 2013
Interim	11 December 2014
Re-accreditation	23-24 October 2017

PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgements 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

The Institution has appointed a silversmith, who is also Chair of the Contemporary British Silversmiths, to assist the Principal, with a view to offering regular support for the 2020 to 2021 programme. The co-founder, who was formally the Vice Principal, has stepped back from a hand-on role to assist with the running of the Institution on a limited basis.

Significant investment has been made in the workshop provision. Extraction units that effectively remove hazards such as dust have been installed. These have a significant positive impact on the working environment in the workshops.

2. Response to actions points in last report

25.3 25.5 The Institution must replace all the warning and safety signs to ensure they are clear, appropriate and meet all health and safety standard requirements.

The Principal, the staff member who looks after specific projects and one of the tutors have together taken steps to address the replacement of the warning and safety signage. The signage has been replaced where appropriate and possible with universal signage images. Some warnings are necessarily very specific and instructional and are linked to specialist equipment. These signs therefore remain in place and are appropriate. The signs are now clear and meet health and safety standard requirements.

25.4 The Institution must introduce health and safety guidance for visitors, including for the workshop areas, to ensure that everyone is aware of the hazards and the need to avoid touching specialist equipment.

Visible health and safety statutory notices are now in place in the workshop areas. The various dangers that are posed by the specialist equipment are very clear from the signage in the workshops. Visitors to the workshops are accompanied and oral guidance is given to support the warning notices.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

There were no recommendations identified 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 is appropriate for the size and scope of the organisation. Responsibilities are clear and all staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Appropriate job descriptions are in place for permanent members of staff. However, this is not the case for self-employed staff and could lead to a lack of clarity in terms of accountability and responsibility.

Varied and established channels of communication between management and staff result in timely and effective communication.

The members of the administrative team have clearly defined responsibilities and carry these out well. This ensures that sufficient administrative support is in place to cover all areas of the day-to-day running of the organisation effectively.

Appraisals of all staff are carried out appropriately and result in an effective review of the performance of all staff.

Audio-visual content on the website provides potential students with an accurate reflection of their likely experiences and living and working environment. Digital advertising used for the exhibitions is designed using material from those currently attending courses, ensuring that up-to-date reflections of activity are made available. A dedicated member of staff is responsible for maintaining a social media presence providing up-to-date information on the Institution's activities.

Accurate attendance records are in place and appropriate practices are implemented if any of the students are absent without explanation. Student residences are situated very close to the workshops and communication within the Institution is effective. This results in a timely response in the event of student absence.

The Institution has effective procedures in place for the collection of information that informs its annual reports. For example, surveys are sent to alumni and responses are collated by a member of the administrative support team. Comprehensive minutes of the useful weekly staff and student meetings, where ideas for improvements are discussed, are retained.

Regular feedback is provided by students on the residential accommodation, tutors and workshops. This is discussed and any action required is recorded and carried forward. As a result, any issues are dealt with swiftly. Students confirmed this to be the case and inspection findings confirm this view. Students are kept informed of progress in response to their feedback by the senior management.

Annual reports are compiled and published and include the success rates of previous alumni. Success is measured on whether alumni are working as self-employed practitioners, which relates directly to the Institution's objectives. This enables the Institution to assess its own performance well.

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Effective academic procedures are in place and overseen by the Principal. Delivery of the courses is fully timetabled, and timetables are distributed to staff and students. There is room in the timetable for additional masterclasses and time for the students to undertake individual practice, create pieces and to consolidate their work in the masterclasses. This results in students being able to develop their skills to their full potential.

In addition to the equipment provided in the workshops, students receive a bursary for tools and metals. Students reported that this is sufficient to ensure that they can successfully complete their course.

The courses are designed to allow the students to develop the knowledge and skills to enable them to meet their goals. The students exhibit the work that they create on the course at a number of exhibitions held by BET. In addition to creating pieces for exhibition and making tools, there is a focus on the business side of silver making and producing work to industry standard. All the components of the courses strongly contribute to the high success rate of alumni in their chosen fields.

Tutors are very well qualified and experienced. The appraisal procedure for the tutors is appropriate. The Principal carries out observations of the tutors and gives feedback. Feedback to tutors is also provided following the weekly staff and student meetings. These measures effectively support BET's objective to be a centre of excellence.

A very good relationship between tutors and students enables the tutors to get to know the students well and to adapt their teaching effectively to meet the students' different learning styles and needs.

Tutors provide written notes on each students' progress after each session. The comments are e-mailed individually to the students and are shared with the other tutors. This ensures timely, clear, constructive support for the students on a continuous basis and allows all tutors to be fully aware of the progress the students are making.

4.3 Student Welfare (spot check)

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

Comments

Students are clear about whom to approach if they have a personal welfare issue. Students can also raise issues at the weekly staff and student meetings. Tutors are also available to discuss personal and welfare issues if needed. The Principal checks regularly to ensure that students are well supported.

The information that students receive before the course starts, for example the information on the website and provided during the application process, provides them with a clear understanding of what to expect on arrival. However, insufficient information is provided about what students should bring to use in their residential accommodation.

Appropriate policies are in place to avoid discrimination and have been effectively communicated to students in the handbook. Students confirmed that they are clear and confident regarding the procedures to follow in the event of a problem. Adjustments are made to take account of different cultural and religious considerations, including dietary requirements.

Residential accommodation is conveniently located on the same site as the Institution or immediately adjacent to it. A range of accommodation is offered to suit different budgets and preferences for living alone or sharing. The accommodation is clean and safe and has sufficient space to meet the students' needs. Students report that any maintenance issues are sorted out quickly. All students report being happy with their accommodation and say that it is suitable to meet their day-to-day requirements. Inspection findings confirm this view.

Students report that a variety of social activities are available both in the Institution and in the local area. These include countryside walks and a local climbing centre. As a result, students have good opportunities to participate in leisure-time activities to enrich their experience whilst studying at the Institution.

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

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

Comments

The Institution has secure tenure of its premises which are located in a Grade II listed farmhouse. The premises are maintained in an adequate state of repair, decoration and cleanliness.

Health and safety signage in the workshops is clear and specific to the particular hazards that are present there. The students are provided with a thorough workshop induction that is carried out as the first session on the course. The students reported that health and safety was given a high priority by the Institution and that guidance was provided on a continuous basis. Inspection findings fully support this. Risk assessments have been carried out for each piece of equipment in use in the workshops and these are regularly updated. However, there is no health and safety checklist for the workshops to ensure that all areas are regularly checked by a responsible person to ensure that any issues are addressed immediately.

The workshops, relaxation areas and outside spaces are of a sufficient size to allow students to circulate freely and there are suitable areas for receiving visitors. Toilet facilities are sufficient in number, clean and fit for purpose.

All rooms, including the communal areas, offices and workshops, are heated and well ventilated. Substantial investment has been made, for example in the workshops where extraction units have been installed. The workshops are of a sufficient size and number to allow for the effective teaching of groups and for students to create their own pieces for exhibition. They are well equipped with a wide range of appropriate tools and machinery.

Staff and students have access to a number of suitable spaces that are appropriate for consuming food and drink and relaxation. These include a large communal room above the workshops and a garden.

The administrative offices are of sufficient size for the number of staff and there is ample space for staff and student meetings.

4.5 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

The course provides students with invaluable and unique experiences and exposure to a range of techniques and ideas so that they are fully engaged in their learning whilst at the Institution.

The tutors provide highly personalised instruction and guidance for all students within a group.

The nurturing of talent and ongoing support for alumni are strongly in evidence and help the students to realise their full potential.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

High Medium Low

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

It is recommended that the Institution develops job descriptions for all the self-employed staff to clarify their accountabilities and responsibilities.

It is recommended that more detailed information on the equipment in the residential accommodation is provided to the students prior to arrival to ensure that they understand what they need to bring with them.

It is recommended that a fire and health and safety checklist for the workshops is put in place to ensure that all areas are regularly checked by a responsible person to ensure that any issues are addressed immediately.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS - FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE

Most equipment has undergone Portable Appliance Testing (PAT). There is some equipment in use by the students, for example in the residential accommodation, that has not been tested. PAT testing should be carried out on all relevant equipment.