

BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

SUPPLEMENTARY INSPECTION NEW/ADDITIONAL PREMISES AND CHANGE OF MANAGEMENT/STAFFING

(Short Course Provider)

PROVIDER: Oxford Study Courses

ADDRESS: Building 9400
Alec Issigonis Way
Oxford Business Park North
Oxford
OX4 2HN

HEAD OF PROVIDER: John Ingram

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 5 December 2019

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

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the provider

Oxford Study Courses (OSC/the Provider) is a private limited company established in 1990 as a family-run business. OSC's work is mainly linked to the delivery of the International Baccalaureate (IB). It is now owned by GEMS Education (GEMS) and is being integrated into the work of the Pamoja group of companies, which is also owned by GEMS. GEMS recognised that a combined operation between OSC and Pamoja would benefit the future development of both companies whilst providing a single management structure, and this is the reason for the integration. Some of the functions of OSC and Pamoja are already integrated, but the Provider remains as a recognised brand. These include administration, Information Technology (IT) support, marketing and Human Resources (HR). Pamoja, which is based in Oxford, was primarily an education technology company and the acquisition of OSC has created a company that now has technical delivery expertise coupled with practical face-to-face teaching.

GEMS is a large, worldwide provider of online and face-to-face training and education. It is a limited company. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Provider is supported by a senior management team that includes the Operations Director, Head of Compliance and Senior Events Manager. The CEO reports to the GEMS board. The Provider has the support of the wider GEMS organisation and benefits from the financial and HR expertise of GEMS.

OSC's mission is to provide the highest quality of educational support for IB students and schools, to support philanthropic educational projects and to nurture a fulfilling working environment in which all stakeholders are treated with integrity and respect.

OSC is now based in the Pamoja headquarters at Oxford Business Park North, where OSC staff share an open office with Pamoja staff. Courses are delivered at Oxford and Cambridge University colleges.

2. Brief description of the current provision

OSC provides academic support courses for participants who are taking the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) at their different schools. Most participants study on a residential basis. OSC publishes revision guides for various IB subject areas and offers an interactive IB revision platform.

OSC's courses are offered in the spring and summer school vacations. The spring revision course is held in Oxford, where participants are resident and taught in Oxford University colleges. Summer courses are held from July to August in both Oxford University and Cambridge University. All OSC classes are face to face.

OSC courses are normally offered over a three-week period in the spring and a six-week period in the summer. The majority of participants attend the spring revision course for five to eight days. Most of those attending the summer course do so for two to three weeks. As part of the 2019 spring revision course, OSC provided more than 160 classes across 40 different subjects. For summer 2019, OSC provided 159 classes in 41 subjects. A minority of these classes were for participants about to enrol on an IB programme at school. Most classes were for those who were halfway through their IB programme.

The courses are subject based and run for one week, with each week offering a different subject area. Participants can study for one week or more depending on how many subject areas they wish to study.

There was a total number of 68 participants during the inspection, 31 of whom were male and 37 of whom were female. The majority of the participants were from German and other participants were from the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. All participants are aged from 14 to 18.

BAC accreditation relates to the OSC's UK provision only.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was undertaken by one inspector over half a day. The inspector had discussions with the CEO, the Operations Director, Head of Compliance, Senior Events Manager, Admissions and Events Manager, an Academic Manager and an Academic Operations Officer. Discussions were also held with an Operations Support Manager and staff responsible for marketing and customer relations, finance and IT. The inspector also scrutinised a wide range of documentation. All staff cooperated well with the inspection.

4. Background to the supplementary inspection

Since the last inspection, the Provider has move premises to become more integrated into Pamoja's operations.

The former CEO has left OSC and a new CEO has been appointed.

5. Inspection history

Inspection type	Date
Stage 2	22 January 2009
Stage 3	6 April 2009
Interim	21 January 2010
Interim	3 & 10 April 2013
Interim	10 July 2015
Re-accreditation	11 & 13 July 2017
Interim	30 July 2019

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. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

1.1 Management, Staffing and Administration (full inspection)

The numbers below refer to the standards as presented in the short course provider scheme document and main full inspection report.

1. The provider is effectively managed

- | | | | |
|-----|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 1.1 | The management structure is clearly defined, documented and understood, including the role and extent of authority of any owners, trustees or governing body. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 1.2 | The head of the provider and other senior managers are suitably qualified and experienced, understand their specific responsibilities and are effective in carrying them out. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 1.3 | There are clear channels of communication between the management and staff and those working at the delivery venue/s. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The organisation is well managed. The management structure is clearly defined, with all staff understanding to whom they report and their place within the structure. The organisational chart clearly shows responsibilities and lines of reporting.

The head of the Provider is highly qualified for the role and other managers are appropriately experienced, most having worked in the sector for a significant period of time. They understand their role and manage their teams well. There is a well-understood plan for the development of OSC.

There are clear channels of communication between managers and the staff they manage. As a result, all staff understand the changes that are taking place in the organisation and the current priorities.

2. The administration of the provider is effective

- | | | | |
|-----|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 2.1 | Administrators are suitably qualified or experienced and understand their specific responsibilities and duties. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2.2 | The size of the administrative team is sufficient to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the provider. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2.3 | The administrative support available to the management is clearly defined, documented and understood. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2.4 | Policies, procedures and systems are well documented and effectively disseminated across the provider. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| 2.5 | Data collection and collation systems are effective. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

OSC has a very experienced and well-qualified administration team to support the delivery of its courses. The administration support has now been increased by the addition of experienced staff from Pamoja so that the capacity to plan for, administer and deliver the courses has been enhanced. All the administrators understand their role well.

The team members communicate well with each other and are encouraged to share ideas and understand the different aspects of the business.

Suitable administrative policies and procedures are effective and well understood.

Data collection methods are well established, particularly in relation to marketing and identifying future possible course participants. Operational reports are produced weekly and useful project management spreadsheets are used. These are based on a traffic light system to identify priorities.

3. The provider employs appropriate managerial and administrative staff

3.1 There are appropriate policies and effective procedures for the recruitment and continuing employment of suitably qualified and experienced staff. Yes No

3.2 Experience and qualifications claimed are verified before employment. Yes No

3.3 There is an effective system for regularly reviewing the performance of staff. Yes No

This standard is judged to be:

Met

Partially Met

Not Met

Comments

Policies and procedures for the recruitment and continued employment of staff are effective. All staff have undergone appropriate pre-employment checks and their experience and qualifications are verified before employment.

There is a new staff performance appraisal process in place. It is clearly structured and the outcomes are systematically logged and recorded. Staff feel that the new system is clear and transparent. Inspection findings confirm this view.

4. Publicity material, both printed and electronic, gives a comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate description of the provider and its programmes

4.1 Text and images provide an accurate depiction of the provider's location, premises, facilities and the range and nature of resources and services offered. Yes No

4.2 Information on the courses available is comprehensive, accurate and up to date. Yes No

This standard is judged to be:

Met

Partially Met

Not Met

Comments

The website provides clear, up-to-date and accurate information about the courses that are offered. The information includes where the courses will be run, what participants can expect during the course and the outcomes of attending the courses.

The images provide an accurate depiction of the university accommodation that is used for the delivery of the courses. The information on the course content is comprehensive and clear. There is also useful information for participants' parents and the schools involved in teaching the IB.

The Provider is in the process of refreshing its brand and, as part of that process, is developing more communication opportunities and better engagement with customers through the website.

5. The provider takes reasonable care to recruit and enrol suitable participants for its courses

5.1	Entry requirements for each course, including those relating to language ability, are set at an appropriate level and clearly stated in the course descriptions seen by prospective participants.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
5.2	A formal application process ensures that participants meet the entry requirements and any claimed qualifications are verified.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
5.3	The provider replies to all application enquiries promptly and appropriately and briefs all stakeholders properly on the nature and requirements of its programmes.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
5.4	Any overseas recruitment agents are properly selected, briefed, monitored and evaluated.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Entry requirements, including for language ability, are set at an appropriate level. Participants and their parents know that participants need to be proficient in spoken English at an intermediate level. In practice, participants' English language skills are at this level or above.

There is a formal application process. Participants or their parents apply through the website by creating an account. Any queries are dealt with through telephone conversations with experienced student services staff. The main requirement to attend OSC's programmes is that participants are studying on the IB.

There is excellent communication between OSC, participants' parents and schools that teach the IB. Enquiries are dealt with promptly and, as a result, the parents and IB schools understand the nature and requirements of the programmes.

6. There is an appropriate policy on participant attendance and effective procedures and systems to enforce it

6.1	There is an appropriate, clear and published policy on participant attendance and punctuality.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
6.2	Accurate and secure records of attendance and punctuality at each session are kept for all participants, and collated centrally and reviewed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
6.3	Participant absences are followed up promptly and appropriate action is taken.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA

This standard is judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Participants and their parents are provided with the requirements relating to attendance and punctuality before programmes begin. These expectations are clear and are in the contractual information that parents and participants receive prior to the commencement of the programme.

New software has been purchased to ensure that attendance and participant progress are effectively monitored. Attendance at all activities in which individual participants engage is accurately recorded in a timely manner. Tutors and Course Directors record the participants' attendance at all classes at the start of each class.

The resulting data is monitored centrally, so that immediate, appropriate and progressive action can be taken in the case of non-attendance.

7. The provider regularly obtains and records feedback from participants and other stakeholders and takes appropriate action where necessary

7.1	The provider has effective mechanisms for obtaining feedback from participants and other stakeholders (such as staff, partner providers and employers) on all aspects of the provider's provision, including formal participant representation where appropriate.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
7.2	Feedback is obtained, recorded and analysed on a regular basis.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
7.3	The feedback is reviewed by management and action is taken where necessary.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
7.4	There is a mechanism for reporting on the provider's response to the feedback to the participant body.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Provider has effective mechanisms for obtaining feedback from a range of stakeholders. All staff feel able to give feedback on the way the company is progressing and their contribution to its development. Feedback from staff is reviewed and analysed as part of the regular weekly operational reports.

Participant feedback is taken very seriously and is used in the formal review procedure that follows each programme delivery. OSC has reduced the number of times it asks for formal feedback following comments from participants that they were often repeating information. OSC has now made its request for feedback more focused at the end of each programme and this effectively informs future programme delivery.

In addition, participants have the opportunity to provide feedback at any time in the programme. Usually, any issues are remedied immediately with the participant at the end of the day. Feedback to the participant body on what has been done in response to their feedback is provided when the participants are all together, usually at mealtimes.

8. The provider has effective systems to review its own standards and assess its own performance with a view to continuing improvement

8.1	There are effective systems for monitoring and periodically reviewing all aspects of the provider's performance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
8.2	Reports are compiled that present the results of the provider's reviews and in corporate action plans.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
8.3	Action plans are implemented and regularly reviewed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Provider has effective systems to review its own standards and assess its own performance.

Regular weekly management operational reports are produced. These are rated by urgency and importance using a traffic-light system. Urgent issues are dealt with immediately.

All action plans are effectively implemented and reviewed in regular weekly meetings.

1.2 Premises and Facilities (full inspection)

The numbers below refer to the standards as presented in the short course provider document and main full inspection report.

23. The provider has secure possession of and access to its premises

23.1	The provider has secure tenure on its premises.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA
23.2	Where required, the provider has access to suitable external premises for academic or non-academic purposes of a temporary or occasional nature.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> NA

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Provider has security of tenure on administrative premises.

All of OSC's courses are delivered in Oxford University teaching rooms and participants are housed in university college accommodation. OSC is moving to a three-year rolling booking arrangement with its selected university colleges to ensure continuity and security of accommodation.

24. The premises provide a safe, secure and clean environment for participants and staff

24.1	Access to the premises is appropriately restricted and secured.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
24.2	The premises are maintained in an adequate state of repair, decoration and cleanliness.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
24.3	There are specific safety rules in areas of particular hazard (e.g. science laboratories), made readily available to participants, staff and visitors.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA
24.4	General guidance on health and safety is made available to participants, staff and visitors.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
24.5	There is adequate signage inside and outside of the premises and notice boards for the display of general information.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
24.6	There is adequate circulation space for the number of participants and staff accommodated, and a suitable area in which to receive visitors.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
24.7	There are toilet facilities of an appropriate number and level of cleanliness.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
24.8	There is adequate heating and ventilation in all rooms.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Access to the office accommodation is restricted to relevant staff. There is a reception area that is shared with other companies housed in the office block.

The administration and head office accommodation is modern, very spacious, well equipped and fit for purpose. The premises are in an excellent state of repair.

Health and safety guidance and signage are clear and appropriate.

When the programmes are being delivered, participants are accommodated in student college premises and their lectures take place in college teaching areas. These premises have excellent circulation and communal space, including a grassed area outside where tea and refreshments are provided for parents and participants when they join the programmes.

There are sufficient and very clean toilet facilities and adequate heating and ventilation in all rooms.

25. Training rooms and other learning areas are appropriate for the courses offered

25.1	Training rooms and other learning areas provide adequate accommodation in size and number for the classes allocated to them.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
25.2	Training rooms and/or any specialised learning areas (e.g. laboratories, workshops, studios) are equipped to a level that allows for the effective delivery of each course.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> NA

25.3 There are facilities suitable for conducting the assessments required on each course. Yes No NA

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The lecture and teaching rooms used in the University of Oxford college premises are excellent. They provide a very good learning environment and make a valuable contribution to the participants' learning experience.

The training rooms are of a good size. They are very well equipped and allow for the effective delivery of each course.

26. There are appropriate additional facilities for participants and staff

26.1 Participants have access to sufficient space and suitable facilities for private study, including library and IT resources. Yes No NA

26.2 Trainers have access to sufficient personal space for preparing lessons, marking work and relaxation. Yes No NA

26.3 Participants and staff have access to space and facilities suitable for relaxation and the consumption of food and drink where appropriate. Yes No NA

26.4 Participants and staff have access to storage for personal possessions where appropriate. Yes No NA

26.5 There are individual offices or rooms in which trainers and senior management can hold private meetings and a room of sufficient size to hold staff meetings. Yes No

26.6 Administrative offices are adequate in size and resources for the effective administration of the provider. Yes No

This standard is judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Participants are able to use their accommodation as study rooms. They can readily access their evening work through the website. All participants use their own laptops and tablets. Resources, including study aids and other support materials, are available to participants online. Trainers supply hard copies of resources where necessary.

Trainers and participants have good areas away from the teaching rooms in which they can relax. There is a dining room and other recreational areas where participants and trainers can obtain refreshments.

Participants have accommodation in which to store their belongings and trainers have allocated rooms in which to work or relax.

The training programmes are delivered in university buildings during holiday periods. These premises have adequate space for the administration staff to work and for the academic staff to hold meetings and tutorials with participants.

The administrative premises have suitable meeting rooms and offices for senior management and staff and a well-equipped kitchen.

1.2 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated. Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

All administration, teaching and participant accommodation, including teaching rooms, is of a very high standard and fit for purpose.

Senior managers are handling the necessary changes resulting from the merging of the work of OSC and Pamoja well and with sensitivity. Staff feel well supported during the transitional period.

Managers use technology well to support the continued development of the business and the day-to-day management of the teaching programmes.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

High Medium Low

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

It is recommended that the Provider completes its development of the website so that it provides more communication opportunities and better engagement with customers.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE