

# BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

## MID-WAY PROBATION REVIEW (International Centre)

**INSTITUTION:** Transnational Academic Group

**ADDRESS:** PO Box CT 9823  
Cantonments  
Accra  
Ghana

**HEAD OF INSTITUTION:** Professor Malcolm McIver

**ACCREDITATION STATUS:** Probation accreditation

**DATE OF INSPECTION:** 13 May 2020

**ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:** Continued probation accreditation, 16 July 2020

## **PART A – INTRODUCTION**

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### **1. Background to the institution**

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Transnational Academic Group (TAG/the Institution) is a privately-owned institution that is part of Transnational Education Group. TAG offers a one-year foundation programme. It is based in Accra, Ghana, and is located, together with Lancaster University (LU) Ghana, in a modern building close to the city centre.

TAG's aim is to prepare learners for direct entry onto LU's undergraduate degree courses. The Institution, established in 2013, is a private limited company with three main shareholders. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of TAG has oversight of the company in Ghana. The relationship between TAG and LU is set out in a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), in which the responsibilities of both partners are specified.

Management of the partnership with LU lies with the Board of Directors, which includes the shareholders. The board meets quarterly and is chaired by the CEO. At LU United Kingdom (UK), management responsibility for the relationship with TAG rests with the Partnership Management Group, chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (International). LU UK has responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the programme.

In January 2020, a new Provost was appointed. He oversees the provision at both TAG and LU Ghana. He is temporarily filling the role of Foundation Programme Coordinator until a new appointee is found. A new Quality Manager was appointed in March 2020. Since March, all courses have been delivered online.

### **2. Brief description of the current provision**

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The Institution offers a one-year university foundation programme in Law, Business and Social Science, or Science and Technology. The programme is usually delivered face to face but is currently being delivered online. These full-time foundation courses allow learners to gain entry onto undergraduate degree programmes at LU Ghana or LU UK.

At the time of the inspection, there were 53 learners enrolled on the different foundation courses. The total capacity is 200. The majority of learners are from Ghana. Other countries represented include Nigeria, Togo and Ivory Coast. Ages range from 17 to 37. A small minority are under the age of 18 years. There are approximately equal numbers of male and female learners.

Learners can start courses on a specified date in either October or January, when enrolment takes place. Courses run for three terms, but learners have the option of completing a fourth term if sufficient progress has not been made.

In order to be enrolled onto a course at the Institution, prospective students must be 17 years of age or above and must have received a minimum grade C in five subjects, including English and Mathematics, which qualify as General Certificates of Secondary Education.

### **3. Inspection process**

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The inspection was undertaken remotely by one inspector over one day. The inspector reviewed documentation and had video calls with management, other staff and learners. The staff cooperated fully with the inspector throughout the inspection.

### **4. Inspection history**

<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Date</b>
Full Accreditation	19–20 August 2015

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Interim

31 August 2016

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Re-accreditation

31 July & 1 August 2019

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## **PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE**

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### **1. Significant changes since the last inspection**

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A new Provost was appointed in January this year, after a lapse of two and a half months since the previous Provost left. Consequently, this has limited progress on the action points from the last inspection. The new Provost has long experience in the university sector, as well as working in Ghana.

A new Quality Manager was appointed in March this year.

All courses are currently being delivered online. Teachers have been trained to deliver the courses, and observation of teaching is now taking place remotely. A minority of students do not have sufficient bandwidth or data to attend live lectures. However, they are able to access lectures later. The stability of electricity in the country can also hinder effective course delivery. LU has offered the Institution use of its Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for course delivery. Teaching staff report that course attendance has increased as learners can now access lectures and other materials in their own time.

### **2. Response to actions points in last report**

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*1.1 The organisation chart must be sufficiently detailed to support a clear understanding of the structure.*

The organisation chart has been amended and is now sufficiently detailed to support a clear understanding of the structure.

*2.4 All policies must be communicated to staff and learners to support a shared understanding and they must be regularly reviewed for relevance.*

Policies are communicated to staff and learners in the relevant handbooks. The handbooks do not contain all the policies, such as the complaints and safeguarding policies, or the same policies, so reducing a shared understanding. These policies are now reviewed annually in August, and August 2020 will be the first time the process has been undertaken.

*7.1 The system for obtaining learner feedback must be reviewed so that it is effective in terms of the level of response and the aspects of the provision that it measures.*

Learner response levels to feedback on teaching and learning have increased but not to a sufficiently high response rate to obtain a representative understanding of learners' views. A separate questionnaire on aspects of the provision that are not academic is administered centrally. This is inadequate, since only a small minority of learners completing the questionnaire are on foundation courses. Therefore, it is not possible to identify the views of these learners effectively.

*7.2 Feedback must be recorded and analysed systematically in order to gain a full understanding of learners' views.*

Feedback from both questionnaires is recorded, but the approach used is not systematic and therefore gives rise to data that is not robust. Feedback is not systematically analysed to gain a full understanding of learners' views.

*7.4 A mechanism must be devised to report to the learners on the response made to their feedback to demonstrate quality improvement.*

A mechanism to report to the learners on the response made to their feedback to demonstrate quality improvement has not yet been developed.

*8.1 A system for monitoring and reviewing all aspects of the Institution's performance must be devised to drive up standards.*

A performance review document was recently created to provide a framework to monitor and review institutional performance. The document is overly detailed, making it unwieldy to use, and so reducing its usefulness. It outlines many data-gathering exercises that have not all been undertaken.

*8.2 8.3 The Institution must use the full range of information available on its performance to produce an annual report and appropriate action plans.*

As a result of staff changes and insufficient time, this has not been done.

*11.3 Lesson observations must be carried out systematically and incorporated into the tutors' appraisal to further support improvement.*

Lesson observations are carried out annually and are supportive in developing tutors' teaching techniques. The template does not include a section for the tutor to complete, nor a section identifying which teaching areas to work on, so limiting the quality of the process. Observation forms are taken to the tutors' appraisals, but are not incorporated into the process.

*16.2 A procedure for learners to appeal against their marks must be devised and made known so that an appeal can be made, if necessary.*

An effective procedure for learners to appeal against their marks has been devised and is included in the learner handbook.

*20.2 Learners must be informed of a fair complaints policy in writing at the start of the course, so they are clear on the procedure to follow if necessary.*

The complaints policy is made available to learners in the handbook and on the VLE. It is overly long and difficult to follow, so reducing its effectiveness.

*20.3 Learners must be advised of BAC's complaints procedure.*

Learners are advised of BAC's complaints procedure in the learner handbook. The explanation is excessively long and complicated, so reducing its effectiveness.

*23.2 The social programme must be responsive to the needs and wishes of the foundation students to support their attendance and enrich their experience.*

The social programme offers a wide range of activities, including those suggested by learners. It has been highly responsive to the needs and wishes of the foundation learners and has enhanced the quality of their experience very well.

*25.4 Guidance on health and safety must be made routinely available to visitors.*

Guidance on health and safety is not routinely available to visitors.

*27.1 Facilities and resources in the library and computer laboratory must be maintained to suitable levels to support private study effectively.*

Facilities and resources in the library and computer laboratory are maintained to suitable levels through the interventions of the laboratory assistant, or by users completing a form or making a telephone call to report a problem. The library is used as an area for learners to gather. A separate area has now been identified to be converted into a social space for learners, to ensure that the rest of the library is quiet and is used for study. This is scheduled for completion once learners are back at the university.

### **3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report**

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*The Institution should review the role of the QA Manager and associated responsibilities to promote effective quality assurance procedures.*

The role of the Quality Assurance (QA) Manager and associated responsibilities have been reviewed to promote effective QA procedures. The appointee has been in position for two months.

*It is recommended that the complaints procedure is included in the staff and learner handbooks to assist with its effective dissemination.*

The complaints procedure is in the learner handbook, but not in the staff handbook.

*The Institution should consider how to better integrate foundation students into the social programme.*

This has been successfully undertaken and has had a positive impact, as reported by learners.

*The Institution is recommended to make better use of the noticeboards so that different aspects of the provision are more clearly communicated to the learners.*

This was not able to be reviewed as part of this inspection.

*At the weekends, the ventilation system in the library should be used so that learners are comfortable when using the library.*

The ventilation system is used over the whole weekend to support the comfort of learners.

### **4. Response to compliance to statutory requirements in the last report**

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*In a recent emergency evacuation, a report details that the alarm did not sound in the washrooms nor on the roof where learners eat. The report states that learners would not leave the rooms they were in as they did not understand the importance of the evacuation. Consequently, health and safety procedures are insufficient and do not provide sufficient safeguards for learners.*

*There is inadequate signage for emergency exits. This was highlighted in the recent emergency evacuation report when staff and learners did not know how to leave the building.*

An emergency evacuation has been carried out and the alarm sounded in the washrooms and on the roof. Fire alarm tests take place every three months. This number of fire alarm tests is insufficient to ensure that the fire alarm system is maintained in good working order.

Photographs of the fire exit signage were made available to the inspector. These clearly showed the signage on each floor of the building. This demonstrates that the issue of inadequate signage has been suitably addressed.

## PART C – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### Further work to meet outstanding actions

2.4 All policies must be made known to both staff and learners and must be reviewed for relevance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
7.1 The system for obtaining learner feedback must be reviewed so that it is effective in terms of the level of response and the feedback questionnaire administered centrally must be changed to be able to identify the views of foundation students.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
7.2 Feedback must be recorded and analysed systematically in order to gain a full understanding of learners' views.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
7.4 A mechanism must be devised to report to the learners on the response made to their feedback.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
8.1 The recently created performance review document must be simplified so that it is easy to use and provides an effective process for monitoring and reviewing institutional performance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
8.2 8.3 The Institution must use the full range of information available on its performance to produce an annual report that informs the development of an annual action plan.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
11.3 The lesson observation template must include a section for the tutor to complete and a section identifying which areas to work on to further support improvements. Observation outcomes must be incorporated into the appraisal process.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
20.2 The complaints policy must be simplified so that it can be easily understood.	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
20.3 Information provided on BAC's complaints procedure must be simplified so that it can be easily understood.	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
25.4 Guidance on health and safety must be routinely available to visitors.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
27.1 The social space for learners, separate from the library and computer laboratory, must be completed in time for the learners' return to the university.	<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low

### FURTHER WORK TO MEET OUTSTANDING RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Institution should consider including the complaints procedure in the staff handbook.

The Institution is recommended to make better use of the noticeboards so that different aspects of the provision are more clearly communicated to the learners.

### ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

It is suggested that the Institution has fire alarm tests and evacuations more regularly than every three months so that learners know what to do in the case of an emergency evacuation.