



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (College)

INSTITUTION:	Academy of Forensic Medical Sciences
ADDRESS:	Greenwich Public Mortuary Miller House 3 Devonshire Drive London SE10 8LP
HEAD OF INSTITUTION:	Professor Peter Vanezis
ACCREDITATION STATUS:	Accredited
DATE OF INSPECTION:	10 July 2020
ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:	Continued accreditation, 1 October 2020

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

The Academy of Forensic Medical Sciences (AFMS/the Institution) was established in 2010. It is a privately owned, not-for-profit company limited by guarantee providing training in Forensic Medicine and Forensic Medical Sciences.

AFMS' offices and teaching facilities are based in Greenwich, London with some teaching also taking place at Barts Medical School at Queen Mary University of London.

The Institution is dedicated to furthering the interests of justice in society through the pursuit of excellence in education and training in the forensic medical sciences.

The Board of Directors is responsible for the strategic, financial, human resources and legal aspects of the Institution. The Board of Directors is supported by an Academic Advisory Board consisting of 21 international experts in the field of Forensic Medical Sciences. The Managing Director, who is also the Principal of the Institution, manages the day-to-day operations, supported by a small administrative team.

AFMS has Memoranda of Understanding with a number of international organisations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the University of Verona, and the National University of Malaysia.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Institution offers a number of courses using a combination of online and face-to-face delivery. The current courses offered include the Diploma in Forensic Medical Sciences (DipFMS), which is a 60-hour course, with the course materials delivered online. The Diploma in Forensic Human Identification (DipFHID) is an intensive, one-week face-to-face course, and the Diploma in Medical Jurisprudence Training is a modular, two-year course that includes work experience with institutions in the UK and abroad. The Diploma in Management of the Dead (DipMoD) is available for study face to face and online.

All the diploma courses are awarded by AFMS. In addition, fully qualified and experienced forensic pathologists can apply for a Fellowship in Forensic Pathology and Human Identification with AFMS. Both the Fellowship and the Diploma in Medical Jurisprudence Training are recognised by the Speciality Board of Medicine in Malaysia and allow pathologists to become senior consultants. The Institution also offers a distance learning Master's in Forensic Medical Sciences to international students. This programme was developed by the Principal in collaboration with a colleague at the University of Verona.

At the time of the inspection, there were 41 students enrolled. Five students are studying at AFMS' premises and 36 students are studying online. The majority of students are aged between 30 and 50 years old, with approximately equal numbers of male and female students. The majority of students are UK residents. Other countries represented are Saudi Arabia, India, Romania, Malaysia, Germany, Canada and the United States of America. There are no students under 18 years of age.

The Institution's academic year runs from October to April, with enrolment opening in April for the following academic year. Successful applicants for all courses are graduates in medicine, law, science or social science or have relevant vocational experience in forensic medicine.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was carried out remotely by one inspector over one day. The inspector held online meetings with members of the senior management team and with students. A comprehensive selection of documentation was made available. The Institution cooperated fully with the inspection.

4. Inspection history

Inspection type	Date
Stage 2	8 April 2015
Stage 3	8 October 2015
Interim	14 October 2016
Re-accreditation	21 & 25 March 2019

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

There has been one change of administrative personnel due to the previous incumbent relocating overseas. The transition has been smooth as the new member of the team is an alumnus of AFMS and familiar with the Institution's operation and procedures.

2. Response to actions points in last report

4.1 The Institution must update its website to reflect its new location in Greenwich.

AFMS' website has yet to be updated with photographs of the Greenwich site. The Institution is working with its web designers to rectify this.

8.2 8.3 The Institution must formalise annual action-planning, including the use of stakeholder feedback, to inform target setting.

AFMS has yet to formalise its action-planning process.

15.1 The Institution must demonstrate that its qualifications meet national criteria for the advertised qualification levels.

AFMS has removed all reference to qualification levels from its publicity material and course descriptors.

15.3 The Institution must make appropriate use of external examiners to ensure consistency of standards across all courses and with other HE institutions.

AFMS provides samples of students' work to external examiners, who report on the quality of the work and its assessment. This ensures AFMS' standards are commensurate with those of other institutions in the sector.

18.1 The Institution must ensure that at least one member of staff undertakes student welfare training in order to further enhance provision in this area.

Staff have undertaken appropriate training in the prevention of radicalisation and extremism in order to ensure the safety of the students. One member of the administration team is in the process of completing online welfare training offered by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF).

20.3 The Institution must include details on the BAC complaints policy in its complaints and feedback documentation.

Reference to the BAC complaints policy is clearly shown as part of AFMS' complaints procedures.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

It is recommended the Institution use on-script comments for summative assignments to help students continually improve their academic writing.

Tutors are currently not using written comments systematically as part of their feedback to students on assignments. Students are therefore not always receiving written advice on how to improve their academic writing.

It is recommended that teaching staff plan for more student involvement in their sessions. This will encourage greater contributions from the students and increase the amount of peer learning in sessions.

Teaching staff now plan for more student involvement in their sessions. As a result, students confirm that they have full involvement in practical and theory sessions, which enriches their learning.

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

AFMS has a well-defined management structure with clear lines of communication, ensuring the efficient administration of the Institution. The head of AFMS has a strong international reputation and maintains a considerable number of contacts worldwide. This effectively enhances the reputation of AFMS. An Academic Advisory Board assures academic standards, and Memoranda of Understanding with international organisations ensure that AFMS contributes and responds to global advances in forensic medicine.

Administrative staff are well qualified and have clear roles and responsibilities that are defined in comprehensive job descriptions. The administrative team is effective in supporting the management, students and teaching staff. A comprehensive number of appropriate policies and procedures is held centrally and is accessible to staff and students through the Institution's website.

The Principal is responsible for staff appraisals, which are ongoing and provide staff with realistic performance targets that are subject to regular review.

AFMS' website has full and accurate course descriptors that allow students to make an informed choice as to the course or courses most suitable to further their career.

4.1 The Institution's website does not contain any photographs of the Greenwich premises.

All diploma courses are self-validated. Nevertheless, students have the option of sitting for examinations set by external organisations. Entry requirements for each course are clearly stated, and applicants' qualifications, experience, resilience and English language ability are confirmed. Thus, students are assured that they have chosen the correct course and that they will be able to cope with the demands of their chosen course.

Students are expected to have an appropriate minimum percentage of attendance or the certificate of attendance is withheld. Attendance is accurately recorded and rare cases of absence are followed up promptly. Lateness to examinations may result in a student forfeiting their award.

Student feedback is effectively collated and the resulting actions are recorded on the website as a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), which are readily accessible to students. The Institution provides stakeholders with a brief annual report. However, it does not indicate how the Institution intends to develop.

8.2 8.3 AFMS' annual report to stakeholders does not include action or strategic plans. As a result, it is not clear how the Institution intends to develop its provision.

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Principal acts as the Academic Manager and ensures that teaching and learning are of a very high standard. All face-to-face teaching sessions are observed by a senior member of staff to ensure academic standards are consistent. The Principal is readily available to students for help and advice, so students feel well supported in their learning.

The teaching staff are drawn from a pool of highly qualified and experienced academics, pathologists, medical doctors and legal experts in the field of forensics. This ensures that students are exposed to theory and practical sessions that demonstrate the most up-to-date methodologies.

Students have access to an operating mortuary for their practical sessions, which enhances their learning. Face-to-face theory sessions are well planned following the course specification and are held in suitable accommodation. Online sessions make use of an appropriate Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) successfully.

Students are fully involved in their learning and speak very highly of the teaching they receive. They are well prepared for their assessments. Students are aware of the methods by which they will be assessed and have the opportunity to sit for qualifications awarded by external bodies, which they appreciate.

Students identified as making slow progress are offered additional support to ensure they reach the required standard by the end of their course. Helpful oral feedback is regularly given to students to help them improve. However, written comments to students on their assignments vary in their quality and usefulness. Students confirm that the excellent feedback they do receive is helpful in supporting them to improve their practice.

External examiners are used to ensure that award standards are commensurate with those across the sector. However, external examiner reports are not made available to the student body. This would inform students as to the quality of the teaching and learning provided by the Institution and represents good practice.

4.3 Student Welfare (spot check)

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

Comments

International students find the high-quality pre-course advice they receive very helpful. They are effectively supported in obtaining a visa and accommodation. As mature professionals, students are largely self-sufficient, but they appreciate that help is available to them on demand.

Detailed, comprehensive policies covering discrimination and abusive behaviour are available on the Institution's website.

AFMS has suitable arrangements in place to prevent radicalisation and extremism, supported by a thorough risk assessment.

Students are made aware of the AFMS complaints procedure in their course handbook and on the website, which means that students are aware of the procedures should they wish to complain or make staff aware of an issue.

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

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

Comments

The premises in Greenwich are ideal for the courses offered. They are secure and offer good opportunities for students to develop their practical skills under the tutelage and supervision of the Principal.

Strict health and safety procedures are followed at all times.

There are suitable teaching, study and office space, and an extensive specialist library.

Students are very complimentary about the resources available to them. Additionally, they can take advantage of the facilities offered at Queen Mary University of London, including through attendance at lectures, which they appreciate as an addition to their studies.

4.5 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

A small team of permanent staff ensures the smooth running of the Institution and a strong commitment to its development.

High-quality teaching and support in the theory and practice of forensic medicine allow students to succeed in their chosen course.

Flexible study options allow students to experience a wide range of approaches to the teaching and practice of forensic medicine.

Excellent facilities for the teaching and practice of forensic medicine ensure that students develop their investigative and analytical skills very well.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

4.1 The Institution must include photographs of its current location on its website.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low
8.2 8.3 The Institution must produce and review short- and long-term action plans.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low

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

The Institution should ensure that detailed feedback and comments to support improvement are provided to all students on their written assignments.

The Institution should consider establishing a validation agreement with a domestic or overseas HE institution for its diploma courses.

The Institution should consider making external examiners' written reports available to students.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE

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