



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (College)

INSTITUTION:	Docklands Academy London
ADDRESS:	11 Selsdon Way London E14 9GL
HEAD OF INSTITUTION:	Mrs Canan Ejder Celik
ACCREDITATION STATUS:	Accredited
DATE OF INSPECTION:	20 April 2021
ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:	Continued accreditation, 19 July 2021

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

Docklands Academy London (Docklands Academy/DAL/the Institution) is a trading division of Simply Alliance Limited (SAL), a privately owned limited company. The Institution offers a range of vocational courses at levels 4 and 5 in Business, Hospitality Management, and International Travel and Tourism Management.

The Institution is located in the Docklands area of East London, close to London's financial district in Canary Wharf. It aims to provide high-quality education for future leaders in the world of work and business.

DAL is a privately funded provider of English language courses and higher education. Governance is provided by the Institution's four directors, one of whom acts as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), and Acting Principal and Chair of the Board of Governance. They are supported by the Academic Head, senior managers and a range of external governance board members.

Docklands Academy was originally established in Aston, Birmingham in August 2009. In 2011, it relocated to the City Harbour area of East London. Since the previous inspection, there has been a change in Principal and Academic Head. The CEO currently undertakes the role of Acting Principal since the departure of the previous Academy Principal in June 2019.

Since September 2017, the Institution has worked in partnership with a public further education provider, Unified Seevic Palmer's College, trading as USP College (USP), to offer Pearson Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Higher National Diploma (HND) courses to students who are entitled to apply for student loans to fund these qualifications. These students are registered at USP, but all delivery and assessment take place at the Institution. In September 2020, USP enforced a teach-out contract with Docklands Academy, with no further recruitment through USP.

Docklands Academy is also an approved Pearson centre in its own right and is able to recruit students directly to its own HNC and HND managed programmes.

2. Brief description of the current provision

Docklands Academy offers HNC and HND programmes at levels 4 and 5 in Business, Hospitality Management, and International Travel and Tourism Management. All qualifications are accredited by Pearson. Almost all current students are enrolled on qualifications validated through USP. Programmes are usually delivered in person at the Institution's London premises. At the time of the inspection, programmes were being delivered online due to local restrictions.

The Institution also offers courses in English language, and short non-accredited courses in food safety, gastronomy and culinary arts. These programmes are not accredited by BAC and were not inspected.

At the time of the inspection, 98 students were enrolled, the large majority on the HND in Business. The Institution has capacity for 502 students. No students are currently enrolled on the HNC or HND in Hospitality Management, and there are no future enrolment bookings. All students on higher education courses are aged 18 or over. Just over half of students are male. The large majority of students are Romanian, with a few students from Bulgaria and other European countries.

Students are enrolled termly three times each year in September, January and April. Students must meet published entry requirements and minimum levels of English language competency. Students undertake an English language and mathematics placement test and have a face-to-face or online interview prior to enrolment. USP-registered students must complete an online USP College application form.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was conducted online over one day by one inspector. Online meetings were held with the CEO/Acting Principal, the Academic Head, senior managers and tutors, and a group of students. The inspector observed online lessons. A pre-recorded virtual tour of the premises was reviewed. A range of documentation was scrutinised. A good range of inspection information was made available as requested. The Institution co-operated fully with the inspection process.

4. Inspection history

Inspection type	Date
Stage 2	11 August 2010
Supplementary	20 July 2011
Stage 3	5 September 2011
Interim	11 March 2013
Re-accreditation	14–15 October 2014
Interim	3 October 2014
Re-accreditation	28–29 January 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

The Principal in place at the last inspection left the Institution in June 2019. The CEO has taken on the role of Acting Principal and provides effective operational and strategic oversight. The previous Academic Head has been replaced. The current Academic Head is a qualified solicitor, experienced higher education lecturer and programme leader, and has extensive experience of managing HNC and HND programmes.

In September 2020, following an evaluation of two years' performance outcomes, the USP College board decided to enforce a teach-out contract with the Institution. Currently enrolled students are being taught out of their level 5 HND programmes in Business and International Travel and Tourism Management, with all USP-registered students due to complete their qualifications by May 2022. The Institution is currently open to new enrolments for direct entry onto HNC and HND programmes as an approved centre in its own right.

2. Response to action points in last report

There were no action points identified in the last inspection report.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

It is recommended that the Institution takes measures to improve punctuality in the first lesson so that all students benefit fully from the session.

The Institution has a clear attendance and punctuality policy in place. Clear expectations for high levels of student attendance and punctuality are very well reinforced through the student handbook, the induction process and relevant policies. Students are marked as absent if they arrive for classes within 15 minutes of the scheduled start time. Redesigned attendance monitoring forms ensure that punctuality can be easily tracked and prompt action taken to address any concerns. At the time of the inspection, teaching sessions were being delivered online, with excellent levels of punctuality.

The Institution should consider providing introductory-level training in specific learning needs to a member of the academic team to facilitate the provision of support for any future students with such needs.

Since the previous inspection, managers have recruited an additional staff member to the Institution with relevant qualifications and experience in supporting students with additional learning needs and disabilities. They are available to offer useful support, advice and guidance to meet the learning needs of students when required.

It is recommended that the Institution further develops teachers' skills in differentiated lesson-planning so that students of all abilities are suitably challenged.

Managers recognise that many students do not achieve the higher grades in their HNC and HND assessments. To address this, managers have encouraged the sharing of best practice between higher education and English language teachers, to share examples of teaching methods and approaches that could promote further challenge and extension. A professional development activity has taken place to model different strategies for developing students' higher order thinking skills. Students have also received ongoing feedback to help them better understand the demands of the higher level grading criteria. These initiatives help teachers to plan lessons that are more challenging for the more skilled students.

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 Institution is effectively managed. The CEO, in the role as Acting Principal, provides appropriate strategic and operational leadership, supported by the Academic Head and a team of senior managers. A three-year strategic plan sets out the Institution's key long-term goals and priorities. The management structure is clearly structured and defined, and managers are suitably experienced and qualified to undertake their roles.

Effective educational oversight is provided by the Board of Governance. A range of external board members, with appropriate experience and expertise in academic management and quality assurance, challenge senior leaders to ensure that the quality of education is maintained. A range of other committees meet regularly to formally review standards and monitor performance. Committee meeting records are detailed and highlight useful recommendations for consideration by senior leaders to help enhance the quality of provision further. Managers meet formally each month to review a wide range of operational issues and to monitor previously set action plans. These processes ensure that areas for development are systematically monitored by managers, to help the Institution improve.

The Institution regularly obtains and records feedback from students. The academic and advisory committee includes student representatives as full members, to ensure the needs of students are well represented and considered. A separate student committee raises the profile of the student voice further and provides a systematic forum for students to feed back on their experience and to raise any areas for enhancement. Students are invited to complete regular feedback surveys at different points in their learning journey and managers analyse the results to identify areas for future action.

The administration of the Institution is effective. The size of the administrative team is appropriate for the current number of students. Data collection and collation systems are efficient and effective. A good range of clear and detailed policies are in place that are regularly refreshed and updated. These are shared with staff and students effectively to ensure that all stakeholders are well informed and kept up to date with the Institution's processes and procedures.

A range of measures are in place to ensure students are recruited effectively to appropriate courses. Entry requirements for each course are clearly communicated in course literature and on the Institution's website. Admissions staff follow a systematic process for enrolment and students complete a range of initial assessments to ensure that they are placed on an appropriate programme that meets their educational goals and aspirations.

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The academic and advisory committee, supported by the Head of Academics, provides effective oversight of academic matters. Courses are appropriately scheduled, planned and implemented, following awarding organisation guidelines and assessment regulations.

Students benefit from the flexible scheduling of classes and the option to study at weekends to fit around their work commitments. Timetables are clear and include provision for optional tutorial support, supervised assessment activities and additional academic workshops. This ensures that students receive effective advice and guidance on academic writing, referencing and how to avoid academic malpractice, to help them improve the quality of their assignment work.

Teaching staff have a range of qualifications, including first or higher degrees, and some have relevant vocational experience, for example in the hospitality sector. Most teaching staff have qualifications and experience as teachers of English as an additional language. They use their skills and experience to plan lessons

appropriately, making use of relevant learning resources, such as case studies and discussion topics, to engage students and promote debate. As a result, students develop their vocational knowledge and understanding, for example of different types of business ownership and structures, marketing methods, strategic planning and basic accounting.

Teachers engage in ongoing professional development activities, completing a range of mandatory training sessions, such as in safeguarding and health and safety, as well as additional professional qualifications, such as assessor awards. Teachers also undertake annual development reviews, to evaluate their performance and identify individual development targets and objectives. This includes appropriate consideration of the outcomes of regular observations of teaching sessions, which are undertaken by academic managers.

These measures help managers to identify areas for ongoing enhancement, helping the Institution to maintain its standards and enhance the quality of education. For example, lesson observations have helped managers to identify the need to better support more students to extend and develop their critical thinking skills in ways that are appropriate to higher level study.

Students benefit from access to a good range of online learning resources through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) provided by USP. Students access assignments, teaching notes, presentations and other supporting resources to help support their studies and independent learning skills.

Teachers use a range of ongoing assessment methods to check students' knowledge and understanding. For example, online forms are used for students to respond to questions during lessons, so that teachers can quickly correct any misunderstandings and can monitor engagement. Formal assignment submissions are uploaded and managed through the VLE, making effective use of similarity software checks to ensure that students' work is valid, authentic and reliable. Teachers provide evaluative written feedback against individual assessment criteria in line with awarding organisation procedures. This ensures that students are clear about the criteria achieved and where improvements are required.

Teachers' assessment decisions are regularly reviewed and moderated through internal verification processes and external examination by the awarding organisation. Where essential actions are identified, these are monitored effectively through the committee and management meeting structure to ensure improvements are put in place quickly.

4.3 Student Welfare (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Students benefit from appropriate pastoral and welfare support from supportive and accessible staff. Students complete an induction process on arrival to help them settle into their studies quickly. The Welfare Officer provides a useful drop-in service for any student to seek advice and guidance on personal and pastoral issues. An out-of-hours contact number is provided for students to access urgent support outside normal working hours. A broad range of up-to-date policies and procedures is in place to avoid discrimination and for dealing with any abusive behaviour.

A range of measures are in place to protect students from the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Managers have carried out a specific risk assessment and put an action plan in place to reduce and manage any potential risks to staff and students. All staff received mandatory update training in this area to help them understand their roles and responsibilities. The Academic Quality Co-ordinator has undertaken specific training to help them deal with any behaviour considered extremist if this is ever identified. In meetings with students, they confirmed that they had received some initial information on potential risks from radicalisation and extremism during induction, but lacked confidence in how this related to their own personal and professional lives in modern Britain.

Students usually benefit from access to a range of social events throughout the academic year, when they can mix with students on other courses at Docklands Academy. At the time of the inspection, the type, frequency and range of social events had been significantly reduced due to local restrictions.

Students confirm that they receive limited guidance on possible career and progression options, for example a level 6 top-up degree programme with a local university provider. Students can seek out additional information, advice and guidance if required, but would benefit from information and guidance on a broader range of possible options to support their next steps.

Students have access to a clear, fair and comprehensive complaints procedure, which includes useful links and signposts to independent, external adjudicators and the BAC complaints process if required. All relevant student policies, including those on fees and refund procedures, are clearly communicated and shared with students. This ensures that they are clear about the terms, conditions and commitments related to their studies.

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Institution has a secure long-term lease on its premises until 2035.

Students benefit from clear, modern, spacious and attractive premises that support their studies well. A good number of well-equipped and furnished classrooms, a large conference space, a well-appointed library and computer rooms all provide suitable facilities for learning and assessment.

There is a range of suitable office spaces for staff to work and meet with students. Washrooms are clean and modern.

A good level of signage is available inside and outside the premises, including health and safety advice.

There are no areas of particular hazard.

Students and staff confirm that the premises offer a high-quality, safe and comfortable space for work and study.

4.5 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

A clear committee and meeting structure is in place that ensures leaders and managers can review performance and provide effective oversight of key performance areas.

A broad range of detailed and specific policies and procedures are in place and regularly updated, which ensures that staff and students are clear about their roles, responsibilities and working practices.

Students highly value the advice and guidance provided by encouraging and accessible tutors who support them to develop their vocational knowledge, understanding and skills.

Students benefit from clean, modern, spacious and well-appointed premises that support their studies well.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

High

Medium

Low

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

It is recommended that measures are put in place to help more students develop their critical thinking skills, in ways appropriate for higher level study.

The Institution should consider ways to help students better understand the risks around radicalisation and extremism and how these relate to their roles in the business, hospitality, and travel and tourism sectors.

The Institution should reinstate a range of engaging social activities when appropriate to do so.

It is recommended that all students receive additional advice and guidance on a broader range of career and progression options to support their next steps.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE

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