



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (College)

INSTITUTION:	The Interior Design School
ADDRESS:	1A Sheldon Square Paddington Central London W2 6PY
HEAD OF INSTITUTION:	Ms Iris Dunbar
ACCREDITATION STATUS:	Accredited
DATE OF INSPECTION:	29 March 2021
ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:	Continued accreditation, 8 October 2021

1. Background to the institution

The Interior Design School (IDS/the Institution) is a privately owned Institution that offers non-accredited, part-time and full-time professional vocational education programmes in interior design.

IDS is located in a new creative campus at Paddington Central, west London. The campus is within a thriving business community. The area is growing in reputation as the leading hub for creative businesses in west London. All programmes are delivered in contemporary studio premises that are designed with individual workstations that benefit from a lot of natural light to create an inspiring and professional working environment.

The Institution aims to provide students with industry-led training in a practising design studio that encompasses the skills and knowledge necessary for professional practice in all aspects of interior design.

IDS has one Managing Director (MD), who is also the owner of the Institution. The MD oversees programme management and delivery. Financial oversight is provided by the Company Secretary, who is also an external adviser. The MD is supported by an Operations Manager, who is responsible for the administration and general management of all aspects of the provision.

IDS was founded in 1991 by its current MD, who wanted to provide professional training courses leading directly to employment within the creative industries. In September 2019, IDS moved from Queens Park in London to Paddington Central in London.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Institution offers a number of different courses that seek to accommodate students' individual requirements and circumstances. For example, there are short courses for students who want to achieve a personal goal by designing their own interior space, and full-time courses for students who may want a professional qualification to practise as an interior designer.

The Institution offers two non-accredited programmes in interior design. These are a full-time Professional Diploma in Interior Design and a part-time Professional Certificate in Interior Design. The Professional Diploma in Interior Design is an intense, one-year, full-time programme. It is aimed at students wishing to gain an understanding of the skills and knowledge required to change career, continue in further education or develop individual professional skills. The Professional Certificate in Interior Design consists of four modules, delivered over two evenings a week, over two years. Modules can be taken separately or consecutively.

Both programmes also involve some weekend and residential commitments. In addition to these programmes, the Institution also offers one-day programmes that give students an insightful overview of the process of design thinking. All the programmes are currently delivered in person.

At the time of the inspection, eight full-time and 10 part-time students were enrolled on the Professional Diploma in Interior Design and the Professional Certificate in Interior Design programmes respectively. A majority of the students are British, with Sweden, Germany, Italy and Greece among the other countries represented. A majority of the students are female, and all students are over 21 years of age.

Enrolment on programmes takes place throughout the year. The full-time programme recruits students on an academic-year basis, while the part-time programme recruits per consecutive module. The shorter programmes recruit throughout the year for evenings, a specific weekday and weekends. The current programme capacity is a maximum of 12 students on any programme. There are no entry requirements for any programmes, although all applicants have an interview to discuss course requirements and the expectations of the Institution.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was conducted over one day, online, by one inspector. Meetings were held with the Managing Director, the Operations Manager, one tutor and a small group of students. A range of documentation was scrutinised, and a virtual tour of the premises was undertaken, as well as one lesson observation. All requested documentation was readily available and well organised. The Director co-operated highly efficiently with the inspection process.

4. Inspection history

Full Accreditation	8 November 1999
Re-accreditation	1 December 2005
Interim	20 July 2009
Re-accreditation	18 January 2011
Interim	10 April 2013
Re-accreditation	4–5 February 2015
Interim	16 January 2017
Re-accreditation	21–22 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 Institution moved premises in September 2019. IDS is now based in a new, modern area of Paddington Central, which is a growing community of creative businesses in west London.

2. Response to action points in last report

3.2 Qualifications of all current and newly recruited staff must be formally verified.

Qualifications of all staff, including new staff, have been formally verified by the MD. This process is undertaken for all staff who are recruited. Clearly documented records are in place.

3.3 The Institution must introduce an appropriate annual appraisal system for all staff.

There is an effective and appropriate documented system for regularly reviewing the performance of staff. This is inclusive of an appraisal meeting with the MD every six months. The meetings are used to review performance and identify areas of strength and areas for development. The staff performance evaluation document is effective in recording this process. However, it does not include a section to identify areas of development and training needed to support continuous improvement.

8.2 The Institution must develop a comprehensive self-evaluation process that is reviewed annually.

The Institution has developed a comprehensive and effective self-evaluation system. The results of the self-evaluation are documented in the IDS annual report and the newly introduced IDS mid-year reports and company evaluation report.

8.3 The Institution must develop an action plan, as a consequence of the self-evaluation review, with clear targets that are reviewed, monitored and updated regularly.

On completion of the IDS annual report, the Institution has introduced a company evaluation report that identifies future plans. The company evaluation report includes information about how targets are reviewed, monitored and updated.

11.3 The Institution must introduce a classroom observation schedule for all tutors.

A schedule for classroom observations has been developed for all tutors, along with a checklist document identifying the roles and responsibilities of tutors and students. A useful summary of the process is captured in a document to ensure all tutors are aware of the purpose and value of classroom observations.

18.7 The Institution must develop formal mechanisms to manage the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

All staff at the Institution have undertaken training on the arrangements in place to protect students from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Certificates of completion are securely stored as part of the staff's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) records. There is also an effective policy and risk assessment in place.

19.1 The Institution must provide additional information on its website and in information packs for prospective international students to better prepare them for living and studying in the UK.

The Institution provides clear and appropriate information for prospective international students to support their transition to living and studying in the UK. The information pack includes advice and support about accommodation, transport and facilities that are local to IDS.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

It is recommended that the Institution undertakes a refresh of its website and uses this opportunity to enhance the support for international students as well as to showcase students' work and success stories.

The Institution has an exciting and professional website that is highly reflective of IDS and its ethos. The website also has webpages dedicated to staff expertise, graduate profiles and portfolios, and the IDS annual exhibition showcase. Therefore, the website provides useful information for all students.

It is recommended that the Institution makes clear reference, with appropriate information, to the English language ability that is required in order to be accepted onto its courses.

The requirement for all students to have a good level of English language is clearly stated on the course information webpage, which is accessible from the IDS website. This is also communicated to potential students at the initial stages of enquiry.

It is recommended that the Institution systematically collates feedback and the respective responses and actions, and records them as part of the annual review process to demonstrate how feedback is managed by the Institution.

Student feedback is requested at the end of every programme. Feedback is collated and used to inform the IDS annual report and the company evaluation report that identifies actions for future practice and improvement.

The Institution is recommended to consider mapping its courses to the UK's Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) so that it clarifies the level of study and enables credit transfer should a student wish to progress to a higher level of study.

The Institution has mapped the two non-accredited programmes to the RQF at Level 6 so that the level of study is clarified and credit transfer is facilitated should a student wish to progress to a higher level of study.

It is recommended that a more formalised approach is taken to prepare students for further higher education study by providing guidance and support around the application and funding process.

Owing to the high ratio of staff to students, information, advice and guidance are regular and ongoing regarding progression. All staff are knowledgeable in referring students to accurate and up-to-date sources of information if they cannot provide this themselves. This is inclusive of applications and funding for higher education.

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 management structure is clearly defined in the organisation chart. The IDS organisational structure is effectively communicated to relevant stakeholders through induction, in student handbooks and in the staff handbook.

Both the MD and Operations Manager are highly qualified and experienced within the creative industries. Job descriptions are clearly documented and identify the level of authority and the responsibilities relating to teaching staff. Both the MD and Operations Manager have a clear understanding of the IDS ethos and approach to learning.

The small management team work well together on a day-to-day basis and channels of communication are highly effective. Required weekly formal communications are also recorded and up to date. Communications with freelance teaching staff are also regular, well documented and effective.

The Operations Manager is responsible for most of the administration as part of the job role. The Operations Manager is supported by the MD as needed. The size of the administrative team is sufficient to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the Institution. All enquires are responded to promptly by the MD and Operations Manager.

Daily data collection and collation activity are efficiently and effectively controlled using an electronic central storage system. This system is only accessible by the MD and Operations Manager. The central storage system is robust and all records are backed up appropriately to ensure their security.

The MD is responsible for the recruitment and continuing employment of suitably qualified and experienced staff. Most freelance teaching staff have been working with the Institution for several years and are highly experienced practitioners within the creative industries. The MD verifies all staff experience and qualifications prior to issuing employment contracts.

The IDS website and associated printed and online marketing materials provide an accurate depiction of the Institution's location, premises and facilities, and the range and nature of resources and services it offers. The website also contains comprehensive, accurate and up to date information on the programmes available.

The Institution considers student recruitment for all programmes to be a high priority. Entry requirements for each programme are clearly stated in the course descriptions on the IDS website. These are also communicated to potential students at the initial stages of enquiry. This is supported by a formal application process to ensure that students meet the entry requirements.

There is a clear and published policy on student attendance and punctuality. In the unusual event of any unauthorised absences, these would be followed up promptly by the Operations Manager.

The Institution requests feedback from its students at the end of every programme, and the MD also actively meets with students during all programme delivery to seek early feedback and to ensure a positive student experience. Freelance teaching staff and other industry professionals, such as guest speakers and assessors, are also asked for feedback on the quality of the learning resources and the students' outcomes. The IDS annual report and company evaluation report include the use of stakeholder feedback as part of the self-evaluation process.

The Institution has annual reports and mid-year reports in place that are effective for monitoring and periodically reviewing appropriate aspects of the Institution's performance. Annual reports include an analysis of year-on-year results on student satisfaction, retention, achievement, completion rates and progression outcomes. The IDS website is also highly informative regarding student success stories and staff expertise and recognition. The company evaluation report effectively identifies plans for areas of development and improvement, inclusive of how targets are reviewed, monitored and updated.

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The MD and Operations Manager are highly qualified and experienced and ensure that the academic management of programmes is effective, including the oversight of teaching, learning and assessment. The careful allocation of teachers to classes and well-planned timetables provide for a consistent and professional learning experience.

IDS management and teaching staff are highly committed to the Institution and their roles and, as a result, the programmes are planned and delivered to ensure that students receive a high-quality learning experience. Teacher and student feedback supports this view and processes are appropriately supported by policy and staff and student handbooks.

All teaching staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, and all are current industry practitioners. They have worked with IDS for many years and have an excellent understanding of the Institution's aims and ethos. Teachers have a high level of subject knowledge, and pedagogic and communicative skills that allow them to deliver the content of courses effectively. Student feedback supports the view that the academic staff are highly knowledgeable and supportive.

All staff receive an appraisal from the MD. This documented process includes a six-monthly meeting and regular lesson observations. The teaching observations support teachers in their CPD, and this enables them to develop further pedagogic techniques to enhance the students' learning. The staff performance evaluation document that is used for appraisals is effective for capturing staff performance. However, it does not allow for the recording of any areas of development and training needs to support their continuous improvement.

Teachers are effective in responding to the different learning needs of students where appropriate, taking various learning styles into account in their planning and delivery of lessons. They also employ effective strategies to involve all students in active participation and to check their understanding of concepts and course content. The outcomes of lesson observations and student feedback confirm this.

All academic resources are internally standardised and reviewed by one of the Institution's managers and industry professionals to ensure consistency and high quality. Students and staff have access to an on-site library that is fully equipped with physical and digital publications.

As the professional qualifications are not accredited by an awarding body, all assessment takes place internally and is planned around industry requirements. Students receive regular, high-quality formative and written summative feedback on their progress in their lessons and in additional one-to-one tutorials. In addition, a formal assessment based on a final project takes place towards the end of programmes. This is assessed by industry professionals and considered as developmental activity and is key to students' progression. Student handbooks include clear guidance and penalties regarding plagiarism.

As there is a small allocation of students to teachers and the MD and Operations Manager are based on site throughout all the programme delivery, students have access to effective academic and pastoral support while in attendance. They also have contact details for the MD and Operations Manager, should they require support outside class time.

For assessment purposes, students are required to produce a body of work that indicates a level of proficiency and understanding of the design process and skills suited to work in the interior design profession. An external industry professional is recruited annually to assess the student portfolios. All programmes are unaccredited, and students receive a certificate of attendance from the Institution on completion.

4.3 Student Welfare (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met

Partially Met

Not Met

Comments

The Institution is highly committed to the welfare of all students. The MD is responsible for student welfare and is the initial point of contact for advice and counselling. Pre-course information is communicated in advance to students before they start their programme and this provides them with specifics such as course and assessment structures, and attendance and punctuality requirements.

A full induction is provided for all programmes. Students are also required to submit a learning agreement before programmes begin. Students are issued with a handbook, which is informative and provides details of the Institution's relevant policies and procedures, as well as emergency contact details.

International students are provided with additional relevant information to help them to settle into their studies quickly. The Institution provides clear and appropriate information for prospective international students to support their transition to living and studying in the UK. The information pack includes advice and support around accommodation, transport and facilities that are local to IDS. International students also receive an appropriate induction upon arrival, covering issues specific to the local area.

There is a clear and effective electronic enrolment process that is undertaken in a fair and transparent manner. Students are made aware of the complaints procedure during induction and have clear mechanisms to raise any concerns. Any complaint is recorded centrally and managed promptly and comprehensively by the MD. The BAC complaints policy is specifically referenced in both the student handbook and at induction.

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Institution has secure tenure on its premises. Access to the premises is appropriately restricted and secured.

Both the ground and first floors of the premises are maintained in an adequate state of repair, decoration and cleanliness.

General guidance on health and safety is made available to students, staff and visitors and there is clear signage inside and outside the premises for the display of general information.

There is adequate circulation space for the number of students and staff accommodated, as well as a suitable reception area in which to receive visitors.

There are sufficient bathroom facilities that are well maintained to a high level of cleanliness and there is a modern heating and ventilation system throughout the premises.

The new studio represents a functioning design practice space that enables students to operate in a relevant and professional environment. The space has been designed with individual workstations that benefit from plenty of natural light. The studio is also industry-standard equipped with drawing boards and excellent design computers with appropriate software.

4.5 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

The Institution has continued to employ a team of highly experienced and knowledgeable staff, which results in professional standards of teaching and pastoral support, and high levels of student satisfaction.

The professional and engaging website provides appropriate information for the Institution’s target audience.

The Institution has excellent systems in place to ensure that professional feedback is provided to students throughout their time on the programmes.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

High

Medium

Low

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

The staff performance evaluation document would benefit from an additional section to document an action plan for each member of staff, and which would include areas of development and training needs to support their continuous improvement.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE

--