



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Independent Higher Education)

INSTITUTION:	Newbold College of Higher Education
ADDRESS:	St Mark's Road Binfield Bracknell Berkshire RG42 4AN
HEAD OF INSTITUTION:	Dr Stephen Currow
ACCREDITATION STATUS:	Accredited
DATE OF INSPECTION:	9 February 2023
ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:	Continued accreditation, 30 June 2023

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

Newbold College of Higher Education (Newbold College/the Institution) is privately owned and has charitable status. It offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and diplomas. It is one of the oldest academic institutions of the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which is part of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist education network.

The 80-acre campus, where the Institution is based, is situated between Bracknell and Wokingham in the grounds of a former mansion. On the campus, there are also two, large purpose-built buildings, Salisbury Hall and Murdoch Hall, which house classrooms and administrative offices, as well as two purpose-built halls of residence, a modern library and accommodation for staff and students with families.

The Institution's vision is to be the Seventh-day Adventist Christian higher education institution of choice in Europe. It aims to provide and facilitate high-quality, creative and challenging learning opportunities within a Christian context. Newbold College seeks to promote and mentor the spiritual growth of students and staff, and to support students throughout their learning experience, as well as providing opportunities for service to meet the needs of others.

Newbold College is a registered charity with a Board of Governors appointed by the Trans-European Division. The Board of Governors works with the Institution's Principal and it confers the operation of the College to the Institution as a trust. The Principal is supported by the Chief Financial Officer, the Academic Registrar, the Head of Centre for Ministry and Mission, and the Head of Student Life and Chaplaincy.

The Institution is accredited by the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges and Universities, and the programmes offered are validated by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) with whom a partnership was formed in September 2015. The partnership was reviewed in November 2022, with the association continuing to be approved for the next five years.

The Institution has undergone a restructure following the decision to rationalise provision to focus on theology and mission, and a new Principal has been appointed.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Institution offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, including a Bachelor of Arts (BA) (Hons) in Biblical and Pastoral Studies, a Master of Arts (MA) in Theology, and the postgraduate Certificate in Mission. The Institution also offers an unaccredited, one-semester course in Mission and Service (OYIMS), allowing young people to learn the theory of mission and service on Newbold's campus for three months. In addition, a series of interactive workshops led by active specialists provided students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge in a real-world context.

The BA and the Graduate Diploma in Biblical and Pastoral Studies are taught on campus, with the option for students who are not able to study full time on campus to attend classes synchronously online. Non-residential students opting for the synchronous options are encouraged to also stay on campus for a proportion of their studies. The MA in Theology and the Postgraduate Certificate in Ministry and Mission are also taught synchronously with online links. Students are able to study for all programmes full- or part time.

Although the Institution does not see itself as exclusively a college for members of the Adventist faith, virtually all the students currently enrolled are affiliated to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and a high proportion are intending to work within the church.

At the time of the inspection, there were 89 full- and part-time students enrolled, ranging from 18 to 58 years of age, with a large majority of students being male. The large majority of students are from the United Kingdom

(UK), with international students coming from a number of other countries, including The Netherlands, Norway, Hungary, Sweden, Serbia and Poland.

Enrolment patterns for the UWTSD programmes mean that students typically enrol each September, with the possibility of starting the Graduate Diploma in January on a part-time basis. The MA in Theology and postgraduate certificate also have an intake in January. All entry requirements are clearly published on the Institution's website, including qualifications at Level 3 or equivalent for undergraduate provision, and a previous degree or ministry experience for the postgraduate programmes.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was undertaken onsite by one inspector in one day. Meetings were held with the senior managers, academic and support staff, and with students. The inspector observed teaching sessions, undertook a tour of the campus and checked the documentary records systems. A range of documentation was scrutinised. The Institution engaged positively with the inspection process.

4. Inspection history

Inspection type	Date
Full Accreditation	5–7 March 2008
Interim	20 January 2010
Re-accreditation	9–10 April 2013
Interim	12 August 2015
Re-accreditation	11–12 October 2017
End of Probation Review	22 May 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

A new Principal has been appointed since the last inspection, with the previous Principal having retired in 2022.

In September 2020, a decision was made by the Board of Governors to close the English Language Centre, and the Business, Humanities and Study Abroad programmes. Students in the Business and Humanities programmes have been transferred to the Southern Adventist University.

2. Response to action points in last report

There were no action points arising from the previous report.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

It is recommended that the periodic review process includes specific reference to the potential outcomes of the review and includes a template for the review report.

The Institution's periodic review utilises the documentation of its partner university, which includes a clear template and specific reference to the review outcomes. A review of the partnership and validated provision took place in November 2022.

It is recommended that Newbold College considers making specific reference, within the annual monitoring processes, to the key performance indicators that are used in evaluating progress.

Suitable key performance indicators have been developed. They are currently being reviewed and further developed by the senior managers in order to ensure these reflect the Institution's strategic objectives. These will be embedded in the annual monitoring process.

It is recommended that Newbold College ensures that all appraisals use the standard template to ensure that the outcomes of peer observation are considered in all academic staff appraisals.

A clear and appropriate appraisal template has been developed for all staff. In the case of academic staff, the appraisal includes consideration of the outcomes of teaching observations.

4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

4.1 Governance, Strategy and Financial Management (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

A clear and effective management structure is clearly communicated to stakeholders. The links between governance and management are clearly defined and understood. Risk management identification and monitoring are effectively managed and regularly reviewed.

The Newbold College strategic plan is clear and focuses on the future development of the Institution and refocusing its provision to support growth. The performance of the Institution is monitored against key strategic performance indicators, which are being updated to reflect the current strategic goals.

Financial management is transparent, with clearly designated responsibilities and appropriate external audits.

4.2 General and Academic Management and Administration (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Academic management and administration are clearly defined and supported by appropriate job descriptions and policies. The committee structure is clear, with appropriate terms of reference for each committee.

Data management and administration are effective, and all records are securely stored and regularly updated. Policies and procedures are effectively disseminated to staff and students via the intranet and the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Students are able to access their transcripts following internal and external moderation procedures, which students confirm they understand.

The policy and procedures for the recruitment of staff are appropriate, and qualifications and references are checked. In addition, Disclosure and Barring Service checks are being introduced for all staff to further ensure student and staff safety.

Staff have access to additional training and professional development linked to their annual appraisals. They can access good levels of support for taking additional qualifications and training, as needed.

Academic management systems are robust and managed in accordance with the partner university's requirements. Information provided to students is accurate, and learning outcomes are clearly articulated in programme handbooks. The regular formal and informal communication between management and students effectively supports a student-centred learning environment, and inspection findings confirm this to be the case.

Entry requirements are clearly articulated in the course descriptors, along with English language proficiency requirements. Students are able to access additional information and guidance as part of the effective admission procedures. However, the recognition of prior learning policy and procedure are not currently available online to applicants so that they are readily accessible.

Academic staff are encouraged and supported to undertake research activities, including access to external events and the publication of papers.

The information on the Institution's website is clear and provides an accurate depiction of the programmes, campus and facilities. Handbooks are easily accessible and regularly updated. While course fees and accommodation costs are made clear, there is little information on possible additional expenses for matters such as course study books or meals.

4.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Teaching and learning are supported effectively and delivered by well-qualified and experienced lecturers and academic managers.

Delivery methods take account of any individual learning needs and the requirements of both online and in-person students. All students are encouraged to participate in a range of active learning opportunities, which helps confirm their understanding of theories and their applications.

Assessment strategies are clear and support students effectively to meet the learning outcomes, with schedules, assessment briefs and grading criteria available through handbooks and the VLE. Students confirmed that feedback was timely and constructive and that they are aware of how to appeal a grade where appropriate.

Students have access to a very wide range of learning materials both in the library and online. Course materials are regularly reviewed and updated, and students are also provided with learning materials, by the unit lecturers, via the VLE. Students confirm that they have access to good-quality resources and materials. Inspection findings support this view.

4.4 Student Support, Guidance and Progression (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Welfare support is provided by appropriately qualified staff, with a named lead who is resident on campus. A comprehensive student induction includes relevant information on programmes and support services, including Information Technology (IT), counselling services and other professional advisory services available in the local area.

Policies on equality, diversity and discrimination are clear and accessible online. The mechanisms for the protection of students from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism are clear. Staff have undertaken training, and risks are regularly evaluated through the risk assessment register.

Academic staff are accessible to students outside class time, and students are able to book appointments to review their progress and gain additional advice as needed. Advice on careers and further studies is available from academic and support staff.

Complaints procedures are clearly documented, accessible and understood by students and include reference to the British Accreditation Council (BAC) complaints procedure.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with appropriate support to ensure they have access to tutors and resources.

International students are provided with clear advice and guidance on travel, living in the UK and the local area. This information is expanded on as part of a comprehensive, week-long induction. Students are made aware of the attendance requirements. They are clear that records are maintained and attendance is closely monitored for both online and on-campus students.

The residential accommodation offered is of a good standard and is open to inspection by the local authority. Married students accompanied by their families have access to separate accommodation that is also on campus.

Students confirm that there is an active social programme on campus that is appropriate to their interests, including sporting, cultural and broader social gatherings. The Institution provides support for the social programme, including supervision as needed. Online social forums support broader social interactions between those on campus and online students.

4.5 Premises, Facilities and Learning Resources (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Institution owns the campus, which is approved for education use by the local authority.

The teaching, social and residential premises are well maintained, providing good-quality space for the delivery of classes and for holding examinations. Staff and students have access to a number of areas in which they can relax, socialise and receive visitors, including a student common room. Health and safety guidance is clear, and all emergency exits are clearly signposted. As a result, the campus provides a comfortable and appropriate learning environment that students appreciate.

Academic staff have appropriate space in which to prepare lessons and undertake marking, and for holding meetings with students. Staff and students have access to the refectory, which provides a lunch and dinner service and the opportunity for out-of-class interaction. This arrangement is effective in supporting students to discuss any concerns.

The library is large and well-stocked and provides ample space for students to study in groups or individually, including provision of individual study booths. Opening hours are clear, and students have access to appropriately qualified and experienced librarians who provide help as needed. Accessible online resources, including a number of journals and online library subscriptions, are also provided to support students to complete assignments and staff to undertake research.

Students and staff have free access to wireless internet through the campus and external technician support, which they confirm is helpful and responsive. The wide range of accessible resources and study spaces support students effectively in their studies.

4.6 Quality Management, Assurance and Enhancement (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Institution regularly obtains and records feedback from students and takes appropriate action where necessary. Students complete online surveys as well as providing feedback through student representation at formal meetings, including programme and Academic Board meetings. Information on actions taken in response to feedback is provided through the student representatives.

Quality management processes and procedures are clearly documented and embedded in the ongoing monitoring of teaching and learning. Programme and institution reports are produced, primarily in response to UWSTD requirements, including an analysis of appropriate data and consideration of retention and achievement rates, and the periodic review of programmes.

However, a regular report evaluating all areas of Newbold College's performance across the whole provision and the key performance indicators has not been produced since the reduction in the number of programmes offered.

Programme monitoring and review reports are used to identify and share good practice as well as identifying areas for development. The reports are identified and appropriately shared both informally and as part of meetings and included in action plans as needed.

4.7 Online, Distance and Blended Learning (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met NA

Comments

Staff have a good understanding of the requirements of online and distance learning. Staff have been fully trained to deliver online provision and understand its demands and challenges.

The effective co-teaching of in-person and online students is supported by the innovative use of technology, which allows the lecturer to interact with online and in-class students as a cohesive group. This represents good practice.

Students are provided with clear information and support linked to digital skills requirements as well as guidance about studying effectively online. Students confirm that they feel well supported and have access to additional advice as required.

4.8 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

The range of study and leisure facilities, including the large library, provides students with a high-quality learning environment.

The large and well-resourced library includes a wide range of physical and online materials that meet the research needs of staff and students effectively.

The effective use of technology supports online and on-campus students to be taught together.

The individual support provided to students by tutors is responsive and supports high levels of achievement effectively.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

The Institution must produce a regular monitoring report that supports the evaluation of all areas of the Institution against the performance indicators.

High Medium Low

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

It is recommended that the recognition of prior learning policy and procedure be made available online to prospective students.

The Institution should consider adding information about possible additional costs to the information on its website.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE

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