



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Short Course Provider)

PROVIDER: Immerse Education Ltd

ADDRESS: 15-19 Bakers Row
London
EC1R 3DG

HEAD OF PROVIDER: Mr Sean Stevens

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 29 October 2020

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation, 6 April 2021

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the provider

Immerse Education Ltd (the Provider) is a privately owned company that offers short summer residential academic programmes for participants aged 13 to 18 years. The Provider was established in 2012. It was initially known as One Lindens Limited and was renamed Immerse Education in 2014 by its sole Director. The Provider's business premises are in London.

The residential academic programmes are offered at three locations in Oxford, Cambridge and London. Programmes are delivered at the colleges of Oxford University, Cambridge University and the Royal Hospital School.

The Provider aims to prepare participants for higher education in the United Kingdom (UK) by providing them with a positive experience during the study of their chosen academic programme.

Immerse Education has two Directors, one of whom oversees programme management and delivery. The other Director is also the owner of the Provider and is responsible for the oversight and general management of all aspects of the provision. He is supported by the College Managers, part-time tutors, and full-time mentors.

From the summer 2021, a new role of Academic Manager will also support the Director and will be responsible for the performance of tutors and mentors, who are recruited annually depending on demand. The Provider has access to a bank of tutors who are subject specialists and often lecture at the associated institution where the courses are delivered. The mentors are current undergraduate or postgraduate level participants who are studying at the associated institution.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Provider offers a range of short, accredited programmes over a seven-week period each summer in July and August. All programmes are residential and delivered face to face and are two weeks in duration. They are designed to provide a taster of what it is like to study at university in the UK.

The participants are recruited both in the UK and internationally. Most participants are from the UK, China, the United States of America and Hong Kong, however, broader international applications are welcomed.

The subjects offered are law, politics and international relations, medicine and biological science, architecture, biology, chemistry, computer science, creative writing, economics, engineering, English literature, history, international relations, management, mathematics, philosophy and physics.

Each programme comprises academic specialist-themed modules which are delivered by tutors, who are also university lecturers. In 2019, the Provider introduced separate programmes designed for participants aged 13 to 15 years and for participants aged 16 to 18 years.

As well as the academic aspect, the programmes include a wide range of visits to university specialist research centres, museums and academic centres of excellence appropriate to participants chosen subject area. There are also extensive cultural visits and tours that are, as much as is practicable, adapted to accommodate individual choice.

There is separate residential accommodation for each participant age group.

At the time of the inspection, there were no courses being delivered. The last course to run was in the summer of 2019, when there were 700 male and female participants aged 13 to 18 years who studied across the range of subject areas.

All applications and bookings are managed through the Provider's website and participants can enrol throughout the year. There are no formal academic entry requirements. However, at the time of application, it is specified that participants must have competent English-language skills at approximately Level B2 using the

Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), or over 5.5 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

3. Inspection process

The inspection was conducted over half a day by one inspector. Meetings were held with the two Directors and a range of documentation was scrutinised. Photographic evidence of the college campuses used in 2019 was reviewed. All the documentation requested was made readily available and the Directors cooperated well with the inspection.

4. Inspection history

Inspection type	Date
Full Accreditation	14-15 August 2013
Supplementary	12-13 August 2014
Interim	17 July 2015
Re-accreditation	7-8 August 2018

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 provider.

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

Immerse Education Ltd has changed its office address since the last inspection. The new office is still based in central London and has similar facilities to the previous office. These premises are used for business purposes only and participants do not visit them.

The previous branding of Cambridge Immerse is no longer in use as the company has now broadened its relationships with other institutions. Future marketing will be Immerse Education only, and programme titles based on the location of the programme, for example Immerse Education Oxford, Immerse Education Cambridge or Immerse Education Royal Hospital School.

The Provider has made significant improvements to its programme management since the last inspection and in preparation for its next recruitment of participants in summer 2021. The Provider has developed a new Academic Manager role. The responsibilities of this role include the planning and implementation of the tutor observations.

2. Response to actions points in last report

There were no action points identified at the last inspection.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

It is recommended that the Staff Handbook is revised and abridged to meet the needs of sessional staff.

The previous Staff Handbook has been reviewed, abridged and updated and is now called the Sessional Staff Handbook. It is an appropriate and well-written document that clearly meets the needs of the sessional staff.

It is recommended that the class observation policy is reviewed to reflect an achievable number of tutor observations during each summer period.

The tutor observation policy has been reviewed and updated. It now includes a clear justification for how many observations will take place for each two-week programme, per tutor. The policy also states the priority of the observations, based on tenure, experience, performance and any previous actions per tutor.

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 management, staffing and administration are effective for the type of Provider and nature of the provision. The staff hierarchy is clearly stated in the organisation chart and all staff have clear and sufficiently detailed job descriptions that clearly outline their responsibilities.

Communication between staff is excellent and well-documented, this is inclusive of regular meetings, emails and calls prior, during and post-programme delivery.

The Provider outsources its specialist staff training in first aid and safeguarding to reputable training companies. As a result, staff are appropriately trained in these areas. Details of staff training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities are recorded and stored using the Provider's secure online system. These systems and processes demonstrate the Provider is effectively managed.

The administration functions are carried out effectively. Prior to the commencement of the programme delivery, the administration is undertaken by one of the Directors. Once participants are enrolled and in attendance, the programme administration is managed by the College Managers. Tutors and mentors also provide support as needed.

The Provider has appropriate administrative policies and quality assurance procedures in place. These have been reviewed during 2020, even though programmes have not been delivered.

The Provider has highly effective electronic, online management and administration systems in place that effectively support the efficiency of programme planning, delivery and evaluation. The two Directors work closely to ensure that the systems are appropriate for the types of courses being delivered and to meet the participants' needs. These systems are also effective for the clear organisation, review and secure storage of all required quality assurance documentation.

The provider employs appropriate managerial and administrative staff. Staff recruitment is mostly carried out through recommendations as the Provider has an excellent reputation within the education sector for this type of provision. There is a clear recruitment policy in place, and qualifications and prior experience are appropriately verified by the Directors.

The information provided on the website is clear, engaging, informative and up to date regarding programme details. However, the website still includes references to terms such as the Cambridge Summer School, which are no longer in use and need to be removed for accuracy.

Participant recruitment is effectively carried out. The two Directors review all applications to ensure that participants are placed on appropriate courses for their age group, subject and learning needs. This process ensures recruitment of participants is of high priority.

Participant attendance is recorded daily and at every session. As the programmes are residential, unauthorised absences are rare. If these happen, they are promptly followed up by the College Manager. This process results in excellent attendance for all programmes and ensure the safety of all participants.

The Provider effectively uses feedback from participants, parents and staff to continuously bring about improvements across all elements of the organisation and its course delivery. The Provider responds positively to suggestions for improvement and any resulting actions are recorded on an action plan. Feedback is also used to analyse the programme design, delivery style and performance of tutors and this has an impact on the planning of future programmes. The Provider communicates improvements in response to feedback within their publicity materials and internal self-evaluation reports.

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met

Partially Met

Not Met

Comments

The staff are highly committed to the organisation and their roles, and as a result, the programmes are planned and delivered, to ensure that the participants receive a high-quality learning experience. Participant and parental feedback supports this view.

The quality of the planning of all training courses is of a high standard. All resources are internally standardised and reviewed by one of the Directors to ensure consistency and high quality.

Participant feedback supports the fact that the academic staff are highly knowledgeable and supportive.

The Provider will introduce a new role of Academic Manager in 2021. The Academic Manager will oversee the performance monitoring of tutors and mentors. All tutors will be observed at least once for each two-week programme. These observations are recorded using an appropriate report.

Participants receive regular, high-quality formative and written summative feedback on their progress in their lessons and in weekly one-to-one tutorials. The tutorials take place at least once a week.

4.3 Participant Welfare (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Provider is highly committed to the welfare of all participants. One of the Directors is the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), and all staff receive appropriate annual training from an external company that specialises in safeguarding in education. The Provider employs part-time sessional mentors to provide pastoral support. Mentors are trained annually prior to the delivery of the programmes. The mentors are managed by the DSL.

All participants receive comprehensive information and guidance regarding their programmes during the enquiry stage and prior to arrival. This includes travel requirements and the college locations. The Provider regularly communicates with participants and parents during the application and enrolment stages to answer any questions and provide additional information.

Participants receive an appropriate induction on arrival that includes information about the residential accommodation, the academic and social aspects of the programmes, and out-of-hours contact numbers. UK laws and local customs are also explained.

The information provided and the induction also include guidance regarding expected and prohibited behaviour.

The Provider has effective arrangements to protect participants from the risks of radicalisation and extremism.

Each college location, where the programmes are delivered, has a College Manager. The College Manager can be contacted out of hours and for emergency support. Participants are provided with their contact details, including a mobile telephone number. In addition, participants have emergency contact numbers for their mentor.

There is a clear complaints policy in place, inclusive of the British Accreditation Council's (BAC) complaints policy. The Provider's complaints process is also referenced within the programme terms and conditions, this is accessible from the Provider's website. The terms and conditions are clearly written and fair, however, they do not include information regarding the BAC complaints policy.

Throughout their stay, participants are well supported by their mentors to make the best use of their time both academically and socially. There is a wide range of daily leisure activities, including croquet, punting and film nights. All participants are invited to dine at formal college functions at least once during their stay. These events ensure participants experience a wide range of social and cultural activities.

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The office premises were not inspected as the two Directors are currently working from home. Compliance is. Therefore, based on the findings of the previous inspection and no contrary indications were identified during this inspection.

With regard to the teaching areas at Cambridge University, the evidence submitted demonstrated that the participants had access to very good academic and social spaces. The premises include welcome areas for registration and good facilities for lessons, lectures, seminars, groupwork and social activities.

4.5 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

The Provider has continued to employ a team of highly experienced and knowledgeable staff, which results in good-quality teaching, pastoral support, and high levels of participant satisfaction.

The professional and engaging website provides appropriate information for the international target audience.

The programmes include well-balanced subject-specialist and cultural experiences.

The Provider has excellent systems in place to ensure the safety of participants throughout their time on the programmes.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

High Medium Low

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

It is recommended that the Provider reviews the out-of-date references in its online marketing materials.

It is recommended that information regarding the BAC complaints policy is included in the programme terms and conditions document.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE

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