



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (College)

INSTITUTION:	Heatherley School of Fine Art
ADDRESS:	75 Lots Road London SW10 0RN
HEAD OF INSTITUTION:	Ms Veronica Ricks
ACCREDITATION STATUS:	Accredited
DATE OF INSPECTION:	9 January 2024
ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:	Continued accreditation 28 March 2024

1. Background to the institution

Heatherley School of Fine Art (HSFA/the Institution) is owned by the Thomas Heatherley Educational Trust Limited, which is a charitable trust. It offers diploma classes, summer schools and community outreach programmes in the arts.

The Institution was established in 1845 to help students prepare applications for admission to Royal Academy schools. Thomas Heatherley, who was a former student, became its second Principal in 1860.

The Institution's premises are situated near the King's Road in Chelsea, London. It occupies accommodation that was built specifically for the Institution in 2009. The premises include eight studios, one of which accommodates the library, as well as a student recreation area with access to a roof terrace and an artists' materials shop.

The Institution aims to be at the forefront of contemporary arts education.

Overall policy responsibility for the Institution rests with the Council. The Council is made up of ten members who are elected from the Thomas Heatherley Educational Trust. The day-to-day running of the Institution rests with the Principal, who is supported by the Course Director for the Diploma in Portraiture and the Director of Studies and Course Director for Diploma in Figurative Sculpture.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Institution offers two on-site, full-time, two-year diploma courses. These are the Diploma in Portraiture and the Diploma in Figurative Sculpture. In addition, a Post Diploma in Figurative Painting is available. Courses are aimed at artists and those who are looking to follow professional practice as an artist.

Diploma courses lead to internal awards, which are set at an equivalent to Level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Graduation follows successful completion of a series of units. External assessors are employed, and standards are ratified by three professional societies with whom the Institution has had close ties for a considerable period of time. These are the Royal Society of Portrait Painters, the Royal British Society of Sculptors and the Society of Portrait Sculptors.

The Institution also runs a programme of 40 part-time, day and evening classes in sculpture, portraiture and ceramics. Part-time classes include weekly Open Studios, to which students return year after year. A significant proportion of students who attend the part-time courses subsequently apply for the diploma courses.

At the time of the inspection, there were 34 full-time students and 380 part-time students enrolled. All are over 18 years of age. The majority of the students are female. Many students are qualified to postgraduate level. A majority have previous professional qualifications and are seeking a change of career. All students are resident in the United Kingdom.

The academic year runs from September to July and there are currently summer courses during August. Recruitment for the full-time diploma courses is in the autumn of each year, while recruitment for the part-time courses is on a continuous basis.

Applications for courses are generally made online. Applicants for full-time courses are interviewed in person or online before being offered a place. Entry is open to those with no previous experience in the arts.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was carried out on site over one day by one inspector. The inspector met with the Principal and carried out discussions with the Director of Studies and Course Director for the Diploma in Figurative Sculpture. Discussions were held with staff and students in each of the three lessons observed. A comprehensive range of documentation was scrutinised. A tour of the premises was also undertaken. The Institution was extremely well prepared for the inspection and gave full co-operation to the inspector.

4. Inspection history

Inspection type	Date
Full Accreditation	2–3 July 2013
Interim	7 August 2014
Spot Check	11 February 2016
Re-accreditation	28–29 June 2017
Interim	5 September 2019
Re-accreditation	29 November and 2–3 December 2021

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 Post Diploma in Figurative Painting has been introduced.

The first year of the Sculpture Diploma is currently not running and has been replaced by new classes in sculpture and ceramics.

Three new staff appointments have taken place since the previous inspection, with changes in the responsibility for marketing and the Institution's website, and in the position of the Studio Manager and the Ceramics Technician, together with the role of the Printmaking Technician.

2. Response to action points in last report

18.8 The Institution must publish its policy to protect students from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and ensure that a risk assessment is carried out and that all staff receive appropriate training on the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

This action has been implemented. An appropriate policy to protect students from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism has been written by the Principal and is now made available to the Institution's staff. In addition, a suitable risk assessment has been carried out, and staff have undertaken external, online training on the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. As a result, effective arrangements are now in place to protect students from such risks.

20.3 The Institution must ensure that appropriate reference is made to BAC's complaints procedure.

The action point has been implemented. Students are appropriately advised of BAC's complaints procedure during induction. Consequently, students report that they are aware of the policy and how to make a complaint, should they need to.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

There were no recommendations identified in the last inspection report.

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

HSFA is very well managed, and the range of provision offered fulfils the aims of the Institution well. HSFA's governance and management structure is clear, with well-defined and documented roles and responsibilities. Members of the HSFA Council act as the governing body and their role and extent of authority are clearly understood by other stakeholders. They are closely involved in the work of the Institution and support and work very closely with managers and staff.

The Bursar manages the finances of the Institution and is directly responsible to the trustees. As a result, the structure effectively supports leaders and managers in their day-to-day duties, with clear and detailed reporting structures that are fully understood by staff.

Senior leaders and managers are well qualified, very experienced and highly effective in carrying out their duties. They have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the requirements for delivering high-quality art courses and fully understand their roles and responsibilities within the Institution. Consequently, they provide clear educational direction and are highly effective in ensuring that course delivery and the student experience are of a high quality.

Communication within HSFA is highly effective and includes a wide range of methods to ensure that all stakeholders are kept up to date regarding the ongoing progress of the Institution. For example, regular meetings are held between managers, administrative staff and teachers so that all staff are kept up to date with any operational changes, as well as being able to ask any questions or raise any concerns.

Administrators are well qualified, suitably experienced and through detailed job descriptions understand their roles and responsibilities well. An appropriate number of administrators is in place. This ensures that suitable policies, procedures and systems are maintained and effectively disseminated across the Institution. As a result, administrative support is effective in ensuring that the day-to-day needs of HSFA and its managers are met.

The Institution is highly effective in recruiting and retaining very well-qualified and experienced staff. Teaching staff have a wide range of relevant teaching experience and are practising artists. Recruitment procedures are well developed and secure. This ensures that all claimed experience and qualifications are appropriately verified before employment. Face-to-face interviews are completed as part of the recruitment procedure.

Staff performance is regularly reviewed, and formal appraisals are conducted. The process includes the opportunity for self-reflection, and developmental plans are completed and used effectively to bring about improvement. As a result, staff report that they are aware of their strengths and areas for development and are well supported by the Institution.

The Institution's website is of a high quality and well developed. It provides detailed and accurate information about the content of the courses available and their assessment and an accurate description of the Institution's premises and facilities. The comprehensive and wide range of information provided about the Institution's courses enables potential students to make fully informed choices about the course they would like to study.

An appropriate attendance and punctuality policy is in place. HSFA attendance requirements are made known to students during their induction session, where they are asked to inform the Institution of their absence in advance when possible.

Attendance is monitored effectively by managers. Accurate and secure records are kept and used effectively by staff to track attendance and punctuality. Student absences are followed up promptly. This data is collated and regularly reviewed, with any required action being taken promptly. As a result, punctuality is very good, and attendance on all courses is high.

A wide range of mechanisms for obtaining feedback from stakeholders is used effectively to monitor performance and bring about change where necessary. For example, full-time student feedback is collected by the Institution through the use of surveys and student representatives. Feedback is collated and analysed by the Director of Studies and reviewed and acted on by the Academic Board. The Institution's response to feedback is reported back effectively to students via their course representatives and student notices.

Procedures for reviewing and assessing the Institution's own performance are highly effective and take into account a wide range of relevant key performance indicators. For example, a well-developed process of yearly self-evaluation ensures that leaders and managers are aware of the Institution's strengths and areas for improvement.

A wide range of data, including student satisfaction, retention and achievement, is collected and analysed to identify action points for improvement. As a result, a well-developed annual report is compiled that includes data analysis. This is made available to stakeholders.

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Principal and two Course Directors are very well qualified and experienced and provide highly effective oversight of the delivery and development of the curriculum. As a result, the content and delivery of HSFA courses are well planned and regularly reviewed to ensure that the course content and materials are up to date and meet the needs of the students.

A comprehensive and well-managed system ensures that classes are suitably timetabled. Appropriate rooms and teachers are allocated for the requirements of each of the Institution's courses. This ensures a consistent learning experience for students.

Teachers are highly qualified and experienced. They have an in-depth understanding and knowledge of their specialist subject area. They have well-developed pedagogic and communicative skills, which allow them to deliver the content of courses effectively. In addition, they are practising artists, which brings a depth of knowledge to their classes and helps students develop their practical skills.

Lessons are well planned and delivered in ways that engage students and fully support their future course assessment. As a result, students fully participate in classes and are able to develop their knowledge and practical skills very well. The Institution is very well resourced and provides excellent facilities and materials for the teachers and students to fulfil the requirements of the course.

A schedule of assessment for each course is made available to students in writing well in advance of the assessment date, with reminders provided in classrooms by way of student notices.

Outcomes from each assessment are carefully monitored and used very effectively to identify students who are not making the expected progress. Each student is made aware of their progress against prior agreed targeted levels of achievement, with the Institution providing prompt additional support where appropriate. For example, teachers make themselves available outside class time to answer questions and clarify points to ensure understanding. Students report how helpful this is and how much they appreciate the support from their teachers and the Institution.

Advice about further study and career opportunities is readily available from staff members, who, as professional artists, have up-to-date knowledge of the industry. In addition, the Institution has dedicated staff who provide support regarding the preparation of students for further study.

4.3 Student Welfare (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Staff members responsible for student welfare are well qualified and experienced. The identities of the student welfare staff are highlighted to students during their induction session and are identified clearly in student documentation. Staff providing student support are appropriately trained and accessible to all students to provide advice and counselling. As a result, students report that they are well supported.

On arrival, students receive a detailed induction, which ensures that they fully understand the requirements of their chosen course and the Institution's key policies and procedures, including the expectations for attendance and punctuality.

Arrangements to protect students from the risks of radicalisation and extremism are appropriate. There is a clear policy relating to preventing radicalisation and extremism, and relevant staff have been appropriately trained. A detailed risk assessment has been carried out.

The application form makes clear the Institution's fair and transparent terms and conditions. An appropriate complaints procedure is in place and is discussed during induction. Reference is made to BAC's complaints procedure. As a result, students are well informed about what to do if they have a complaint.

4.4 Premises and Facilities (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

HSFA owns its own freehold premises and has appropriate authority to deliver education programmes.

The Institution's premises are clean and very well designed, maintained, resourced and decorated. Access is secure and appropriately restricted by the use of key-code entry to the building. The design of the premises provides appropriate spaces to allow staff and students to relax and socialise. Consequently, the premises provide a safe and comfortable learning and working environment.

Heating, ventilation and air conditioning are all appropriate, and toilets are adequate in number, clean and well maintained.

There are specific safety rules in areas of particular hazard. For example, hazardous materials within the printing and ceramics departments are suitably stored and access is restricted. Students are not allowed access to areas containing hazardous materials or machinery when a technician is not present. Comprehensive health and safety guidance is provided to students and staff during their induction and to visitors on arrival at the premises.

Studios and other learning areas of the premises are well appointed, adequate in number and size, and highly effective in supporting learning. For example, the print room is equipped with a wide range of specialist printing equipment to ensure that the Institution meets the requirements of its printing courses and modules. As a result, students report that studios and other learning areas are equipped to a level that allows for the effective delivery and assessment of their course.

Lockers are provided, ensuring that students and staff have appropriate access to storage for personal possessions.

Academic staff and senior management have access to appropriately sized rooms to hold private meetings, including whole-staff meetings. Administrative offices are adequate in size and have resources for the effective administration of the Institution.

4.5 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Strengths

Highly effective leadership successfully guides the Institution and supports continuous improvement of the provision.

The excellent teaching is highly effective in supporting students to make progress and in preparing them for their assessments.

The Institution has been successful in recruiting very well-qualified and experienced teachers who are practising artists and are highly effective in motivating their students.

Well-equipped premises and facilities provide a safe and comfortable environment that supports learning effectively.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

High Medium Low

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

None

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE

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THE INSPECTION WAS CARRIED OUT BY:

Nigel Chambers

Lead Inspector