

ONLINE, DISTANCE AND BLENDED LEARNING (ODBL) SCHEME DOCUMENT



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL

RAISING STANDARDS IN THE
GLOBAL EDUCATION MARKET

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Introduction | 3 |
| 2. Eligibility for accreditation | 3 |
| 3. Accreditation process | 3 |
| 4. Accreditation cycle | 3 |
| 5. Inspection process | 4 |
| 6. Programmes and awards | 4 |
| 7. Accreditation fees | 4 |
| 8. Accreditation statements and marks | 5 |
| 9. Meeting standards and key indicators | 5 |
| 10. Contacting BAC | 5 |
| 11. Accreditation scheme standards | 6 |
| Management, staffing and administration | 6 |
| Teaching, learning and assessment | 8 |
| Learner support | 11 |
| Face-to-face component | 12 |
| Appendix A: Glossary | 15 |
| Appendix B: Care of under 18s and vulnerable adults | 17 |
| Useful websites for further information and guidance on safeguarding | 18 |

1. Introduction

BAC accreditation is a voluntary quality assurance scheme for independent providers of further and higher education and vocational training courses.

The online, distance and blended learning accreditation scheme is designed to offer a tailor-made quality assurance scheme which recognises the particular qualities and distinctive character of providers that deliver teaching and learning through a variety of media.

2. Eligibility for accreditation

Any independent education or training institution is eligible for accreditation as a provider of online, distance and blended learning provided that the following requirements are met:

- The provider is established as a deliverer of online, distance or blended learning programmes for a minimum period of two years.
- The provider is licensed by a local, regional or national licensing agency if such licensing is mandatory and/or holds accreditation from a nationally recognised educational or professional body and/or meets all mandatory requirements to operate.
- The provider is able to provide evidence of its financial stability.
- Effective control of the provider is the responsibility of an accountable management team.
- The provider is led by a proprietor or designated principal/director who has clear contractual responsibilities for the running of the provider and for the quality of its work.
- There are no grounds for believing the proprietor, principal/director or any other senior manager to be unfit to have responsibility for the provider. Such grounds may include an assessment of any previous position held at another institution/provider known to BAC, in particular, any institution/provider that consistently failed to meet BAC's standards or failed to repay debts owed to BAC.

3. Accreditation process

Prospective applicants are invited to contact BAC to discuss their eligibility for the scheme.

If BAC is satisfied that the eligibility criteria have been met, the provider must submit a completed application form, along with supporting documents, that includes evidence of financial stability.

Once the application has been processed and passed, the next stage is the onsite full inspection. During this visit, the provider's full range of provision will be assessed and evidence will be required that the management is capable of maintaining acceptable standards during the period of accreditation and operating within the requirements of relevant local legislation.

The onsite full inspection will measure the provider and its provision against BAC's minimum standards. The full inspection report is then considered by the Accreditation Committee, which determines whether to award, defer or refuse accreditation. This committee is independent of BAC and is comprised of members from the education sector.

For comprehensive information on the whole of the accreditation process, please see the Accreditation Handbook.

4. Accreditation cycle

The online, distance and blended learning accreditation is valid for four years.

An accredited provider is subject to an interim inspection during an accreditation cycle.

During an accreditation cycle, a provider is subject to all BAC requirements. If there are any significant changes to the management, provision or premises and facilities, a supplementary inspection may be required for the continuation of accreditation.

Accredited providers are notified six months before the end of the accreditation period so that a full inspection can be arranged. The inspection report is then presented to the Accreditation Committee for consideration of re-accreditation before the accreditation period ends.

5. Inspection process

A full inspection is arranged following successful completion of the first stage of the application process.

The inspection process for online, distance and blended learning providers takes into account the special circumstances in which such providers work. The inspection comprises two distinct phases. The first is a computer-based assessment of the provider's website, online materials related to both publicity and learning, and a scrutiny of learners' work. The second phase involves a visit to the main office of the provider where the inspector meets with the management and administration to inspect documentation and to discuss the provider's systems and policies.

The duration of these visits will be determined by the breadth and size of the provider's services. If the provider offers blended learning that includes a face-to-face component, the inspector will visit the delivery venue on a separate occasion to inspect the premises and observe the teaching.

With newly accredited providers, an interim inspection is organised in the first year of accreditation. For accredited institutions, an interim inspection is organised in the middle of the four-year accreditation cycle.

Institutions are required to complete and submit a self-evaluation report assessing their quality assurance mechanisms against specific criteria prior to the inspection being conducted.

5.1 Inspection areas

A full inspection covers the following inspection areas:

- Management, Staffing and Administration
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Learner Support
- Face-to-Face Component

5.2 Minimum standards

The minimum standards for the online, distance and blended learning accreditation are set out on page 6. Details are provided of the documents that will need to be supplied and reviewed and of the staff members who will be interviewed by the inspector/s during the inspection.

5.3 Legal and statutory compliance

All new applicants and those applying for re-accreditation are required to sign a declaration stating that the institution complies with all relevant statutory requirements in force in the country of operation in connection with such matters as:

- Health and safety
- Safeguarding
- Employment law
- Copyright
- Disability provision
- Equal opportunities
- Planning consent
- Data protection
- Public liability

It is the provider's responsibility and the personal responsibility of the head of the provider to ensure that all requirements are met.

BAC inspectors will not inspect the above areas but will note any observed breach of regulations.

Although the compliance with statutory requirements is not a BAC minimum standard, evidence of non-compliance will provide the Accreditation Committee with grounds for refusal or withdrawal of accreditation.

6. Programmes and awards

BAC's policy is that providers should offer courses leading to approved external awards granted by recognised awarding bodies. BAC does accept, however, that there may be instances where there is no appropriate external awarding body and that the provider will only offer internal awards.

BAC's inspectors will consider the accuracy of any claims made by institutions as to the level and status of any internal awards. This will include a requirement for evidence of the extent to which the institution's internal awards are accepted for the purposes of employment or further study. BAC encourages institutions to involve external moderators in the assessment where appropriate.

7. Accreditation fees

All providers awarded accreditation under this scheme will be required to pay the online, distance and blended learning provider accreditation fee, which is calculated on the basis of the number of learners per annum. This is due when accreditation has been awarded and then every September thereafter.

All other fees (including application and inspection fees) are the same for each type of accreditation.

Accurate figures of learner numbers must be supplied to BAC once a year on request. If such figures are not supplied by the deadline given, the full maximum accreditation fees will be charged. Failure to pay the annual accreditation fee by the given deadline on the invoice may result in withdrawal of accreditation.

8. Accreditation statements and marks

Providers that have been awarded the online, distance and blended learning accreditation may use the statement of accreditation in their promotional materials subject to certain conditions.

Acceptable forms of the statement are:

- “Accredited by the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education as an Online, Distance and Blended Learning Provider”
- “Accredited by the British Accreditation Council as an Online, Distance and Blended Learning Provider”
- “Accredited by BAC as an Online, Distance and Blended Learning Provider”
- “BAC-accredited as an Online, Distance and Blended Learning Provider”

Once accredited, providers may use the BAC accreditation mark of the online, distance and blended learning accreditation scheme in their promotional materials subject to certain conditions. The standard accreditation mark features the BAC logo, colour-coded to the specific accreditation scheme, and the word ‘accredited’.

9. Meeting standards and key indicators

Some of these standards and key indicators may not be applicable to your organisation. This is a judgment that will be made by the inspector/s during the inspection process.

10. Contacting BAC

Further guidance and details of the generic requirements and responsibilities for BAC-accredited institutions can be found in the Accreditation Handbook.

Please contact info@the-bac.org for further information.

11. Accreditation scheme standards

Inspection area – management, staffing and administration

Minimum standards 1–6

1. The provider is effectively managed

- 1.1 The management structure is clearly defined, documented and understood, including the role and extent of the authority of any owners, trustees, advisors or governing body.
- 1.2 Those responsible for governance understand the provider's strengths and weaknesses, provide support, and hold senior managers accountable for improving the quality of learning.
- 1.3 The head of the provider and other senior managers are suitably qualified and/or experienced, understand their specific responsibilities and are effective in carrying them out.
- 1.4 There are clear channels of communication between the management and staff, including those working remotely.
- 1.5 The provider has a written statement of its mission and goals which effectively guides its activities, is communicated to all stakeholders, and is effectively implemented and regularly reviewed.
- 1.6 The provider has a written risk management strategy, which includes financial planning and data breaches and is effectively implemented and regularly reviewed.
- 1.7 The provider conducts its financial matters professionally, transparently, and with appropriate probity.

2. The administration of the provider is effective

- 2.1 Administrators are suitably qualified and/or experienced, understand their specific responsibilities and duties and are effective in carrying them out.
- 2.2 The size of the administration team is sufficient to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the provider.
- 2.3 The administrative support available to the management and learner is clearly defined, documented and understood.

- 2.4 Administrative procedures and systems are up-to-date, thorough, well-documented and effectively disseminated across the provider.
- 2.5 The working environment is fit for purpose and suitably resourced for the effective administration of the provider.
- 2.6 Data collection and collation systems are effective in supporting the administration of the provider, including the logging and monitoring of tutor and student interaction, and appropriate action is taken if the timeliness of these falls below expectations.

- 2.7 Learners' and tutors' personal records are sufficiently detailed and regularly updated.
- 2.8 The provider has a robust security system and policies in place for protecting the data of its staff, learners and self-employed tutors.

3. The provider recruits appropriate staff

- 3.1 There are appropriate policies and effective procedures for the recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced staff, which include, for self-employed staff, the development of a signed performance service level agreement.
- 3.2 Experience and qualifications are appropriately checked and verified before recruitment and records are accurately maintained.
- 3.3 The recruitment process for tutors working remotely includes an online interview with cameras turned on.
- 3.4 There is an effective system for regularly reviewing the performance of all staff, which for tutors, includes the regular, scheduled monitoring of course delivery and the feedback to learners.
- 3.5 All staff are treated fairly as per the providers' own published policies, and they have access to an appropriate grievances and appeals procedure.
- 3.6 Managerial and administrative staff are appropriately supported in their continuing professional development.

4. **Publicity materials, both printed and online, provide a comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate description of the provider and its courses**

- 4.1 Text and images provide an accurate depiction of the provider's location and premises, where appropriate, as well as its facilities and the range and nature of resources and services offered.
- 4.2 Information on the courses available is comprehensive, accurate, readily accessible and up to date.
- 4.3 Learners are informed of the full cost of all courses, including the costs of any assessments and required materials prior to enrolling at the provider.
- 4.4 The information provided ensures that learners are well informed of the status of the qualifications offered, including the awarding body and level of award.
- 4.5 The provider's key policies are accessible through the website.

5. **The provider takes reasonable care to recruit and enrol suitable learners for its courses**

- 5.1 The provider ensures that the specific courses on which learners are registered are likely to meet the learners' expectations and needs.
- 5.2 Entry requirements for each course are set at an appropriate level and are clearly stated in the course descriptions that are made available to prospective learners.
- 5.3 A formal application process ensures that any claimed qualifications and language competency requirements are checked and verified.
- 5.4 Applicants are provided with sufficient information to enable them to make a judgment on the suitability of the courses and their delivery methods, and can discuss any concerns before registration.
- 5.5 There are effective processes in place to confirm that learners meet published entry requirements and have the capability to complete the programmes on which they are enrolling.
- 5.6 The provider replies to all application enquiries in line with its appropriate target response times, and all stakeholders are briefed properly on the nature and requirements of its courses.

- 5.7 The provider makes it clear to applicants that they are responsible for checking that they have the digital literacy and system requirements necessary to study on their chosen programme.

6. **The provider has effective systems to monitor its own standards and assess its own performance with a view to continuous improvement**

- 6.1 There are effective systems for monitoring and periodically reviewing all aspects of the provider's performance.
- 6.2 The provider has effective mechanisms for obtaining feedback from learners and other stakeholders, such as staff, partner providers and employers, on all aspects of the provider's provision, including formal learner representation where appropriate.
- 6.3 Feedback is obtained, recorded and analysed on a regular basis.
- 6.4 The feedback is reviewed by management and appropriate action is taken.
- 6.5 There is a mechanism for reporting to the learners what the provider has done in response to their feedback.
- 6.6 Reports are compiled at least annually, that include the results of the provider's performance reviews, an analysis of relevant data, including learners' progress from their starting points, course completion rates, achievement rates, learners' destinations, and learner and other stakeholder feedback, and action plans.
- 6.7 Action plans, including those for improvement, are implemented and regularly reviewed, with outcomes reported to management.
- 6.8 Good practice is effectively identified and disseminated across the provider.

Examples of documentation required

- Internal and external quality assurance documentation, including copies of any policies used as a means of quality management, annual reports and action plans.
- Responses made as a result of external audits.
- Samples and summaries of any learner and other stakeholder feedback, including completed feedback questionnaires.
- Action plans for dealing with stakeholder feedback
- Documentation relating to policies and procedures informing stakeholders of the response made to their feedback Performance data maintained by the organisation, for example, examination pass rates/stakeholder feedback scores/attendance rates.

- Annual performance reviews against strategic targets at organisation/department/course and programme levels.
- Up-to-date organisation chart or outline description of the staff structure, with names of post-holders and individual roles.
- List of committees/boards together with their terms of reference and membership.
- Detailed Curricula Vitae (CVs) for all staff including all academic/teaching staff to include evidence of academic and teaching qualifications.
- Detailed job descriptions of for all staff.
- Minutes of relevant committee and/or board meetings.
- Minutes of staff meetings.
- The strategy/development plan including strategic targets.
- Documentation on risk planning and completed risk assessments.
- Financial planning documentation.
- General management and administrative policies, procedures and systems.
- Samples of administration correspondence with learners.
- Policies to protect the data of participants and staff
Key policies underpinning the running of the organisation, for example, those relating to staff recruitment, staff performance monitoring and staff development, quality assurance, assessment, and learner welfare.
- Samples of administration correspondence with learners.
- Policies to protect the data of participants and staff.
- Key policies underpinning the running of the organisation, for example, those relating to staff recruitment, staff performance monitoring and staff development, quality assurance, assessment, and learner welfare.
- Staff personnel files and records.
- Up-to-date signed contracts of employment for all staff.
- Self-employment contracts/agreements for all self-employed staff.
- Staff, including academic and teaching staff, induction programmes.
- Staff handbook.
- Staff appraisal procedures and completed documentation.
- Evidence of monitoring of teaching/training/tutoring staff, including completed classroom observation records.
- Evidence of continuing professional development/training opportunities and individual development logs.
- Up-to-date prospectus, course brochures and other marketing materials to include clear entry requirements where applicable.

Inspection area – teaching, learning and assessment

Minimum standards 7–13

7. Course management is effective

- 7.1 There is a suitably qualified and/or experienced course manager or course management team with responsibility for teaching, learning and assessment.
- 7.2 The curriculum effectively supports good learner outcomes represented by data on learners' progress from their starting points, course completion rates, achievement rates in line with national averages, where available and learners' destinations.
- 7.3 The curriculum offered meets the needs of a range of relevant stakeholders, such as employers and members of the wider community, such as chambers of commerce, local authorities and charitable organisations, where applicable.
- 7.4 The allocation of tutors to courses provides a consistent learning experience and delivery is monitored to ensure consistency across all the provision.
- 7.5 The commissioning of individual course materials is managed effectively, and the content and style of the materials are checked to ensure standardisation across the provision.
- 7.6 The provider has a sufficient number of qualified online tutors to give individualised instructional service to each learner.
- 7.7 Tutors are supported in their continuing professional development and are enabled to develop further pedagogic techniques to enhance learning.

8. The courses are planned and designed in ways that enable learners to succeed

- 8.1 The courses' design and content reflect current knowledge and practice, are regularly reviewed and revised and take into account input from relevant stakeholders.
- 8.2 The content of the courses enables learners to develop the knowledge and skills required to meet the learning outcomes and to be successful in any final assessments.

- 8.3 Programme designers make effective use of appropriate online teaching and learning resources.
- 8.4 Course materials are designed for a specific and clearly stated level of study and include appropriate support material.
- 8.5 Course materials are appropriately presented and sufficiently comprehensive to enable learners to achieve the course objectives.
- 8.6 Suitable additional study aids are provided through investment in technology and/or issuing supplementary study materials.
- 8.7 Courses maintain an appropriate focus on any assessment objectives or statement of learning outcomes established by the awarding and/or examination body.
- 8.8 Ongoing assessments appropriately reflect the content and standards of final assessments.
- 8.9 The academic and/or professional backgrounds and particular support needs of learners are taken into account in the planning and design of the course.
- 8.10 Learners receive appropriate guidance and support to ensure they are able to study effectively through online and distance learning.
- 9. Tutors are suitable for the courses to which they are allocated and are effective in their delivery**
- 9.1 Tutors are appropriately qualified and experienced.
- 9.2 Tutors demonstrate an understanding of the challenges and demands of online, distance and blended learning.
- 9.3 Tutors have a level of subject knowledge, pedagogic and communication skills that allow them to deliver the courses effectively.
- 9.4 Tutors receive effective training and support to ensure the successful delivery of online and distance learning that meets the needs and interests of learners.
- 9.5 Tutors respond to the different backgrounds and particular support needs of learners in their delivery of the teaching sessions.
- 9.6 Learners are encouraged and enabled to develop independent learning skills.
- 9.7 Tutors employ effective strategies to involve all learners in active participation and to check their understanding of concepts and course content.
- 9.8 The provider has appropriate methods in place to encourage and measure learner engagement.
- 9.9 Online delivery methods are sufficient to attain the stated course objectives and intended learning outcomes.
- 10. Learners receive appropriate assessment and feedback on their performance and progress, which are effectively monitored**
- 10.1 Learners are provided with an assessment schedule in which required assessments and revision periods are detailed in advance with clear submission deadlines.
- 10.2 Assessment strategies are relevant to the content and nature of the courses and focused on measuring learners' achievement of the intended learning outcomes.
- 10.3 Learners' progress and assessment outcomes are monitored to enable the identification of learners who are not making satisfactory progress, and prompt intervention takes place if required.
- 10.4 Learners receive regular, detailed and supportive oral and written feedback on their assessments and overall performance and progress, which are effectively monitored.
- 10.5 The feedback provided to individual learners is tailored to meet their specific needs and is constructive in its nature and delivery.
- 10.6 Learners have appropriate access to tutors outside the scheduled course delivery time.
- 10.7 The provider takes appropriate steps to identify and discourage academic malpractice, including cheating and plagiarism, and to penalise offenders.
- 10.8 Prompt action is taken when learners miss deadlines or when the work submitted is not of a satisfactory standard.
- 10.9 There are clear policies and procedures for learners to claim mitigating circumstances.

10.10 There are clear policies and procedures for learners to appeal against marks awarded.

11. The provider offers courses leading to accredited awards granted by recognised awarding bodies

11.1 For courses leading to awards from the provider's country of domicile, the awarding body is recognised by the relevant regulator.

11.2 For courses leading to an award from an international educational provider that is authorised to operate in its country of domicile, the provider has a formal agreement in place with the international provider.

12. There is a clear rationale for courses leading to internal awards, i.e. awards that are made on the basis of the outcomes of formal internal assessment methods

12.1 There is a clear statement of the level claimed relative to the relevant national qualifications' framework and evidence that learners who receive the award meet the stated requirements for that level.

12.2 There is evidence of the extent to which the awards are accepted for the purposes of employment or further study.

12.3 There is appropriate input to the assessment process from objective specialists who are external to the provider.

13. There are satisfactory procedures for the administration of examinations and other means of assessment

13.1 The provider complies with the requirements of the relevant awarding bodies in terms of assessment security and administration.

13.2 For internal awards, there are effective systems in place for assessment security and administration.

13.3 There is an authentication process which enables the provider to verify that the learner who is registered on the programme is the same person who attends, completes the programme and receives any programme credit.

Examples of documentation required

- Detailed up-to-date list of programmes available, taken from the application form and/or data collection form, so please just update one of those lists if necessary, rather than producing something new.
- A detailed timetable of the courses/classes taking place at the time of the inspection.
- Whole course/academic year plans/schemes of work.
- Module/course descriptions.
- Completed lesson/lecture plans.
- Outline curriculum for each training programme, including assessment procedures.
- Current class timetables.
- Policies and procedures for the acquisition of teaching/training and learning resources.
- Assessment procedures/schedule of assessments/samples of assessment methods/assessment tools/statement of intended learning outcomes.
- Samples of marked learners' work with feedback for the learner.
- Records of learner progress.
- Summaries of results/grades awarded for the previous three years for each academic programme or from the start date if the courses have not been available for that time.
- Policies to prevent cheating and plagiarism.
- Agreements with awarding bodies.
- Copies of annual reports to the awarding bodies for the previous three years for each academic programme or from the start date if the courses have not been available for that time.
- Copies of audits and academic reviews carried out by or on behalf of the awarding bodies or partnership organisations.
- Documents relating to external moderation.
- Copies of external examiners' reports for the previous three years for each academic programme or from the start date if the course has not been available for that time.
- Learners' academic appeals and grievance procedures.
- A list of learners on site on the day/s of the inspection, broken down by level of English competence (where relevant), gender, age, country of origin, programme and start date, to choose a group to meet with as part of the inspection.

Inspection area – learner support

Minimum standards 14–16

14. Services provided meet the reasonable needs of learners

- 14.1 Suitably trained and/or experienced staff are available to assist learners to resolve issues of a general and/or technical nature, and all enquiries from learners are handled promptly and sympathetically.
- 14.2 Learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are identified and appropriate support provided to meet their needs.
- 14.3 The provider has effective systems to identify learners who have special educational needs and disabilities requiring additional learning support.
- 14.4 The provider has policies to avoid discrimination and a published procedure for dealing with any abusive behaviour, and these are effectively implemented.
- 14.5 Staff monitor the online activity of learners and tutors and take action promptly if there are concerns about cyberbullying or other online risks to learners.
- 14.6 Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place for learners under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults, which are regularly reviewed.
- 14.7 Effective arrangements, including a policy, risk assessment and staff training, are in place to protect learners from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.
- 14.8 The provider supports and encourages peer interaction through a variety of channels, such as social media and virtual learning environment platforms.
- 14.9 The provider ensures that learners understand any system requirements and have access to appropriate technical advice to assist with technological problems which are the provider's responsibility.

15. The fair treatment of learners is ensured

- 15.1 Learners apply for and are enrolled on courses under fair and transparent contractual terms and conditions, which include appropriate refund arrangements and a cooling-off period.

- 15.2 Learners have access to a fair complaints procedure, of which they are informed in writing at the start of the course.

- 15.3 Learners are advised of BAC's complaints procedure.

16. The technology used to deliver the programmes is fit for purpose and effective

- 16.1 The provider uses appropriate and accessible technology to optimise the interaction between the provider and the learner and to enhance instructional and educational services.
- 16.2 The provider ensures that the materials and learning resources can be easily accessed by learners and checks this regularly.
- 16.3 The provider has access to the services of an experienced technical support provider that ensures systems are operative at all times and provides appropriate support to tutors and staff working remotely.

Examples of documentation required

- Information for learners relating to qualifications and awarding bodies.
- Initial guidance documents for learners.
- Enrolment application form with details of fees and refund policy.
- Completed learner application forms and any learner contracts.
- Policy on accreditation of prior learning, including experiential learning for prospective participants.
- Learner files with details of registration, enrolment, attendance and qualifications.
- Induction packs for home and international learners.
- Sample placement/initial tests, including completed documentation.
- Careers advice and guidance documentation.
- Learner handbook.
- E-policy that covers learners' onsite use of social media and devices such as mobile telephones, tablets and cameras.
- Policy documents related to discrimination, bullying and abusive behaviour, including cyberbullying.
- Complaints policy and procedure documentation, including reference to BAC's complaints procedure if relevant.
- For a list of the safeguarding documentation required, please see the safeguarding checklist in Appendix B.
- Policy on preventing radicalisation and extremism.
- Evidence of appropriate prevention of radicalisation and extremism training for all staff.
- Risk assessment regarding prevention of radicalisation and extremism.

Inspection area – face-to-face component (if applicable)

Minimum standards 17–26

17. The provider has secure possession of and access to its premises.

- 17.1 The provider has formal arrangements in place, which means it has possession of and/or access to suitable premises.
- 17.2 The provider has access to suitable external premises of a temporary or occasional nature for teaching or non-teaching purposes.

18. The premises provide a safe, secure and clean environment for learners and staff

- 18.1 Access to the premises is appropriately restricted and secured.
- 18.2 The premises are maintained in an adequate state of repair, decoration and cleanliness.
- 18.3 There are specific safety rules in hazardous areas, which are readily accessible to learners, staff and visitors.
- 18.4 General guidance on health and safety is made available to learners, staff and visitors.
- 18.5 There is adequate signage inside and outside the premises for the display of general information.
- 18.6 There is adequate circulation space for the number of learners and staff accommodated and a suitable area in which to receive visitors.
- 18.7 There are toilet facilities of an appropriate number and level of cleanliness.
- 18.8 There is adequate heating and ventilation in all rooms.

19. Classrooms and other learning areas are appropriate for the programmes offered

- 19.1 Classrooms and other learning areas provide adequate accommodation for the teaching sessions allocated to them.

- 19.2 Classrooms and any specialised learning areas, are equipped to a level that allows for the effective delivery of each course.
- 19.3 There are physical or digital facilities suitable for conducting the assessments required for each course.
- 19.4 Teaching sessions are timetabled, and rooms are allocated appropriately for the courses offered.

20. There are appropriate additional facilities for learners and staff

- 20.1 Learners have access to sufficient space, so that they can carry out their own private work and/or study.
- 20.2 Tutors have access to sufficient space for preparing teaching sessions, marking work and relaxation.
- 20.3 Learners and staff have access to space and facilities suitable for relaxation and the consumption of food and drink, including facilities that are located outside the premises.
- 20.4 There are individual offices or rooms in which tutors and senior management can hold private meetings and a room of sufficient size to hold staff meetings.
- 20.5 Administrative offices are adequate in size and are resourced for the effective administration of the provider.

21. There is an appropriate policy on learner attendance and effective procedures and systems to enforce it where appropriate

- 21.1 There is a clear policy on learner attendance and punctuality, that is communicated to all learners and other stakeholders.
- 21.2 Accurate and secure records of attendance and punctuality at each session are kept for all learners, collated centrally and regularly reviewed.
- 21.3 Learner absences are followed up promptly, and appropriate action is taken.

22. Learners receive welfare support appropriate to their age, background and circumstances

- 22.1 Learners receive an appropriate induction and relevant information at the start of the course.
- 22.2 Learners receive appropriate information on the pastoral and emergency support available and referral to external specialists, as required, in connection with learners' mental health and well-being.
- 22.3 There is an e-policy in place that references any existing staff and learner codes of conduct and covers learners' onsite use of social media and devices such as mobile telephones, tablets and cameras.
- 22.4 The provider collects contact details for learners, and their emergency contact, and appropriate staff can access the information quickly and easily, in and out of normal operating hours.
- 22.5 There are appropriate policies and procedures for the acquisition of teaching and learning resources which ensure that all tutors have access to the appropriate quantity and quality of resources on the day/s of the course for the benefit of the learners.

23. International learners are provided with specific advice and assistance

- 23.1 International learners receive appropriate advice before their arrival on travelling to and living in their host country.
- 23.2 International learners receive an appropriate induction upon arrival, covering issues specific to the local area.
- 23.3 Information and advice specific to international learners continues to be available throughout their programme of study.
- 23.4 Provision of support takes into account cultural and religious considerations.

24. Residential accommodation that is directly managed by the provider is fit for purpose, well-maintained and appropriately supervised

- 24.1 Any residential accommodation is clean, safe and of a standard that is adequate to meet the needs of the learners.

- 24.2 Any residential accommodation where learners under 18 are accommodated is open to inspection by the appropriate authorities, where applicable.

- 24.3 Clear rules regarding fire safety and other health and safety procedures are in place and appropriate precautions are taken for the security of learners and their property.

- 24.4 A level of supervision appropriate to the needs of learners is provided.

- 24.5 Appropriate measures are in place to ensure that learners under the age of 18 and those over the age of 18 are separated when allocating accommodation.

25. The welfare of learners in home-stay accommodation is ensured and the provider's relationship with the hosts is properly managed

- 25.1 Due care is taken in selecting home-stay accommodation which provides a safe and comfortable living environment for learners and is appropriately located for travel to and from the provider.

- 25.2 Any home-stay accommodation is inspected before learners are placed there and is subject to regular re-inspection by a responsible member of staff or agent of the provider.

- 25.3 The provider has appropriate contracts in place with any hosts, clearly setting out the rules, terms and conditions of the provision.

- 25.4 Appropriate advice and support are given to both hosts and learners before and during the home-stay placement.

- 25.5 Clear monitoring procedures are in place with opportunities for learner feedback and prompt action taken in the event of problems.

26. Learners have access to an appropriate social programme and information on leisure activities in the local area

- 26.1 Learners are provided with appropriate information on opportunities for participation at events and other leisure activities which may be of interest.

- 26.2 The social programme is responsive to the needs and wishes of learners.

- 26.3 Any activities within the social programme have been chosen with consideration for their affordability for the majority of learners.
- 26.4 The activities organised by the provider are supervised by a responsible adult representative with suitable qualifications and/or experience.
- 26.5 Off-site social activities are subject to an appropriate risk assessment, and suitable safeguards are put in place as a result.

Examples of documentation required

- Evidence of the ownership or tenure of the premises or evidence of the hire or lease agreement.
- Floor plan of each site being inspected accommodation.
- Health and safety guidance for learners, staff and visitors.
- Information relating to the number, specification, location and accessibility of computing and related IT resources.
- Guide to the library and IT facilities.
- Catalogue of library stock.
- Evidence of attendance monitoring, including class registers for each course/programme.
- Documents related to residential accommodation.
- Documents related to home-stay accommodation, including advice to home-stay learners and organisations.

Appendix A – Glossary

Definitions and/or explanations of key terms in the BAC standards document.

Achievement rates – the goals and objectives related to the overall course objectives and intended learning outcomes that the learner hopes to achieve as a result of studying on a course. The goals and objectives should include an element of stretching to support the continuous development of the learner.

Active participation – the active and engaged involvement of learners, such as proactive contributions, thoughtful interactions and enthusiastic participation, rather than passive observation or mere presence.

Adult – whilst the legal definition of an adult varies according to the law of different countries, for the purposes of this scheme, an adult is defined as someone who is aged 18 or over.

Assessment – a generic term for processes that measure learners' learning, skills, and understanding.

Awarding bodies – in the UK, an awarding body is an examination board which sets examinations and awards qualifications. It does not always provide the courses that lead to a qualification. Often an awarding body will provide an approval process for institutions and those institutions, if they meet the criteria, are able to award qualifications that are accredited by that awarding body.

Course completion rates – the percentage of learners who have successfully finished and fulfilled all the requirements and attained the learning outcomes or objectives set for the course by the institution within a specified time frame.

Course objectives – brief, clear statements that describe the overall intended purposes and expected results of undertaking a course of study.

Cyberbullying – the use of electronic communication to bully a person, defined as making use of behaviour that is repeated and intended to hurt someone and often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature.

Extremism – holding extreme political or religious views that may deny rights to any group or individual. Extremism can refer to a range of views, for example, racism, homophobia, right-wing ideology and any religious extremism.

Feedback – this could be academic feedback following assessment and could be formal (written) or informal (tutorials and oral) feedback. Feedback is also obtained from different stakeholder groups. This could be in the format of end-of-programme questionnaires or surveys from the learners, internal committees with learner and staff representation, or employer groups where the relevance of the provision to meet local or national requirements is discussed.

Governance – the system and processes through which the institution is managed, directed and controlled. It encompasses the structure, policies, and decision-making mechanisms that guide the institution's operations and strategic direction. For example, a governing body, board of trustees, or council is responsible for setting overall objectives, ensuring legal and regulatory compliance, appointing key personnel, such as the principal, and overseeing financial and academic matters.

Home-stay – an arrangement where learners live with local host families while studying. The host families normally provide accommodation, meals and a supportive environment.

Independent learning – in addition to the contact hours with academic staff, learners are expected to undertake independent learning. Independent learning places increased educational responsibility on the learner for the achievement of objectives and the value of their goals. This can be facilitated through the provision of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and ensuring that sufficient resources are made available to learners to study independently.

Intended learning outcomes – an intended learning outcome describes in detail what learners should know or be able to do on completion of a learning programme or part thereof. It may relate to knowledge, understanding and skills that the learner did not have before undertaking the programme.

Key policies – these are policies that are considered crucial to the effective governance, management and operation of an organisation.

Learners' destinations – the various paths and outcomes that learners pursue after completing their studies, such as higher education, vocational training, employment, or other opportunities.

Learner engagement – learners influence the content, materials, and pace of teaching. The learner is placed at the centre of the learning process. Learners may lead learning activities, discuss topics that interest them, and engage in learning experiences outside the classroom, such as internships or online classes. Institutions will define how they encourage engagement in the learning process and must be able to assess its effectiveness.

Learner outcomes – this can refer to either the individual or learner cohort outcomes with reference to the intended goals of a course or programme of study or the actual academic achievements of the learners. This is often benchmarked against key performance indicators set by the institution.

Mitigating circumstances – mitigating circumstances are any serious circumstances beyond the control of the learner which may have adversely affected their academic performance. This could include medical conditions and personal and domestic circumstances.

Objective specialists – a specialist in the subject area, through academic or professional expertise, who is external to the institution and can therefore be objective.

Pastoral support – a service that gives help and support to learners as well as provides information, advice, and guidance about activities outside the standard academic teaching.

Performance review – an internal review of how well the institution has achieved its mission and goals, through which the institution assesses what it does well and what it could develop and/or improve in the future.

Plagiarism, including academic malpractice – the act of using someone else's ideas, words, or work without giving proper credit or acknowledgement and presenting it as original work.

Probity (in relation to financial management) – the institution always follows principles of honesty, integrity, and ethical behaviour when dealing with financial matters, ensuring that all financial decisions and actions are undertaken with complete openness and full responsibility.

Provision – the courses or programmes of study offered by the educational institution.

Radicalisation – the process of an individual or a group of people adopting extreme political, religious or social doctrine or ideas.

Risk Management – the process of identifying, assessing and mitigating potential risks or uncertainties that could impact an organisation's strategy and objectives.

Robust security system – a system or set of processes which ensure that all data is protected from unauthorised access and data corruption. They include key management practices that protect data across all applications and platforms.

Safeguarding – a term used in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland to denote measures to protect the health, well-being and safety of children, who are defined as people under the age of 18, and vulnerable adults.

Service level agreement – a contract between an institution and its customers that establishes a set of deliverables that one party has agreed to provide to another.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) – this typically refers to any special educational needs and disabilities that a learner may have, which have been identified by the institution as requiring specific support to be put in place to assist the learner in completing their studies. An example of the support might be to provide additional time to complete written assessments for learners who are diagnosed as being dyslexic.

Stakeholders – this typically refers to groups who are invested in the welfare and success of an institution and its learners

Internal stakeholders – internal stakeholders include current learners, faculty and academic staff, the administrative support staff, and advisory boards or committees such as the governors or trustees.

External stakeholders – external stakeholders would typically be the local community, employers of graduates, potential learners or applicants, and governments or funding bodies.

Submissions – learner and teacher interactions and posts relating to assessments made via the electronic learning platform.

Written statement of its mission and goals – most organisations have a published mission and/or vision statement, which sets out the key aims and aspirations of the organisation. This provides a focus for the institution and its future development.

Appendix B – Care of under 18s and vulnerable adults

BAC does not generally inspect compliance with legal and statutory requirements. However, given the importance of Safeguarding in educational contexts and the fact that we have a duty of care to ensure that such institutions are fully compliant with all safeguarding requirements, we are obliged to inspect this aspect of the provision. All organisations will still be asked to sign the Declaration of Compliance with Legal and Statutory Requirements, which also covers safeguarding. Key definitions Children: In accordance with the Children Act 1989 and 2004, a child is any person who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. Vulnerable Adults: A vulnerable adult is generally defined as 'an adult, who is unable to function cognitively or adequately undertake basic day-to-day functions without the help or oversight of someone not impaired in these ways or who is unable to protect him/herself against significant harms or exploitation'.

During the inspection, the inspection team will assess an organisation on the following aspects of Safeguarding.

1. Is there a suitable policy for the protection of participants under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults, that is reviewed at least annually?
2. Is there a named DSL (designated safeguarding lead), who is responsible for implementing this policy effectively and responding to child protection allegations?
3. The policy should be a working document (regularly reviewed) which sets out an organisation's commitment to protect children from harm and the procedures in place to support this. It should cover: policy statements, codes of conduct, health and safety, safer recruitment, training, welfare provision and child protection procedures (including: awareness, how to raise concerns, responding to disclosure, named person(s) responsible, the decision-making process, systems for recording and reporting information and handling allegations/incidents). The policy should be clear and relevant to the organisation and up-dated at least annually.
4. Has the institution made the safeguarding policy known to all adults in contact with under 18s through their role with the organisation (including employees, sub-contractors, homestay hosts, group leaders and volunteers) and provided guidance or training relevant to its effective implementation?
5. Is there a code of conduct for staff effective in covering relationships with participants under the age of 18 and which includes whistleblowing procedures?
6. Are there approved arrangements in place to identify any person who is vulnerable and to ensure the right help and support is provided in a reasonable time scale?
7. Are up-to-date contact details recorded for a parent, carer or person acting in loco parentis for participants aged under 18 (and under 25 for participants with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, if the participants wish so)?
8. Are participants aware of how they can access support or complain, if they do not feel safe?
9. Is there an appropriate course of action to follow should a participant report abuse or concerns about their well-being? In reports of abuse, the arrangements should indicate how to receive disclosures and pass them on to statutory agencies and deal with staff who are subject to allegations.
10. Do recruitment and selection procedures follow safer recruitment best practice? Do the recruitment and selection procedures and other human resources management processes help to deter, reject, or identify people who might abuse children, or are otherwise unsuited to work or care for them? Is appropriate information provided to job applicants? Do recruitment materials for roles involving responsibility for or substantial access to under 18s (staff and host families) include reference to the organisation's commitment to safeguarding and inform applicants that suitability checks will be required?
11. Are arrangements made for appropriate checks on staff, including enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks from 2013 for staff who have regular, unsupervised access to children or vulnerable adults, and where appropriate (based on risk assessment) on proprietor/ governors and volunteers. (Note: In accordance with best practice – appropriate DBS checks should be carried out on all staff and host families. These checks should be carried out prior to their appointment or prior to the start of their regulated unsupervised activities. If a new starter does commence employment prior to clearance being received, they must have signed a self-declaration and their access should be supervised at all times; they must not be left alone with children.)
12. Does a single, central record (SCR) exist of all checks on staff and, where appropriate, proprietor/ governors and volunteers?
13. Are references taken up on all staff prior to employment and recorded on the SCR?
14. Do all staff, volunteers and contractors undertake appropriate training on safeguarding which is recorded and monitored for currency? Is this training updated regularly in line with advice from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)?

15. For those working with regularly or hosting under 18s and vulnerable adults, does the training included how to recognise signs of abuse and how to respond to disclosures from participants?
16. Is safeguarding training part of the induction training for all staff, temporary staff and volunteers newly appointed? Does this include the safeguarding policy, staff behaviour policy or code of conduct, and the identification and role of the designated safeguarding lead and how to recognise and respond to concerns?
17. Good practice is that all staff are trained to Level 1 (basic); management to Level 2 (advanced) and DSL to Level 3.
18. Is there a board level lead responsible for safeguarding? Is there a designated senior member of staff responsible for safeguarding arrangements, who has been trained to the appropriate level, (including Inter-agency working) and understands her/his responsibilities with respect to the protection and welfare of participants under 18 and vulnerable adults?
19. Is clear information provided to the parents/guardians of under 18s? Does the publicity or other information made available, before enrolment, give an accurate description of the level of care and support given to participants under 18, especially concerning any periods when participants are unsupervised as well as including sleeping arrangements when accommodated overnight or when at leisure?
20. Are there safe working arrangements for off-site activities, such as any social programme?
21. Are there effective arrangements made to protect participants from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism?
22. Is there an E-Safety policy, that references the staff code of conduct, participants' use of social media and devices on site such as mobile phones and cameras?
23. Do managers and staff take action immediately if there are concerns about any form of bullying including cyber-bullying or other online risks to the participants?
24. Are arrangements for accommodation, through home-stay, halls of residence or otherwise, appropriately managed with adequate safeguards and levels of supervision and registered in accordance with national requirements?
25. When the institution arranges host family accommodation for under 18s, are enhanced DBS and barred list checks made for all permanent residents who are aged 16 or older?
26. Where under 16s are accommodated, other than with their parents or guardians, for more than 28 days, has the local authority been alerted?

Useful websites for further information and guidance on safeguarding

The Children Act 2004:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/pdfs/ukpga_20040031_en.pdf

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 – refer to this document as a basis for good practice, although it is our understanding that it is not a legal requirement in the private sector:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1161273/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2023_-_statutory_guidance_for_schools_and_colleges.pdf

Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-safer-recruitment-in-education

Safeguarding:

www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/information-centres/care-children

Prevent:

https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/information_for_providers_on_prevent_obligations_0.pdf#



Website: www.the-bac.org
email: info@the-bac.org

The British Accreditation Council is
registered Charity and a UK Private
Company Limited by Guarantee

Company no: 1828990
Charity no: 326652