

COLLEGE SCHEME DOCUMENT



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL FOR INDEPENDENT FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document must be read in conjunction with the Accreditation Handbook September 2012.

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

BAC College accreditation is the standard accreditation scheme for independent FE and HE institutions and covers a very wide range of institutions in terms of provision and size. While the same standard is required of all institutions accredited under this scheme, the range of provision on offer is very broad, including:

- Adult education and skills for life
- Business and professional education
- Creative and performing arts
- Specialist vocational training
- Study abroad placements

- Traditional higher education
- Tutorial colleges
- University preparation

BAC's college accreditation scheme covers the full range of activities provided by a college or similar institution and is not restricted to specific courses within the total operation. This accreditation does not extend to activities which take place outside the institution itself (for instance, franchised programmes, satellite summer schools or separate branches, whether in the UK or overseas) or which are promoted and delivered under a different name, unless BAC has given specific approval for the inclusion of such activities within the institution's accreditation.

2. Eligibility for accreditation

Any independent education or training institution in the UK is eligible for College accreditation provided that the following requirements are met:

- The institution offers programmes of further and/or higher education.
- The institution is able to provide evidence of its financial stability.
- Effective control of the institution is the responsibility of an accountable management based in the UK.
- The institution is led by a proprietor or designated principal/director, who must be legally resident in the UK and have clear contractual responsibilities for the running of the institution 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 institution. Such grounds may include an assessment of any previous position held at another institution known to BAC, in particular any institution which consistently failed to meet BAC's standards or which failed to repay debts owed to BAC.

The following types of institution will not normally be considered eligible for college accreditation:

- Institutions which are wholly publicly funded, or which are wholly responsible to a government department or an institution in receipt of state grants, and thereby subject to Ofsted inspection or QAA audit.
- Institutions which are solely or predominantly providers of education for students of compulsory school age (i.e. 16 years and under).
- Institutions which are solely providers of courses in English as a foreign language (EFL) or English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).
- Institutions which only offer courses of less than six months duration – (please see Short Course Provider scheme document).

3. Accreditation process

For comprehensive information on the accreditation process please see the Accreditation Handbook September 2012.

4. Accreditation cycle

College accreditation is valid for four years. Accredited colleges are notified six months before the end of the accreditation period so that a full inspection can be arranged and the institutional report 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. An inspection team with appropriate experience for the institution being inspected is formed and consists of a reporting inspector and usually one specialist inspector. It is usual practice for the inspection to take two days but the days allocated will reflect the breadth and size of the institution's provision. With newly-accredited institutions, 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 document 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
- Student Welfare
- Premises and Facilities

Management of quality and the institution's quality assurance procedures are assessed throughout each area of inspection.

5.2 Minimum standards

The minimum standards for college accreditation are set out in Appendix A. Details are provided of the documents which will need to be supplied and reviewed and of the staff members who the inspectors will interview during the inspection.

Legal and regulatory compliance

All new applicants and those applying for reaccreditation 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 and public liability. It is the institution's responsibility and the personal responsibility of the head of the institution 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 of accreditation.

6. Approved candidates for accreditation

The 'approved candidate for accreditation' process is available to any newly-established institution operating in the UK which has not yet recruited students to its programmes.

- The status of 'approved candidate for BAC accreditation' can be awarded following a successful candidacy inspection.
- The institution will be approved as a 'candidate for BAC accreditation' if the Accreditation Committee is satisfied that the institution meets or exceeds BAC's minimum standards for premises, management, staffing, administration and documentation relevant to student welfare. The inspectors also need to be satisfied that robust quality assurance policies and systems are in place.
- 'Approved candidate' status is awarded for a period of six months, during which time BAC will arrange an accreditation inspection.
- If your institution fails to agree a date for the accreditation inspection within this period, its 'approved candidate' status will lapse, unless, exceptionally, the Accreditation Committee agrees to allow an extension.

7. Programmes and awards

BAC does not validate or accredit qualifications. BAC's policy is that institutions should offer courses leading to approved external awards granted by recognised awarding bodies. BAC does however accept that there may be instances where there is no appropriate external awarding body and that the institution will only offer internal awards. Under these circumstances, 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.

8. Top-up inspections

BAC formally recognises the quality assurance processes of a number of other inspection and review bodies and where appropriate will consider 'top-up inspections' of those institutions which have undergone such a process. It is BAC's intention to minimise the burden placed on institutions which hold approved accreditation or Educational Oversight and to tailor inspection requirements to meet

individual circumstances. Further details can be found in the Accreditation Handbook September 2012. Applicants who consider that they are eligible for a top-up inspection should contact BAC head office to discuss their situation.

9. Accreditation fees

Annual accreditation fees based on the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students are due in September each year. The exact fee payable depends on the number of students enrolled at the institution over the previous year. Accurate enrolment figures must be supplied to BAC once per 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 fees by the given deadline on the invoice will result in suspension and the possible withdrawal of accreditation.

10. Accreditation statements and marks

Institutions which have been awarded 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 a College"
- "accredited by the British Accreditation Council as a College"
- "accredited by BAC as a College"
- "BAC accredited as a College"

Once accredited, institutions may use the BAC accreditation mark of the college 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'.

Colleges awarded 'approved candidate for accreditation' status must use the accreditation mark which incorporates the words 'accredited approved candidate'.

11. Contacting BAC

Further guidance and details of the generic requirements and responsibilities for BAC-accredited institutions can be found in the Accreditation Handbook September 2012. Please contact info@the-bac.org for further information.

Inspection area - management, staffing and administration

Minimum standards 1-8

1. The institution is effectively managed

- 1.1 The management structure is clearly defined, documented and understood, including the role and extent of authority of any owners, trustees or governing body.
- 1.2 The head of the institution and other senior managers are suitably qualified and experienced, understand their specific responsibilities and are effective in carrying them out.
- 1.3 There are clear channels of communication between the management and staff.

2. The administration of the institution is effective

- 2.1 Administrators are suitably qualified or experienced and understand their specific responsibilities and duties.
- 2.2 The size of the administrative team is sufficient to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the institution.
- 2.3 The administrative support available to the management is clearly defined, documented and understood.
- 2.4 Policies, procedures and systems are well documented and effectively disseminated across the institution.
- 2.5 Data collection and collation systems are effective.

3. The institution employs appropriate managerial and administrative staff

- 3.1 There are appropriate policies and effective procedures for the recruitment and continuing employment of suitably qualified and experienced staff.
- 3.2 Experience and qualifications claimed are verified before employment.
- 3.3 There is an effective system for regularly reviewing the performance of staff.

4. Publicity material gives a comprehensive, up-to-date and accurate description of the institution and its curriculum

- 4.1 Text and images provide an accurate depiction of the institution's location, premises, facilities and the range and nature of resources and services offered.
- 4.2 Information on the courses available is comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date.

5. The institution takes reasonable care to recruit and enrol suitable students for its courses

- 5.1 Entry requirements for each course are set at an appropriate level and clearly stated in the course descriptions seen by prospective students.
- 5.2 A formal application process ensures that students meet the entry requirements and any claimed qualifications are verified.
- 5.3 Students are properly briefed on the nature and requirements of the courses for which they apply, and all application enquiries responded to promptly and appropriately.
- 5.4 Any overseas recruitment agents are properly selected, briefed, monitored and evaluated.
- 5.5 Students receive a proper initial assessment, which includes language ability, to confirm their capability to complete the courses on which they are enrolling.

6. There is an appropriate policy on student attendance and effective procedures and systems to enforce it

- 6.1 There is a clear and published policy on student attendance and punctuality, requiring that they attend at least 80% of their scheduled classes.
- 6.2 Accurate and secure records of attendance and punctuality at each session are kept for all students, collated centrally and reviewed at least weekly.
- 6.3 Student absences are followed up promptly and appropriate action taken.

7. The institution regularly obtains and records feedback from students and other stakeholders and takes appropriate action where necessary

- 7.1** The institution has effective mechanisms for obtaining feedback from students and other stakeholders (such as staff, partner institutions and employers) on all aspects of the institution's provision, including formal student representation where appropriate.
- 7.2** Feedback is obtained, recorded and analysed on a regular basis.
- 7.3** The feedback is reviewed by management and action is taken where necessary.
- 7.4** There is a mechanism for reporting on the institution's response to the feedback to the student body.

8. The institution has effective systems to review its own standards and assess its own performance with a view to continuing improvement

- 8.1** There are effective systems for monitoring and periodically reviewing all aspects of the institution's performance.
- 8.2** Reports are compiled at least annually which present the results of the institution's reviews and incorporate action plans. Reports include analysis of year-on-year results on student satisfaction, retention, achievement, examination results and completion rates.
- 8.3** Action plans are implemented and regularly reviewed, with outcomes reported to the management.

Documents required

- Up-to-date organogram
- Minutes of relevant committee or board meetings
- Minutes of staff meetings
- Detailed CVs for all managerial and administrative staff
- Staff appraisal procedures and completed documentation
- Staff Handbook
- Course descriptions
- Correspondence with students
- Up-to-date, signed contracts of employment for senior, academic and non-academic staff
- Briefing materials for agents if used
- Up-to-date prospectus and marketing material
- Completed student application forms and any student contracts
- Evidence of attendance monitoring, including class registers for each course/programme
- Stakeholder feedback forms
- Completed feedback forms
- Action plans for dealing with stakeholder feedback
- Annual performance reviews at institution and department levels

Interviews required

As part of their assessment, inspectors will hold interviews with the following:

- Principal/director
- Academic managers
- Senior administrator
- Examinations officer
- Marketing manager

Inspection area – teaching, learning and assessment

Minimum standards 9-17

9. Academic management is effective

- 9.1 There is a suitably qualified and experienced academic manager or academic management team with responsibility for teaching, learning and assessment.
- 9.2 Classes are timetabled and rooms allocated appropriately for the courses offered.
- 9.3 The allocation of teachers to classes provides for a consistent learning experience.
- 9.4 There is an appropriate policy and effective procedures for the acquisition of academic resources.

10. The courses are planned and delivered in ways that enable students to succeed

- 10.1 Courses are designed and delivered in ways that allow students to develop the knowledge and skills which will be required for final examinations or assessments.
- 10.2 Lessons and assessments maintain an appropriate focus on any assessment objectives or statement of learning outcomes established by the awarding body.
- 10.3 Formative assessments appropriately reflect the nature and standards of summative examinations.
- 10.4 Students are encouraged and enabled to develop independent learning skills.
- 10.5 Full-time courses requiring students to attend for 15 hours or more per week are timetabled over at least three days.
- 10.6 Any required coursework and revision periods are scheduled in advance.
- 10.7 The academic backgrounds and particular needs of students are taken into account in the classroom delivery of the course.

11. Teachers are suitable for the courses to which they are allocated and effective in delivering them

- 11.1 Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced.
- 11.2 Teachers have a level of subject knowledge, pedagogic and communicative skill which allows them to deliver the content of courses effectively.

- 11.3 The appraisal procedures for teaching staff incorporate regular classroom observation.
- 11.4 Teachers are supported in their continuing professional development and enabled to develop further pedagogic techniques to enhance the learning of students.
- 11.5 Teachers respond to different learning needs of students where appropriate, taking various learning styles into account in their planning and delivery of lessons.
- 11.6 Teachers employ effective strategies to involve all students in active participation and to check their understanding of concepts and course content.

12. The institution provides students and teachers with access to appropriate resources and materials for study

13. Students receive appropriate assessment and feedback on their performance and progress, which are effectively monitored

- 13.1 Courses are planned to include a schedule of assessments, the procedures and criteria for which are available in writing and in advance to students and teachers.
- 13.2 Assessment outcomes are monitored to enable the identification of students who are not making satisfactory progress and prompt intervention where appropriate.
- 13.3 Students are made aware of how their progress relates to their targeted level of achievement.
- 13.4 The institution takes appropriate steps to identify and discourage cheating and other misdemeanours, and to penalise offenders.
- 13.5 Additional support or advice on alternative courses is provided to students who are judged not to be making sufficient progress to succeed.
- 13.6 Oral and written feedback is given to individual students on a regular basis, tailored to meet their specific needs and constructive in its nature and delivery.
- 13.7 Students have appropriate access outside class time to teachers or personal tutors for academic support.

14. The institution offers courses leading to accredited awards granted by recognised awarding bodies wherever appropriate

- 14.1** For courses leading to the award of a UK degree, the institution has a formal agreement with a recognised UK degree-awarding body.
- 14.2** For courses leading to other UK awards, the awarding body is recognised by the relevant regulator.
- 14.3** For courses leading to the award of an overseas degree, the institution has a formal partnership agreement with the overseas degree-awarding body, which is itself accredited by a recognised national agency.

15. There is a clear rationale for courses leading to unaccredited or internal awards

- 15.1** There is a clear statement of the level claimed relative to the NQF/QCF and evidence that students who receive the award meet the stated requirements for that level.
- 15.2** There is evidence of the extent to which the awards are accepted for the purposes of employment or further study.
- 15.3** External moderators are involved in the assessment process where appropriate.

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

- 16.1** The institution complies with the requirements of the relevant awarding bodies in terms of examination security and administration.
- 16.2** For internal awards, there are effective systems in place for examination security and administration, and clear procedures for students to appeal against their marks.

17. There is appropriate provision of advice for students intending to proceed to employment or higher/further education

- 17.1** Students have access to advice from a designated staff member on further study and career opportunities.
- 17.2** If the institution offers courses preparing students for higher education, they have access to prospectuses and to advice from a designated staff member both on selecting courses and institutions and on the application process.

Documents required

- Whole course/academic year plans (schemes of work)
- Completed lesson plans
- Timetables for all courses offered by the institution
- Detailed CVs for all academic staff, including evidence of academic qualifications
- Samples of marked student work
- Internal quality assurance documentation
- Copies of any policies developed by the institution as a means of quality management
- External quality assurance documentation as required
- Student files with details of registration, enrolment, attendance and qualifications
- Sample placement tests
- Records of student progress
- Summaries of results/grades awarded for previous three years for each academic programme (or from start date, if the course has not been available for that time)
- In the case of degree programmes, agreements with degree-awarding bodies
- Documents relating to external moderation
- Copies of external examiners' reports for the previous three years for each academic programme (or from start date, if the course has not been available for that time)
- Copies of annual reports to the awarding bodies for the previous three years
- Copies of any academic reviews carried out by or on behalf of the awarding body
- Completed classroom observation forms
- Staff appraisal procedures and completed documentation

Interviews required

As part of their assessment, inspectors will hold interviews with the following:

- Principal/director
- Academic managers
- Senior administrator
- Examinations officer
- Teaching staff

Inspection area – student welfare

Minimum standards 18-23

18. Students receive pastoral support appropriate to their age, background and circumstances

- 18.1 There is at least one named staff member responsible for student welfare who is suitably trained, accessible to all students and available to provide advice and counselling.
- 18.2 Students receive appropriate advice before arrival.
- 18.3 Students receive an appropriate induction and relevant information upon arrival.
- 18.4 Students are issued with a contact number for out-of-hours and emergency support.
- 18.5 The institution has policies in place to avoid discrimination and a published procedure for dealing with any abusive behaviour.

19. International students are provided with specific advice and assistance (if applicable)

- 19.1 International students receive appropriate advice before their arrival on travelling to and living in the UK.
- 19.2 International students receive an appropriate induction upon arrival covering issues specific to the local area.
- 19.3 Information and advice specific to international students continues to be available throughout the course of study.
- 19.4 Provision of support takes into account cultural and religious considerations. Where possible, students have access to speakers of their own first language.

20. The fair treatment of students is ensured

- 20.1 Students apply for and are enrolled on courses under fair and transparent contractual terms and conditions.
- 20.2 Students have access to a fair complaints procedure of which they are informed in writing at the start of the course.
- 20.3 Students are advised of BAC's own complaints procedure.

21. Where residential accommodation is offered, it is fit for purpose, well maintained and appropriately supervised (if applicable)

- 21.1 Any residential accommodation is clean, safe and of a standard which is adequate to the needs of students.
- 21.2 Any residential accommodation is open to inspection by the appropriate authorities, including Ofsted where students under 18 are accommodated.
- 21.3 A level of supervision is provided appropriate to the needs of student.
- 21.4 Separate accommodation blocks are provided for students under 18.

22. Where home-stay accommodation is organised, the welfare of students is ensured and the institution's relationship with hosts is properly managed (if applicable)

- 22.1 Due care is taken in selecting home-stay accommodation which both provides a safe and comfortable living environment for students and is appropriately located for travel to the institution and back.
- 22.2 Any home-stay accommodation is inspected before students are placed and is subject to regular re-inspection by a responsible representative or agent of the institution.
- 22.3 The institution has appropriate contracts in place with any hosts, clearly setting out the rules, terms and conditions of the provision.
- 22.4 Appropriate advice and support is given to both hosts and students before and during the placement.
- 22.5 Clear monitoring procedures are in place with opportunities for student feedback and prompt action taken in the event of problems.

23. The institution provides an appropriate social programme for students and information on leisure activities in the area (if applicable)

- 23.1 Students are provided with appropriate information on opportunities for participation at events and other leisure activities which may be of interest.
- 23.2 The social programme is responsive to the needs and wishes of students.
- 23.3 Any activities within the social programme have been chosen with consideration for their affordability by the majority of students.
- 23.4 Any activities organised by the institution are supervised by a responsible representative with suitable qualifications and experience.

Documents required

- Student induction packs both for home and international students
- Student Handbook
- Policy documents related to discrimination, bullying and abusive behaviour
- Documents related to residential accommodation (if applicable)
- Documents related to home-stay (if applicable)
- Students' social programme (if applicable)

Interviews required

As part of their assessment, inspectors will hold interviews with the following:

- Principal/director
- Senior administrator
- Student welfare officer
- Students

Inspection area – premises and facilities

Minimum standards 24-27

24. The institution has secure possession of and access to its premises

- 24.1** The institution has secure tenure on its premises.
- 24.2** Where required, the institution has access to suitable external premises for academic or non-academic purposes of a temporary or occasional nature.

25. The premises provide a safe, secure and clean environment for students and staff

- 25.1** Access to the premises is appropriately restricted and secured.
- 25.2** The premises are maintained in an adequate state of repair, decoration and cleanliness.
- 25.3** There are specific safety rules in areas of particular hazard (e.g. science laboratories), made readily available to students, staff and visitors.
- 25.4** General guidance on health and safety is made available to students, staff and visitors.
- 25.5** There is adequate signage inside and outside of the premises and notice boards for the display of general information.

- 25.6** There is adequate circulation space for the number of students and staff accommodated, and a suitable area in which to receive visitors.
- 25.7** There are toilet facilities of an appropriate number and level of cleanliness.
- 25.8** There is adequate heating and ventilation in all rooms.

26. Classrooms and other learning areas are appropriate for the courses offered

- 26.1** Classrooms and other learning areas provide adequate accommodation in size and number for the classes allocated to them.
- 26.2** Classrooms and any specialised learning areas (e.g. laboratories, workshops, studios) are equipped to a level which allows for the effective delivery of each course.
- 26.3** There are facilities suitable for conducting the assessments required on each course.

27. There are appropriate additional facilities for students and staff

- 27.1** Students have access to sufficient space and suitable facilities for private study, including library and IT resources.
- 27.2** Teaching staff have access to sufficient personal space for preparing lessons, marking work and relaxation.
- 27.3** Students and staff have access to space and facilities suitable for relaxation and the consumption of food and drink where appropriate.
- 27.4** Students and staff have access to storage for personal possessions where appropriate.
- 27.5** There are individual offices or rooms in which academic staff and senior management can hold private meetings and a room of sufficient size to hold staff meetings.
- 27.6** Administrative offices are adequate in size and resources for the effective administration of the institution.

Documents required

- Current lease agreement or proof of ownership
- Floor plan of each site being inspected

Interviews required

As part of their assessment, inspectors will hold interviews with the following:

- Principal/director
- Maintenance/facilities manager





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