

Organisation name	Activate Learning Reading College, Bracknell and Wokingham College
Inspection date	6 June 2019
Current accreditation status	Accredited by extension
Reason for spot check	Signalled: first inspection of new extension

### Recommendation

We recommend continuation of the extension of accreditation pending a full inspection of the provision within twelve months. However, evidence must be submitted within three months to demonstrate that weaknesses in Publicity have been addressed.

### Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	N/a
Last full inspection	November 2017 Activate Learning, Reading Campus
Subsequent spot check(s) (if applicable)	This inspection
Subsequent supplementary check(s) (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent interim visit(s) (if applicable)	N/a
Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre	N/a
Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates	Activate Learning, Banbury and Bicester, City of Oxford, Guildford, and Reading campuses
Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates	Various schools, FE colleges, and University Technical Colleges (UTC) in the UK, and FE colleges in Saudi Arabia, in the Activate Learning Group

Student and staff profile	At inspection	In peak week: September
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	149+29	180+19
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	16	16
Typical age range	16–88	16–88
Typical length of stay	2 years	2 years
Predominant nationalities	Romanian, Italian, Hungarian	Romanian, Italian, Hungarian
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	7	7
Total number of managers including academic	2	2
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	0	0

### Premises profile

Address of main site	Activate Learning, Bracknell and Wokingham Campus, Church Road, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1DT
Additional sites in use	N/a
Additional sites not in use	N/a
Sites inspected	Bracknell and Wokingham Campus

### Introduction

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## Background

Bracknell and Wokingham College (BWC), purpose-built and opened in 2009, is situated centrally in Bracknell. It has all the facilities to support a modern FE curriculum, including media studios, hair and beauty salons, hospitality and catering outlets, science laboratories, a sports hall, a learning resource centre, and well-equipped classrooms. It offers full and part-time day and evening general English courses for young people (16+), and adults. Classes are designated ESOL or EFL, though allocation is by student aspiration/need. At the time of the spot check ESOL was offered at Entry 1, 2 and 3, and Levels 1 and 2, and courses lead to a relevant ESOL qualification. For the first time, in September 2018 insufficient EFL students had enrolled to form designated EFL classes, which lead to international qualifications, so no EFL was being delivered at the time of the inspection. EFL students may infill into the ESOL provision.

BWC forms part of an educational group, Activate Learning (AL), which was launched in 2013. AL operates across FE, HE, schools, apprenticeships and training in the UK, and four FE colleges in Saudi Arabia. It has six accredited centres in the UK: City of Oxford, Guildford, and Reading Colleges are accredited in their own right, Banbury and Bicester as part of Oxford, and Bracknell and Wokingham by extension from Reading. BWC merged with AL in January 2019, so, although harmonisation of systems got underway in September 2018, it is nowhere near complete. The spot check therefore took place at a time of considerable change for BWC.

The UK FE colleges in the group share common management, administrative, marketing, and academic systems. The AL executive team consists of the chief executive officer (CEO), and seven executive directors, four of whom have responsibilities for faculties. EFL and ESOL are located in the faculty of Lifeskills. The executive team often have responsibilities within different colleges as the overall management structure is AL, rather than college-specific. Day-to-day management functions operate at college level. The Lifeskills executive director is responsible for the director of stakeholders and employability, based mainly in Banbury, who has an EFL background and maintains an overview of the Bracknell and Wokingham provision. He line manages the BWC head of English, maths and ESOL, and the academic manager responsible for ESOL/EFL. The latter has been employed at BWC for ten years, as a manager for the last three. Her full-time contract specifies 50 per cent teaching and 50 per cent management responsibilities, which in future will encompass more than ESOL/EFL.

## Preparation

The inspector received documentation from the Accreditation Unit, and related correspondence, including the last inspection report on the AL Reading Campus provision, and she read the group's website.

## Programme and persons present

The inspector arrived at the college at 10.30 and left at 15.30. The time was spent examining documentation with and interviewing the academic manager responsible for ESOL/EFL and the head of English, maths and ESOL. The inspector also observed and interviewed the two teachers who were timetabled that day. She also spoke to seven of the students who were attending the part-time day class that morning. At the end of the day there was brief feedback to the two managers. The following day the inspector rang the director of stakeholders and employability to discuss the visit to BWC and to clarify two particular issues.

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## Findings

### Management

- M1 There is a clear statement outlining the mission and purpose of AL on its website. Management staff were broadly aware of its goals and values, the teaching staff interviewed less so.
- M3 There is a documented structure for the ELT operation at BWC, with sufficient staff to manage and deliver the provision. Currently the future relationship between the ELT operations across the AL group has not been explored by BWC managers with the senior managers.
- M4 Teaching staff and managers were positive about both the formal and informal communications between BWC staff. Managers suggested that sufficient systems existed for communication between BWC and the wider group, and AL managers had been approachable and supportive, and they judged they had had input into the harmonisation processes underway. Teaching staff were less positive.
- M5 Feedback is currently collected from students, and it is used to inform the annual course reviews.
- M7 An annual course review is undertaken, which is wide-ranging and includes student progression routes and safeguarding.
- M9 Job descriptions are in the process of being reviewed in the light of allocation of responsibilities post merger.
- M13 Employee development days are held regularly, and considerable development has been given on new management information systems, as well as some ELT-specific sessions relating to teaching procedures and examinations.
- M19 There is a clear policy on student attendance, and this is outlined in the student handbook.
- M21 The complaints procedure is outlined in the student handbook. There is no reference to English UK as a final arbiter, though reference is made to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills.
- M22–M29 Publicity: Findings are reported in the criteria section below.
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## Premises and resources

Findings are reported in the criteria section below.

## Teaching and learning

T1–T4 Academic staff profile: Findings are reported in the criteria section below.

T9 The two members of the teaching team interviewed were very positive about the guidance and support for their teaching that they received from their academic manager.

T10 Formal observations are undertaken by the academic manager annually, and reports are thorough and useful.

T11 Course design is based around a standard ELT coursebook, from which schemes of work are derived. Books from the same series are used at all levels. AL policy does not reflect this practice, so it is likely to change in the near future.

T12 There is an annual course review meeting which considers the entire provision, and a report is produced.

T17 Standard placement tests are used to assess students' linguistic levels at the beginning of their course.

T18 Formative and summative tests are part of the programme, and all ESOL courses lead to a qualification.

Regular academic and welfare tutorials form part of the whole college structure, and students and staff maintain a record of tutorial meetings and goals set.

T20 Students are entered for exams which reflect their level of attainment and their skills range.

T22 Information and advice on progression paths is available from tutors and student services. Individual progression routes are recorded in the course review.

## Classroom observation

The teaching observed met the requirements of the Scheme.

## Welfare and student services

W3 Students receive pastoral care from their class teachers, and their personal tutors, and there is close liaison between BWC and the social workers of relevant ESOL students. The students also have access to the student services' provision, including the counselling service. When questioned students were a little hazy about this provision, and named their teachers as their first port of call for personal problems. The student handbook contains clear and prominent information about these services, and information is also re-iterated at induction, according to managers.

W4 On its website AL has a clear statement about British values and its equality and diversity policy. The BWC student handbook also appropriately summarises these for student consumption. One student in the group interviewed volunteered without any prompting that the best thing about BWC was that he was always treated with respect by staff and students in the college.

W7 Life in the UK is an integrated strand of the curriculum for full-time ESOL students, and reflects the ethos of the provision. Information is also available in handbooks and at student services.

W24 The ESOL/EFL section offers a modest leisure programme of visits to local places of interest, cultural and social events, organised by one of the teaching staff. All the students in the group interviewed had taken part in at least one activity, and were very appreciative of the opportunities the programme offered.

## Safeguarding under 18s

There were 29 under 18s at the time of the spot check, the bulk of whom were in the full-time ESOL programme.

S1 The AL safeguarding policy specifies appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of students under the age of 18 and identifies the designated safeguarding lead as the group head of student support, but the post-holder is not named. This role is supported by faculty safeguarding teams chaired by the executive director of faculties. At BWC the person responsible for safeguarding within ESOL/EFL is the academic manager.

S2 The safeguarding policy is available on the website. Mandatory safeguarding training is provided for all staff, with regular on-going training. Staff are appropriately trained for their level of responsibility. Guidance on safeguarding is provided for sub-contractors. Safeguarding appears as a standing item in the course review report.

Publicity	Need for improvement
M22 All publicity and information is accurate, and gives rise to realistic expectations about the premises, location, and the extent and availability of the services and resources.	Met
M23 All publicity and information about the provider and the services it offers is in clear, accurate and accessible English.	Not met
M24 Publicity gives clear, accurate and easy-to-find information on the courses.	Not met
M25 Publicity includes clear, accurate and easy-to-find information on costs.	Not met
M26 Publicity or other information made available before enrolment gives an accurate description of the level of care and support given to any students under 18.	Not met
M27 Publicity gives an accurate description of any accommodation offered.	N/a
M28 Descriptions of staff qualifications are accurate.	N/a
M29 Claims to accreditation are in line with Scheme requirements.	Met

## Comments

The main medium of publicity for the AL group is the website. Supplementary flyers advertising ESOL/EFL programmes have also been produced by the individual colleges.

M23 Although text is generally clear, accurate and accessible, some of the sector short-hand, for example around part-time provision, is not clear or accessible.

M24 Information on times of classes, taught hours and course dates are not given. No information is provided on course content, non-teaching days, maximum class size or minimum enrolment age.

M25 Although tuition costs are clear, there is no indication of the cost to students of the coursebook or the leisure programme.

M26 No description of the level of care and support available specifically to 16 and 17 year olds is present on the website.

M27 No accommodation is offered.

M28 There are no descriptions of staff qualifications.

## Premises and resources

Premises and facilities	Met
P1 Premises, including any external areas, are in a good state of repair, cleanliness and decoration, and provide a comfortable environment for students and staff.	Strength
P2 Classrooms and other learning areas provide a suitable study environment.	Strength
P3 Students have adequate room and suitable facilities for relaxation and the consumption of food.	Met
P4 Free drinking water is available. A choice of appropriate food at affordable prices is available to students on site, if not available locally.	Met
P5 There is adequate signage to buildings, routes, rooms and exits, and there are facilities for the display of general information.	Met
P6 There is sufficient space for all staff, for meetings, relaxation and the storage of personal possessions, and for teachers to carry out their preparation and marking.	Not met

## Comments

P1 BWC is a contemporary purpose-designed building providing a full range of educational and social facilities. It is in excellent decorative order. Its grounds are limited, as it is very close to the town centre. It provides limited car parking space for students.

P2 There are two dedicated rooms which are well furnished and equipped, and generally of a high standard, with attractive wall displays of students' work. Students commented that there is one other room which was too small. Managers confirmed that they had use of one room which was designed to accommodate ten, and classes of no more than ten students were timetabled there.

P6 The ESOL course review 2017–18 reports that the staffroom which has been in commission for a few years is not acceptable. It is hot and airless throughout the year, there is insufficient room for the number of staff it has to accommodate, and not enough space to have files to hand. There is a plan reconfigure it in summer 2019 as part of the AL restructuring.

Learning resources	Met
P7 There are sufficient learning resources for the number of students enrolled, appropriate to their age and the level, length and type of courses offered.	Met
P8 There are appropriate resources for teachers, which are adequate in number, accessible, and well maintained and organised.	Met
P9 Any educational technology inside the classroom and elsewhere is well maintained with adequate technical support. Staff receive appropriate training in using the available technology to support learning.	Not met
P10 Any facilities provided for additional or independent learning are appropriately equipped and organised.	Strength
P11 Students receive guidance on the use of any resources provided for independent learning.	Met
P12 There is a policy for the continuing review and development of teaching and learning resources, and evidence of its implementation.	Met

## Comments

P9 Teachers commented that considerable time and resources had been dedicated to training and developing materials for the interactive whiteboards. They were concerned that since the merger there had been no updating of

the equipment and certain functions were therefore no longer available. They also expressed concern that the materials they had developed would not be compatible with any new system. Managers commented that AL was reviewing its entire IT provision, and that they would lobby hard to ensure materials could be converted. Technical support is satisfactory, though teaching staff commented that the procedure is laborious.

P10 There is excellent provision for self access. The LRC provides study space in a range of formats, including social and quiet study areas, with large numbers of computers for student use.

## Teaching and learning

<b>Academic staff profile</b>	Met
T1 All academic staff have a level of education normally represented by a Level 6 qualification on the Ofqual register of regulated qualifications.	Met
T2 The teaching team has ELT/TESOL qualifications relevant to the courses they are teaching.	Met
T3 The teaching team has a range of experience, knowledge and skills appropriate to the courses offered and the needs of the learners.	Met
T4 The academic manager/academic management team has an appropriate professional profile to provide academic leadership.	Met
<b>Comments</b>	
T4 The academic manager is qualified for her role in FE by dint of her DTLLS/PCE (Level 5) and Diploma in Teaching English: ESOL (Level 5). She does not have a Level 6 qualification. She has the qualities and experience to provide academic leadership, and is supported in her role by the director of stakeholders and employability, based centrally, who is also TEFLQ, although he has relatively little day-to-day involvement with the provision.	

## Action taken on points to be addressed

*Points from the previous full inspection and/or subsequent spot checks or interim visits with comments (in bold) to indicate how far these have been addressed. Only points reviewed during this spot check are included here. Any points outstanding will be checked at the next full inspection.*

N/a.

## Conclusions

In general the ESOL/EFL provision at BWC sufficiently conforms to the standards conferred via its 'Accredited by extension' status. All five areas are generally sound.

The major section of concern is the publicity on the website, which is insufficiently detailed, and thus in need of improvement. Omissions in the BWC publicity are also reflected in that of the other AL colleges'. The director of stakeholders and employability provided evidence that review of the information on the website is in hand. In terms of *Premises and resource* the ESOL/EFL staff workroom at BWC is unsatisfactory, and plans have already been made to reconfigure provision as part of the AL restructuring. The teaching staff are also concerned that since the merger there has been no updating of interactive whiteboard equipment, and that the materials they have developed would not be compatible with any new system.