



BRITISH
COUNCIL

Accreditation UK handbook

www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation

How to use this handbook

This handbook is valid for inspections taking place from January 2026 until the release of the next edition.

Any amendments to the terms and procedures set out in this handbook necessitated by, for example, change in legislation, before the release of a new handbook will be notified to all accredited providers and clearly posted on the website www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation

There are two sections in the handbook.

Introductory section

This part is designed to meet the needs of different readers.

As this handbook is a reference document, the introductory section is brief. Specific information and documentation is available to providers on the AUK portal hosted by Protecht, which contains links to templates and guidance documentation.

Overview provides a general background to the Scheme for readers interested in finding out what the Scheme is and how it works.

Becoming accredited is for providers that are considering joining the Scheme, and want more information about the responsibilities, the costs, and the procedures involved.

For accredited providers is for already accredited providers, and sets out their ongoing responsibilities.

Main section

This contains details about specific aspects of the Scheme, with further detail available on the website. There are four sub-sections:

- 1 Eligibility and application
- 2 Inspections
- 3 Accreditation
- 4 Help

Other formats

The handbook is available to download from the website at www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation

The website also contains the *Criteria, requirements and guidance* document (setting out inspection criteria, additional guidance and inspection documentation), electronic versions of the full range of forms required as part of the application and inspection process, along with supporting advice.

We would be grateful for your help in making this handbook as useful as possible, so please feel free to send us feedback at accreditation.unit@britishcouncil.org.

Please note: for the purposes of the Scheme, 'the United Kingdom' shall mean the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

Child protection

The British Council believes that all children have potential and that every child matters – everywhere in the world. The British Council affirms the position that all children have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse as set out in Article 19, UNCRC 1989. The Scheme is committed to helping ensure the safety of all international students and the safeguarding needs of under 18s.

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What is Accreditation UK?

Accreditation UK is a specialist voluntary quality assurance scheme for providers of English language teaching (ELT) services in the UK. The Scheme is open to language schools, home tuition providers, further and higher education institutions, international study centres and independent schools.

The first British Council quality assurance scheme for ELT was founded in 1982. The current partnership was established in 1996 with English UK bringing together separate schemes for private and state-sectors.

The aim of the Scheme is to give international students who are studying or planning to study English in the UK an assurance of quality. This is achieved by external inspection, ensuring that accredited providers meet agreed quality standards developed through consultation with accredited centres and the professional association English UK.

We want to help the accredited ELT sector thrive, grow and remain sustainable in a positive operating environment by encouraging innovation, collaboration, resilience and diversity. Our aim is for UK ELT to be a rewarding place for students, staff and the language centres at its heart.

We support both publicly funded and privately owned language centres. The scheme seeks to ensure students and their advisors recognise that choosing an 'Accredited by the British Council' for the teaching of English in the UK courses offers the best possible experience inside and outside the classroom.

Accreditation UK is a mature scheme in a mature industry: we are listening, agile and dynamic. Our inspection framework now includes online courses, and a new web portal enables providers to assess progress and report improvements between formal inspections.

We welcome every provider and aim to make our centres attractive places to work, encouraging more students to choose British Council-accredited institutions.

Our Mission

To give students, parents and international partners the assurance of quality when choosing a UK ELT programme, and to support and encourage the pursuit of excellence.

Our Vision

A thriving accredited ELT sector in the UK that transforms lives through learning and intercultural understanding.

Our Values

We are: Inclusive: everyone should feel welcome in our centres, and all ELT providers should feel welcome in our scheme.

Open: we are in open dialogue with members and users.

Robust: students and stakeholders can trust our quality assurance process.

Relevant: our inspection criteria focus on what is most important and evolve in collaboration with the industry.

Agile: in a fast-changing operating environment, we constantly review what we do and why.

Excellent: we continually improve our scheme through regular reviews and updates of our criteria and procedures. We recognise that quality is at the heart of our schools' offer and that this can take different forms.

www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation

www.englishuk.com

What are the Scheme standards?
page 5

3.1 Claiming accreditation (for alternative versions and conditions of use)

What are the purposes of the Scheme?

The purposes of the Accreditation Scheme are to:

- develop, establish and maintain quality standards for English language provision delivered in the UK for international students.
- accredit all organisations providing English language courses in the UK which meet the Scheme criteria and standards.
- provide an assurance of the quality of English language providers accredited under the Scheme to international students and their advisers.

What are the Scheme standards?

The Scheme sets overarching standards in five areas of the work of an English language provider.

Management standard

The management of the provision operates to the benefit of the students, and in accordance with the provider's stated goals, values and publicity.

Premises and resources standard

The premises provide students and staff with a comfortable and professional environment for work and relaxation. A range of learning resources is available, appropriate to the age and needs of the students. Guidance on the use of these resources is provided for staff and students where needed.

Teaching and learning standard

The academic staff team has a professional profile (qualifications, experience and continuing professional development) appropriate to the context. Teachers receive sufficient guidance to ensure that they support students effectively in their learning. Courses are structured and managed to provide the maximum possible benefit to students. The teaching observed meets the requirements of the Scheme.

Welfare and student services standard

The provision meets the needs of the students for security, pastoral care, information and leisure activities. Students benefit from well-managed student services, including, where offered, out-of-class activities and suitable accommodation.

Safeguarding of under 18s standard

There is appropriate provision for the safeguarding of students under the age of 18 within the organisation and in any leisure activities or accommodation provided.

What are the benefits of accreditation?

Benefits to accredited providers

- A visible and explicit commitment to meeting and maintaining quality standards through the use of the 'accredited by the British Council' marque.
- Opportunities for improvement in services through regular inspection and through the sharing of best practice.
- Eligibility to enrol visa students on a short-term study visa, up to six months for under 18s and up to 11 months for students aged 18 and over (English language only), and incidental study up to 30 days for those on a standard visitor visa.
- Promotion in overseas markets by:
 - the extensive network of British Council offices in over 100 countries.
 - the work of British Council ELT promotion staff in the UK and overseas.

www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/how-we-regulate

Overview

- Inclusion in the list of accredited providers on the British Council website and agent resource pack.
- Access to market reports, events and tendering opportunities limited to accredited providers.
- Eligibility for English UK membership.

Benefits to students

- Students studying with accredited providers are assured of a level of service defined by the section standards of the Scheme. These cover **Management, Premises and resources, Teaching and learning, Welfare and student services** and **Safeguarding under 18s**.
- Students can get redress through an agreed complaints procedure if these standards are not met.
- Alternative courses can be arranged at no additional cost for students affected by the sudden closure of an accredited provider.

How is accreditation awarded?

Accreditation is awarded on the basis of an inspection. The purpose of the inspection is to verify that the ELT provision is being carried out in accordance with the agreed standards and criteria.

At the end of the inspection, inspectors provide initial oral feedback to the provider. A report is then written, using a pro forma report template.

The report is submitted to, and moderated by, the Accreditation Scheme Advisory Committee (ASAC), who recommend to the Executive Board one of the following:

For new applicants

- provisional accreditation
- full accreditation.
- withholding of accreditation.

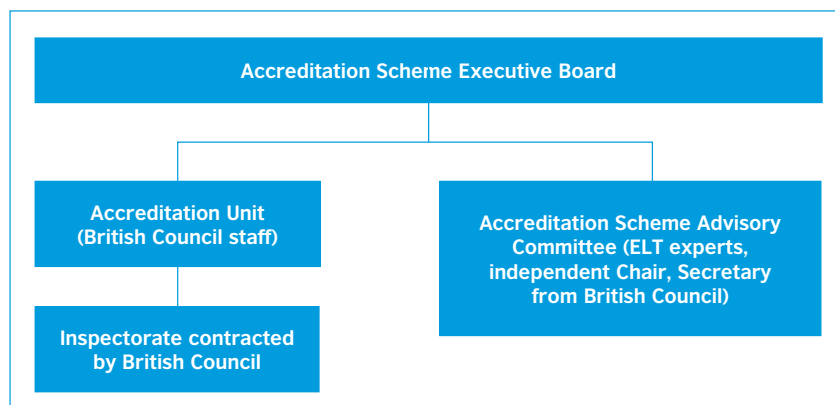
For already accredited providers

- continued accreditation.
- placing accreditation under review pending rectification of particular weaknesses identified in the report.
- withdrawal of accreditation.

After the report has been moderated, it is sent to the provider. Reports on accredited providers, including those where accreditation is placed under review, will be published on the British Council website.

Providers may appeal against a refusal to grant or continue accreditation.

Who's who in the Scheme?



www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/centres

www.englishuk.com

3.5 Complaints against accredited providers

3.6 Student Emergency Support Fund

2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations

2.5 Follow-up action

3.1 Claiming accreditation

2.6 Appeals and complaints procedures

Accreditation Scheme Executive Board

The Accreditation Scheme Executive Board (EB) is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the Scheme. The Board comprises three British Council and three English UK members. The role of Chair of the Board alternates between the British Council and English UK; Manager Accreditation UK, British Council, is Secretary to the Board. The current members of the EB are listed on the website. The Board will consult with wider stakeholders to contribute to the development of the Scheme.

www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/how-we-regulate

Accreditation Scheme Advisory Committee

The Accreditation Scheme Advisory Committee (ASAC) moderates reports from inspectors, and recommends to the Executive Board that accreditation should be awarded, continued or withdrawn. Members of the ASAC include individuals from accredited ELT providers from both state and private sectors, as well as individual experts in the fields of ELT, student welfare and educational evaluation. The current members of the ASAC are listed on the website.

British Council

As well as being a partner in the Scheme, the British Council is responsible for the management and administration of the Scheme.

The British Council logo is incorporated in the Accreditation Scheme marque:

Accredited by the



for the teaching
of English in the UK

English UK

English UK is a partner in the Scheme and is the national association of accredited language centres. English UK has over 300 member centres in private schools, educational trusts and charities, further education colleges and universities.

www.englishuk.com

Accredited providers

Both private and state sector providers of ELT courses in the UK can apply for accreditation. Accredited providers have input to the management and development of the Scheme communicated to the Board through English UK or the Accreditation Unit.

Inspectors

Inspectors are senior ELT professionals, appointed to the panel of inspectors by the EB and contracted by the British Council.

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What are your responsibilities?

Accredited providers are expected to:

- operate within the law at all times and in all aspects of business and provision.
- operate within the spirit of the Scheme.
- maintain a high level of service to international students and their representatives in line with Scheme standards.
- contribute to the high reputation of UK English language teaching.
- promote and protect the good name of Accreditation UK.
- share responsibility for providing alternative English language courses, at no additional cost, to students affected by the sudden closure of a local accredited provider.

Accredited providers are required to act within the law at all times. This specifically includes, but is not limited to, business and financial dealings, safeguarding, health and safety, immigration and any relevant regulatory requirements. Providers are also required to operate with high standards of educational practice. Providers in the private sector will need to demonstrate, on initial application and from time to time thereafter, that any person (owner/proprietor, director/chief executive officer, head of school/principal) with effective or day-to-day control of the organisation in the UK that meets the eligibility as defined by the Accreditation Scheme.

Accredited providers are expected to make every effort to conduct themselves with integrity and to high professional standards, particularly in dealings with the Scheme, the Scheme's representatives, with their staff and students, and with other ELT providers.

To be accredited you must therefore ensure that students using your services receive the level of professional and personal care which they are entitled to expect from an accredited provider. This means that all aspects of your work must be conducted in accordance with Scheme standards and criteria.

You must follow the formal requirements of the Scheme, adhering to the procedures contained in this handbook. You must make the annual returns required by the Scheme, pay the annual fee, and undergo inspection and re-inspection as required.

3.6 Student Emergency Support

You must also support the Scheme in investigating and dealing with any complaints that may be made about your provision by students or their representatives.

Who is eligible?

Eligible providers

ELT providers from both the private and state sector are eligible for accreditation subject to meeting certain criteria. These include the length of time the provider has been operating, and the precise type of work carried out. For new providers that have not yet met the one-year operational requirement, provisional accreditation is now available.

Eligible provision

Only provision taking place in the UK is eligible. This includes all types of ELT provision with the exception of externally validated teacher training courses.

What is the accreditation process?

A summary of the process by which eligible providers can become accredited is given on page 11. The following stages are involved:

- information gathering and preparation.
- application and scrutiny.
- uploading of copies of inspection documentation.
- inspection.
- results and report.
- follow-up.

Scope of accreditation

Your accreditation must include all the eligible provision that you offer. Accordingly, it must all be included in the accreditation process and in each inspection of your provision. Providers can choose whether to include in-company, Applied English or online courses in their accreditation.

Inspection procedures

You will find the requirements in terms of the frequency of inspection, and the procedures for the inspection of different types of provider in [2.3 Inspection process](#).

For information about spot checks, supplementary visits, and interim visits, please see [2.5 Follow-up action](#) and [3.2 Between inspections](#).

How long does it take?

The process of setting up an inspection begins two to four months in advance, so you must be sure to apply for your inspection by the deadline for the date on which you want the inspection to take place.

Inspections usually last from 1.5 to five days, depending on the size of your provision.

At the end of the inspection, the inspectors will tell you the date of the ASAC meeting at which your report will be considered (six to 14 weeks after the inspection). The ASAC meets at least six times per year. You will hear from the Accreditation Unit about the result of your inspection within five days of the ASAC meeting, and will receive your report within six weeks of the meeting.

How much does it cost?

The basis on which inspection costs are determined and the current cost of accreditation are set out in a *Fees sheet* which is available from the Accreditation Unit and website.

When you apply for accreditation, you will have to pay:

- administration fee of £200
- costs of the inspection (usually between £2000 and £6,100, depending on the length of the inspection).

3.5 Complaints against accredited providers

1.1 Eligibility

1.2 Different types of provider and specific eligibility

1.4 Applying for inspection

2.3 Inspection process

2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations

2.5 Follow-up action

1.3 Scope of accreditation

2.3 Inspection process

2.5 Follow-up action

3.2 Between inspections

1.4 Applying for inspection

Becoming accredited

On gaining accreditation, you will have to pay:

- annual fee (English UK members will receive a discount). Fees for newly accredited providers are calculated on a pro rata basis for the first year of accreditation.
- an annual contribution to the Student Emergency Support (SES)
- costs of a spot check inspection during the first 18 months of accreditation (approximately £550).

Accredited providers pay an annual fee and SES contribution together with the costs of re-inspection (every four years) and any spot check or supplementary visit which may be ordered by the ASAC or by the Accreditation Unit.

How do you make your first application?

You need to complete the *First inspection application* form, and send it to the Accreditation Unit together with supporting documentation and the appropriate fee.

Please see the website for additional advice on making your first application and details of the documentation required.

An administration fee must be paid at the time of the first application.

The full cost of the inspection must be paid before an inspection can be set up.

How do you prepare for your first inspection?

See **2.3 Inspection process** for an overview of the inspection process in terms of preparation, procedures, and outcomes. Additional advice is available on the website and at pre-inspection briefing events held regularly by the British Council.

It is important that you make sure all your colleagues are told about what will be happening during the inspection, and their own roles.

The inspectors will be looking at your provision in relation to the Scheme standards and criteria. Please make sure that all your colleagues are familiar with these as they relate to their area of work.

How and when do you get the results of the inspection?

After their visit, the inspectors will write their report within five weeks of the inspection and submit it for consideration at the next meeting of the ASAC.

The ASAC will then make a recommendation to the Executive Board concerning your accreditation. In the case of a provider applying for initial accreditation, the ASAC will recommend either 'accreditation' or 'withholding of accreditation'.

The inspectors will tell you at the time of the inspection when they will be submitting their report and when the ASAC will be considering it. You should receive the result of your inspection within five working days of the ASAC meeting.

If you are awarded accreditation, you will have a spot check inspection during your first 18 months of accreditation.

It is normally recommended that providers that have failed to gain accreditation wait 12 months before seeking to be re-inspected.

How do you give feedback, make an appeal or a complaint against the Scheme?

You can give feedback on the inspection process on the *Inspection evaluation* form.

A provider that has been refused accreditation or has accreditation withdrawn has the right to appeal against the decision. No right of appeal exists against other decisions.

3.6 Student Emergency Support Fund

2.5 Follow-up action

2.3 Inspection process

2.5 Follow-up action

www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/apply-for-accreditation

1.4 Applying for inspection

www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/how-we-regulate

2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations

2.5 Follow-up action

2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations

2.6 Appeals and complaints procedures

A summary of the process

Stage	Activity	Notes	Period
Information gathering and preparation Keep in touch with the Accreditation Unit throughout the process, for clarification and detailed information. Read the additional guidance provided on the website. English UK provides a consultancy service to help those preparing for inspection.	Check out the website. Download the handbook and the <i>Criteria, requirements and guidance</i> document.	www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation	Any time. Please note that you will need a current handbook to apply.
	Sign up for a British Council promotional or pre-inspection briefing.	accreditation.unit@britishcouncil.org	Promotional: to find out about the benefits of accreditation. Pre-inspection: in the year before/ of inspection.
	Read the guidance on the website which includes self-evaluation tools.		Before you apply and throughout the process.
	Look into benefits of English UK membership.		Any time. You may want to ask about services available to aspiring members.
Application and scrutiny We will advise you not to proceed if there are serious doubts about your provision.	Submit application forms and other documentation for scrutiny. First inspection application form.	1.4 Applying for accreditation www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/information-centres/application	By the appropriate deadline for the period you want inspection to take place (approximately two to five months before inspection).
	Pay administration fee.	Fees sheet – www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/fees_sheet_2025-26.pdf	On submission of application.
	Agree length and timing of inspection with Accreditation Unit.	accreditation.unit@britishcouncil.org	The Unit will contact you following scrutiny of your application.
Payment for inspection and compilation of inspection documentation	Pay invoice for inspection. Compile inspection documents for sending to inspectors and additional documents for reference during the inspection.	Fees sheet – www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/fees_sheet_2025-26.pdf	Before inspection is set up. As early as you can – inspection preparation documents must reach the inspectors at least ten working days before the inspection.
Inspection	During the inspection.	www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/information-centres	On agreed dates (inspection normally lasts one to five days).
Report Results and final report	Inspectors write report.	Inspectors submit their report within five weeks.	
	Report considered by the Accreditation Scheme Advisory Committee. Recommendation made.	www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/how-we-regulate	The result of inspection is sent out immediately after the ASAC meeting. 2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations
	Report sent to provider and published on the British Council website if accreditation has been granted.	Reports are edited by the Accreditation Unit 3.1 Claiming accreditation	The final report is sent within six weeks of the ASAC meeting.
Follow-up	Submission of evidence of action regarding points to be addressed.	2.5 Follow-up action	By 31 January in year following inspection, or earlier if required by ASAC.
	Routine spot check for newly accredited providers.	2.5 Follow-up action	Within 18 months of gaining accreditation.
	Submission of <i>Annual declaration</i> form.	3.2 Between inspections	By 31 January each year.
	Submission of <i>Notification of changes</i> form.	3.2 Between inspections	In advance of an anticipated change, or within five working days of change.

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What are your responsibilities?

Accredited providers are expected to:

- operate within the law at all times and in all aspects of business and provision.
- operate within the spirit of the Scheme.
- maintain a high level of service to international students and their representatives in line with Scheme standards.
- contribute to the high reputation of UK English language teaching.
- promote and protect the good name of Accreditation UK.
- share responsibility for providing alternative English language courses, at no additional cost, to students affected by the sudden closure of a local accredited provider.

Accredited providers are required to act within the law at all times. This specifically includes, but is not limited to, business and financial dealings, safeguarding, health and safety, immigration and any relevant regulatory requirements. Providers are also required to operate with high standards of educational practice. Providers in the private sector will need to demonstrate, on initial application and from time to time thereafter, that any person (owner/proprietor, director/chief executive officer, head of school/principal) with effective or day-to-day control of the organisation in the UK is a 'fit and proper person', as defined by the Accreditation Scheme.

Accredited providers are expected to make every effort to conduct themselves with integrity and to high professional standards, particularly in dealings with the Scheme, the Scheme's representatives, with their staff and students, and with other ELT providers.

As an accredited provider you therefore have a continuing responsibility to ensure that students using your services receive the level of professional and personal care which they are entitled to expect from an accredited provider. This means that all aspects of your work must be conducted in accordance with Scheme standards and criteria.

3.6 Student Emergency Support

You must follow the formal requirements of the Scheme, adhering to the procedures contained in this handbook. You must make the annual returns required by the Scheme, pay the annual fee, and undergo inspection and re-inspection as required.

You must also support the provisions of the Scheme in investigating and dealing with any complaints that may be made about your provision by students or their representatives.

Can accreditation be withdrawn?

There are a number of grounds on which accreditation may be withdrawn, these are detailed in **3.4 Withdrawal, withholding or suspension of accreditation**.

How do you show that you are accredited?

You are strongly encouraged to use the Accreditation Scheme marque in your publicity relating to eligible activities (see **Overview**, page 4).

You may reproduce in your publicity the summary statement issued with your most recent report and publish the full report.

In order to protect the interests of accredited providers, the use of the report and summary statement, the claiming of accreditation, and the use of the marque are subject to conditions. Please help to promote the Scheme by making full and appropriate reference to your status as an accredited provider.

Can accreditation be extended to new areas?

Accredited providers must inform the Accreditation Unit of any new provision (centres or eligible courses) they intend to run. The Unit, in consultation with the ASAC, will advise on the future inspection of additional provision (specific forms are provided for this purpose).

In some cases accreditation may be extended to include additional provision. However, if you are an accredited year-round provider and you extend your operations to include more than one seasonal centre or any additional year-round centre(s), or if you are an accredited seasonal multicentre provider and you extend your operations to include a year-round provision, then you must seek separate accreditation for the 'extension' provision.

What do you have to do between inspections?

There are a number of formal requirements between inspections. These include action planning, self-evaluation, making routine annual returns to the Accreditation Unit, and informing them of any major changes, using a *Notification of changes* form in Protecht.

It is also your responsibility to make sure that you apply for re-inspection in time to maintain your accreditation. Inspections normally run on a four-year cycle.

What is an interim visit?

In order to ensure that standards are maintained between inspections, each year a number of providers, chosen at random, will receive unannounced interim visits. These are carried out at the Scheme's expense.

When and how do you apply for re-inspection?

You need to start preparing for your re-inspection well in advance.

The deadlines for applying for re-inspection are very important.

You must apply on the prescribed forms and with the prescribed supporting documentation.

Scope of accreditation

Your accreditation includes all the eligible provision that you offer. Accordingly, it must all be included in the accreditation process and in each inspection of your provision.

Before applying for re-inspection, please review all areas of your current work to identify any changes or developments since the previous inspection. Please check carefully the types of courses that you are now offering.

2.3 Inspection process

3.5 Complaints against accredited providers

3.4 Withdrawal, withholding or suspension of accreditation

3.1 Claiming accreditation

3.2 Between inspections

1.2 Different types of provider and specific eligibility

3.3 Extension of accreditation

3.2 Between inspections

1.4 Applying for inspection
www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/information-centres

3.2 Between inspections

1.1 Eligibility

1.2 Different types of provider and specific eligibility

1.3 Scope of accreditation

For accredited providers

Inspection procedures

You will find the requirements in terms of the frequency of inspection, and the procedures for the inspection of different types of provider, in [2.3 Inspection process](#).

For information about spot checks, supplementary visits, and interim visits, please see [2.5 Follow-up action](#) and [3.2 Between inspections](#).

How do you prepare for re-inspection?

See [2.3 Inspection process](#) for an overview of the inspection process in terms of preparation, procedures, and outcomes. Additional advice is available on the website and at pre-inspection briefing events held regularly by the British Council.

It is important that you make sure all your colleagues are told about what will be happening during the inspection, and their own roles.

The inspectors will be looking at your provision in relation to the Scheme standards and criteria. Please make sure that all your colleagues are familiar with these as they relate to their area of work.

How and when do you get the results of the re-inspection?

After their visit, the inspectors will write their report within five weeks of the inspection and submit it for consideration at the next meeting of the ASAC.

The ASAC will then make a recommendation concerning your accreditation. In the case of a provider applying for continuing accreditation, the ASAC will recommend one of the following:

- continued accreditation.
- placing accreditation under review
- withdrawing accreditation.

The inspectors will tell you at the time of the inspection when they will be submitting their report and when the ASAC will be considering it. You will receive the result of your inspection within five days of the ASAC meeting, and you will receive your report within six weeks of the meeting, if there are no outstanding invoices relating to the inspection.

How do you give feedback, make an appeal or a complaint against the Scheme?

You can give feedback on the inspection process, on the post-inspection feedback form.

A provider that is refused accreditation or has accreditation placed under review has the right to appeal against the decision. No right of appeal exists against other decisions.

How much does it cost?

You pay an annual fee and SES contribution together with the costs of re-inspection (every four years) and any spot check or supplementary visit which may be ordered by the ASAC or the Accreditation Unit. Note that you do not pay the costs of interim visits.

English UK members receive a discount on their annual fee.

2.3 Inspection process

2.5 Follow-up action

3.2 Between inspections

2.3 Inspection process

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

www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/how-we-regulate

2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations

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

2.6 Appeals and complaints procedures

3.6 Student Emergency Support Fund

2.3 Inspection process

2.5 Follow-up action

1 Eligibility and application

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1.1 Eligibility

Any educational provider offering English language teaching in the United Kingdom is eligible for accreditation provided that the following requirements are met:

- The provider offers any or all of the following provision:
 - English language teaching for adults.
 - English language teaching for children.
 - English for academic purposes (English language provision preparing students for, or supporting them in, undergraduate and postgraduate study in an English speaking environment).
 - English for specific purposes, such as:
 - English for executives
 - English for business
 - ESOL for citizenship
 - One-to-one tuition in English language.
 - Home tuition/English in a teacher's home (provision where the students both live and study in the home of the teacher; teaching takes place in the teacher's home in groups of a maximum of three students).
 - English language components of access and foundation programmes.
 - English language plus studies in other areas.
 - Applied English: this includes Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) courses, subject/content-driven courses and project or task-based courses, from which students are intended to derive linguistic benefit or improved English language skills in addition to content or subject learning.
 - Development for English language teachers (teacher development provision must: include English language improvement as an aim; be primarily targeted at practising or trainee teachers from overseas; not lead to a formal ELT/ TESOL qualification; not be validated by any recognised validating or examining body; not provide, or be promoted as providing, entry into, or professional advantages within, the UK ELT profession).
- The provider has offered this provision in the UK for the required minimum period of time, and can demonstrate continuity:
 - one year for year-round providers (provision is offered for 25 weeks or more per year), or
 - two seasons (minimum two weeks per season) for seasonal providers (provision is offered for fewer than 25 weeks a year); the provider must have been in operation for a minimum of one year (If an applicant is in the same ownership as a provider which is already accredited, a shorter qualifying period may be allowed at the discretion of the ASAC).
 - For new providers that have not yet met the one-year operational requirement, provisional accreditation is now available.
- Effective control of the provision is exercised by a proprietor or designated manager(s) with clearly defined responsibilities for policy, for day-to-day management and for the quality of work.
- Private sector only: the proprietor has a permanent residence or (in the case of a company) a registered office in the UK.
- The people in effective or day-to-day control of the provision meet the eligibility criteria.
- Appropriate records and registers are kept and such information and returns provided as the British Council may from time to time require. Records for at least 12 months must be available at the time of the inspection.
- English language provision for international students forms a distinct part of the provision and may not be confused by prospective students with any non-accredited ELT/ESOL provision of any kind taking place in any other section(s) of the institution.

Please note: for the purposes of the Scheme, 'the United Kingdom' shall mean the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

1.2 Different types of provider and specific eligibility

ESOL (Skills for Life) provision may be covered by accreditation if the institution puts it forward for inspection. However, an inspection of any ELT provision for international students need not include an inspection of ESOL work, if ESOL is clearly separate from ELT provision, unless international students are placed in ESOL classes. If only the ELT provision for international students is inspected, then only this can be accredited and the accreditation will be in the name of the centre or department delivering this provision, and not in the name of the overall institution.

Where a provider is contracted to supply tuition only as part of a study package delivered by a sponsor or other separate body, this provision will be inspected (see [3.1 Claiming accreditation](#)).

Non-eligible provision

Excluded from the scope of this Scheme are the following:

- any activities taking place outside the UK
- any activities, other than ELT and ancillary services taking place within the UK
- provision which is organised specifically and exclusively for students (such as refugees) where tuition fees are not charged.

1.2 Different types of provider and specific eligibility

Year-round providers

A year-round provider is defined as one operating for 25 weeks or more a year. A year-round provider may operate a maximum of one, separate, seasonal provision within the same accreditation.

Seasonal providers

A seasonal provider is defined within the Scheme as a provider that operates for fewer than 25 weeks a year.

Seasonal multicentres

Providers that operate seasonal provision in two or more locations are classed as seasonal multicentres for the purposes of the Scheme.

Home tuition providers

Providers offering English language provision where the students both live and study in the home of the teacher. Teaching takes place in the teacher's home in groups of up to three students.

- Effective control of the provision will be exercised by a proprietor, designated principal or other properly constituted body. This person or body will have clearly defined responsibilities for policy and quality of provision.
- Where effective control of a home tuition provider is in the hands of a body formed of a group of home tuition providers, its membership and constitution must be made available to the British Council when the application for inspection is made.

Certain inspection criteria are applied differently to home tuition providers; see the *Criteria, requirements and guidance* document online for more information.

International study centres

Providers with the specific aim of preparing international students for independent school education by teaching English language and mainstream subjects through the medium of English.

In-company provision

Providers offering English language provision delivered in-company, i.e. on the business premises of the client (UK only) rather than in premises leased or owned by the provider, must be declared and may be submitted for inspection. Certain inspection criteria do not apply to in-company provision and others are applied differently; see the *Criteria, requirements and guidance* document online for more information.

1.3 Scope of accreditation

Accreditation is awarded to the provider and therefore all eligible provision must be included in the inspection, irrespective of which part of the operation is delivering it. There should be no doubt in the mind of the student when opting for an accredited provider that all the eligible activities offered have been put forward for inspection and are therefore covered by the Scheme.

Where eligible activity is delivered in-company but is not submitted for inspection, the provider must make it clear to potential clients that accreditation does not cover this activity.

Accredited providers have a responsibility to declare all eligible provision. Therefore,

- the initial application for inspection must set out all eligible provision offered to students
- the annual declaration made by all accredited providers must set out all eligible provision offered to students
- the Scheme reserves the right to inspect all such provision.

See [1.1 Eligibility](#) for information about provision that is eligible for accreditation.

In the state sector, all eligible provision taking place within the institution must be included in the inspection. The Accreditation Unit must be informed before inspection if there is any ELT/ESOL activity located in a separate part of the institution in order to determine whether or not it should be inspected. Provision offered by a separate private enterprise will not be included in the inspection; this must be clear in the promotion.

In the private sector, each legal entity requires separate accreditation.

Inspection of international study centres seeking specific accreditation will include observation of the teaching of subjects other than English, discussion with relevant staff and survey of resources for subject specific courses in addition to the normal inspection of eligible ELT provision.

ELT provision recruited for and taught as 'closed groups' will normally be considered eligible, including cases where some of the provision is supplied by a sponsor or other separate body.

If there is doubt about the eligibility of any provision, the following questions will be used to come to an agreed decision:

- Is the aim of the provision language improvement?
- Is the aim of an element of the provision language improvement?
- Are fee-paying students enrolled (even if taught in classes with non-fee-paying students)?
- Is the fact of accreditation being used to attract students?
- Do students, irrespective of whether they have paid or not, enrol believing that the provision is accredited and expecting a level of service associated with an accredited provider?
- Where students are enrolled on an academic course where ELT is a support, not main, subject, is the in-session support structured (rather than 'drop-in')?

If the answer to any of the above questions is 'yes' then the ELT provision is eligible, even if it is credit bearing, unless it is a discrete and clearly separate provision (see page 16). If the provider objects to an eligible provision being inspected, then a rationale will need to be presented for its exclusion from the range of inspected provision. This should be presented to the Accreditation Unit at the time of the application for inspection. If no rationale is presented at the time of application it is assumed that all eligible provision (regardless of where it takes place and how it is managed) will be included in the inspection.

In cases where there is doubt about the eligibility of provision, the provider should write to Manager, Accreditation UK, who may refer the matter to the ASAC.

1.4 Applying for inspection

First inspection

Having read and accepted the terms of the Accreditation UK Handbook, the provider decides on a preferred inspection date and submits an inspection application by the appropriate deadline:

Preferred inspection date	Deadline
February 2026 - April 2026	3 November 2025
May -August 2026	9 February 2026
August- October 2026	11 May 2026
October -Decemeber 2026	18 August 2026

Inspection application

The inspection application comprises:

- *First inspection application form* (**(please note:** there are different versions of this form for the private and state sectors)
- evidence of relevant ELT qualifications held by the academic manager/management team
- All links to all ELT publicity materials.
- the first inspection application scrutiny fee, which is non-returnable (payable by BACS)
- evidence of ownership (and any changes made within the last 12 months)
- *Fit and proper person test and declaration form* (private sector only)
- documentation supporting declaration (see [4.3 Inspection documentation](#)).

Applications will not be processed if application documentation is incomplete.

The Unit will not be able to confirm your inspection date until at least six weeks after the deadline. However, you will receive confirmation that your application has been received.

The application is scrutinised by the Accreditation Unit, which will decide on provisional eligibility; in cases of doubtful or contested eligibility, the decision may be referred to the ASAC.

In the private sector, the scrutiny process will include credit checks. The Scheme reserves the right to refuse an application if the checks indicate that the financial standing of the applicant presents a financial or reputational risk to the Scheme.

If the application proceeds, an inspection is arranged as soon as convenient and appropriate. The final decision as to the date of the inspection rests with the Accreditation Unit.

Private sector providers will be invoiced for the full cost of inspection in advance of the inspection taking place. See *Fees sheet*. This invoice must be settled before an inspection can be set up.

1.5 Data protection

Re-inspection of an accredited provider

An accredited provider wishing to continue accreditation will normally be required to undergo full re-inspection every four years.

The maximum period between inspections will be from the date of the inspection to 31 December in the fourth year following the inspection. For example, a provider inspected in June 2026 will be due for inspection before 31 December 2030.

The maximum period of accreditation will be from the date of inspection to 31 March in the fifth year following inspection. For example, for a provider inspected in June 2026, the period of accreditation will normally be from the date of inspection to 31 March 2031. Please note, however, that for accreditation to be retained beyond 31 December 2030, the provision must be re-inspected before 31 December 2026.

The Accreditation Unit will circulate instructions for application by the end of October for inspections to take place after 1 January the following year. The Accreditation Unit will use the history of inspection and the information provided on the most recent *Annual declaration* to identify an appropriate month for inspection. The provider will then be invited to indicate any preference for the timing of the inspection within that month by submitting an inspection application comprising:

- *Re-inspection application form*
(**please note:** there are different versions of this form for the private and state sectors)
- *Fit and proper person test and declaration form*
(where required)
- Links to all ELT publicity materials.

Where changes to the provision mean that the month of inspection proposed by the Accreditation Unit is unsuitable, the provider must contact the Unit immediately, suggesting an alternative month for inspection and explaining why the change is necessary. Alternative arrangements may then be made.

An inspection will be arranged only if the Accreditation Unit has received a completed *application* form by the deadline given. It is the responsibility of the accredited provider to submit its documentation and application in time. Failure to submit the application for re-inspection in time for the inspection to take place may be grounds for withdrawal of accreditation.

Re-inspection of an unaccredited provider

Where a provider wishes to re-submit for inspection after accreditation has been withdrawn or withheld, that inspection will normally take place no sooner than 12 months after the original inspection, unless a supplementary inspection has been recommended. See [2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations](#).

Where a full re-inspection is required, the application process is the same as for a first inspection.

Where a supplementary inspection has been recommended, an application for re-inspection must be made no later than 11 months after the full inspection. This application comprises:

- *Supplementary inspection application form*
- *Declaration of legal and regulatory compliance form*
- *Fit and proper person test and declaration form* (where required)
- All links to all ELT publicity materials
- An action plan indicating the action taken to rectify weaknesses identified in the report.

The Accreditation Unit will advise on the process to be followed and documentation submitted.

1.5 Data protection

The British Council complies with data protection law in the UK and laws in other countries that meet internationally accepted standards. Please refer to the Information Sharing Agreement, which defines the detailed arrangements for processing information shared between the British Council and participants in the Accreditation UK quality assurance scheme.

The British Council Accreditation Unit will use the information provided in application forms and annual declarations to administer the accreditation scheme, contact providers with relevant information about Accreditation UK and list accredited providers on the website and agent resource pack.

The British Council will process and share information in accordance with the Information Sharing Agreement and, where there is a legal responsibility to do so, with UK Visas and Immigration and statutory bodies responsible for child protection.

As a public authority the British Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act; we will normally consult the provider in the event of a request for information about their provision or inspection under the Freedom of Information Act.

2 Inspections

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2.1 Legal and regulatory compliance

Accreditation UK and accreditation does not remove the obligation of providers to comply with relevant statutory or other legal requirements.

The Scheme requires accredited providers to comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

- Providers must take steps to ensure that they are aware of, and comply with, all existing and new legal requirements.
- On initial application and annual renewal of accreditation, providers are required to confirm that they are complying with all applicable laws and regulations (*Declaration of legal and regulatory compliance* form).
- A *Fit and proper person test and declaration* is to be submitted by private sector providers on initial application and applications for re-inspection. A confirmation of continued compliance with this is included in the requirements for annual renewal.
- Inspectors will check a random sample of items during inspection, in relation to criterion D1; if they find evidence of a breach of statutory or other legal requirements, the provider will be required to submit evidence of compliance confirmed by the appropriate regulatory body.
- Any breach of the law or regulations will be viewed seriously by the Scheme and may result in the withdrawal or withholding of accreditation.
- Any sustained breach of the law or regulations which an accredited provider fails upon reasonable notice to remedy will result in accreditation being withdrawn.

Guidance notes

Please note: The following list is **not** exhaustive and is intended for guidance only. This is not a comprehensive statement or summary of relevant law but indicates the main areas of law relevant to the ELT sector and gives website addresses for the various regulatory bodies or sources of further information. More detail is given in areas which directly affect student welfare. We advise you to obtain legal advice about any issue which may have a legal dimension.

There may be some differences in statutory and other legal requirements in different countries within the United Kingdom. Providers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are advised to check the responsibilities and powers of the devolved administration in the relevant country; the following websites may be of help:

www.gov.uk
www.nidirect.gov.uk
www.gov.scot
www.gov.wales

Practical advice for business

Business support: www.gov.uk/business-support-helpline

Provides useful information on starting or running a business.

Licence finder: www.gov.uk/licence-finder

Allows you to make a customised search to identify regulations, licences and permits relevant to your business and location.

2.1 Legal and regulatory compliance

We cannot accept any liability for the accuracy or completeness of the list which follows.

Use of premises

The Planning Portal: www.planningportal.gov.uk

- You may be required to obtain planning consents of various kinds before you begin to operate or if you plan any change in the nature or size of your existing operation.
- The type and number of permissions will vary according to the location and type of your premises and the size and nature of your provision.

Health and safety

Health and Safety Executive: www.hse.gov.uk

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents:
www.rospa.co.uk

Fire Protection Association: www.thefpa.co.uk

Fire safety for accommodation: www.gov.uk/government/publications/do-you-have-paying-guests

- Employers must display the HSE notice 'Health and Safety Law' or provide each worker with a copy of the equivalent pocket card.
- Where appropriate, providers should be registered with the Health and Safety Inspectorate and the local Environmental Health Department.
- Generally employers have a duty to assess all types of risk in the workplace, and take reasonable steps to minimise risks of injury or harm to anyone using their premises. This includes:
 - identifying and removing fire hazards, ensuring fire alarms and equipment are fully operational, and that those using the premises are familiar with emergency procedures
 - stating health and safety policy and assigning clear roles for carrying out the policy
 - providing a safe, comfortable and healthy working environment, including lighting, toilets, washing facilities and drinking water, with an ergonomic workspace and eye tests for those using computers
 - ensuring food handlers are trained, that food storage and preparation areas are clean and free from pests/vermin, and that waste is hygienically disposed of
 - ensuring first aid needs are assessed and met, and that there is an accident record for any accident leading to absence from work of three or more days, any notifiable work-related disease or dangerous occurrence
 - ensuring that regulations on private transport (minibuses) for students are observed.
- Employers must hold suitable insurance to cover injuries to employees arising in the course of their employment, and public liability insurance to cover injury to others while on their premises.
- Providers of accommodation are responsible for keeping the property safe and in good repair; they must comply with the law on fire safety, carry out a risk assessment and arrange for regular gas safety checks.

Equal opportunity

- It is unlawful to discriminate against an actual or potential employee or service user because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

Child protection

British Council:

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

Information on criminal records checks:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service
www.mygov.scot/organisations/disclosure-scotland
www.dojni.gov.uk/accessni

- Organisations working with children must comply with the provisions of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, as well as the Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
- Employers must not knowingly employ in regulated activity, or use as a volunteer, a barred person; and must refer to the relevant safeguarding body any case where they dismiss or cease using a person in regulated activity because they think the person harmed or posed a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults. Persons barred from regulated activity must not work or seek to work in regulated activity from which they are barred.
- The local social or children's services must be informed about all private fostering situations, i.e. when a child or young person under 16 years old (or 18 if they have a disability) is looked after for 28 days or more by someone who is not a close relative, guardian or person with parental responsibility.

Employment

ACAS: www.acas.org.uk

Employing people – GOV.UK:

www.gov.uk/browse/employing-people

- Staff contracts must specify terms and conditions of employment, including pay, holiday and pension entitlements, sickness arrangements, hours of work, and disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- Most workers in the UK have a legal right to the National Minimum Wage.
- Proper arrangements must be made for deduction of income tax and National Insurance contributions.
- Staff are legally protected from dismissal or negative treatment if they have made a 'protected disclosure' (whistleblowing) by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. Employers must share their complaints procedure with all staff.

Data protection

Information Commissioner's Office: www.ico.org.uk

- Staff, student and host records should be maintained and divulged to third parties only within the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 (GDPR).
- Normally the consent of the data subject to expected forms of data disclosure (for example to inspectors) should be obtained at the time of data collection.

Supply of goods and services, and advertising

Advertising Standards Authority: www.asa.org.uk

- Consumer protection and trade description legislation governs the provision of goods or services, including provisions for the protection of consumers.
- Providers are required to deliver the service specified in the contract on time.
- Terms and conditions of the contract must be fair and reasonable and not force the buyer to give up rights, for instance in the case of cancellation.
- Where the contract is electronic (enrolment through website, for example) full and clear information must be provided to the buyer and the buyer is entitled to a 'cooling-off period' of 14 days with a right to free cancellation.

Copyright

- Providers must either hold a current licence from the **Copyright Licensing Agency** or ensure that no material protected by copyright is reproduced. www.cla.co.uk
- Providers must either hold a current licence from the **Newspaper Licensing Agency** or ensure that no material protected by copyright is reproduced. www.nlmediaaccess.com
- Providers must either hold a current licence from the **Educational Recording Agency** or ensure that no material protected by copyright is used. www.era.org.uk
- Providers may require a licence for use of films or other audiovisual works; the **Motion Picture Licensing Company** offers an umbrella licence. www.themplc.co.uk

Immigration/Home Office regulations

UK Visas and Immigration: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration

British Council site with information for international students: <https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/planning/visas>

- Providers must verify prior to enrolment that prospective students have the right to study in the UK.
- To enrol students from outside the EEA on courses lasting more than 11 months, providers must sponsor those students under Tier 4 of the points-based system. To do this, providers must obtain a sponsor licence and comply with sponsorship duties.
- Accredited providers can enrol visa students on a short-term study visa, up to six months for under 18s and up to 11 months for students aged 18 and over (English language only), and incidental study up to 30 days for those on a standard visitor visa.
- Employers must check that a job applicant is allowed to work in the UK before employing them.

Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-of-the-immigration-services-commissioner

- Individual student counselling on immigration matters, including applications for extension of leave to remain, must not be given unless the member of staff responsible is registered with the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner.

Independent school registration

www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-school-registration

- Settings in England which provide full-time education to five or more children of compulsory school age (5–16) must be registered with the Secretary of State for Education as an 'independent school' before operating.

Companies Act 2006

Companies House: www.companieshouse.gov.uk

- Certain details, such as VAT numbers and registered addresses, must be included on invoices and letterheads.

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015

The Education and Training Foundation:

www.preventforfeandtraining.org.uk

Training modules: www.preventforfeandtraining.org.uk/prevent-online-training-modules

- Education providers have responsibilities under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to prevent people of all ages being radicalised or drawn into terrorism (Prevent duty).

2.2 Inspection criteria

The inspection criteria are now published online in the *Criteria, requirements and guidance* document; please ensure you have downloaded the latest version.

Notes:

Where providers teach other subjects in addition to ELT, the inspection criteria relate to the management, staff, facilities and resources relevant to the experience of any ELT students.

Evidence will be sought from inspection application forms, interviews with staff and students, on-site and off-site checks, classroom observation, and the documentation listed in the column beside the criteria as appropriate.

Please note that where 'any' is used, this means if available/applicable to the provider being inspected.

2.3 Inspection process

2.3 Inspection process

Timing of an inspection

The date and timing of an inspection will be arranged between the Accreditation Unit and the provider, with the aim of ensuring that a representative range and volume of provision is seen.

All accredited providers undergo a full inspection every four years in order to retain accreditation. In the absence of an agreement the Accreditation Unit may impose a date, even if the provider is unable to offer a representative range and volume of provision at the time chosen.

In addition, providers may be subject to spot checks, supplementary inspections, or interim visits. Note that a spot check is routinely carried out within 18 months of first granting accreditation. Details of these shorter inspections are given in [2.5 Follow-up action](#).

Allocation of inspectors

The nomination of inspectors is the responsibility of the Unit, but the provider has the right to object to up to two nominated inspectors. An outline CV for each inspector is available from the Accreditation Unit on request.

The Accreditation Unit will seek to ensure that at least one of the appointed inspectors has experience of working in the relevant sector: state or private.

No nominated inspector will have any financial or working connection, past, present or prospective, with the provider to be inspected.

Where a nominated inspector is directly connected with another provider in the field of ELT, the provider under inspection will have the right to object to such a nomination in addition to the objections allowed above.

Preparing for inspection

Once an inspection has been set up, the provider will receive written confirmation of the inspection details (date and inspectors' names and contact details) from the Accreditation Unit, along with a reminder of the action to be taken next. Providers are required to send the upload their stage 2 inspection preparation documentation to the AUK Portal at least 10 working days before the start of the inspection. Stage 3 documentation must be ready for inspectors to examine from the beginning of the inspection visit.

Cancellation of inspections

If the inspection is cancelled, either by the provider or the Accreditation Unit (please see below), within 28 working days of the first day of the inspection a cancellation charge is payable (see the *Fees sheet*).

The Accreditation Unit will cancel an inspection if, in the view of Manager, Accreditation UK, the provider to be inspected has not submitted sufficient documentation within ten working days of the agreed inspection date for the inspection to take place. Documentation required for an inspection is set out in the Inspection documentation list at the end of the *Criteria, requirements and guidance* document. In this case, the cancellation fee will be payable by the provider to be inspected.

The cancellation charge will not be payable by the provider if the inspection is cancelled by the Accreditation Unit for reasons other than the non-submission of documentation.

The inspection

The inspection is normally carried out by two inspectors – the reporting inspector and the co-inspector. An inspection for a small provider will last one day, usually with the previous evening being used to visit accommodation. With larger providers, there may be three inspectors working over a few days.

The role of the inspectors is to assess the extent to which the provision meets the inspection criteria.

Inspectors will meet with senior staff at least two thirds of the way through the inspection (more frequently on long inspections) to check the accuracy of their findings so far; this is an opportunity for the provider to correct any misperceptions by providing further information and supporting evidence. There will be a short round-up meeting at the end of the inspection, at which time the inspectors will explain what happens next. Inspectors are not able to indicate whether or not accreditation will be awarded or continued, as this recommendation is made by the ASAC.

Sites to be seen

All sites where eligible ELT provision takes place will normally be visited on a full inspection. If there is any dispute between the Accreditation Unit and the provider as to whether more than one accreditation is required, then the matter will be referred to the ASAC for a decision. In this case, the extent of the provision as advertised in the provider's promotional materials will be taken into account.

Accommodation

Where accommodation is offered, inspectors will visit a sample of accommodation, review documentation and may also conduct telephone interviews with homestay hosts or other accommodation providers. Accommodation companies may apply to be registered with the Scheme through separate inspection. When an English language provider using a company registered by the Scheme is inspected, the inspectors will be notified that a registered company is in use and will receive a copy of the latest report. Where there is no accommodation provision other than that offered by a registered accommodation company inspection will not need to include a visit to the company or, in most cases, any accommodation. Inspectors will utilise the relevant information from the registration report and interview relevant people at the school/college to assess the standard of provision. If necessary, inspectors will be able to contact the company for further information and reserve the right to visit accommodation. Where there is additional accommodation provision, this will be inspected in the normal way and the inspection report will reflect both types of provision. Please see the accommodation providers' registration pack for more information.

Providers operating in more than one location

Year-round providers

See [1.2 Different types of provider and specific eligibility](#) for the definition of 'year-round'.

Providers that operate year-round in more than one location and where each location has a distinct identity, will normally submit each location for separate inspection and accreditation.

Seasonal multicentres

See [1.2 Different types of provider and specific eligibility](#) for the definition of 'seasonal multicentre'.

The following sample of centres will normally be visited.

Where the total number of centres is 16 or less:

- the headquarters
- one in four of centres operating in the year of inspection, which will include one centre without prior notice ('wild card' inspection) with a minimum of two centres normally being inspected
- further 'wild card' inspections where the inspectors and the Accreditation Unit consider that the sample visited does not enable them to gain a full picture of the standard of the provision.

Where the total number of centres is more than 16:

- the headquarters (extended inspection)
- two centres, with prior notice of inspection
- three centres without prior notice ('wild card' inspections)
- further 'wild card' inspections where the inspectors and the Accreditation Unit consider that the sample visited does not enable them to gain a full picture of the standard of the provision.

Year-round and seasonal providers

A year-round provider which, in addition, offers seasonal provision must seek separate accreditation for the seasonal provision if it takes place in two or more locations in addition to the year-round provision.

Groups with multiple accreditations

Groups of private sector ELT providers with more than three year-round schools may apply for a head office inspection if policies and procedures are developed centrally by senior management teams and then implemented in uniform ways in their schools. The purpose of such an inspection is to inspect the centralised functions, policies and procedures and produce a head office inspection report which will inform the inspection team(s) conducting subsequent inspections of the individual schools. Head office reports will not be published and should not be used in publicity by the group or individual schools.

International study centres

International study centres are eligible for accreditation; see the *Criteria, requirements and guidance* document for guidance on specific inspection requirements.

The inspectors will be allocated additional time to observe the teaching of subjects other than English, for discussion with relevant staff and survey of resources in order to establish whether the criteria are met in the context of an international study centre.

In order to be accredited as an international study centre, the inspection report must indicate that the standards of the Scheme are met in each of the five sections and that the ISC criteria are met.

Home tuition providers

Providers offering English language teaching in the teacher's home will be inspected on the basis of the main inspection criteria.

Inspection of eligible provision

The provider must inform the Accreditation Unit of all eligible English tuition offered, including the homes and premises used by all teachers employed by or having a part in the provision. The Accreditation Scheme reserves the right to include these within the scope of the provider's inspection.

Providers offering home tuition only

Inspection of home tuition providers will include the following:

- inspection of the headquarters (site of general and academic management)
- inspection of a representative sample of the homes and teaching used.

Where the provider being inspected is not currently accredited, the inspection will be conducted in two stages.

■ Inspection of headquarters (stage 1)

In addition to the assessment of the criteria listed in other sections of the handbook, inspection of headquarters of a home tuition provider will include assessment of:

- all student feedback (including telephone logs) and reports on action taken
- the methods and rigour of teacher observation/assessment and guidance
- evidence of evaluation of materials and methods used
- evidence of the development of one-to-one teaching materials and methods appropriate to the students' needs.

■ Inspection of teachers' homes and teaching (stage 2)

In the case of samples marked*, the inspectors may select suitable alternatives where precise criteria do not apply.

The inspectors will expect to see the following cross sample of teachers' homes:

- at least one home which has been used for at least ten student weeks* in the year preceding inspection **and**
- at least one home which has been used for fewer than three student weeks* in the year preceding inspection **and**
- at least one established home which has been used for more than one year* **and**
- at least one recently recruited home which has been used only within the six months* preceding inspection **and**
- at least one further home.

All homes inspected must be those of teachers on the current register. Telephone interviews may also be conducted with a number of additional teachers.

2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations

All homes inspected will be chosen by the inspectors after examining the provider's records of student feedback and evaluation.

The following cross-sample of teaching will be inspected:

- at least one teacher who has taught at least ten student weeks* in the year preceding inspection **and**
- at least one teacher who has taught fewer than three student weeks* in the year preceding inspection **and**
- at least one teacher who has worked for the provider for more than two years* **and**
- at least one teacher who has worked for the provider for less than six months* prior to the date of the inspection **and**
- at least one teacher who holds a diploma in ELT/TESOL **and**
- at least one teacher who holds a certificate in ELT/TESOL only **and**
- at least one other teacher.

All teaching inspected will be chosen by the inspectors after examining the provider's records of student feedback and evaluation.

General

Teaching and premises may be inspected in the same homes.

The size of the sample seen by the inspectors will be related to the size of the home tuition provision as a whole. The number of teachers sampled will be in proportion to the number of student weeks over the provider's peak month (normally one teacher to every 30 student weeks), and will normally be at least five.

Please note: inspection will not necessarily take place during the peak period.

Where the home tuition provider covers a number of geographical areas, the inspection of teachers and their homes will be in at least two of these areas.

Telephone interviews (particularly in remote areas) will also be included in the inspection process.

Providers offering home tuition in addition to their on-site provision

These providers will be inspected on the standard basis in relation to their on-site provision and with reference to the procedures above and the additional criteria for home tuition in relation to their home tuition provision.

In-company provision

Providers seeking accreditation for English language teaching delivered in company will be inspected on the basis of the main inspection criteria. Please see the *Criteria, requirements and guidance* document for additional guidance. The inspectors will be allocated additional time to observe a sample of in-company teaching, for discussion with relevant staff and survey of resources in order to establish whether the additional criteria are met.

After the inspection

After their visit, the inspectors will write an inspection report within five weeks of the inspection and submit it for consideration at the next meeting of the ASAC. The ASAC meets six times a year, dates for forthcoming meetings are available on www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/how-we-regulate

The ASAC will then make a recommendation concerning accreditation; this will be communicated to the provider in writing within five days of the ASAC meeting. The inspection report will be sent to the provider within six weeks of the meeting, if there are no outstanding invoices relating to the inspection. Reports on accredited providers, including those where accreditation is placed under review, will be published on the website.

Please see [2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations](#) and [2.5 Follow-up action](#) for details of the possible results.

Please see [2.6 Appeals and complaints procedures](#) for information on the procedures for challenging the results or findings of an inspection.

Inspection evaluation

An inspection evaluation questionnaire will be emailed to the provider after the inspection. Please help us to improve the working of the Accreditation Scheme by completing this to give us your feedback on the inspection.

Specific feedback on an inspection is only passed on to the inspectors concerned after the inspection report has been submitted to the Accreditation Unit.

Feedback is also copied to the ASAC and, where relevant, any response from the inspectors or ASAC will be passed on to the provider.

Feedback received about inspectors will be taken into account when planning inspector training and reviewing appointments to the panel of inspectors.

Feedback on the inspection process also contributes to the future development of the Scheme.

2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations

Accreditation

In order for a provider to receive or retain accreditation its inspection report must indicate that the standards of the Scheme are met in each of the five sections (four if under 18s are never accepted). The standard for each section is stated on page 5. Newly accredited providers will be spot-checked in their first 18 months of accreditation (see [2.5 Follow-up action](#)).

2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations

It is expected that all criteria will be met by accredited providers. However, it is acknowledged that the Scheme accredits a wide range of providers offering a variety of services to students and not all criteria may be relevant in all cases. In the case when one or more criteria are not met, the section summary must give a clear indication that failure to meet the criteria in question has no significant negative effect on the experience of students, and the overall standards of the Scheme are met. When this is not demonstrated to the satisfaction of the ASAC, accreditation will be withdrawn or withheld.

In order for the **Teaching and learning** section of the report to be considered satisfactory, the report on teaching must indicate that the criteria in this section (T23–30) were seen to be met in the lessons observed, whatever methodology is used.

For seasonal multicentres, all centres inspected must meet all the standards set out above in order for the provider to receive accreditation. See **1.2 Different types of provider and specific eligibility** for a definition of 'seasonal multicentre'.

Providers seeking accreditation as an international study centre must also meet the ISC criteria (see **3.1 Claiming accreditation**).

Where, on receipt of an inspection report, the ASAC has reservations about granting accreditation for a full four years, a period between inspections of less than four years may be recommended.

Where the four/five section standards are met but the inspection report identifies weaknesses, the ASAC may recommend a spot check or other follow-up action (see **2.5 Follow-up action**).

The ASAC may also bring forward the date of any inspection where there is evidence of cause for concern about the provision offered or changes taking place.

Re-inspection of an accredited provider

Where the provision at re-inspection does not meet the standards, i.e. at least one section summary of the inspection report states that the required minimum standards are not met, the ASAC will recommend withdrawal of accreditation. It is normally recommended that providers that have had accreditation withdrawn wait at least 12 months before seeking to be re-inspected.

In the case of an accredited provider with limited and clearly identified problems which the ASAC considers it likely that the provider will be able to overcome within a defined period of time, the ASAC may recommend placing accreditation under review pending the rectification of areas of weakness identified in the report.

Placing accreditation under review

This outcome can only be recommended in the case of re-inspection of an already accredited provider.

Accreditation will continue while under review, which will normally be for a period of not less than three months and not more than one year from the date of inspection. The length will be determined by the ASAC at the time of the decision and made clear to the provider. The provider will remain on the list of accredited providers and the inspection report, indicating the standard not met, the weaknesses to be addressed and the period of review, will be published on the accreditation website.

At the discretion of the ASAC, the period of review will be terminated by either a full re-inspection or a spot check, at the provider's expense, or by the submission of satisfactory evidence of the rectification of weaknesses. The required procedure will be made clear at the time of the decision.

Where the period of review is to be terminated by submission of evidence of rectification of weaknesses, failure to provide satisfactory evidence will be grounds for withdrawal of accreditation.

Where the period of review is to be ended by a full inspection, failure to submit the application for inspection in reasonable time for the inspection to take place within the period set will be grounds for withdrawal of accreditation.

Where the period of review is to be terminated by a spot check and where the spot check report indicates that the weaknesses which led to the review have not been rectified, then the ASAC will normally recommend withdrawal of accreditation.

Where the period of review is to be terminated by a spot check and where the spot check indicates serious weaknesses other than those indicated in the report which led to placing accreditation under review, the ASAC may recommend that a full inspection take place. If, having considered the report on the full inspection, the ASAC continues to have serious reservations about the provision, such that they would normally have recommended placing accreditation under review, then the ASAC will recommend withdrawal of accreditation.

Inspection of a provider not currently accredited

Where the provision does not meet the standards, i.e. at least one section summary states that the required minimum standards are not met, the ASAC will recommend withholding of accreditation. It is normally recommended that providers that have failed to gain accreditation wait at least 12 months before seeking to be re-inspected.

Where accreditation is withheld because of limited and clearly identified problems which the ASAC considers it likely that the provider will be able to overcome within a defined period of time, the ASAC may offer the provider an earlier opportunity to demonstrate that the weaknesses have been rectified through a full re-inspection or a supplementary inspection taking place within 12 months of the original inspection.

During the period between these inspections the provider remains unaccredited and cannot make any claims about the outcome or possible outcome of the inspection process.

The ASAC will specify an appropriate time period for the inspection, which will be not less than three months and not more than 12 months from the date of the original inspection. The type of re-inspection and the time period in which it may take place will be made clear to the provider.

When a provider is invited to apply for a full re-inspection within a period of less than 12 months, the provider must submit the normal application documentation by the appropriate deadline for the period they wish re-inspection to take place (see **1.4 Applying for inspection**).

2.5 Follow-up action

When a provider is invited to undergo a supplementary inspection to demonstrate that the weaknesses identified in their report have been rectified, the provider must notify the Accreditation Unit of their readiness to be re-inspected within the time period set. Failure to do so will forfeit the opportunity and a full re-inspection will be required if the provider wishes to continue to seek accreditation.

If, at the time of re-inspection, the inspection report indicates that the weaknesses which led to accreditation being withheld have not been rectified, then the ASAC will normally recommend withholding of accreditation with no further opportunity for early re-inspection.

If at the time of re-inspection, the inspection report indicates serious weaknesses other than those indicated in the report which led to accreditation being withheld, the ASAC will normally recommend withholding of accreditation with no further opportunity for early re-inspection.

Appeals and complaints

Complaints about inspection reports or results are considered by the ASAC, see [2.6 Appeals and complaints procedures](#) for further information.

A provider whose application for accreditation or continued accreditation is rejected has the right to appeal. The appeals procedure to be followed is set out in [2.6 Appeals and complaints procedures](#).

2.5 Follow-up action

Following inspection

Following an inspection the ASAC may recommend:

- accreditation with a spot check in the first 18 months of accreditation (new applicant)
- continued accreditation with no specific follow-up action required
- continued accreditation with action to be taken, for example a report submitted to a future meeting outlining action taken to address certain weaknesses identified in the report
- continued accreditation with a spot check focusing on specific areas where improvement is required
- accreditation be placed under review, the period of review to be ended by the submission of evidence, a spot check or a full re-inspection
- withdrawal or withholding of accreditation.

Where an inspection has been unable to cover all necessary areas, the ASAC may recommend that a supplementary inspection takes place. All providers are required to submit, with their annual declaration, an action plan showing progress on any points to be addressed from the inspection report in the year following inspection.

Spot checks

A spot check is an inspection of all or part of the provision carried out without prior arrangement of date. Spot checks are normally carried out by one or two inspectors and will usually last half a day, or sometimes a full day.

A spot check is routinely carried out within 18 months of first granting of accreditation. In addition, a spot check may be required at any time during the accreditation period at the discretion of Manager, Accreditation UK, or on direction of the ASAC or EB. For example, a spot check may follow a complaint in writing about the provider. A spot check may also be carried out if there is any reason to believe that there have been significant changes to the provision, or if there is reason to believe that there may be grounds for accreditation to be withdrawn.

Changes likely to trigger a spot check include:

- change of owner, principal or academic manager or persons carrying out these functions or any other person responsible for the operating policy of the provision
- removal to new premises and centres
- use of additional premises and/or centres
- major changes or damage to premises or resources
- introduction of any eligible activity not seen at the previous inspection.

The ASAC will take into account the timing of the next scheduled full inspection when deciding whether a spot check is necessary.

Spot checks will normally be carried out at the provider's own expense.

The spot check is not a full inspection and inspectors will not look at all areas covered by the criteria but will concentrate on maintenance of standards and on any progress in specific areas they have been asked to focus on. They will take into consideration the length of time since the previous inspection and any specific requirements for improvement given by the ASAC.

The inspectors will contact the provider to ask for any relevant information about course dates or programmes. They will not indicate exactly when the spot check will take place but they will try not to arrive on a day that is inconvenient, such as an intake day or an excursion day. They may require more information such as staff lists but they will not ask for the level of documentation required in a full inspection. Some providers have found it useful for both them and the spot check inspector to look at the 'Points to be addressed' from the inspection report and to comment on progress.

On arrival, the inspectors will ask to see the most senior person and will present identification. They will outline what they want to do and who they would like to meet. They will discuss with the provider how their proposals will fit into the day's schedule.

The inspectors will give a brief round-up at the end of their visit but they will not discuss their final recommendation. The spot check report will be considered at the next ASAC meeting.

Supplementary inspections

Supplementary inspections may be carried out at the discretion of Manager, Accreditation UK, or the ASAC if there is reason to believe that an inspection has been unable to cover all necessary areas and further information about the provision is required.

Supplementary inspections will normally be carried out by one or two inspectors (often the inspectors who conducted the full inspection), on a pre-arranged date, and at the provider's own expense. The findings of the supplementary inspection will be presented to the ASAC along with the findings of the full inspection.

Outcomes

Following a spot check or supplementary inspection, inspectors will provide a report to the ASAC, who will recommend any ensuing action. The report and recommendations will be sent to the provider after the ASAC has considered them.

On receipt of a spot check or supplementary inspection report the ASAC may recommend that:

- no further action be taken
- Secretary to the ASAC writes to the provider advising on improvements
- a (further) spot check be conducted
- accreditation be placed under review
- the full re-inspection of the provision, at the provider's expense, be brought forward.

In exceptional circumstances, a recommendation may be taken from the ASAC to the EB for immediate withdrawal of accreditation on the basis of evidence in the report and associated documents only. In this case, the final decision on whether accreditation should be withdrawn will be taken by the EB. In the case where no EB meeting is to be held within two weeks of the ASAC meeting, then the decision may be made on behalf of the EB by its Chair.

2.6 Appeals and complaints procedures

Accredited providers have an opportunity to give annual feedback on the Scheme through the customer satisfaction survey conducted each year.

Complaints about inspectors or the conduct of the inspection

An inspection evaluation questionnaire will be emailed to the provider after the inspection. Please use this to submit any comments (positive or negative) that you may have about the inspectors or the conduct of the inspection.

The Accreditation Unit may contact the provider to investigate any negative feedback. All feedback will be copied to the ASAC and the inspectors. Please note that feedback on an inspection is passed on to the inspectors concerned only after the inspection report has been submitted to the Accreditation Unit. Where relevant, any response from the inspectors or ASAC will be passed to the provider.

Complaints about inspection reports or results

Complaints about factual inaccuracies in inspection reports and feedback concerning the inspection results will be considered by an administrative review panel and, if necessary, the ASAC and should be addressed to Manager, Accreditation UK within five working days of receipt of the report.

Requests to update a summary statement should be addressed to Manager, Accreditation UK for consideration by the ASAC (see [3.1 Claiming accreditation](#)).

Appeals

A provider that is refused accreditation or has accreditation withdrawn has the right to appeal against the decision. The appeals procedure does not apply to decisions such as accreditation being placed under review. Complaints about other inspection results or the report will be considered by the ASAC (see above).

The appeals process is time-consuming and expensive. Providers should consider the findings of the inspection report very carefully before beginning the process.

A provider wishing to appeal must have sent the Manager, Accreditation UK written notice of this intention in writing within five working days of receiving the report that confirms refusal of accreditation. If the report is withheld because of non-payment, the provider will lose the right to appeal.

An accredited provider submitting an appeal will continue to be accredited, and an unaccredited provider will continue to be unaccredited, until after the hearing and determination of its appeal. In the case of an accredited provider where accreditation has been withdrawn or placed under review, any publication of the inspection report will be delayed until after the hearing and determination of the appeal but any previous inspection report will be withdrawn (the accreditation website will indicate that the report has been disputed).

The role of the Appeal Committee is to assess all information relevant to the ASAC recommendation to withdraw or withhold accreditation or place accreditation under review and to decide whether to uphold or reject the appeal. It is not the role of the Appeal Committee to assess the validity of complaints made against the Scheme in general.

The Appeal Committee will focus on the appellant's provision at the time of the relevant inspection(s). Changes made to the appellant's provision since inspection will not be considered.

The responsibility lies with the appellant to demonstrate that the recommendation made by the ASAC, based on evidence presented in the inspection report(s), is unsound.

The appeals procedure is described in more detail on the website.

Other complaints about the Accreditation Scheme

These will be considered by the EB. They should be made in writing addressed to Manager, Accreditation UK or the Chair of the EB.

Complainants will be informed about the decision of the EB in response to their complaint by the Chair of the EB within ten working days of the EB meeting.

2.7 Liability

The British Council will not be liable to providers in respect of any indirect or consequential losses, including without limitation loss of profit or commercial opportunities, arising out of or in connection with the publication of the inspection reports. Nothing in this disclaimer shall limit any of the British Council's liabilities that may not be excluded under applicable law.

3 Accreditation

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3.1 Claiming accreditation

Please note the following conditions relating to the claiming of accredited status

- Accreditation covers all eligible provision, regardless of whether or not it has been individually inspected, provided that it has been declared.
- Providers which also offer non-eligible courses (please see [1.1 Eligibility](#)) must take all possible steps to ensure that there is no confusion in promotional materials between the accreditation status of these courses and that of accredited provision.
- The inclusion of inaccurate or misleading statements concerning accreditation in promotional materials will be brought to the attention of the ASAC and may lead to accreditation being withdrawn.
- A provider that ceases to be accredited must immediately cease to advertise itself as accredited and should ensure that all uses of the accreditation marque or BC logo, and references to accreditation are removed from all online and published materials.
- A provider that has applied for, but has not yet been granted, accreditation may not use a phrase such as 'applied for British Council accreditation' in promotional or other materials.

Please note the following conditions relating to the use of the Accreditation Scheme marque

- A provider that has been granted accreditation should use the 'accredited by the British Council' marque in promotional materials. This marque comprises the British Council logo with the words 'accredited by the British Council for the teaching of English in the UK.'. Please see right for examples of correct uses of the marque to claim accreditation.
- The positioning, size and font type of the marque must be used in accordance with British Council design standards. Details on how the Accreditation Scheme marque should be used and the marque itself are available from the Accreditation Unit. Further advice about the use of the marque is available from the Accreditation Unit accreditation.unit@britishcouncil.org

- The marque may only be used on a provider's publicity relating to accredited provision showing the same name as on the certificate of accreditation.
- The marque should be restricted to information relating to accredited provision. If the marque is used on a letterhead, which may be used in connection with non-eligible provision, or appears on the front of a brochure containing both eligible and ineligible provision. Alternatively, the provider may choose to limit the use of the marque in brochures to pages describing eligible provision. Accreditation does not give providers the right to use the British Council logo separate from the accreditation marque.

Accredited by the



for the teaching
of English in the UK

Providers gaining specialist accreditation

- In the case of an international study centre which has met the criteria in relation to subject teaching, the marque may be used with the phrase 'as an international study centre'. If a study centre is accredited but has not met the additional requirements, the marque can only be used with the phrase 'for the teaching of English in the UK'.

Accredited by the



as an international
study centre

- In the case of a home tuition provider, whether managed by a representative body or by a proprietor or proprietor organisation, the 'accredited by the British Council' marque may be used in promotional materials by the home tuition body or organisation only. Individual teachers or groups of teachers who are members of the organisation may not use the marque on their own promotional materials. Accredited home tuition organisations may use the marque with the phrase 'as a home tuition provider'.

Accredited by the



as a home
tuition provider

Publication of inspection reports

All inspections result in an inspection report. These are written for the ASAC to make a recommendation on accreditation; they also help the provider continue to improve. From 1 January 2013, inspection reports on accredited providers will be published on the website. Reports on providers failing to gain accreditation will not be published and they are not listed on the website. Reports on spot checks and supplementary inspections will be included on the website after the full inspection report but reports on interim visits which are not part of the regular inspection schedule will not be published.

Where the report is to be published, the provider will have five working days from receipt of the report to comment on any factual inaccuracies before the report is published (see [2.6 Appeals and complaints procedures](#)). The provider will receive a copy of the report, in pdf format, when it is published and may include this on their website. The following conditions will apply:

- The summary statement (formerly publishable statement) may be used for promotional purposes separate from the full report.
- Selective quoting from or reference to other parts of the inspection report is not permitted.

- Where changes render the report out of date, the provider may request a supplementary inspection or early re-inspection resulting in a revised or new inspection report. All costs for the inspection must be met by the provider.

3.2 Between inspections

Annual declaration

Accredited providers must complete, by 31 January each year, an *Annual declaration* via the AUK portal. The Accreditation Unit will email instructions each year. In the year following an inspection, an action plan showing progress on any points to be addressed from the inspection report must also be submitted.

Notification of change

In addition, the Accreditation Unit must be notified (by completion of a Notification of change form on the AUK portal) in advance or within five working days of any significant change in the scope or character of the provision including any of the following:

- unscheduled closure
- change of business or centre name
- issue of a notice of closure (independent school)
- change of owner, principal or academic manager or persons carrying out these functions or any other person responsible for the operating policy
- removal to new premises and centres
- use of additional premises and/or centres
- major changes or damage to premises or resources
- vacation of premises previously occupied
- introduction of any eligible provision not seen at the previous inspection; for information about eligible provision, see [1.1 Eligibility](#).

The Accreditation Unit must also be notified immediately of any situation which may lead to accreditation being withdrawn under the provisions set out in [3.4 Withdrawal, withholding or suspension of accreditation](#).

Following any such notification, the Accreditation Unit may arrange either a spot check or full re-inspection of the whole provision, or may refer the matter to the EB for a recommendation on withdrawal of accreditation.

Failure to submit an *Annual declaration* via the AUK portal or notification to the Accreditation Unit of changes will lead to withdrawal of accreditation or a spot check at the provider's expense.

See [2.5 Follow-up action](#) for information about spot checks.

Interim visits

In order to ensure that standards are maintained between inspections, each year a number of accredited providers chosen at random will receive unannounced interim visits.

Interim visits are short inspections (like a spot check) conducted without prior notice. Interim visits are carried out at the Scheme's expense, by one or two inspectors.

Following an interim visit, inspectors will provide a report to the ASAC, who will recommend any ensuing action. The report and recommendations will be sent to the provider after the ASAC meeting.

3.3 Extension of accreditation

On receipt of an interim visit report the ASAC may recommend that:

- no further action be taken
- Manager, Accreditation UK, write to the provider advising on improvements
- a spot check be conducted
- accreditation be placed under review
- the full re-inspection of the provision, at the provider's expense, be brought forward.

In exceptional circumstances, a recommendation may be taken from the ASAC to the EB for immediate withdrawal of accreditation on the basis of evidence in the report and associated documents only. In this case, the final decision on whether accreditation should be withdrawn will be taken by the EB. In the case where no EB meeting is to be held within two weeks of the ASAC meeting, then the decision may be made on behalf of the EB by its Chair.

3.3 Extension of accreditation

Accredited year-round providers that extend their operations to include a multicentre provision* or any additional year-round provision*, or accredited seasonal* multicentre providers which extend their operations to include a year-round provision, must seek separate accreditation for the 'extension' provision if they wish to claim accreditation for it.

*See [1.2 Different types of provider and specific eligibility](#)

For extension to be granted, the accredited provider must demonstrate clearly:

- its legal relationship with the new provision
- (with allowance for local imperatives), that its systems, structures and ethos will be reflected in the new provision
- the process by which continuing support for the new provision will be available, and the resources set aside for this, until such time as the new provision becomes accredited in its own right.

The procedure for doing this is as follows:

- The accredited provider must notify the Accreditation Unit of the existence of the extension provision, and that they wish to claim accreditation for it. The Accreditation Unit must receive written details of what premises will be used and expected student numbers at least two months before the provision begins.
- Accreditation may be claimed for the extension only after written agreement to this effect has been received from the Accreditation Unit. In the case where the last inspection report on the main provision revealed one or more areas of weakness which needed to be addressed, the ASAC may ask the provider for evidence that these have been resolved before agreement is granted or refused.
- If it is agreed that the extension provision may claim accreditation, it will undergo a spot check, at the provider's expense, at as early a date as possible.
- If the spot check is considered to be unsatisfactory, then the extension provider must immediately cease to claim accreditation, and all normal rules for a new applicant seeking accreditation will apply.

- If the spot check is considered by the ASAC to be satisfactory, the provider may claim accreditation for the extension provision for a maximum of 12 months from the date of the spot check. A pro-rata annual fee will be levied for the duration of the period of extension at fee band A* (from 1 January 2026)
- Within 12 months of the date of the satisfactory spot check, there must be a full inspection of the extension provision. This inspection will take place under the rules for a first inspection (i.e. inspection of provider not currently accredited).
- If the inspection report is satisfactory (according to the guidelines set out in [2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations](#)), then the extension provision will gain accreditation, separate from the main provision. All normal provisions and fees for accredited providers will apply.
- If the inspection report is unsatisfactory and accreditation is withheld, then all normal rules for providers from which accreditation has been withheld will apply (See [2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations](#)).

3.4 Withdrawal, withholding or suspension of accreditation

Following inspection

Accreditation will be withdrawn or withheld on the advice of the ASAC if the provider fails to meet the standards required by the Scheme (see [2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations](#)). Inspection reports may be escalated to the Board, bypassing ASAC, if serious issues are identified and waiting for the committee to meet would delay a decision in the interests of the Scheme.

Following a period when accreditation is under review

Accreditation may be withdrawn following a period when accreditation is under review in the circumstances described in [2.4 Results of inspection: ASAC recommendations](#).

Following a complaint

Accreditation may be withdrawn following a complaint under the procedures set out in [3.5 Complaints against accredited providers](#).

Failure to comply with the regulations of the Scheme

In addition to any other reasons stated in the handbook, accreditation may be withdrawn on the following grounds:

- failure to undergo re-inspection when due.
- failure to declare all eligible provision or the making of any false statements on the inspection application forms, *Fit and proper person test and declaration* form or *Annual declaration* form.
- failure to inform the British Council in advance or within five working days of any significant changes in the provision (as specified in [3.2 Between inspections](#)).
- changes taking place within the provision which lead to the provider no longer being eligible for accreditation.

3.5 Complaints against accredited providers

- failure to take steps to ensure that users cannot infer that non-accredited provision has received accreditation and cannot confuse accredited provision with non-accredited provision
- non-payment of accreditation, inspection or spot check fees.

Other grounds for withdrawal

- Conviction of the owner(s), a company director or the head of the institution of a criminal offence relevant to the good management of the provision, which includes offences involving dishonesty, sexual offences, health and safety and immigration.
- Failure of any person (owner/proprietor, director/chief executive officer, head of school/principal) with effective or day-to-day control of the organisation in the UK to demonstrate that they are a 'fit and proper person' as defined by the Scheme.
- Sustained breach of the law or statutory requirements which the provider fails upon reasonable notice to remedy.
- Any action or lack of action on the part of the provider which in the opinion of the Accreditation UK Executive Board poses a serious risk to the safety of individuals or the reputation of the Scheme or its partners.
- If the accredited provision is owned by an individual or individuals then, in the event of any such individual becoming bankrupt or making a composition or arrangements with his or her creditors.
- If an accredited provision is owned by a company or companies then, in the event of the company having a proposal for a voluntary arrangement for a composition of debts, or scheme or arrangement approved in accordance with the Insolvency Act (1986), or having an application made under the Insolvency Act (1986) to the court for the appointment of an administrator, or having a winding-up order made, or (except for the purposes of amalgamation or reconstruction) a resolution for voluntary winding-up passed, or a provisional liquidator, receiver or manager of the business or undertaking duly appointed, or having an administrative receiver, as defined in the Insolvency Act (1986), appointed, or possession taken, by or on behalf of the holders of any debentures secured by a floating charge, of any property comprised in or subject to a floating charge.

Suspension of accreditation

Accreditation may be suspended for a period of time prior to a decision to withdraw or continue accreditation.

Accreditation may be suspended by the Board for a limited period of time, pending required action or receipt of additional information on a matter which may lead to the withdrawal of accreditation. Such circumstances may include but are not limited to the following:

- investigation of an incident or allegation which poses a serious risk to the reputation of the Scheme or its partners
- unresolved criminal, regulatory or other legal proceedings against the provider, its directors or employees
- the issue of a notice of closure against an independent school, whether or not the provider intends to appeal.

The reason and timeframe for the suspension will be made clear at the time of the decision and the Board will specify the action to be taken or information required prior to making a decision to withdraw or continue accreditation.

During the period of suspension, the provider will be:

- removed from the list of accredited providers on the British Council website
- required to remove the accreditation scheme marque from current website and electronic marketing and any new printed marketing materials.

Where relevant, English UK will be informed of the decision to suspend accreditation and this may affect membership benefits.

Closure or voluntary withdrawal from accreditation:

Accredited providers closing or wishing to withdraw from accreditation must inform the Accreditation Unit in writing of their intentions. The Accreditation Unit will inform the ASAC; remove the provider's name from the lists of accredited providers; and inform British Council offices, English UK and other relevant parties.

Members of English UK should inform both the Accreditation Unit and English UK of any intention to withdraw from accreditation.

3.5 Complaints against accredited providers

It is a requirement of the Scheme that all accredited providers must have in place an explicit procedure to deal with complaints made by students or parents/agents. For members of English UK, this will normally include a reference to this organisation.

English UK members

If English UK receives a complaint from a student or student's representative against one of its members:

- it will investigate the complaint, in accordance with its established procedures, with a view to resolving it to the satisfaction of the complainant and the member
- if an agreement cannot be reached, English UK may refer the matter to their Ombudsman
- English UK will submit to the EB an annual return showing the number and nature of complaints received and resolved, and the organisations concerned.

If the Accreditation Unit receives a complaint against an accredited provider which is a member of English UK:

- the complaint will be recorded and referred in the first place to English UK for investigation, as above.

3.6 Student Emergency Support Fund (SES)

Accredited providers not in English UK membership

If the Accreditation Unit receives a complaint from a student or student's representative against an accredited provider which is not a member of English UK:

- the complaint will be recorded and referred in the first place to the Principal/Head of ELT concerned.
- If the complaint includes a safeguarding element, it will be shared with the British Council safeguarding team for review and applies to ALL accredited members including members of English UK.
- the Principal/Head of ELT will report to Manager, Accreditation UK within 30 calendar days what action is proposed.
- within a further 30 calendar days the Principal/Head of ELT will report to Manager, Accreditation UK what action has been taken.
- if, in the opinion of Manager, Accreditation UK, the matter has not been satisfactorily settled, he or she will consult the Accreditation UK Executive Board for further action.

Where a complaint is passed to the Accreditation UK executive board for further action, the board will investigate the complaint and recommend measures to settle it. Recommendations by the board may include the following:

- that the complaint be dismissed
- that the complainant be reimbursed all or part of his or her course fees.
- that the complaint be included in the briefing papers for the inspectors at the next inspection.
- that Manager Accreditation UK authorises a spot check inspection specifically to investigate the issues raised by the complaint.
- that the ASAC considers bringing forward the next inspection of the provider.
- that the EB considers withdrawing accreditation from the provider.

If the provider accepts the Ombudsman's recommendations and the complainant does not, the complainant will be told that the Scheme will take no further action.

If the provider does not accept the Ombudsman's recommendations, the Ombudsman will recommend to the EB one of the following measures:

- an immediate spot check.
- an immediate full re-inspection.
- withdrawal of accreditation.
- other appropriate steps.

Any spot check or re-inspection will be at the provider's expense.

Further action following a complaint

If the EB considers that the investigation of a complaint reveals what appears to be an unsatisfactory standard of performance by the provider (i.e. below that expected of an accredited provider) the following action may be taken:

- an immediate spot check.
- an immediate full re-inspection.
- withdrawal of accreditation.

Any spot check or re-inspection will be at the provider's expense.

If a defect is revealed in the operation of a seasonal provider after the course is over and the staff dispersed, any re-inspection will be arranged in the season following the complaint.

A provider refusing re-inspection or a spot check following a complaint will have its accreditation withdrawn.

3.6 Student Emergency Support Fund (SES)

The financial collapse and closure of an accredited English language centre is a rare occurrence but one with significant potential to damage the reputation of Accreditation UK and of the UK ELT profession. Therefore, when this does happen, the most important concern is that students are taken care of and that their programme of study is able to continue with the least possible disruption. Accredited providers are expected to share responsibility for offering alternative accredited English language courses where possible, at no additional cost to the students, in the event of the sudden closure of an accredited provider in their region.

In addition to this shared responsibility, all accredited providers are required to pay an annual contribution to the Student Emergency Support Fund (SES) managed by English UK, which is used to provide emergency assistance to students affected by the closure of an accredited centre. This would normally cover such things as accommodation fees paid by students up to the date of declaration of insolvency or assistance with the cost of travelling if the alternative course provided is at a distance from the premises of the closed provider. The SES does not provide payment to providers for the tuition of the students that they have taken from the stricken centre.

4 Help

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4.1 Sources of help

Accreditation website

This handbook is complemented by the Accreditation UK website, which contains more detailed information on all aspects of the Scheme and comprehensive guidance for providers on each stage of the accreditation process.

General information about the Scheme is available on the home page www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation and details of the management of the Scheme at www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/how-we-regulate

Providers are advised to use the relevant sections to access the forms and additional information supporting the inspection process.

Pre-inspection briefings

The Accreditation Unit runs pre-inspection briefing events for providers preparing for inspection. These events give providers an opportunity to learn more about the application and inspection process, ask any questions they have about the process or inspection criteria and get advice from the Accreditation Unit and Senior Inspectors.

The programme, dates of forthcoming briefings are available on the website: www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/information-centres.

English UK

English UK offers a pre-inspection consultancy service for providers who are preparing for inspection and a number of professional development events and qualifications for English language teaching operations.

For details of the consultancy service or training programme, contact:

English UK
47 Brunswick Court
Tanner Street
London SE1 3LH
+44 (0)20 7608 7960
info@english.uk.com
www.englishuk.com

Accreditation Unit

Providers can contact the Accreditation Unit for specific advice about accreditation:

accreditation.unit@britishcouncil.org

4.2 Academic staff qualifications

4.2 Academic staff qualifications

ELT/TESOL

ELT/ELT/TESOL is used by the Scheme as a general term covering TEFL/TESOL or other qualifications that qualify teachers to teach English to speakers of other languages.

The role of the Accreditation Scheme

The Accreditation Scheme is not an accreditation scheme for ELT/TESOL qualifications. The Scheme assesses qualifications solely for the purpose of deciding whether a provider meets its requirements for Teaching and learning. Please see the Criteria, requirements and guidance document, Academic staff profile. The Scheme does not endorse and cannot be held responsible for the use of its assessment for any other purposes.

Teacher recruitment

It is the responsibility of an accredited provider or a provider applying for accreditation to ensure that the qualifications of teachers it recruits meet the requirements of the Accreditation Scheme. The Scheme cannot normally advise on the recruitment of individual teachers. Responsibility for the decision to recruit a teacher rests solely with the provider, that will wish to take into account not only the requirements of the Scheme but also its own needs and operating context. For inspection, the provider should present a clear recruitment and support policy for the academic team relevant to the stated course objectives and student profile (T1) and document how the professional profile of the academic manager/management team (T2) and teaching staff (T3) align with this policy. Please see the Criteria, requirements and guidance document, T1-T3 for guidance on appropriate qualification and experience profiles for different contexts.

Checking the status of qualifications within the Scheme

It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that the qualifications of their staff are appropriate to the courses that they are teaching. If you are unsure as to the status of an ELT/TESOL qualification, please read the following carefully and complete the Qualifications evaluation form available on the website. This should be made available to the inspectors in preparation for the inspection. Inspectors will not be able to assess a qualification unless all sections of the form are completed. It is the responsibility of the provider applying for accreditation to ensure that the form is accurately and fully completed. Providers are advised to ensure that the necessary information is received from the teacher concerned and, if necessary, verified with the validating body before the teacher is appointed.

First degrees

Although a first degree is not an entry requirement for some courses leading to ELT/TESOL qualifications, the Scheme has to date expected teachers to have a first degree or equivalent, i.e. (Level 6 Qualifications and Credit Framework). Please see the Criteria, requirements and guidance document, for additional guidance. A level 7 qualification, e.g. diploma in ELT/TESOL also meets this requirement, as do other qualifications at higher levels. The Scheme now encourages language centres to attract a more diverse range of applicants by recognising that many candidates possess valuable experience and learning outside traditional academic paths. In addition to seeking applicants with a general level of education represented by a degree, centres can also welcome applicants from more varied educational backgrounds who can demonstrate suitability through relevant experience, knowledge and skills, and a commitment to ongoing professional development.

ELT/TESOL qualifications

For the purposes of the Accreditation Scheme, qualifications are classified as:

TEFLI certificate in ELT/TESOL

Certificate-level qualifications are first-level qualifications, usually taken by teachers with little or no ELT/TESOL experience who wish to enter the profession. To be considered by the Scheme as a valid certificate in ELT/TESOL, a qualification must:

- be externally validated by a reputable examination body (usually a university or recognised examination board) and/or accredited by a national accrediting body such as Ofqual in England
- contain at least six hours' supervised teaching practice (i.e. teaching practice where a qualified and standardised assessor observes the trainee teacher teaching real students and gives feedback on his or her performance)
- contain at least 100 hours of ELT/TESOL input.

Examples of ELT/TESOL certificate-level qualifications are certificates in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages accredited by Ofqual or similar national regulators, at Level 4 or Level 5 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (the Scottish Qualifications Authority uses a different framework).

Other qualifications which providers may consider to be certificate level (provided that they meet the validation, teaching practice and input criteria listed above) are:

- PGCE in English/modern languages
- PGCE leading to primary QTS.
- University 'certificate in ELT/TESOL' courses.

TEFLQ diploma in ELT/TESOL

Diploma-level qualifications are higher-level qualifications, usually taken by teachers with relevant experience who wish to follow a career in ELT/TESOL. To be considered by the Scheme as a valid diploma in ELT/TESOL, a qualification must:

- be externally validated by a reputable examination body (usually a university or recognised examination board) and/or accredited by a national accrediting body such as Ofqual in England
- require candidates to have prior EL/ESOL teaching experience
- contain at least five hours' supervised teaching practice (i.e. teaching practice where a qualified and standardised assessor observes the trainee teacher teaching real students and gives feedback on his or her performance)
- contain at least 100 hours of ELT/TESOL input.

Examples of ELT/TESOL diploma-level qualifications:

- diplomas in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages listed by Ofqual or similar national regulators, at Level 6/7 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (or relevant equivalent level)* (*Where delivery is modular, all modules must be completed successfully for the teacher to be considered TEFLQ)

Other qualifications that providers may consider to be diploma level (provided that they meet the validation, entry requirements, teaching practice and input criteria listed above) are:

- university 'diploma in ELT/TESOL' courses
- overseas qualifications (equivalent to a PGCE, BEd or MA in ELT/TESOL) which qualify teachers to teach ESOL in state educational institutions in their country of origin.
- A qualification in ELT/TESOL management.

Certain combinations of qualifications are accepted as equivalent to TEFLQ. Examples of these are:

- PGCE in English and a TEFLI certificate in ELT/TESOL that meets the validation, teaching practice and input criteria listed above.
- PGCE in Foreign Languages and a TEFLI certificate in ELT/TESOL that meets the validation, teaching practice and input criteria listed above.
- PGCE PCET: Professional/Post Graduate Certificate in Education, (Post Compulsory Education and Training) – ESOL specialism, and either Additional Diploma (ESOL) in the Lifelong Learning Sector or February 2025
- Diploma (ESOL) in the Lifelong Learning Sector or a TEFLI certificate in ELT/TESOL that meets the validation, teaching practice and input criteria listed above.
- Postgraduate qualification in ELT/TESOL or related subjects and a TEFLI certificate in ELT/TESOL that meets the validation, teaching practice and input criteria listed above.
- A qualification in ELT/TESOL management (no teaching practice) and a TEFLI certificate in ELT/TESOL that meets the validation, teaching practice and input criteria listed above.

Postgraduate master's degrees in ELT/TESOL

Master's degrees (MA/MSc etc) in ELT/TESOL or related subjects with a focus on English language teaching can be considered TEFLQ provided that they meet the validation, teaching practice and input criteria listed above.. Where the teaching practice (only) criterion is not met and the teacher is not TEFLI, a teacher with this qualification will be considered TEFLQ for the purposes of the Scheme where there is documented evidence that he or she has been systematically observed teaching for a minimum of five hours by a TEFLQ academic manager or teacher trainer post-qualifying. Records of such observations can be carried forward from one employer to another.

Please note: the use of post-course supervised teaching practice outlined above does not apply to certificate or diploma-level qualifications without a teaching practice component.

Academic managers

Please note that under T4 in the criteria, requirements and guidance document there are requirements relating to teaching experience as well as to the qualifications of an academic manager.

Academic management in further education

In further education colleges, holders of a qualification for a full-teaching role in ESOL, such as a Level 5 generic teaching qualification and a Level 5 specialist TESOL qualification, will all be considered appropriately qualified as an academic manager in the further education (state sector) context only. Integrated qualifications that meet the requirements are the Level 5 Diploma in Education and training (English: ESOL) and the DTE (ESOL)LLS. Stand alone specialist diplomas include the Level 5 Diploma in Teaching English: ESOL and the additional DTE(E)LLS.

See under TEFLQ diploma in ELT/TESOL for the status of PGCE PCET (ESOL) specialism, a Level 6/7 qualification. The academic manager or members of the academic management team who hold such qualifications and have the relevant experience will be acceptable in relation to T2 and for T9 only within the context of a further education college.

*Where delivery is modular, all modules must be completed successfully for the teacher to be considered TEFLQ.

4.3 Inspection documentation

Qualified teacher status (QTS)

PGCE or equivalent qualifications which lead to qualified teacher status in the UK, i.e. qualified to teach in state maintained and special schools, are considered by the Accreditation Scheme to be TEFLI if the subject specialism is related to English language teaching (e.g. modern languages or English) or the teacher has primary QTS. QTS in unrelated subjects plus evidence of ELT/TESOL training will also be considered an appropriate profile for teaching under 18s in combination with additional ELT/TESOL support.

Specialist qualifications

Teachers holding specialist qualifications in ELT/TESOL such as young learners or one-to-one qualifications will be considered appropriately qualified provided the qualification meets the validation, teaching practice and input requirements stated above and the teacher is teaching the appropriate students/mode (e.g. young learners or one-to-one). Teachers without ELT/TESOL qualifications but with specialist professional qualifications in other subjects (e.g. law, business or medicine) will also be considered by the Scheme to be qualified to teach relevant ESP, CLIL/content-based courses if they have received specialist training to deliver the language component to meet the needs of their students and documented ELT support to deliver English language development through the subject being taught.

Providers that employ teachers without ELT/TESOL qualifications but with specialist professional qualifications (in subjects such as sports or drama), which the provider believes complements their teaching provision, are required to demonstrate appropriate deployment, support and training to ensure the teacher is professionally prepared to meet the course objectives

Absence of relevant qualifications

It may be the case that teachers have undergone a course of training which does not meet the validation, teaching practice or input requirements stated above. In this case, the Scheme will consider them not to have an ELT/TESOL qualification and the provider is advised to produce a rationale for their employment. Please see the *Criteria, requirements and guidance* document, T2. Guidelines for rationales are on the website.

4.3 Inspection documentation

A list of inspection documentation is included at the end of the *Criteria, requirements and guidance* document, which is available from the website: www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation/information-centres. This list of documents is designed to help you ensure that your inspectors get a full picture of your provision.

The provision of clear, complete and accurate documentary evidence will make your inspection proceed more efficiently and economically.

Please refer to the website for further information and guidance on preparing and sending the documentation.

Stage 1: Initial background documentation

These documents must reach the Accreditation Unit by the appropriate application deadline.

Stage 2: Inspection preparation documentation

Providers must submit a completed self-evaluation form as part of Stage 2 documentation with supporting documentation. These documents must be shared with inspectors at least ten working days before the inspection. They are essential for the inspectors to plan the inspection timetable and gain an overview of the structure and operation of the provision. If these are not shared by the inspectors at least ten working days before the inspection, the inspection will be cancelled and cancellation charges made (see *Fees sheet*).

Stage 3: Additional documentation

These documents should be made available to the inspectors during the inspection. Inspectors will sample files and records to obtain evidence that criteria are met.

In partnership with



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