

Organisation name	Perth College, University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)
Inspection date	26 August 2016

BACKGROUND

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	May 1999
Last full inspection	October 2014
Subsequent spot check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent supplementary check (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent interim visit (if applicable)	N/a
Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre	Range of FE and UHI courses
Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates	N/a
Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates	Perth College is partner of UHI for HE provision; partner of UHI region network for FE

Current accreditation status and reason for spot check

Current accredited status	Accredited
Reason for spot check	Signalled: check course not running at inspection

Premises profile

Address of main site	Crieff Road, Perth PH1 2NX
Details of any additional sites in use at the time of the inspection	N/a
Details of any additional sites not in use at the time of the inspection	Pathways Learning Centre, South Street, Perth
Sites inspected	The college comprises four modern purpose-built buildings on a campus on the outskirts of Perth. The language school, where the ELT operation is located, is on one floor of one of these buildings. Classrooms are grouped together, with the staff base at the end of the corridor on the same floor. Students have use of a canteen within the same building, and library and IT facilities in a nearby building.

Student and staff profile

	At inspection	In peak week - September
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	45	120
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	18	17
Typical age range	20–22	28–32
Typical length of stay	2–7 weeks	9 months
Predominant nationalities	Japanese, Chinese	Polish, Romanian, Spanish
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	7	10
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	3	3

INTRODUCTION

Background

Perth College fulfils a further and higher education role. It caters for over 9,000 FE/HE students and has almost 300 teaching staff. The college is also part of a network of 13 institutions in northern Scotland which forms the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), established in 2011.

In the language school, general English and ESOL (full-time and part-time) are provided for adults (16+) during the academic year, and a general English summer school for adults runs during July and August. In 2016 a pre-session English for academic purposes (EAP) course is being run for the first time, with five students from China. The course was originally planned for eight weeks during July and August, but was shortened to seven because the students arrived a week late. The students all have unconditional offers to join the fourth year of either the Electrical or Mechanical Engineering undergraduate programme run by the college. The main purpose of this spot check inspection was to inspect this EAP provision.

At the time of the inspection there were 40 students attending the summer school in addition to the five students following the EAP preparation course.

Since the 2014 inspection there has been a change of director of studies (DoS). The current DoS has been in post since July 2015. He directs and has taught on the pre-session course but was absent on the day of the inspection visit.

Preparation

The inspector received the report of the 2014 inspection, publicity and relevant documentation and correspondence. She contacted the DoS a few weeks before the inspection to check on the pre-session course timetable and to request some documentation, including the action plan following the 2014 report. The precise date of the visit was not disclosed but staff had prepared for a spot check inspection.

Programme and persons present

The inspection took place over a morning, from 08.45 until 13.15, on the Friday of the penultimate week of the pre-session course.

The course was discussed with three of the teachers who were teaching on the programme and, separately, with the students. One of the teachers had been deputised by the DoS to liaise with the inspector in his absence. Meetings were also held with three members of staff in the international centre. While at the college the inspector spoke to the HR officer by phone and was subsequently sent some relevant documentation.

Lesson segments of two of the teachers were observed. In one, a visiting speaker was giving a talk to the group and answering questions.

FINDINGS

The programme of learning for the pre-session course is managed for the benefit of its students. See also *Course design and implementation*, below. Students reported that they had made good overall progress and that they felt well prepared for the undergraduate course they were due to follow a few weeks later.

The teachers are members of the year-round language school staff and have appropriate qualifications: of those teaching during the week of the inspection, three are TEFLQ; one is TEFLI and is currently following a course leading to a diploma. She has extensive experience of EAP and English for Specific Purposes (ESP), and knowledge of the students' field of study. The teachers are given sufficient support to ensure that their teaching meets the needs of the students on this course.

The learning resources and environment support and enhance the studies of the students following the EAP course: there is a good range of coursebooks and supplementary materials; classrooms are spacious and well furnished and equipped, for example with interactive whiteboards. Students have use of the college library, IT facilities and canteens and relaxation areas.

The needs of students for welfare and student services are generally well met. They are given a range of appropriate advice, information and assistance. However, the pre-session students do not have a specific student handbook; that given to the summer school students contains useful information but is not entirely appropriate.

The students are staying in homestay accommodation during the course (to increase their exposure to English) but will transfer to more independent accommodation in one of the college residences when they start their undergraduate module.

The pre-sessional students can take part in some of the activities and trips organised for the summer school students (most at an additional cost). However, they reported that they would like more organised activities specifically for them during the late afternoon/evening and at weekends.

Course design and implementation

Criteria	Not met	Met	Strength	See comments	N/a
T12 Principled course structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
T13 Review of course design	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
T14 Course outlines and outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
T15 Study and learning strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
T16 Linguistic benefit from UK	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Comments

T12 The course has been designed in liaison with the Engineering, Science and Technology (EST) learning and teaching leader, in order to prepare students for their future courses at the college. An appropriate coursebook is used as a framework but the book is adapted and supplemented to meet the needs of the students. The students also have the opportunity to listen to live and recorded lectures/talks.

T13 The content of the course is reviewed by teachers and the DoS at weekly team meetings. It is planned to follow up the students' progress with the EST learning and teaching leader.

T14 Students receive a short overview at the start of the course and more detailed schemes of work at the start of each week. Criteria for assessed work (a research project and presentation; written reports) are clearly set out for students.

T15 Study and learning strategies are at the core of the EAP programme and sophisticated skills, such as referencing and avoiding plagiarism, are taught. However, more could be done to guide the students in recording language and in organising their paperwork.

T16 Work done in class is of immediate relevance to their future time in the UK.

POINTS TO BE ADDRESSED

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

Management

M3 Minor amendments are needed to some job descriptions to reflect current roles, duties and job titles more accurately.

Addressed. Staff's safeguarding roles have been added to job descriptions.

M5 References were not on file for all teachers in the language school.

Addressed. References are on file for teachers recruited since the 2014 inspection.

M8 There is no requirement to keep formal records of interim reviews.

Addressed. Electronic records are kept of annual reviews. Teaching observations are kept in staff files.

M15 Sanctions relating to disciplinary issues are not made explicit.

Partially addressed. There is a disciplinary procedure on the open website, including definitions of behaviours which are subject to the *Disciplinary Procedure*. A link is published in the Student Handbook for year-round students. However, it is not certain that all students access this information.

M23 None of the sources of publicity contain a comprehensive or adequate description of the courses available.

Addressed. Course outlines are adequately detailed.

M28 The phrase 'well qualified', which is used in several places in the publicity, was not an accurate description of all teachers employed at the time of the inspection.

Addressed. The website text has been altered.

M29 On one page of the prospectus a non-standard version of the accreditation marquee is used.

Addressed. The correct version is in the 2016–2017 prospectus.

Resources and environment

R3 Classrooms are somewhat small for most classes (which contain up to 20 students). Teachers in the focus group commented that rooms lacked sufficient ventilation in hot weather.

Partially addressed. The classrooms are sufficiently spacious for the classes taking place at the time of the spot check inspection. Blinds have recently been fitted to classrooms to counteract heating by the sun in summer.

R4 Students in the focus group and in written feedback stated that more spaces for student relaxation were

desirable.

Addressed. The canteen has been extended since the last inspection.

R6 The DoS does not have her own office and there are no small tutorial rooms for confidential conversations with students.

Addressed. A separate office/tutorial room is now available.

Teaching and learning

T10 There is no regular CPD programme.

Addressed. In addition to college-wide provision a CPD programme is run which is specific to the language school, with staff leading regular sessions throughout the year.

T14 No written course outlines are provided for students.

Addressed. Course outlines are provided for all courses, including the pre-sessional course.

T24 There was no evidence of planning for differentiation.

Addressed. Planning for differentiation is now included in the lesson plan pro-forma.

T25 It was not clear if or how individual learner profiling had influenced lesson planning.

Addressed. In the lesson plans seen, it was clear how individual learner profiling had influenced the lesson content.

T27 In some segments, teachers followed the book too closely, with little attempt to adapt the material or draw on students' existing knowledge and experience. Smartboards might have been more fully exploited. Classroom furniture was often arranged in such a way that students sat with their backs to others, militating against easy classroom dynamics.

Addressed in the segments observed.

Welfare and student services

W13 The cost of travel between host and college is not included in the accommodation confirmation letter.

Addressed. This information is now included.

Care of under 18s

C4 Letters sent to prospective employees do not warn them that gaps in CVs will have to be satisfactorily explained and that reference requests will ask about their suitability to work with under 18s. Reference requests do not ask specifically if there is any reason why an applicant should not have significant contact with under 18s.

Addressed. Recruitment documentation now contains all the relevant information.

Points to be addressed arising from this visit

Teaching and learning

T15 Insufficient guidance is given to students to help them record language and organise their paperwork.

Welfare and student services

W26 Students on the pre-sessional course do not have sufficient information about, and access to, social, cultural and sporting events and activities.

CONCLUSIONS

The provision for the pre-sessional course is generally of a good standard. A number of the points noted in the 2014 inspection report have been successfully addressed.

RECOMMENDATION

The next inspection falls due in 2018; there are no grounds for bringing this forward.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Changes to summary statement

Courses for 'academic' English can be added.

Summary statement

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The English language teaching department of this college of further education offers courses in general English and ESOL for citizenship for adults (16+) and vacation courses for adults (16+).

Strengths were noted in the area of care of students.

The inspection report stated that the organisation met the standards of the Scheme.

Revised summary statement

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