Spot check report

Organisation name | University of Salford English Language Centre
Inspection date | 4 November 2015

BACKGROUND

Organisation profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspection history</th>
<th>Dates/details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First inspection</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last full inspection</td>
<td>March 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent spot check (if applicable)</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent supplementary check (if applicable)</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent interim visit (if applicable)</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates</td>
<td>N/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current accreditation status and reason for spot check

| Current accredited status | Accredited |
| Reason for spot check | Signalled: monitor effect of change of provision (new structure) |

Premises profile

| Address of main site | English Language Centre, University of Salford, The Crescent, Salford M5 4WT |
| 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 | N/a |
| Sites inspected | Salford |

Student and staff profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At inspection</th>
<th>In peak week March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)</td>
<td>181 (FT) 170 (PT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical age range</td>
<td>17–45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical length of stay</td>
<td>24 weeks–nine months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominant nationalities</td>
<td>Kuwaiti, Saudi, Iraqi, Greek Cypriot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of administrative/ancillary staff</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Background

The English Language Centre (ELC) is a part of Salford Languages (SL), a unit comprising the ELC and modern foreign language (MFL) provision, with responsibility for exchange programmes. As noted in the last report, a number of changes led to the creation of SL, which is not classed as a school or an academic department, but has its own director – currently an interim role. At the last inspection there was uncertainty around the future structure and management of SL, which was to be decided and announced shortly after the inspection took place; the purpose of this spot check was to see how the new structure was working.

Preparation

The Accreditation Unit sent the necessary information and paperwork to the inspector.

Programme and persons present

The inspector arrived at 1215 and departed at 1520. Meetings were held with the interim director of SL, the ELC manager, the operations manager for SL, together with one of his support assistants, the international foundation year (IFY) coordinator and the in-sessional coordinator. A range of documents was viewed.

FINDINGS

The last report noted lack of certainty about the management structure surrounding SL, and at the time of this spot check inspection, the inspector was told that a new structure has been proposed and approved by the university. This was to be imminently announced to staff, and since the inspection, the interim director SL has sent notification to the Accreditation Unit that this announcement has been made.

The delays in arriving at the new structure have been largely because of wider restructuring decisions and arrangements which affect the outcomes for SL. Most recently the International Business Development Office (IBDO) has taken SL into its remit. IBDO is however itself very newly formed, with an interim director. A permanent position was being advertised at the time of the inspection.

In the meantime, the current interim director of SL will be leaving at the end of this year, and her responsibilities will be covered by the interim and/or the new director of IBDO. A decision has been made to appoint a new head of SL, but at the time of the inspection this role had yet to be advertised, so that a gap is inevitable.

Given these interdependent appointments and arrangements, it seems unlikely that the new structure will be fully implemented in the immediate future, but the inspector was informed after the inspection that the recruitment process for the roles in the new structure, including the new head of SL, will commence at the beginning of December.

This situation has also had an impact on other areas pertinent to this report; publicity, in particular, is likely to be easier for ELC staff to influence and change within the new structure as IBDO is a recruitment champion within the university. Similarly, job descriptions are ready for the new structure, but current ones have understandably not been updated because of impending changes.

The day-to-day management functions of the ELC are not directly affected by this situation, as the ELC manager remains in post and continues to be supported by three members of teaching staff with academic management responsibilities, albeit on an interim basis.

The ELC remains in its location on the eighth and ninth floors of the Maxwell building; the ninth floor has been fully refurbished to a very high standard, and a staff kitchen has been added. The eighth floor is about to receive similar treatment.

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.

Points to be addressed

Points which must be addressed within nine months

Management

M2 There is a level of uncertainty about the future structure of the ELC.

Addressed. A proposed new management and staffing structure has been identified, approved and shared with staff. The recruitment process is about to begin.

M24 Hours are expressed as “academic” hours; not all course descriptions explain that an academic hour is 50
minutes; as a result of the “academic” hour, the number of class contact hours is less than the number stated. Times of classes are not given. Non-teaching days are not listed. The minimum age is not given. The maximum number of students in a group is not stated for all courses.

**Not yet addressed. A new website is currently being developed for SL in collaboration with the university marketing team.**

M25 The coursebooks are provided but students are advised to purchase a dictionary and a grammar book and no estimate of cost is given. Students are informed about social and leisure activities that are available, but no estimate of costs of typical activities is given. Many ESP students take an optional IELTS test but no estimate of fees is stated. Details of deposits, refund policy and deadlines for cancellations are not easy to find.

**Not yet addressed. A new website is currently being developed for SL in collaboration with the university marketing team.**

M26 Publicity does not state that most of the residential accommodation is provided by a private company.

**Not yet addressed. A new website is currently being developed for SL in collaboration with the university marketing team.**

Other points to be addressed

**Management**

M3 Some of the job descriptions are out of date.

**Partially addressed. Job descriptions have been written in readiness for all posts within the new structure.**

**Resources and environment**

R3 Some of the classrooms have fixed furniture and some have lecture theatre layout and are not ideal for language teaching. Groups are seldom in the same classroom twice in the week and, although every effort is made by the ELC manager to avoid this, some groups have to change buildings at the 11.00 break.

**Addressed. The ELC manager has had meetings with central timetabling to ensure that ELC requirements can be factored in at the beginning of the timetabling process rather than left to the end. There will also be a new administrator who will be able to help with this from next year.**

**Teaching and learning**

T28 There were a number of missed opportunities to correct errors especially of pronunciation and to utilise the situation for a quick drill that would benefit the whole class.

T29 In some lessons students needed more encouragement to speak clearly and to listen to each other, thus avoiding the need for the teacher to repeat what had been said.

**No teaching was observed during the inspection.**

**Welfare and student services**

W4 Although a policy exists for dealing with a wide variety of bullying and harassment, the only reference to it in readily available student information is contained in the student charter which expects students and staff to be treated with respect. A simple description of what is involved is not immediately available to students. A more detailed definition and procedure is currently under review.

**Addressed. Information for international students has been produced in a more accessible form.**

**Care of under 18s**

C4 There is no record or other documentation that prospective applicants are warned that they may be DBS checked and referees are not specifically asked about the suitability of applicants to work with under 18s.

**Not yet addressed. Evidence was provided after the inspection that HR procedures include the areas described in the bullet points in this criterion, but no evidence was seen that prospective applicants are informed of this.**

C6 Given the university environment the only additional supervision is regular checks to ensure well-being. Apart from the information provided about underage drinking, how to keep safe and how to get help if needed, there are no special rules for what such students may do outside class time.

**Addressed. After the inspection, an information leaflet was provided which is addressed specifically to under-18s.**

**CONCLUSIONS**

A new management structure for SL has been decided upon and approved within the university, but not yet implemented, although recruitment is due to begin imminently. Many of the Points to be Addressed from the last report have now been addressed, and the new structure will enable the remaining areas, particularly publicity, to be dealt with; there are no further points arising from this report.
RECOMMENDATION

The next inspection falls due in 2019; there are no grounds for bringing this forward. However, an action plan should be submitted within six months to show how the outstanding points to be addressed are being progressed.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Changes to summary statement

No changes need to be made to the summary statement.

Summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited the University of Salford English Language Centre in March 2015. The Accreditation Scheme assesses the standards of management, resources and premises, teaching, welfare, and care of under 18s and accredits organisations which meet the overall standard in each area inspected (see www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation for details).

The English language teaching department of this university offers courses in academic English for adults (17+).

The inspection report noted a need for improvement in the area of publicity.

Strengths were noted in the areas of quality assurance, learning resources, academic staff profile, academic management, course design, learner management, teaching, and care of students.

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

Points to be addressed outstanding from the previous inspection(s) or arising from this visit

Management
M3 Some of the job descriptions are out of date.
M24 Hours are expressed as “academic” hours; not all course descriptions explain that an academic hour is 50 minutes; as a result of the “academic” hour, the number of class contact hours is less than the number stated. Times of classes are not given. Non-teaching days are not listed. The minimum age is not given. The maximum number of students in a group is not stated for all courses.
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Teaching and learning
T28 There were a number of missed opportunities to correct errors especially of pronunciation and to utilise the situation for a quick drill that would benefit the whole class.
T29 In some lessons students needed more encouragement to speak clearly and to listen to each other, thus avoiding the need for the teacher to repeat what had been said.

Care of under 18s
C4 No evidence was seen that prospective applicants are informed of all areas covered by this criterion.