

BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Independent Higher Education)

INSTITUTION: London College of Contemporary Arts

ADDRESS: 9 Holborn
London
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HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Mr Sharjeel Nawaz

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 12 May 2020

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation, 16 July 2020

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

The London College of Contemporary Arts (LCCA/the Institution) is a privately owned higher education provider. It is a specialist institution that delivers courses in fashion, visual arts and media, and in business and hospitality. The Institution is located in Holborn in the City of London.

LCCA aims to provide creative, innovative and industry-focused programmes that enable students to shape their future in employment.

The Institution is led by a Principal, who is supported by a senior management team consisting of the Head of Resources, two Heads of School and the Quality Assurance Manager.

LCCA was established in October 2016 as an independently run organisation under Global University Systems (GUS), which is the parent company. GUS provides payroll, human resources, marketing, and financial and legal services to LCCA, as well as access to administrative staff. GUS also determines the Institution's constitutional governance structure and policies in a number of key areas.

Since the last inspection, a Quality Assurance Manager has been appointed by LCCA. The Institution is no longer recruiting students to programmes at Master's level.

2. Brief description of the current provision

LCCA's provision ranges from programmes at Levels 3 to 6 in fashion, visual arts and media, and business and hospitality. It offers four Bachelor of Arts (BA) programmes, six Higher National Certificate (HNC) programmes and six Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes. It offers one foundation programme and a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) short course in digital graphic design. All programmes are delivered face to face at the London campus.

The Institution works in partnership with Walsall College for the delivery of the HNCs and HNDs. LCCA has franchise arrangements with the University of East London to offer two top-up BA programmes in Hospitality Management and Business Management. It also has a franchise agreement with Buckinghamshire New University for two BA degree programmes in Fashion Design and Graphic Design. The Institution is no longer recruiting students to Master of Arts (MA) programmes, previously offered in partnership with the Università Telematica Internazionale Uninettuno in Rome, or to the BA programmes in Fashion Design awarded by Mod'Art International or the BA in Graphic Design awarded in partnership with Ecole d'Art Maryse Eloy, now the Paris School of Visual Arts, in Paris.

At the time of the inspection, there were 527 students enrolled on 17 full-time courses. Just over half of the students are female. Around a third of students are United Kingdom (UK) nationals. Around two-thirds of students are European and international students who already live and work in the UK. At the time of the inspection, there were two students under the age of 18. LCCA has capacity for 820 students. The HNC Business Management programme is the most popular course, with just over a fifth of all student enrolments.

Students on the HNC and HND programmes are enrolled in February and October each year. Students on all other courses are enrolled in October. Students must meet standard published entry requirements to enrol on each course.

3. Inspection process

The inspection took place remotely over one day and was undertaken by one inspector, who met with the Principal and other senior leaders. The inspector observed online teaching sessions, held online meetings with course and programme leaders and with students, and scrutinised relevant documents and electronic systems.

The premises were not visited and they were reviewed as part of the other inspection activities that were undertaken. The Institution cooperated fully with the inspection.

4. Inspection history

Inspection type	Date
Full Inspection	23–24 November 2017
Mid-Way Probation	22 August 2018
End of Probation	5 March 2019

PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgements and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution.

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

The role of Curriculum and Standards Manager has been replaced by a Quality Assurance Manager, who was appointed in November 2019. The Quality Assurance Manager is a qualified lecturer and has held several teaching and quality assurance roles in the higher education sector. The Quality Assurance Manager is responsible for overseeing quality assurance systems and processes at LCCA and advising the Principal on academic quality and standards.

The Institution has refocused its curriculum offer onto study programmes awarded from UK higher education institutions, at level 6. Consequently, LCCA is no longer recruiting students to programmes offered in partnership with the Università Telematica Internazionale Uninettuno in Rome, Mod'Art International or with Ecole d'Art Maryse Eloy, now the Paris School of Visual Arts,. Students are now able to enrol on the BA programmes in Fashion Design and Graphic Design, which are validated by Buckinghamshire New University.

2. Response to actions points in last report

8.13 The Institution must ensure the VLE is made fully available to all students following the large pilot.

Students on all programmes now have access to a range of learning resources in the Institution's virtual learning environment (VLE). Students benefit from access to learning materials such as class notes, presentations and lecture recordings to support their academic development and independent study. Most students are able to submit their assignments online through the VLE, making use of in-built plagiarism screening software to check the authenticity and validity of their submissions. The VLE is also used to share and disseminate general information, such as the Institution's complaints policy and the student handbook.

Tutors use the VLE to provide students with timely online feedback and guidance to inform their ongoing progress. Course managers make effective use of the VLE to administer and collate the outcomes of online student surveys and module evaluation reports. This information helps managers to continually improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers have created useful training guides and support documents to ensure that both tutors and students are confident in using the different features of the VLE. Students value the features and functionality of the VLE and its impact on supporting their independent learning, particularly when working remotely. Inspection findings confirm this view.

The Institution must update the safeguarding policy to reflect the current staff members responsible for leading and monitoring student safeguarding.

The Institution's safeguarding policy was reviewed and updated in March 2020 by the Academic Board. The policy now includes the names and contact details of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSL. The DSL is a member of the Institution's senior management team. Both the DSL and Deputy DSL are trained in safeguarding to an appropriate level.

The updated safeguarding policy incorporates additional guidance relating to the support and care of students aged under 18. A risk assessment and incident report form are included, along with clear and relevant training and guidance to support all staff in recognising, recording and reporting safeguarding concerns. These measures ensure that LCCA has clear and well-understood processes in place for managing and monitoring any safeguarding concerns or referrals.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

The Institution should formalise arrangements for the systematic collection of employer stakeholder feedback.

LCCA works collaboratively with a range of employers from the business, hospitality, visual media and fashion sectors. A formal Employer Engagement Forum has been established, which is held at least annually, where invited industry representatives meet with the Course Managers. Employer feedback is systematically collected and analysed by the Careers and Student Services Manager for GUS, which informs and shapes LCCA's approach to student employability and skills development, careers education and curriculum review.

The Institution could develop further links between the LCCA Curriculum and Standards Manager and the GUS Quality Team to share best practice and continue to enhance the quality of provision.

A new Quality Assurance Manager, appointed in November 2019, has replaced the previous Curriculum and Standards Manager. The Quality Assurance Manager is a member of the LCCA senior management team and regularly contributes to the Academic Board. They contribute to the Academic Planning Committee at other partner GUS institutions and work regularly with the Head of Accreditation and Development for GUS. This helps to ensure that best practice from across the GUS group is shared and implemented at LCCA to enhance the quality of provision.

It is recommended that the Institution formally records the meetings of the Employer Engagement Forum and the review of the engagement logs, to evaluate the impact of closer industry engagement.

Minutes of the Employer Engagement Forum are formally recorded by the Careers and Student Services Manager. Feedback from industry representatives is collated and shared with Heads of School and Course Managers to inform ongoing curriculum and career enhancement reviews. The outcome of these reviews is presented at each School Board to formally record and evaluate the impact of employer collaboration and industry engagement and to identify where further links and partnerships would be beneficial in enhancing student engagement and supporting progression into relevant careers and higher level study.

4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

4.1 Governance, Strategy and Financial Management (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Institution's governance arrangements are effective. The LCCA Board, supported by GUS senior leaders, provides effective strategic oversight. The Board receives regular updates and data in order to provide appropriate scrutiny, challenge and support to the Principal and senior leaders.

The Board regularly monitors key performance indicators, including those for financial performance, quality of education, student recruitment and current business risk ratings. Where required, effective action is taken to respond to potential risks and to nurture new development opportunities and partnerships in line with LCCA's growth strategy.

The Principal is well supported by the senior management team, including the new Quality Assurance Manager, to develop and implement key policies. GUS central support services provide valuable guidance and support to the Institution, particularly with respect to legal, financial and human resources matters.

There are clear and effective channels of communication between GUS, the LCCA Board, the senior management team and staff working with students.

4.2 Academic Management and Administration (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Academic management of LCCA is effective. The management structure is clearly defined and understood at all levels by stakeholders. Central GUS administration support services, for example for student recruitment and admissions, continue to complement the Institution's own academic support services.

Heads of School meet regularly with academic staff and external validating partners to effectively review and manage academic programmes. Appropriate administrative processes are in place, including effective procedures for managing internal and external moderation.

LCCA employs appropriately qualified and experienced staff. Tutors have relevant postgraduate qualifications in related academic subjects, along with teaching qualifications for the post-compulsory and higher education sectors. Tutor performance is appropriately monitored and developed through an annual appraisal process and regular peer reviews of classroom practice.

Tutors are encouraged to undertake research and other forms of scholarly activity to inform their teaching and professional practice. There are several recent examples of LCCA academic staff completing relevant research projects and published journal articles. However, managers do not currently systematically record research contributions from all academic staff to monitor the level and impact of research activity and to share best practice.

Entry requirements for all courses are published in course literature and on the Institution's website and are in line with validating partner requirements. Publicity material is clear, well presented and accurately reflects the current curriculum and the Institution. Students spoken to during the inspection felt that they had received effective information, advice and guidance prior to enrolment, which had helped them to make study choices. Inspection findings confirm this view.

4.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Students develop their knowledge, understanding and vocational skills as a result of effective teaching, learning and assessment. Academic staff have acted swiftly in response to an urgent need to move teaching and assessment online. As a result, all students benefit from engaging, interactive lessons delivered remotely.

Tutors make effective use of online video conferencing to carry out academic tutorials that help students to manage their own learning, to make progress and to continue developing their study skills. The VLE is used successfully by most students to submit their assignments online and to receive constructive written feedback from tutors in a timely manner, which helps students to develop and improve their understanding and skills over time.

Tutors use their expertise to plan and deliver engaging online learning activities that encourage students to discuss and debate current issues together from their home locations. Lessons are supported by relevant online learning materials, aligned to the specific module descriptors and intended learning outcomes. Most online lessons are recorded for students to access at any time to consolidate their learning and to help them catch up on any live lesson delivery they have missed.

4.4 Student Recruitment, Support, Guidance and Progression (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Students are well supported by academic tutors and learning mentors, who provide very effective personalised advice and guidance that meets students' individual needs. Student support staff are responsive to enquiries and requests. Students interviewed were very complimentary about the high levels of individualised care they receive at LCCA. Inspection findings confirm this view.

Students benefit from a dedicated employability and careers support service that helps them to plan their next steps into work or higher level study. Support includes a programme of industry and charity events, recruitment activities and guest speakers who are vocational experts from across the visual media, fashion, and business and hospitality sectors.

The Institution has a range of policies and procedures to safeguard students' well-being and to protect students from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. These include measures to prevent and deal with cases of discrimination, bullying or abusive behavior. A clear approval process for visiting guest speakers ensures that appropriate codes of conduct are maintained, and freedom of speech protected.

LCCA takes a risk-based approach to identify, protect and support individuals who may be at risk of being radicalised. This approach includes staff and student training and risk assessment related to the UK government's Prevent duty.

Managers rightly recognise that the LCCA Prevent duty risk assessment and action plan have not been recently reviewed and updated to ensure that existing control measures to reduce the risks from radicalisation and extremism continue to be appropriate, sufficient and effective.

4.5 Premises, Facilities and Learning Resources (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

LCCA offers students a range of teaching, learning and independent study spaces in a convenient central London location. When on-site teaching and learning are available, students have access to a range of well-equipped and furnished classrooms, a student lounge, fashion studios, library and gallery and exhibition space.

Students benefit from a range of multimedia learning resources accessed through the VLE, which support their online studies effectively. Students also have access to a popular online research database to support their assignment work and independent research.

Access to the research database is clearly signposted on the Institution's website and various VLE course pages. However, students interviewed were not aware of its availability and function. Consequently, the students were not benefiting from access to the full range of scholarly articles, journals and reports to deepen their critical thinking, evaluation and analytical skills.

4.6 Quality Management, Assurance and Enhancement (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

Leaders and managers have implemented effective systems and processes to review regularly the Institution's performance and the impact on the quality of education and the student experience. Heads of

School use a range of data, for example regular student feedback, achievement, retention, progression rates and employer feedback, to complete annual monitoring reports for each of the programmes offered. Monitoring reports identify key strengths and areas for improvement, leading to an enhancement action plan that helps managers implement and monitor ongoing improvements to the quality of provision. Course managers on the HNC and HND programmes meet regularly with managers from the franchise partners to complete quality reviews and audits. Awarding organisation external examiner reports are analysed and relevant action plans put in place to address identified areas for improvement in a systematic and timely way.

Quality management, and assurance and enhancement activities are regularly reported to the LCCA Board and monitored by the Principal and senior management team. This systematic approach to quality management, assurance and enhancement has helped to contribute to a 20 per cent increase in overall student recruitment, retention and achievement rates compared with the 2018/19 academic year.

4.7 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

Students benefit from good levels of personalised support and care from academic tutors and support staff to enable them to complete their studies and achieve their educational goals and aspirations.

LCCA has reacted swiftly and effectively in response to the urgent need to move teaching and assessment online to ensure that students have benefited from access to good-quality online teaching, learning and assessment to support their ongoing development.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

The Prevent duty risk assessment and action plan must be reviewed and updated regularly.

High Medium Low

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT *(to be reviewed at the next inspection)*

The Institution should consider implementing a more systematic recording system to monitor the research activities of all academic staff and the impact of these activities on the quality of education.

It is recommended that students receive additional guidance and support to further develop their independent research skills and appropriate use of academic literature to inform their studies and assignment work.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE