



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM VISIT AND SUPPLEMENTARY INSPECTION NEW PREMISES (Independent Higher Education)

INSTITUTION: New York College

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HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Mr Elias Foutsis

DATE OF INSPECTION: 17 May 2018

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION ON ACCREDITATION: Continued accreditation 19 July 2018

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

New York College (NYC/the Institution) is a private college founded in 1989 in collaboration with the State University of New York, Empire State College (SUNY/ESC). At that stage, its aim was to provide Greek students with the opportunity to follow United States (US) higher education programmes leading to an accredited US degree. Since then the Institution's portfolio has expanded as it has linked up with additional educational partners. These are the University of Greenwich and University of Bolton in the United Kingdom, the University of Toulouse in France and the Technical University of Varna in Bulgaria. The Institution is part of the NYC Educational Group which has affiliated higher education institutions in the Czech Republic and Albania. BAC's accreditation relates to the provision based in Athens and Thessaloniki only.

The Institution is a limited company with a Board of Directors and is licensed by the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. Its mission is to offer multicultural educational opportunities for students through agreements with recognised American and European universities. NYC aims to develop affordable academic programmes based on European and American standards of higher education, provide programmes and services of the highest quality and assist students to achieve their potential as well-rounded and global citizens, within an international, multicultural environment.

NYC offers degrees in business, engineering, informatics, health sciences, humanities and social sciences, tourism, and shipping, including master's degrees. In partnership with Bolton, NYC offers Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) opportunities. In terms of the number of courses delivered face-to-face at NYC, the University of Greenwich is its most significant partner.

The Academic Board of the Institution is comprised of programme directors and has oversight of all programmes. Heads of major functions, including student affairs, recruitment, administration, advertising and promotion and analytics, report to the President, who reports to the Board of Directors.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The Athens site NYC offers the full range of the Institution's degrees, with all partner organisations. These are bachelor's degrees in management in partnership with the University of Toulouse; in business studies and business studies with specialisations, English language and English language teaching (ELELT), film studies, computer networking, internet engineering and web management, biomedical sciences, human nutrition, psychology, international studies, and science in partnership with the University of Greenwich; in international relations, business administration, communications, business communications, computer science, finance, international business, management, marketing, psychology in partnership with SUNY/ESC; in games programming in partnership with the University of Bolton; and in marine engineering and navigation in partnership with the Technical University of Varna.

At master's level, there is a Master of Business Administration (MBA) in partnership with the University of Bolton and there are master's courses in cognitive behavioural psychotherapies in partnership with the University of Bolton and marine engineering management and global shipping management, in partnership with the University of Greenwich.

In Thessaloniki, a selection of these courses, chosen for local market demand, is offered. These are, with partners SUNY/ESC, bachelor's degrees in business administration, management, psychology, international relations; with the University of Greenwich a bachelor's degree in ELELT; with the University of Toulouse, bachelor's degrees in management and an MBA with the University of Bolton. The course curricula are the same in the two cities.

Many of the programmes have small numbers of students. Twelve courses have 10 or less students and can be taken part-time. At undergraduate level, the Bachelor of Management in partnership with the University of Toulouse is the biggest course with 94 full-time students. The MBA in partnership with the University of Bolton is the biggest postgraduate course with 80 students.

NYC Athens enrolled 813 students and NYC Thessaloniki 100 students for the spring semester 2018. Of the 913, 742 are full-time and 171 part-time. The balance between full-time and part-time students has changed since the previous academic year, when 899 full-time and 24 part-time students were registered. However, the underlying reason for the change is administrative, with students previously registered as full-time being reclassified as part-time to reflect that they were completing their programme on a part-time basis.

NYC teachers teach courses across the NYC course portfolio, irrespective of the NYC partner university. The majority are part-time. There are 45 permanent full-time teaching staff, three of whom are based in Thessaloniki and 106 part-time, including 21 in Thessaloniki. There are 18 permanent full-time members of management, four in Thessaloniki and seven part-time managers, four in Thessaloniki. Of the 32 permanent full-time administrative staff, seven are based in Thessaloniki.

Courses are taught in English, except for the Toulouse-linked course, the first two years of which are taught in Greek. Students are required to have a good standard of English before starting programmes and, for students whose native language is not English, standards of performance in an English language test are specified in the admission requirements.

3. Inspection process

The inspection was conducted for half a day by one inspector at the Thessaloniki site. Meetings were held with the Head of Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance, other members of the senior management team and with teaching staff. There was a lesson observation of a class of the University of Toulouse-linked management course, the biggest course on the Thessaloniki site and discussions were held with students from the course.

4. Inspection history

Re-accreditation inspection:	23-25 February 2016
Interim inspection:	28 April 2014
Re-accreditation inspection:	18-19 May 2011
Interim inspection:	27 April 2010
Re-accreditation inspection:	15-16 May 2006
Interim inspection:	18 February 2002
Full accreditation inspection:	29-30 January 2001

PART B – JUDGMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgments and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector(s) during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

In September 2016, NYC in Thessaloniki relocated to a seven-storey modern building, which includes classrooms, a computer laboratory, which can also be used as a classroom, library, Audio-Visual (AV) facilities, student cafeteria and lounge and offices for student support services and administration. Unlike the previous building, it is in the centre of the city, which is intended to increase the Institution's visibility as well as improve student access.

The portfolio of programmes has been expanded with the addition of three Athens-based undergraduate degree programmes in marine engineering and navigation, both with the Technical University of Varna, and computer games programming with the University of Bolton.

The Institution is planning a major expansion of its provision in conjunction with the University of Bolton to meet market demands and boost recruitment. A three phase roll out is planned, beginning in the coming academic year with six bachelor's degrees in computing; hospitality management; psychology, psychotherapy and counselling; medical biology; business management and media writing and production as well as three master's degrees in software engineering; logistics and supply chain management and crisis management in the health sector. The second phase, beginning in 2019 to 2020, is for seven bachelor's and master's courses, with another seven in phase three. A potential increase in the portfolio of the Thessaloniki-based courses with Bolton University is under discussion. The Institution is confident that the expanded portfolio of programmes can be delivered effectively. They also plan to increase library resources and the students have electronic access to Bolton's main library.

A Head of Analytics has been appointed, reporting to the President. Since autumn 2016, the focus of this role has been to collect and analyse data for various departments, including marketing, recruitment and student retention, with the results being fed into planning and actions.

2. Response to action points in last report

10.2 The Institution must, to strengthen its research activity, establish a research committee which can develop a strategic approach to research, evaluate research proposals and encourage research collaboration wherever possible.

NYC has not established a research committee. NYC sees itself primarily as a teaching institution and recognises that research activity is not an integral part of its operation as yet. Budgetary considerations do not permit the implementation of a co-ordinated research policy and, whilst the Institution's research activity has been strengthened and considerable research is now undertaken, it continues to be sporadic. NYC has an aspiration to have a research committee once a more developed framework is in place. A research committee would provide a focal point to foster and support research development that enriches teaching and learning.

13.3 To assign a specific named staff member as a contact person for students in case of emergency.

The name and mobile telephone number of a designated member of staff is provided for all students, at registration, on noticeboards and on the intranet.

27.6 To introduce a procedure whereby a systematic overview is taken at Institution level of reports from all parts of its operation, and where strategic decisions are subsequently taken for enhancement, using action plans.

The appointment of the Head of Analytics has increased NYC's ability to take information from various areas of the Institution's activity and use it to take strategic decisions. The strengthening of the recording of meetings provides a structure for more effective reporting. A calendar of academic procedures has been created, which specifies the actions planned for the academic year ahead, assigning responsibilities for actions and tracking achievement. Annual reports are made to partner institutions. As a licensed institution, the Institution makes reports to the Greek Minister for Education, Research and Religious Affairs. The strategic plan and the inclusion of a risk register in the plan will add another element of systematic overview and enhance strategic decision making. As a result, a framework for systematic overview is in place. However, the various components have not been consolidated into a comprehensive specified procedure, which would add clarity and avoid overlap.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

To establish a more developed and formal risk assessment register, which takes into account all of the Institution's areas of operation and which is periodically and systematically reviewed.

A risk assessment register will be part of the strategic plan to be produced in September 2018. This assessment and management of external and internal risk is particularly important given the number of NYC's partners and the planned expansion of collaboration with Bolton.

To continue to work on the development and implementation of the Institution's appraisal system, including its enhancement and development aspects.

NYC has worked on the development and implementation of the appraisal system. Administrative staff are evaluated by heads of departments. However, it is not a regular formal process and the results are not systematically recorded. NYC has organised a workshop for heads of department in relation to setting up an effective administrative staff appraisal process and has developed training tools for the staff on carrying out appraisals and on defining and measuring competencies.

To strengthen further the formal minuting and recording of key committee meetings, including identified action points for those meetings where formal decisions are taken.

NYC has strengthened minuting and the inclusion of action points to improve reporting. NYC has initiated weekly administrative meetings attended by the heads of all administrative departments and the minutes include action points and are presented to the Board of Directors. All Academic Council meetings are now properly minuted, improving the transparency of its discussion and decisions.

To strengthen the Institution's support for staff research, for instance by establishing a research committee which can develop a strategic approach to research, evaluate research proposals and encourage research collaboration wherever possible.

Within the constraints of its budget and emphasis on teaching as a key performance indicator, the Institution has made some progress in encouraging and supporting research. Research outputs are primarily produced by part-time staff members, who have a smaller teaching workload. However, research activity is considered in recruiting staff, and staff confirmed they were encouraged and, in some cases, financially supported to engage in scholarly activity and to keep up-to-date with current research in their subject area.

NYC is trying to strengthen research via collaborative initiatives with partner institutions, co-funded by the partner institution. The imminent expansion in the number of courses to be run collaboration with the University of Bolton may provide another opportunity for cross-institutional research and research funding. Examples of research papers and projects and a symposium demonstrate there is some joint activity with partners. NYC reports that it plans to develop a research framework to plan and monitor research outputs, but details are still being worked out.

4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements – spot check

4.1 Governance, Strategy and Financial Management

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<p>Comments</p> <p>There are formal agreements in place with the partner universities. The recent agreement with the University of Greenwich clearly and comprehensively specifies responsibilities for example in relation to programme management and quality assurance and enhancement. This provides a robust framework.</p> <p>NYC is in the process of developing its next five-year strategic plan and wants to make the process more participative. The Institution has recently, in March 2018, asked all staff to complete a questionnaire giving their views on NYC's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities and will factor the results into the development of the strategic plan. This represents a positive way of fostering staff contribution to the process.</p> <p>Ongoing planning and monitoring will be required to ensure that NYC's physical and human resources keep pace with the expanded course portfolio and that NYC maintains programme quality.</p>				

4.2 Academic Management and Administration

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
<p>Comments</p> <p>The appraisal of teachers' performance includes students' views monitored by anonymous questionnaires, face-to-face meetings, and feedback from class representatives. Individual staff scores are analysed against the average score, with the outcome factored into staff development needs. This is an appropriate process.</p> <p>In Spring 2016, a useful new reporting system was introduced, enabling individual academic staff members to compare their results with colleagues in the same department. Actions are agreed with the teacher and monitored by the programme director.</p> <p>Staff development days with interactive workshops on pedagogical subjects are held with the support and/or participation of partner universities. While an event may be provided by a particular partner, appropriately almost all NYC faculty members participate given that they teach courses across the NYC programme portfolio.</p> <p>A peer teaching observation scheme has been adopted by some departments, such as Psychology in Athens and the English Department in Thessaloniki, whereby members of faculty observe colleagues, fill in an observation form and meet afterwards for feedback and self-reflection. This forms a positive addition to the staff development process that should be expanded.</p>				

4.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be		✓		
Comments				

Teaching skills are good. Students are very satisfied with their NYC experience, reporting that there is clarity about the semester curriculum and assessment deadlines before the semester begins.

NYC has made a coordinated effort to increase staff and student usage of the e-learning platform, including incorporating effective use of e-learning into teachers' evaluation. More teachers now use the virtual learning environment (VLE) to stimulate interest and promote active learning, with examples given from the undergraduate degrees in Psychology and ELELT.

10.2 NYC has not yet established a research committee which would provide a focal point to foster and support research development that enriches teaching and learning.

4.4 Student Recruitment, Support, Guidance and Progression

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				
<p>NYC has strengthened the recruitment team and spent more of its promotional budget on a digital campaign. It also reviewed a sample of the SUNY/ESC courses, in order to modernise them and boost recruitment. Feedback from the partner institution, current students, alumni and employers resulted in changes to both courses, including adding new electives. This stakeholder involvement is appropriate.</p> <p>A student retention action plan has been drawn up and is being implemented. Changes to SUNY/ESC curricula, mentoring students on specific issues, for example in writing research papers and a psychology of adjustment session for new entrants are being used to raise the retention rate. This identification of challenges and taking systematic action to address them is commendable.</p> <p>Developing students' employability is a priority. Companies participating in careers fairs are asked to rate both the fair and NYC's students and analysis is factored into future fairs. Potential employers' feedback about NYC students is included in annual monitoring reports to inform partner universities about the need for initiatives or curricula revisions.</p> <p>NYC emphasises the benefits of student placements. Programme leaders and tutors mobilise their professional contacts to provide opportunities for practical or volunteer work for their students. Students praised the Institution's careers support, felt that the Institution enhanced their employability and commended the Institution for helping them to build a real connection with the world of work</p> <p>Counselling services have been strengthened by increasing the hours of a chartered psychologist on the Athens campus.</p>				

4.5 Premises, Facilities and Learning Resources

19. The institution has secure possession of and access to its premises

19.1	The institution has secure tenure on its premises	YES		
19.2	The institution has the legal right to use these premises for the delivery of higher education	YES		
19.3	Where required, the institution has access to suitable external premises for academic or non-academic purposes of a temporary or occasional nature.	YES		
	Met	Partially met	Not met	
This standard is judged to be	✓			
Comments				
<p>The buildings in Athens and Thessaloniki are both leased. Leases are for ten years and renewable. The Athens building has been leased since 1990, while the Thessaloniki building is in year three of its ten-year lease.</p>				

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20. The premises provide a safe, secure and clean environment for students and staff

20.1	Access to the premises is appropriately restricted and secured.	YES
20.2	The premises are maintained in an adequate state of repair, decoration and cleanliness	YES
20.3	There are specific safety rules in areas of particular hazard (e.g. science laboratories), made readily available to students, staff and visitors.	YES
20.4	General guidance on health and safety is made available to students, staff and visitors.	YES
20.5	There is adequate signage inside and outside of the premises and notice boards for the display of general information.	YES
20.6	There is adequate circulation space for the number of students and staff accommodated, and a suitable area in which to receive visitors.	YES
20.7	There are toilet and handwashing facilities of an appropriate number and acceptable level of cleanliness.	YES
20.8	There is adequate air conditioning, heating and ventilation in all rooms.	YES

	Met	Partially met	Not met
This standard is judged to be	✓		

Comments

The Thessaloniki building is modern, well-decorated and very clean. The students are very happy with the premises and its facilities, praising its design, spaciousness, number of classrooms and computer laboratory. Signage is very good.

In Athens, as well as standard annual upgrading, maintenance and refurbishing, the Institution has introduced new digital printing facilities, changes of lighting in all classrooms, a total ban on smoking and the provision of additional seating in outdoor areas.

21. Classrooms and other learning areas are appropriate for the programmes offered

21.1	Classrooms and other learning areas provide adequate accommodation in size and number for the classes (e.g. lectures, seminars, tutorials) allocated to them.	YES
21.2	Classrooms and any specialised learning areas (e.g. laboratories, clinics, workshops, studios) are equipped to a level which allows for the effective delivery of each programme.	YES
21.3	There are facilities suitable for conducting assessments such as examinations.	YES

	Met	Partially met	Not met
This standard is judged to be	✓		

Comments

Classrooms are well-equipped with audio-visual equipment, projectors, and whiteboards. There is a computer laboratory, which is also used as a classroom, with approximately 15 computers.

22. There are appropriate additional facilities for students and staff

22.1	Students have access to sufficient space and suitable facilities for private individual study and group work.	YES
22.2	Academic staff have access to sufficient personal space for preparing lessons, marking work and consultations with students.	YES
22.3	Students and staff have access to space and facilities suitable for relaxation and the consumption of food and drink where appropriate.	YES
22.4	Students and staff have access to secure storage for personal possessions where appropriate.	YES
22.5	There are individual offices or rooms in which academic staff and senior management can hold private meetings and a room of sufficient size to hold staff meetings.	YES
22.6	Administrative offices are adequate in size and resources for the effective administration of the institution.	YES

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
This standard is judged to be	✓			
Comments Students reported that they particularly enjoyed the space they had in which to relax. Student support services and administrative offices, including the admissions office, careers office and student affairs office, are all satisfactory.				

4.6 Quality Management, Assurance and Enhancement

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be		✓		
Comments The Institution's programmes are collaboratively developed and formally approved through systematic procedures conducted by its partner universities. Agreements state that continuing approval is subject to the satisfactory outcome of annual monitoring and periodic review and the implementation of any specification by the partner. This provides a valuable opportunity for quality monitoring. The Institution's renewal of its Memoranda of Agreement with the University of Greenwich was preceded by a six-month Partnership Critical Review process culminating in a Partnership Validation Event. NYC used the process as an opportunity for the NYC senior management team, teaching staff and students to reflect on best practices and areas for improvement. A customer service workshop has been organised for May 2018 to continue staff training in quality enhancement. 27.6 NYC has a framework for systematic overview in place but it is not currently consolidated into a specified procedure.				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

INSTITUTION'S STRENGTHS
<p>The Institution is dynamic, as demonstrated by the new building, its plans to expand its partnership with Bolton, and its curricula reviews and revisions.</p> <p>There is a commendable pattern of the Institution identifying a challenge, gathering and analysing the necessary information, acting to tackle the issue and then monitoring the results. The Head of Analytics post has strengthened the evidence base for decision-making. Where there are concerns, for example, in recruitment or drop-out rates on particular courses, NYC works systematically to identify barriers and find solutions.</p> <p>NYC has a commendable emphasis and useful initiatives on student work placements, careers fairs and employability.</p> <p>The building in Thessaloniki provides an impressive environment for students. They are very satisfied with it and with their NYC experience as a whole.</p> <p>The teachers interviewed feel respected, trusted and supported by the Institution.</p>

ACTIONS REQUIRED	Priority H/M/L
10.2 The Institution must establish a research committee to form a focal point for promoting and co-ordinating research activity.	M
27.6 NYC must consolidate the various elements of reporting in the Institution into a specific single procedure and evaluate if there is scope to streamline any of its elements.	H

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
NYC should continue to work on the development of a risk register, ensuring that it is comprehensive and that there is a process for regular monitoring and mitigation of risks.
NYC should continue to work towards full implementation of an appraisal system for non-academic staff until a comprehensive system is introduced.
The Institution should seek to expand its research activity, including finalising its research framework and increasing collaboration with partner universities.
The Institution is recommended to undertake on-going planning and monitoring to ensure that the physical and human resources in Athens and Thessaloniki keep pace with the growth in courses and student numbers and that programme quality is maintained.
NYC should consider extending the peer observation system to all teachers.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS	
Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	YES
Further comments, if applicable	