

ACCREDITATION SERVICE FOR INTERNATIONAL COLLEGES

ASIC

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1. ASIC Officers, Advisory Board and Office Staff

Officers:	Chairman	Mr Maurice K Dimmock
	CEO	Mr Lee Hammond
	Head of Accreditation	Professor John Wilson
	Qualifications Advisor/ Senior Inspector	Dr Lawrence Watson
	Accreditation Advisor	Mrs Christine Wilson
Office Staff:	Liesle Hattan	Accounts Manager
	Barry Wadrop	Applications Manager
	Florence Waniwa	Communications Manager
Inspectors:	Senior Inspector & Health & Safety Advisor	Mr Mike Coulson
	Senior Inspector	Professor Elizabeth Gillott
	Mr David Straughan	ASIC Inspector
	Mr Peter Casey	ASIC Inspector
	Mr David Nixon	ASIC Inspector
	Rev Pete Spence	ASIC Inspector
	Rev Jim Wright	ASIC Inspector
	Mrs Nicole Brown	ASIC Inspector
	Mrs Nicola Nobes	ASIC Inspector
	Dr Dave Taylor	ASIC Inspector
	Mr Graham Minshaw	ASIC Inspector
	Mr Graeme Ronald	ASIC Inspector

Office Contact Details: ASIC House
13 Yarm Road Tel: 01740 617 920
Stockton on Tees Fax: 01740 617 929
TS18 3NJ

ASIC Advisory Board:

An Advisory Board has been established comprising those people who can bring added value to ASIC in terms of the advice and guidance they can provide on improving the services of ASIC to its Colleges.

Those who have agreed to act in this capacity include:

Mr Michael Elms (CEO of Hotcourses),
Mr John Lyons (Chartered Account),
Mr Jeremy Spooner (Barrister at Law),
Mr Mike Coulson (Health and Safety Officer)
Mr David Straughan (Internal Audit)
Mr Peter Spence (Clergyman)

It is hoped that representatives from organisations such as the following will also agree to act in this capacity:

The UK Visas and Immigration Agency; Ofsted; UKCISA; UCAS; Sponsors Management Unit of the Home Office and UKNARIC.

2. Introduction

Following widespread and increasing concern over the behaviour of some colleges* in the private sector, which largely cater for international students, the Government recently identified the need for a more rigorous system for accrediting colleges involved in recruiting international students. Accordingly, a proposal for the mandatory accreditation of education providers, wishing to bring international students into the UK, was included in the Government's Command Paper "A Points Based System: Making Migration Work for Britain".

In response to this proposal, the Quality Study Abroad Network (QISAN) together with a number of professional practitioners with considerable experience in recruiting international students for universities, further education colleges and schools/EFL colleges and in establishing collaborative arrangements between overseas institutions and UK partners, decided to establish an embryo accrediting body, namely the Accreditation Service for International Colleges (ASIC).

Given their collective experience, the members of this group were well aware of:

- The existence of colleges, which appeared to focus largely on bringing into the UK as potential students young people, whose main aim is to become an illegal economic immigrant,
- Colleges which, although genuine and sometimes accredited educational institutions, provided their students with a poor experience, sometimes placing them on inappropriate programmes and offering qualifications, which were not formally recognised,
- Quite reputable colleges, and indeed some universities, which were not well prepared to cater for all of the needs of international students,
- A number of colleges, which fabricated details of attendance on class registers and which did not inform the Home Office of students who disappeared from their courses,
- The difficulty that the Entrance Clearance Officers, students and their parents have in finding accurate information about the colleges.

ASIC, therefore, fully recognises the pressing need for a robust and transparent approach to ensuring that colleges, to the best of their ability, only recruit genuine and appropriately qualified students and that they provide the best possible student experience in terms of the students achieving their maximum academic potential whilst having their social and pastoral needs fully addressed. In recent years, bodies such as the Quality Assurance Agency, the British Accreditation Council and FEQC have monitored higher and further education providers in these respects, but members of the group have visited several smaller, especially private, colleges and noted that they fall short of what is acceptable.

A related issue of concern is the behaviour of some education agents/representatives, who do not provide students with an acceptable, ethical advisory service, in terms of their giving poor, ill-informed advice and charging high fees.

*** Throughout this Handbook the term college has been used to include all relevant educational institutions, whatever their name.**

In response to this unsatisfactory situation, one of the founder members of ASIC had previously established QISAN to work on behalf of students, their parents, sponsors, colleges and agents in order to address some of these concerns and to ensure that students receive the best possible advice and assistance with their college and visa applications and travel arrangements at a reasonable cost. The aim was to ensure, equally importantly, that students could be confident that they will attend a reputable college offering high quality academic programmes and full student support.

It is intended that ASIC will be a not-for-profit Company, which will undertake accreditation of colleges by inspectors/assessors, who have a wealth of relevant experience, under the guidance of the Advisory Board. While the assessment leading to accreditation will cover the whole range of facilities, resources and activities of the colleges (see Areas of Operation below), there will be a focus on the whole student experience and staff development relevant to this, which will be guided by the knowledge and experience gained by QISAN over the past three or four years.

The student experience is seen as beginning with the recruitment and admission processes and these will be subject to particular scrutiny, including a review of systems for the appointment and management of agents and of the criteria used in assessing student applications. Similarly, there will be careful evaluation of the systems for monitoring the effectiveness as well as the frequency of student participation in the courses on which they are enrolled. A major element of accreditation will be to ensure that the colleges have efficient and transparent methods of tracking international students' performance and attendance and that they have systems in place to inform the Border and Immigration Agency (Home Office) of non-compliance.

The accreditation will initially assess the college's ability to meet the Home Office's minimum criteria for acceptance on the DfES's Register of Education and Training Providers (see Appendix 1). Indeed, the recognition of ASIC as an accrediting body is based on its ability to reassure the Home Office that these criteria are being met.

In order to satisfy the needs of other stakeholders as mentioned above, ASIC has identified the following Areas of Operation, which will each be assessed and given a grade of Commendable, Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. These grades will not only be taken into account in deciding whether or not to award accreditation to a college, but will also be helpful in enabling students to make informed choices on where they might study.

Areas of Operation:

- A. Premises and Health and Safety
- B. Management and Staff Resources
- C. Learning and Teaching; Course Delivery
- D. Quality Assurance and Enhancement
- E. Student Welfare
- F. Awards and Qualifications
- G. Marketing and Recruitment
- H. Compliance with UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) Regulations and Reporting Mechanisms.

Also, in the interests of transparency, ASIC will host a dedicated website (Appendix 2), which will highlight key aspects of a college's inspection report, as it is felt that this will also be beneficial to students and their parents in helping with the decision-making process. This will, of course, also be accessible to others including government bodies and other sponsors, which may award scholarships to students. Further development of the site will include student comments, relevant international news and information from bodies such as the Home Office and British Council.

As ASIC is keen to encourage the private colleges to develop a student-centred approach to their operations, it is suggested that the colleges may wish to consider applying to become members of UKCISA for guidance in this respect.

Ongoing development with the accredited colleges will incorporate training programmes on topics such as high-quality and ethical student recruitment methods, recruiting and monitoring the work of agents, development of admission systems and assistance in the development of codes of practice and ethics policies.

Such activities will be funded through the accreditation annual fee (see Section 7).

Accredited Colleges are entitled to use the ASIC logo and any promotional materials produced by ASIC as long as they retain their accreditation. In the event of a college terminating its membership of ASIC or having its accreditation withdrawn, the college will be deemed to have given an implied undertaking to ASIC that its logo and promotional materials will not be used further.

3. Accreditation

3.1 Introduction

ASIC is an independent body, recognised by the UK Visas and Immigration Agency (Home Office) and approved by Ofsted, which provides an accreditation service for independent further and higher education colleges.

ASIC accreditation gives reassurance to potential international (overseas) students, their parents and education representatives that the operation of their chosen college conforms with relevant United Kingdom laws and offers genuine courses, which are delivered to appropriate standards with acceptable quality, and which lead to recognised qualifications. Accreditation also provides reassurance to the Border and Immigration Agency that the college meets their requirements (section 4.2 H) and, in general, does not harm the perceived quality of the United Kingdom education provision.

Accreditation is based upon the on-site inspection of the full range of the college's provision and supporting activities, together with a detailed consideration of the college's external (statutory) and internal documentation, which helps to ensure that the ongoing operation of the college is maintained at an acceptable level.

In general, ASIC will consider applications for accreditation from colleges which offer full-time courses (typically lasting 30 weeks per calendar year with 15 hours' tuition per week) leading to awards, which may be "internal", that is the college's own awards, or "external", such as those validated by professional/examining bodies or UK universities and moderated by external examiners or assessors. The accreditation process also includes a consideration of whether or not the academic level of internal awards is appropriate to enable the students to progress to further study within the college or elsewhere in the UK, or to relevant employment. Colleges are strongly recommended to involve experienced external moderators in the assessment of their internal courses to ensure that this is the case.

Colleges delivering courses leading to awards and degrees from overseas institutions may also be accredited provided that the awarding bodies are formally recognised as being *bona fide* (see Areas of Operation).

3.2 The Accreditation Process

Colleges considering accreditation by ASIC should download an Application Form from the website, which should be completed and returned together with copies of the statutory (external) and college's documentation as detailed in the Application Form (relevant websites are listed in Appendix 3).

There are then three stages in the accreditation process, namely:

Stage 1 – Scrutiny of the Application Form and the Accompanying Documentation.

If the information provided, which is assessed by a member of the ASIC Accreditation Committee, that is, the Assessor, is acceptable the process moves to

Stage 2. If it is not acceptable, the college may be advised either on actions to take to rectify the perceived shortcomings, or that it is unlikely that ASIC would accredit it at this stage of its development. There is a fee payable at Stage 1 (see Section 7).

Stage 2 – Initial Inspection Visit

Will normally comprise a one day visit by an ASIC Inspector, who will focus on the college's compliance with statutory and the UKVI requirements, management, student support, premises and the adequacy of the teaching resources for the advertised courses. The visiting inspector will also discuss the format of and the arrangements for the Stage 3 inspection visit with the Principal* and senior management of the college.

However, if the college has recently been accredited by a recognised body, it may be possible to avoid the need for a Stage 2 visit. In this case any queries or clarification which might be required can be resolved by telephone or e-mail.

When a Stage 2 visit has occurred, the visiting inspector will submit a report of the visit, which will recommend whether or not interim accreditation is recommended or whether to proceed straight to Stage 3 and also identify any shortcomings that the college may need to address before the Stage 3 event takes place.

The Stage 2 report will be considered by the Accreditation Committee (see section 3.6), which will decide whether or not to confirm the recommendations and/or interim accreditation. If it is decided not to proceed to Stage 3, the college will be informed of the reasons for this, help in rectifying the shortcomings will be offered, the college will be given the opportunity to appeal and present grounds for requesting a review of the inspector's report.

There will be a fee for the Stage 2 visit (see Section 7).

Stage 3 – Accreditation Inspection Visit

The college will be contacted regarding the arrangements for the Stage 3 inspection visit; should the college not agree a date for this within twelve months of the Stage 2 visit the application will be deemed to have lapsed.

While all eight Areas of Operation, identified in Section 1 and downloadable from our website, will be covered during the inspection, there will be an emphasis on academic matters, including learning and teaching, resources and quality management, together with student welfare and reporting mechanisms (links to the UKVI). The inspectors will also ensure that the college has responded satisfactorily to issues raised during Stage 2. In general inspectors will seek to encourage colleges to look for ways in which they might continue to improve their provision and suggest ways in which this might be achieved.

The inspection will normally last two days, though for small colleges with fewer than 200 ftes and a limited academic programme this may be reduced to one day. The number of inspectors involved will depend on the size of the college and diversity of the academic programme but there will be a minimum of two and a maximum of

* The term Principal has been used throughout for the Head of the College.

three. As a general guide, colleges with fewer than 1,000 ftes and not more than six courses will be visited by two inspectors while larger and more diverse colleges will be visited by a team of three. One of the inspectors will be designated as the lead or Reporting Inspector with responsibility for writing the report of the whole accreditation process including the findings of the Stage 3 visit, while the other inspector(s) will be designated as Supporting Inspector(s).

The report will cover each of the eight Areas, identifying points of strength and of weakness, which should be addressed. The report will summarise these under the heading “Recommendations to the College”.

The inspectors will recommend a grade of Commendable, Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory to each Area, which helps to determine the outcome of the inspection and accreditation process as a whole (see Section 3.3).

There will be a fee for the Stage 3 visit (see Section 7).

3.3 Accreditation Decisions.

The final report encompassing the findings from the Stage 3 visit will be considered by the ASIC Accreditation Committee, which will determine one of the following outcomes:

- **award accreditation** for a total period not exceeding four years, after which accreditation must be renewed,
- **refuse accreditation** either on the grounds that the inspectors believe that the college does not meet the requirements for being placed on the **Register of Tier 4 Sponsors (Students)** under the Points based System of immigration, or that there are other serious shortcomings in provision, in which case the college has the right of appeal, the procedures for which are set out in Section 6,
- **defer a decision** when it is perceived that there are weaknesses in the college’s provision which it is felt could be rectified in a period not normally exceeding three months. Typically, the college will be given a number of conditions to meet and when it is believed that these have been met there will be a further visit to the college to confirm that that is the case.

As outlined earlier, the accreditation process will involve the consideration and assessment of eight identified Areas of the Operation of the college as a whole. These Areas, which are not, of course, independent of one another, are:

- A. Premises and Health and Safety
- B. Management and Staff Resources
- C. Learning and Teaching; Course Delivery
- D. Quality Assurance and Enhancement
- E. Student Welfare
- F. Awards and Qualifications
- G. Marketing and Student Recruitment
- H. Compliance with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) Regulations and Reporting Mechanisms.

Detailed descriptions of these areas are downloadable from our website.

The grades, which can be attributed by the Stage 3 inspectors to each of these areas, are:

- Commendable** - representing good practice and a very good level of provision
- Satisfactory** - representing generally satisfactory practice and a level of provision, which meets the expected threshold standards for accreditation identified in the detailed descriptions of the areas of operation. Some minor shortcomings in provision may be acceptable, but the essential conditions specifically relating to immigration have been met.
- Unsatisfactory** - representing weak/unsatisfactory practice with significant weaknesses, which do not meet the expected threshold standards.

To be awarded **full accreditation** for a period of four years, colleges must normally obtain at least a satisfactory grade in each area of assessment. Accreditation may still be awarded, however, if colleges fall just below the expected threshold standard in not more than two areas other than Learning and Teaching, Student Welfare and Quality Assurance providing the identified weaknesses can be addressed quickly.

Colleges with unsatisfactory grades in any of the three areas identified above, or which do not operate within statutory requirements in any area, are unlikely to be granted accreditation.

Colleges which do not meet the requirements of the UK Border Agency will not be granted accreditation.

Colleges which are deemed by the Accreditation Committee to have satisfied a number of indicators of commendable provision in identified sub-areas in each Area of Operation will be awarded a commendable grade for that Area and those colleges which are awarded commendable grades in at least six Areas, normally including Areas B, C, D and E, will be awarded Commendable overall. These colleges will have **ASIC Premier College** status.

3.4 Interim Accreditation

As observation of classes and meetings with students are mandatory aspects of the Stage 3 visit, new institutions which satisfy statutory and UKVI requirements, if appropriate, and which have all of the facilities required to begin to deliver courses may be considered for interim accreditation for a period normally of up to twelve months. This period gives a new institution time to become established and recruit at least one significant cohort of students after which a standard Stage 3 visit would be undertaken with a view to considering the institution for full accreditation. Interim Accreditation may be awarded after a standard Stage 2 Accreditation visit and the fee is the same (see Section 7). The annual fee is payable when the institution gains any accreditation following an Accreditation visit.

3.5 Continuing Accreditation

To be considered for accreditation, colleges must agree that they will submit regular (annual) reports on their on-going operation as outlined below in Section 3.5, receive a one day interim visit during the four year accreditation period and be prepared, if selected, to receive a random, unannounced visit to confirm that the requirements of accreditation are being maintained.

It is likely that the interim visit will be brought forward, or a second visit arranged, if there are significant changes in the operation of the college, such as a change of ownership, appointment of new senior staff, introduction of new courses affecting more than 30% of the enrolment or a major expansion of the premises is planned.

A visit will also take place if any genuine complaints about the college are received by ASIC (or a Government Body) in an attempt to resolve the complaint satisfactorily and expeditiously. The Complaints Procedures are presented in Section 5.

If the college declines to provide regular reports or to receive any of the visits identified above then accreditation will be withdrawn and the UK Border Agency informed.

ASIC will endeavour to minimise the number of visits to colleges between accreditation and re-accreditation. It is important to emphasise, however, that it is a condition of ASIC's recognition as an accrediting body by the Border and Immigration Agency that it will investigate any genuine complaints about the colleges they have accredited, especially if these relate to immigration requirements.

Whether or not the UK Border Agency is the complainant, ASIC will inform the Border and Immigration Agency of the progress and outcomes of the investigation. Colleges may lose points on the Register of Sponsoring Institutions, which will be introduced in the near future, if they decline to collaborate with the investigation or are found to have been complicit in a breach of the visa requirements. Colleges, which have knowingly allowed such a breach to occur, will have their accreditation withdrawn, with no right of appeal and the Border and Immigration Agency informed accordingly.

There will be no fees or expenses payable for interim visits, random visits and visits arising from complaints.

3.6 Annual Reports

Colleges which have been accredited are expected to submit an annual report commencing one year after the date of full accreditation. The report should include:

- Statements from the college Principal
 - a) confirming the college's continued compliance with statutory requirements,
 - b) confirming the college's continued financial viability, attaching the latest set of audited accounts, and

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- c) identifying any significant changes in the operation of the college, such as change of ownership, changes in senior management, location of main accommodation or changes in course provision.
 - Details of the courses delivered in the previous year, including numbers of enrolled students and pass rates.
 - An outline of planned developments in accommodation, course provision or links with other awarding bodies.
 - Details of any other issues which may impinge on the accreditation of the college.

3.6 The Accreditation Committee

The Accreditation Committee will make all decisions regarding the award of accreditation, continuing accreditation and the withdrawal/suspension of accreditation on the basis of a) evidence provided by the Reporting Inspectors following inspection visits, b) evidence arising from the consideration of complaints and appeals and c) documentation provided by the colleges themselves.

ASIC will endeavour to arrange meetings of the Accreditation Committee at least monthly, but also as and when required in the interests of dealing with colleges' applications within reasonable timescales. It is intended that the time which elapses from the receipt of a college's completed Application Form until the final decision on accreditation is forwarded to the college should not normally exceed three months.

In addition to making decisions regarding colleges' accreditation, the Committee will meet regularly, normally annually, to review ASIC's conditions for accreditation and any alterations in statutory regulations (which will be forwarded to the accredited colleges and those seeking accreditation).

The Accreditation Committee will normally be Chaired by the Head of Accreditation or a Deputy Chair appointed from the Committee.

The membership, in addition to the Head of Accreditation, will comprise the Chief Executive (or his/her nominee), the Qualifications Advisor, the Senior Inspector, the Accreditation Advisor, the Accreditation Manager and one other experienced ASIC Inspector, appointed by the Chair and Chief Executive, together with appropriate, experienced co-opted members.

The quorum for meetings will require the Chair and Chief Executive and/or the Deputy Chair to be present along with a minimum of two other members. The Reporting Inspectors will not be required to attend unless the decision is likely to be contentious. This arrangement will ensure that, in the event of an appeal, members of the Accreditation Committee, who were not involved in the original decision concerning the college, can become independent members of the Appeals Committee as described in section 6.2.

The Accreditation Committee may delegate authority to the Chair and/or Chief Executive to take decisions on progression from Stage 1 to Stage 2 and from Stage 2 to Stage 3 which will be ratified at a subsequent meeting of the Committee.

4. Inspection Schedule

4.1 Introduction

As described in Section 3, the accreditation process includes one or more visits to colleges, which are applying for accreditation, by ASIC inspectors, who will meet relevant staff, inspect premises, observe course delivery, meet students and verify documentation.

All ASIC inspectors must confirm before they undertake a visit that there would be no conflict of interest involved, that all information they receive will be regarded as strictly confidential and that they will conduct the inspection in a courteous and professional manner following the ASIC code of conduct. The college will be informed of the identity and background of the inspectors before the visit and provided with a copy of the code of conduct.

The general nature of Stage 2 and Stage 3 visits is outlined in Section 3.2, where it is indicated that Stage 2 may involve a visit by one inspector for one day, while Stage 3 will normally involve at least two inspectors for two days. A third inspector may be required for visits to larger colleges (more than 1,000 ftes) or those with a diverse academic programme.

While relatively little preparation is required for a Stage 2 visit (after receipt of the Application Form and accompanying documentation), Stage 3 visits are more comprehensive as described below.

Colleges are asked to inform all staff and students of the impending visit, to indicate that some staff and students will be required to meet the inspectors and that some teaching sessions will be observed.

The main purposes of the Stage 3 inspection are to assess what is observed during the visit and to consider the evidence regarding the college's ability to maintain and indeed raise standards in the long term. Consideration of the documentation provided before the visit will help in this respect and also, along with the Stage 2 inspection report, helps the inspectors to identify issues within the eight Areas of Operation, downloadable from our website, which will be discussed with key staff.

The precise format of a Stage 3 inspection visit is likely to vary in relation to the size, nature, location and complexity of the college, though the likely format will be agreed during the Stage 2 visit or by correspondence between the Principal and ASIC staff. It is expected, however, that the inspectors will:

- meet the Principal,
- hold an introductory meeting with all staff if possible, or with senior staff, to introduce themselves and outline the nature of the inspection,
- undertake an initial tour of all of the premises,
- undertake a detailed survey of the library,
- assess the IT provision for staff and students,
- assess laboratory and audio visual equipment,

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- visit the refreshment areas,
 - meet a representative group of staff without senior managers being present,
 - meet course/subject leaders,
 - observe a number of teaching sessions (and provide informal feedback after the observation),
 - meet a representative group(s) of students without any staff being present,
 - hold a final meeting with the Principal to give an informal report of their findings, but not indicating the likely outcomes of the visit and whether or not accreditation would be granted since the final decision will be made by the Accreditation Committee. Furthermore the Reporting Inspector should indicate that he/she has been instructed not to enter into further dialogue with the Principal at this juncture.

The college will be asked to provide a suggested itinerary for the visit and meetings together with full timetables for all classes taking place during the inspection. The Reporting Inspector will consider these when allocating duties to members of the inspection team. The precise details of the visit, however, may be changed during the initial meeting with the Principal.

The college should also identify the staff that the inspectors are likely to wish to meet for more detailed discussions, but it is expected that these would include:

- The Principal,
- Heads of Department/Course Leaders,
- College Manager/Safety Officer,
- Senior Administrator,
- Librarian,
- IT Manager/Head of Facilities,
- Examinations Officer,
- Accommodation Officer,
- Student Welfare Officer.

Finally, it is suggested that in preparation for the Stage 3 visit the college may find it useful to undertake a “self critical review or audit” of its total operation (see for example, The Ofsted Handbook for Inspecting Colleges and the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 a Self Audit Checklist for Schools.)

4.2 Areas of Operation

To gain a satisfactory threshold accreditation, colleges must normally be deemed to satisfy each of the paragraphs in all eight Areas of Operation.

Colleges which are deemed to satisfy a stipulated number of the indicators of commendable provision (listed at the end of each Area of Operation and marked * throughout the document) and hence achieve a commendable grade for five of the Areas of Operation, normally including Areas B, C, D and E, will be awarded

accreditation with the grade of Commendable overall. Those colleges will have **Premier College** status.

For more information on our Areas of Operation, simply download them from our website.

5. Complaints

5.1 Introduction

ASIC takes complaints seriously and will make every effort to mediate and recommend solutions that are mutually satisfactory for both the parties involved. ASIC however also encourages students to carefully look at the college's refund and complaints procedure thoroughly before signing to the course to avoid any future misunderstandings.

5.2 How ASIC deals with complaints:

- Each complaint is logged by staff and receipt is acknowledged,
- We will check the documents submitted and if further documents are required we will contact the complainant and ask for them,
- We will contact the institution and ask them to investigate the complaint and provide details within 10 working days and then we will look into whether the college has followed its accreditation commitments or not,
- ASIC will inform the complainant of the outcome and any recommendation that would have been made to the college.

In order for ASIC to look into a complaint the following documents should be submitted:

- A written complaint giving full details of the nature of the complaint and evidence to support it such as the college's response to their complaint or proof that a complaint was made to the college,
- Receipts of payments to the college, please note bank statements will not be accepted,
- Any other documents/evidence to support the complaint,
- ASIC may also ask for additional documents to help further investigate the complaint.

The following are situations that ASIC will not be involved in:

- Complaints that are not relevant to the ASIC accreditation,
 - Where a student has failed to follow the college's complaints procedure,
 - Complaints that are made anonymously, by telephone or email. All complaints need to be in writing with evidence and details of the complainant such as name; address; telephone number and email address (if available) and signature,
 - Where not enough evidence to support the complaint has been submitted,
 - Where a student has sought legal advice/commenced legal proceedings against the college,
 - Where there is a contractual agreement between the college and its employees,
 - Where a student has entered into a contractual agreement with the college that negates the college's refund procedure,
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- Where a student has failed to establish the relevance of the course to their needs or establishing that the awarding body is recognised before enrolment.

The procedures detailed above ensure that the complaint is genuine and, similarly, complaints received from or via the UK Border Agency will need to be authenticated.

6. Appeals

6.1 Introduction

It is recognised by ASIC that colleges, which have been refused accreditation or which have had their accreditation withdrawn or suspended, should have access to a fair and expeditious appeals process.

If the Accreditation Committee decides to refuse or withdraw accreditation, the Chief Executive of ASIC will contact the college within 10 working days informing the Principal of the decision and the reasons for it and, furthermore, reminding him/her of the right of appeal.

The Principal, or other appropriate representative of the college, should submit an appeal within a further 10 working days of receipt of the notification of the Accreditation Committee's decision. If the appeal is made by an accredited college, then accreditation will remain in force until the appeals process is completed.

A college may have its accreditation suspended during the period of their accreditation if serious compliance concerns are raised from various sources, which may include UKVI, unannounced inspection visits, substantiated complaints from students/staff. ASIC will then undertake investigations which can include unannounced inspection visits, and accreditation may be suspended for a period of 28 days pending further investigation.

If our concerns have not been addressed satisfactorily the Accreditation Committee will withdraw the college's accreditation.

Colleges which have their accreditation suspended or withdrawn may appeal as described in Section 6.2 of the Accreditation Handbook.

6.2 Procedures

If the college's application for accreditation is rejected after the Stage 2 accreditation visit, the Principal may request that the report of the inspection visit should be reviewed and that additional documentation, responding to the reasons for rejection, may be submitted.

The Accreditation Committee, including members not present at the original meeting which rejected the application, will review the report and consider any new documentation.

If the Accreditation Committee upholds the appeal, then the accreditation process will proceed to Stage 3.

If, however, the Accreditation Committee upholds the original decision then the college has the right of appeal as described below.

A college wishing to appeal against rejection of its application for accreditation after the Stage 2 visit and subsequent review (as described above) or after the Stage 3 inspection visit, or against withdrawal of its accreditation for whatever reason, may

request a hearing by an Appeals Committee of ASIC. The Appeals Committee will comprise Members of the Accreditation Committee and/or Inspectors who were not involved in the original decision.

The appellant should submit a statement setting out the grounds for the appeal, together with any relevant additional documentation, within 15 working days of notification of the intention to appeal. The Appeals Committee will then endeavour to meet not later than 15 working days after receipt of the appeal.

The college has the right to be represented at the meeting, which will also be attended by the Chair of the Accreditation Committee.

The Appeals Committee may decide to:

- dismiss the appeal,
- order a new inspection of the college at ASIC's expense,
- instruct the Accreditation Committee to grant or restore accreditation.

The Chair of the Appeals Committee will submit a report of the meeting to the Chief Executive of ASIC giving the grounds for the decision and making any other recommendations, which the Accreditation Committee should consider.

At this stage the college has no further rights of appeal. Colleges which submit an appeal as described above will be required to pay a fee towards the costs of the Appeals Committee's meeting. This fee will be refunded if the Appeals Committee instructs ASIC to award or restore accreditation.

7. Fees and Expenses for Inspection Visits and Accreditation (UK Only)

(For International Institution fees please contact the ASIC office by phone or email)

7.1 Application for a New Accreditation

Stage 1 - submission of the Application Form and associated documentation, £300.

Stage 2 - one day inspection visit, £1200 + £350 per inspector day (to be included with the application).

Stage 3 - two day inspection visit, £1200 plus £350 per inspector day, normally a minimum of four and maximum of six days, though this may be reduced to two for very small colleges.

Fees for colleges which have previously been accredited by a recognised accrediting agency or for re-accreditation will be:

Stage 1 - application form - £300.

Stage 2 - the one day inspection will not normally be required.

Stage 3 - two day inspection visit - £1200 plus £350 per inspector day.

7.2 Interim Visits

There will be no fees for one day interim inspection visits, random, unannounced visits or inspection visits made in relation to complaints or appeals.

Colleges making an appeal will, however, be required to pay a deposit of £1000 for a full appeal or £750 for a review appeal, which will be refunded if the appeal is successful.

7.3 Annual Accreditation Fee.

The annual fee will depend on the number of full time equivalent students there are in the college as follows:

- up to 200 ftes : £1000,
- 200 to 400 ftes : £2000,
- over 400 ftes : £3000.

The first annual fee will be due immediately after accreditation is announced.

7.4 Payments of Fees and Expenses

Colleges are normally required to have paid all of the fees and expenses associated with their application for accreditation before the final outcome of the application is released. Colleges which do not conform with this requirement or which delay payment of the annual fee by more than three months will be assumed to have withdrawn from the accreditation process and will not be awarded accreditation or have their accreditation withdrawn as appropriate and the UKVI informed accordingly.

Once an application has been received and fees have been paid to ASIC, there will be no fee refund under any circumstances.

Please note:

- 1. All cheques need to be made payable to ASIC.***
- 2. For International Institution fees please contact the ASIC office by phone or email.***

Appendix 1

Excerpt from the Register of Education and Training Providers in the UK.

This excerpt concerns **Guidance on the Immigration Rules**, with which colleges wishing to be placed on the Register have agreed to comply. The Rules require that for students seeking visa entry colleges will:

- maintain satisfactory records of enrolment and attendance of students
- provide courses which involve a minimum of 15 hours of organised daytime study per week
- ensure a suitably qualified tutor is present during the hours of study to offer teaching and instruction to the students
- offer courses leading to qualifications recognised by the appropriate accreditation bodies
- employ suitably qualified staff to provide teaching, guidance and support to the students
- provide adequate accommodation, facilities, staffing levels and equipment to support the numbers of students enrolled at the institution, and
- comply with the latest Border and Immigration Agency guidance on notification of absent students.

NB Failure of a college to comply with the criteria may lead to removal from the Register and the consequent refusal of visas to students seeking to enter the UK, in which case ASIC would withdraw the accreditation of the college.

Appendix 2

Accreditation Service for International Colleges – Website

In order to ensure that students, parents and representatives/agents are able to gain a clear picture of a college that the students are considering attending, ASIC will produce a website which will give an independent report on accredited colleges which will be an abridged version of the inspector's report.

ASIC will also, with the permission of the students concerned, include comments from students interviewed during the inspection process.

This will be similar to the process used by Ofsted to inform the general public of the outcomes of the inspection of schools & colleges in the UK.

The website will also include useful information regarding studying overseas together with opportunities for international students to apply for scholarships through ASIC.

It is hoped that the website will be interactive so that students and colleges themselves may add information relevant to prospective students.

ASIC will seek to attract sponsors with an interest in international education and will also link with other relevant websites in order to achieve a high ranking on the various search engines.

ASIC will not allow accredited colleges to advertise on this website, although a listing with links to the websites of the colleges will be provided.

Appendix 3

Useful Web-sites and Contact Points

Premises and Health and Safety

- Advice on occupational health and safety is available from the Health and Safety Executive: www.hse.gov.uk
There is also an on-line service, HSE Info line: hse.infoline@natbrit.com
- Fire safety guidance is available from the Fire Protection Association: www.thefpa.co.uk
The London Fire Brigade has a down-loadable guide to Fire Safety at Work: www.london-fire.gov.uk

Management and Staff resources

- Guidance on safe and legal employment procedures is available from the Arbitration and Conciliation Advisory Service: www.acas.org.uk
This Web-site provides model pro-formas for most aspects of employment.
- Advice on copyright is available from the Copyright Licence Agency Ltd (CLA): www.cla.co.uk
e-mail: education_customers@cla.co.uk

Student Welfare

- If you handle personal information about individuals, you have a number of legal obligations to protect that information. The Information Commissioners Office (ICO) is available to help you understand these obligations and keep you updated as and when they change: www.ico.gov.uk
- Advice on the employment of staff who will be in contact with young people under the age of 18 is available from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB): www.disclosure.gov.uk Tel: 0870 9090811
- In order to provide immigration advice to prospective students, colleges must be registered with the Immigration Services Commissioner. The Code of Standards and Rules is available from the Office of the Immigration Service Commissioner: www.oisc.org.uk
- Guidance on visas for students is available from the UK Visas web-site: www.ukvisas.gov.uk
- The Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) provides form FLR(S), used to apply for visa extensions, downloadable from: www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk, Enquiries may be addressed to the IND at: Lunar House, 40 Wellesley Road, Croydon, CR9 2BY Tel: 0870 6067766, e-mail: indpublicenquiries@ind.homeoffice.gov.uk
- Information on the requirements placed on education institutions by the Disability Discrimination Act 1991 can be found on: www.disability-gov.uk or on the web-site of the Disability Rights Commission, www.drc-gb.org
- Colleges which provide or arrange accommodation for students under the age of 18 will be in the category of Independent Boarding Schools under The Children Act (Section 87). The Commission for Social Care Inspectorate carries out accreditation inspections based on a list of minimum standards for boarding schools. Guidance on this is available from The Boarding Schools Association: www.boarding.ofg.uk

Awards and Qualifications

- Information on US degrees and institutions accredited by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation is available from: www.chea.org

Appendix 4

A Note on Plagiarism

Academic misconduct has become a major problem worldwide in educational institutions ranging from the most prestigious universities to small, private colleges and schools.

Academic misconduct includes cheating in examinations whereby students seek to gain an unfair advantage by, for example, introducing unauthorised materials, copying from other candidates and attempting to impersonate or be impersonated as well as plagiarism, which is perhaps the most difficult to guard against and detect.

- A definition of plagiarism might be of the form “to deliberately take and use another person’s invention, idea or writing and claim it, directly or indirectly, as ones own”.

Some common forms of plagiarism are:

- stealing, borrowing or buying, perhaps from online sources, assignments and the like,
- copying, cutting and pasting text from sources on the internet,
- copying from a book or other published article, without proper acknowledgement or referencing,
- quoting word for word, lifting text (or computer programs, music, design, etc) from others including fellow students, and
- submitting this as ones own work.

Even with the definition and examples quoted above, one of the problems for students, especially those who are non-native English speakers, is to recognise exactly what does and what does not constitute plagiarism.

Colleges, therefore, are advised to give clear guidance to students on how to avoid plagiarism by correctly acknowledging and referencing sources of information and how to summarise and paraphrase and express in their own words information that they have quite properly gathered from the internet, texts and other sources in their preparation to complete assignments. Furthermore, students should be encouraged, if they are in any doubt as to whether or not they have inadvertently plagiarised, to consult their tutors for guidance.

Regrettably, despite the best efforts of colleges to warn their students of the dangers of plagiarism and instruct them on how to avoid it, many students choose deliberately to commit plagiarism. Tutors are therefore faced with the problem of detecting this, which, given the huge volume of printed work can be difficult and time consuming. Fortunately, there are now electronic ways of detecting plagiarism, including a facility on google and “turnitin”, which is more user-friendly and effective as it can scan a CD containing a whole assignment, dissertation or thesis to detect the amount of plagiarised work included. There is, however, an associated financial cost to the colleges using this system, which is completely Web-based. There is evidence that plagiarism in colleges which are known to use electronic detection systems is much reduced.

Finally, it is imperative that colleges have a policy regarding the penalties for cheating/plagiarism not only to deter dishonest students seeking an “illegal” advantage but also to reassure honest students that the assessment processes are fair.

It is up to each college to decide on its own range of penalties, but commonly these range from guilty students failing the whole module/subject of which the plagiarised assignment is a part, or perhaps, less severely, the student’s mark is reduced in relation to the extent of the plagiarism, that is the mark for a 50% plagiarised assignment is reduced by 50%.

Repeated plagiarism or cheating is usually considered as being much more serious with more severe penalties including expulsion from the college.

References:

Carroll J. A *Handbook for Deterring Plagiarism in Higher Education*, 2002 Oxford Centre for staff and Learning Development, Oxford.

Davis U.C., University of Southern California, *Avoiding Plagiarism: Mastering the Art of Scholarship*.

<http://sja.ucdavis.edu/avoid.htm> October 25, 2001

Northedge A. *The Good Study Guide*, 1988, The Open University Press, Milton Keynes,

turnitin <http://www.turnitin.co.uk>

Appendix 5

Code of Ethics – Colleges

1. The marketing of education services overseas should be consistent with the maintenance of academic standards and the safeguarding of the interests of both institutions and international students.
2. Institutions should promote accurately and honestly educational programmes in terms of quality, standing and availability.
3. Institutions should have a clearly enunciated policy for all staffs, representatives and agents with respect to the promotion and marketing of education services overseas.
4. Institutions should acknowledge the need for good practice to ensure fairness in their promotion and marketing of educational services overseas with regard to :
 - 4.1 Other institutions
 - 4.2 The interests of both local and international students
 - 4.3 The perceived quality of the education
 - 4.4 The cultural and educational relationships among the countries
5. Differences among institutions should be portrayed in a comprehensible and accurate way so as to project a cooperative marketing image to the target countries. No false or misleading comparisons should be drawn with any other provider.
6. Selection criteria for international students should be such as to maintain the institution's academic standards and to encourage high success rates.
7. Institutions should recognize on-going responsibilities for the education and welfare of international students, ensuring that the academic programmes, support services and learning environment offered encourage a positive attitude towards the institutions.
8. Institutions should establish an appropriate infrastructure to be the focal point for all enquiries and to ensure both the effective implementation of the institutions' international students programme and the provision of all necessary support services.
9. Institutions should provide to prospective international students accurate and comprehensive information on the institutions admission requirements and procedures, the courses available, tuition and living costs, living conditions, accommodation and other services. Advertisements and promotional literature should not include misleading or ambiguous statements about the nature of the course, or the cost of the award offered.
10. Staff members representing institutions overseas should be carefully selected and be:

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- 10.1 Sympathetic, clear communicators with a thorough knowledge of their own institution's courses and procedures
 - 10.2 Sensitive to the culture and customs of the target country, and aware of its historical and political background and educational systems
 - 10.3 Knowledgeable, experienced and competent in the administration of student policy and in face-to-face dealings with students.
11. To the extent that it is relevant the spirit of this Code also is intended to apply to institutions and their national and international partner institutions which offer courses through twinning arrangements, distance education or other modes.
 12. Institutions should at all times conduct themselves with integrity and in a manner that will contribute to the image of a reliable and trustworthy provider of high quality education and training.
 13. Institutions should promote themselves in a professional and ethical manner and should ensure that all marketing activities reflect best practice.
 14. Institutions should behave toward other institutions, professional colleagues and other countries in a respectful and courteous manner.
 15. Institutions should be aware of all other codes of practice and guidelines that may have relevance to international activities and international students and should ensure that they observe the requirements of these codes.

Appendix 6

Code of Ethics – Educational Representatives

1. Demonstrate appropriate attributes and abilities to competently service the legitimate needs of international students.
 - 1.1 Do nothing to support or encourage illegal actions
 2. Maintain proper and high standards of professional conduct of business as an international education agent by actively upholding this code at all times
 - 2.1 Accurately represent areas of competence, education, training and experience
 - 2.2 Maintain the confidentiality and integrity of information about student and communications with students. Complying with data protection law and any policy of the adviser's employing organization on confidentiality and record keeping. Ensure that information about any circumstances in which information may be disclosed without prior authorization is available to students.
 - 2.3 Refrain from unjustified or unseemly criticism of other educational representatives or institutions and seek to resolve any conflict of advice directly with the party concerned in a professional manner.
 3. Establish appropriate resources and procedures needed to provide professional support services to international students and institutions.
 - 3.1 In particular, keep themselves informed, as may be relevant to their areas of advice, of developments in statutory and case law, regulations, immigration rules and procedures, institutional policies and other codes.
 4. Be accountable to both institution and student clients
 - 4.1 Be aware of the difference between information, advice and counselling and be able to recommend qualified counselling assistance to students who may benefit from it.
 - 4.2 Recognise the boundaries of their qualifications and competence, making appropriate referrals when situations fall outside them.
 - 4.3 Actively seek to promote personal professional development and keep themselves informed of current developments in their fields.
 5. Provide student and institutions with information they need and not withhold relevant information.
 - 5.1 Act in good faith and with fairness, consideration and objectivity
 - 5.2 Providing a representative voice regarding issues that are of importance to college programmes
 6. Provide the range of services required by represented institutions to ensure co operative delivery of quality support to international students.
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7. Work with institutions and professional bodies as a provider quality education agent.
 - 7.1 Supporting and promoting college education programmes.
 - 7.2 Promoting and providing professional development.
 - 7.3 Prompt / timely responses to communications

 8. Not discriminate, or tolerate discrimination on the part of others, on the basis of ethnic or national origins, gender, sexual orientation, religion, disability or age.
 - 8.1 Be aware of, and show appropriate sensitivity to and respect for, other cultures and value systems

 9. Act in the best interests of the student, while respecting institutional policies, statutory and legal requirements and the legitimate interests of sponsors.
 - 9.1 Principally concerned with the personal, social, educational and career needs of the students.

 10. Educational representatives are required to advertise in an ethical manner by not engaging in false, misleading or damaging advertising.

 11. Educational representatives should continually monitor their effectiveness as professionals and take steps to improve when necessary.

Appendix 7

Agreement for the Recruitment of International Students

This agreement is drawn up between:

Hereinafter called “The Representative”, *the term to also mean all persons working on behalf of/representing, whether paid or unpaid the Representative as detailed herein).*

And **XXXXXXXX**
Hereinafter called “XXXXXXXX.”

Both parties agree for the period of this agreement that the following shall apply:

1. XXXXXXXX, through its International Office, appoints the following Representative in for the purposes of providing information and data about XXXXXXXX to individuals and organisation in and to assist, support and give guidance, to students wishing to attend XXXXXXXX for English language, undergraduate and postgraduate studies and tailor-made programmes. It is understood that the representative will in undertaking this take heed of the British Council Guide to Good Practice for Education Agents and the **XXXXXXXX Code of Ethics**

The British Council Guide to Good Practice for Education Agents is available at:
http://www.britishcouncil.org/ecs/agents/guidelines_for_agents/index.htm

2. This agreement takes effect fromand shall, unless termination is earlier in accordance with this Agreement, continue for an initial period of three years from the date shown, with a review being undertaken annually. Either party may terminate this agreement by giving thirty (30) days prior notice in writing to the other, where it considers termination justifiable on the grounds that no further purpose would be served by continuing the association.
3. If either party hereto shall commit any breach of or default in any of the terms or conditions of this Agreement and also fails to remedy such a default or breach within thirty (30) days, after written notice of such is given to either party hereto, the party giving notice may, at its option and in addition to other remedies which it may have under English Law, terminate the Agreement by sending notice of such termination in writing to the other party to such effect and such termination shall then be effective as of the date of the receipt of such notice.

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4. Any desire to change the terms of this Agreement in any way shall be valid only if the change is made in writing and approved by mutual agreement of the authorised representatives of the parties hitherto stated.
 5. The Representative is not in anyway authorised to act as agent for XXXXXXXX in any other capacity or action. Neither party shall be bound by any such acts or conduct carried out by the other within any such breach.
 6. Whilst XXXXXXXX will use all reasonable endeavours to ensure the accuracy of the information given to the Representative and other material supplied, XXXXXXXX makes no warranty, expressed or implied, as to the accuracy and will not be held responsible for any consequences arising out of any inaccuracies or omissions unless such accuracies or omissions are the result of negligence on the part of XXXXXXXX.
 7. The design, text and any data of any publicity being undertaken by the Representative, which refers to XXXXXXXX, is to be approved in advance by XXXXXXXX. Copyright, logo and trading rights on all material shall remain vested in XXXXXXXX and may not be used by the Representative or other parties without the express permission of XXXXXXXX, in writing and in advance of any usage.
 8. In representing XXXXXXXX, it will be expected that the Representative will be able to provide premises in agreed locations that are capable of representing and maintaining the standards expected by XXXXXXXX overseas. XXXXXXXX will make these conditions known to potential Representatives on request and will expect such Representatives to adhere to these conditions at all times.
 9. It is agreed by both parties herein that an authorised representative of XXXXXXXX is able at some time during the agreement period inspect the premises of the Representative used to project XXXXXXXX and its overseas operations. A report on the visit and the findings will be made available to the Representative for discussion with XXXXXXXX and to agree future developments for both parties to maintain standards.
 10. The Representative agrees to work with XXXXXXXX to help develop publicity and marketing delivery in country under the direction of XXXXXXXX and as such will make their premises available for XXXXXXXX staff visiting the Representative's country for such purposes. IT communications to keep in contact with XXXXXXXX staff is a prerequisite of becoming a XXXXXXXX Representative.
 11. The representative will ensure that application forms are completed in their entirety by the applicant.
 12. XXXXXXXX's International Office undertakes to provide for accepted and contracted Representatives, an information pack detailing XXXXXXXX s procedures and to provide information needed by The Representative for the successful promotion of XXXXXXXX. The Representative will also agree to attend any in country training that is made reasonably available to the

Representative by XXXXXXXXX. This is to ensure that the quality of provision and representation of XXXXXXXXX and its recruitment processes are maintained.

13. As consideration for the services of the Representatives on its behalf in, XXXXXXXXX agrees to pay to the Representative the following commission for all students demonstrably attending a course at XXXXXXXXX from work attributable to the Representative:

For English Language courses and tailor-made programmes: A payment of ...% of the tuition fees of all courses attended by any one student.

For the, International Foundation, Diploma and Pre masters a Payment of ...% of the first year tuition fee.

For all other academic programmes a Payment of % of the total fee paid by the student to XXXXXXXXX.

This commission will however only be for those courses expressly targeted by XXXXXXXXX and agreed with the Representative in advance each year, in writing, by the authorised XXXXXXXXX representative. XXXXXXXXX will not pay the payment of VAT on top of this commission for any Representative who operates with Offices within the UK.

14. All commission will be paid only upon receipt of student payment to XXXXXXXXX. For students who pay by instalments the University will pay the representative on a pro-rata basis sending the commission upon payments received to the representative at the end of each term. Representatives must send a detailed invoice (per student) for the full amount of commission due at the beginning of the student's study period at XXXXXXXXX , and it is against this that the Finance office will make the commission payments as explained above. For English Language courses, it is understood that should a student prolong the period of their study at XXXXXXXXX the International Office will inform the sending representative about this and the representative, upon sending a new invoice for this will be paid the extra commission due.

15. In accepting the conditions of this Agreement also agree to abide by the highest possible standards and ethics in dealing with potential customers of XXXXXXXXX. They likewise agree to abide by the ECS Code of Professional Standards and Ethics (available at: <http://www.britishcouncil.org/ecs/copse/index.htm>).

16. This Agreement and all its terms, provisions and conditions and all questions of construction, validity and performance under this Agreement shall be governed by the Law of England and shall be subject to, as will any future dispute arising whatsoever, to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English courts.

SIGNED

SIGNED

On behalf of

On behalf of XXXXXXXXX

Name

Name

Position

Position

.....

.....

Date.....

Date.....

This document is not legal unless both parties have signed