

ACCREDITATION SERVICE FOR

INTERNATIONAL COLLEGES REPORT

1 Areas of Assessment

A Premises and Health and Safety

A1 The College comprises three classrooms, two laboratories/classrooms, a student resource/counselling room, two small study rooms, a library, two IT laboratories (one created since the Stage 2 visit) a common room and kitchen. The premises have been well maintained and were redecorated during February 2008. The premises are extremely clean. There is satisfactory heating and windows can be opened, without any intrusive noise, to improve ventilation in warm weather. The toilets are very clean with full hand washing and drying facilities and sufficient in number.

A2 The students can use the College library, tutorial rooms, and the classrooms and IT laboratories, when not in timetabled use, for informal study. They have free access to the internet and e-mail. The students are also reminded of the facilities available in the public libraries and they confirmed that they have free access to internet and e-mail facilities. There is a student common room where they can consume drinks and snacks prepared in the adjoining kitchen, but there are no recreational facilities. There is also a vending machine for cold drinks.

Commendable: There is a large common room with refreshments facilities

A3 The College has addressed health and safety issues very carefully and has appropriate records for the maintenance and testing of alarms, emergency lighting and fire appliances. The staff confirmed that the owner of the College takes responsibility for health and safety and that they are frequently reminded of the health and safety procedures by him. The staff and students also confirmed that there are details of the Health and Safety Policy in their Handbooks and that they had all participated in timed practice emergency evacuations, which had involved a fire marshal to oversee the operations. There are first-aid kits, an accident report book and two trained first-aiders.

B Management and Staff Resources

B1* Mrs Sarwar is responsible for liaison with the examining bodies and the science subject areas while Mrs Thompson is responsible for student welfare and advice on further studies and careers. They are supported by two administrative and one technical support staff. The staff confirmed that the management structure is effective and that the managers are very supportive. Both groups of students indicated that they know whom to approach about various issues to do with their courses and assessments.

Commendable: The Students were aware of whom to approach for information and advice on all aspects of their enrolment and courses.

B2* The Staff indicated that there is effective communication through face-to-face contact and e-mails supported by weekly staff meetings which have agendas and recorded minutes. The staff said that there is a good team ethos between the academic and support staff. They also confirmed that they were aware of the procedures for cover for absent staff, which, are to contact the College as soon as possible where every effort will be made to arrange cover, rather than cancelling classes at short notice or rearranging them.

Commendable: The staff confirmed that there are regular staff meetings with agendas and minutes and that they are aware of the procedures for providing cover in the event of absence.

B3 There are documented procedures for the appointment of staff. Vacancies are advertised in the local Jobcentre Plus or with the Select Education agency for teaching posts. There are job descriptions and person specifications to aid short-listing, followed by formal interviews. The qualifications of successful applicants are verified by inspection of qualification certificates, taking up references and consulting NARIC if appropriate. There is a three month probationary period. In practice, most of the academic staff are recently-retired teachers with extensive experience and knowledge of the examining bodies.

B4 Statutory requirements in term of equal opportunities relating to all aspects of employment are met. A member of staff indicated that he is registered disabled and that provision had been made to accommodate him. These procedures together with formal grievance/complaints procedure could be included in the Staff Handbook. There is a current Employer's Liability Insurance Certificate.

B5* There are designated Heads of Subject but the numbers of staff in the various subjects areas are very small and there is no evident hierarchy. Heads of subject

consult Mrs Yasmin Sarwar regarding teaching arrangements, the acquisition of resources and liaison with the examining bodies.

B6 Students are timetabled for 30 hours of organised study each week including lectures/laboratory classes, tutorials and supervised private study. Students attendances are recorded at every class and the importance of regular attendance strongly emphasised. An unexplained absence would lead to enquiries being made and two absences lead to the commencement of disciplinary action. The College is advised to monitor the attendance of its international students so that if they do not respond to warnings over a period of two weeks their registration should be cancelled and the Home Office informed. The attendance data is entered onto an electronic system for monitoring purposes.

B7 The staff confirmed that the students have a lot of homework and, being highly motivated, they expect to be given homework each week. The students indicated nevertheless that their workload is acceptable.

B8 The College has written procedures for the preparation and conduct of internal, formative assessments and for the invigilation of examinations and exemplary arrangements for the storage of assessment materials in the Associate Principal's office.

Commendable: There are exemplary arrangements for the storage of examination papers and students' scripts as well as the invigilation of examinations.

B9 The College has a CLA licence and appropriate copyright notices are displayed.

C Learning and Teaching: Course Delivery

C1 The students indicated that they had received comprehensive information about pre-enrolment criteria, fees, and the documents to be presented on enrolment. One student from Hong Kong indicated that she had received this information via an agent and that it had proved to be accurate.

C2 The students also said that the information they had received, when attending the College for interview, on the content, nature and requirements of their courses had been accurate. The international students had also been provided with this information and found it to be helpful. The examining bodies supply information on course content, reading lists and assessment regulations and the College provides weekly lesson plans and regular hand-outs.

C3 The CVs of the teaching staff indicate that they are well qualified with a wealth of relevant teaching experience for the courses being delivered. They all have formal teaching qualifications and most of them have worked with the examining bodies on an academic capacity.

C4* Three teaching sessions were observed: a GCSE Physics class, an AS level Physics class and an AS level History class. All were presented by experienced staff and deemed to be commendable. The students indicated that they thought that the teaching was very effective and that they are given very good, helpful handouts at each class.

Commendable: *The delivery of courses is excellent, involving a wide variety of approaches, the use of teaching facilities and the provision of effective handouts.*

C5* The staff said that the library is developing, but could be larger and have a wider selection of books. There is a selection of CD ROMS available and internet facilities to access on-line recourses. The students said that they were aware of the facilities available in public libraries. Informal arrangements had also been made to enable physics students to use a nearby branch of Cardiff University's library. There is material on further study and careers, which is now greatly enhanced by the advice available from Lindsay Thompson.

D Quality Assurance and Enhancement

D1 The curriculum and assessment procedures are set by the AS/A2 levels awarding bodies, though staff discuss which syllabus/awarding body to select. The staff and students can arrange to have the relevant issues raised at the weekly staff meetings, for example, a comparison of the performance of the College's student with the national averages, in which the College performs exceptionally well.

D2 The College monitors students' academic progress using their performance in homework and formative tests, formal assessments and via the tutorial system so that there is a report each term on each student's progress. This approach identifies students who may need some extra help to obtain the highest grades in the period leading up to the formal examinations. The students confirmed that the staff are readily available for personal tutoring and that they have their mobile phone numbers and e-mail addresses so that they may be contacted outside of College hours. They also said that the lecturers provide very helpful written feedback on their assignments.

D3* The College monitors the students pass/completion rates across the ten subjects offered and compares the students' performance with national averages to identify where changes may be required to ensure that students obtain high grades. This monitoring also aims to identify any trends.

D4* The students confirmed that they have the opportunity to complete feedback questionnaires on the teachers and courses and they quoted an example where the College had responded promptly and effectively to their comments. They also confirmed that there are informal monthly student meetings where their comments are noted by a member of staff and that a recently introduced system of having a Head Boy/Head Girl to liaise with the College management appears to be working well. The staff confirmed that feedback from students is responded to promptly.

Commendable: The students confirmed that the College responds promptly and appropriately to their feedback.

D5* The College indicated that as the academic staff are so experienced that staff development is not too relevant; they are, however, encouraged to attend relevant courses run by the awarding bodies to discuss modification to syllabuses and Inset meetings. The staff said that there is an appraisal process but that it seems to concentrate on passing on student comments and that there is some peer review of teaching, though only oral feedback was provided. New members of staff confirmed that they had had a helpful induction and been assigned to a mentor. They also said that they had received a helpful Staff Handbook.

E Student Welfare

E1 It was pointed out that Mrs Thompson, one of the Associated Principals, has overall responsibility for student welfare; however, the students indicated that they would also approach Mr & Mrs Sarwar with their personal problems. The staff indicated that they would all be prepared to help students with their problems but would encourage them to see the appropriate Associate Principal.

E2* The international students all confirmed that they had received helpful information on living in the UK, including living costs, registering with a GP or the Police if necessary and opening a bank account. They said that a member of the College staff had taken them to register with a doctor and dentist and to help them open a bank account. One of the students said that he was met at Heathrow airport and the others said that they had received help in finding accommodation.

Commendable: Students indicated that they had made use of an efficient meet and greet scheme and had received help in finding accommodation.

E3* The College has several students under the age of 18, all of whom are local students living with their parents. The College has an appropriate Child Protection Policy and all staff are CRB checked.

Commendable: A CRB check is undertaken by all staff.

E4 The College has anti-discrimination and disability strategies, which are followed in the selection of students and staff. There is evidence that the college follows its disability policy in that a student who is severely visually impaired gained four A2 Level "A" grades. The student was adamant that she would not have gained these grades without the help of the College; she is now a student at Cardiff University. The students confirmed that there is an opportunity to mention special needs on the application form, but it is suggested that the wording could be more specific in order to identify needs which the College could assist students to cope with. The premises would be very difficult for a person in a wheelchair to negotiate and there are no toilet facilities for the disabled. The students and staff said that they believed and the College could help students with dyslexia and it was indicated that a student had been sent to a centre for testing and that extra time had been arranged in writing examinations.

E5 The students confirmed that they were aware of informal and formal complaints procedures, which are included within the Student Handbook, which all students receive an induction, and which the students said is useful. The students said that in the first instance they would take their complaint to the Associate Principal.

F Awards and Qualifications

F1 The College has arrangements with WJEC, OCR and Edexcel for the provision of AS/A2 level teaching leading to their awards.

F2 While the College Follows the assessment procedures of the awarding bodies, it has written procedures for the preparation and conduct of formative assessments.

F3 The students confirmed that they are made aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and of the associated penalties. The staff indicated that they warn the students against academic misconduct and provide appropriate

guidance. There are written guidelines, which it is recommended should be included in the Student Handbook.

G Marketing and Recruitment

G1* The College is currently developing its procedures for the recruitment of international students. It is recommended that the College produces an Ethics Policy for its own staff and agents, and policies on the guidance and appointment of agents. There is a draft agent contract, (further guidance on these issues is available in the ASIC Accreditation Handbook). However, the students from Hong Kong indicated that they had received information from the College and the courses from an agent and that this had been accurate.

G2 The normal entry requirements for UK A-Levels are appropriate passes in GCSE examinations or in the equivalent for international students, where the College has set an IELTS score requirement of 6.5. The students, both UK/EU and international indicated that they felt that they had appropriate qualifications for their present courses. The staff concurred with this view and indicated that the English of the current international students is excellent.

G3* The College has appropriate documented procedures for the admission and enrolment of students, fees and refunds and the processing of enquires and applications. While one of the students said that the response to her enquiries and application had been very quick, less than 24 hours, another said that the whole application/acceptance process had taken about one month. There are also written procedures for the creation of students' records which contained appropriate documentation. It is suggested that a tick list of required documentation should be attached to each file to aid identification that all required documentation/information has been included.

H Relationships with Government Offices and Reporting Mechanisms

H1 Students who the College believes have been given a visa and who do not arrive for the commencement date of their course are considered no-shows. It is recommended that the students are given some leeway for late arrival before being reported to the Home Office within the official ten day timescale.

H2

* The international students were somewhat vague on the Home Office requirements on attendance; however, they are all timetabled for up to 30 hours of

organised study per week far in excess of the formal requirements. The students' attendance is carefully recorded on paper-based registers and the data transferred to an electronic system to monitor their cumulative attendance.

Commendable: The College has an electronic system which enables students' attendance to be monitored effectively.

2 Areas of Strength and Good Practice

The College is congratulated on:

- the commitment of the management and support for staff;
- the enthusiasm and team ethos of the staff;
- the standard of the premises;
- the attention paid to health and safety issues;
- the availability of help and advice for students;
- its internal communications;
- its standard of its documentation;
- its arrangement for the storage of assessment materials;
- the quality of the teaching;
- its prompt and positive response to students' feedback;
- the strong support, both academic and pastoral, for students;
- its meet and greet scheme and help in finding accommodation;
- the CRB check undertaken by staff;
- the developing Head Boy/Head Girl staff liaison meetings;
- its developing electronic system for monitoring students' attendance;
- the student common room, with provision for drinks and snacks;
- the student support for the College.

Name

Date

Professor John Wilson

18 April 2009