

Organisation name	University of Leicester
Inspection date	26 January 2023
Current accreditation status	Accredited
Reason for spot check	Signalled: to check the effects on provision of a delay in accessing updated premises.

Recommendation

We recommend continued accreditation pending a full inspection of the provision in the final quarter of 2023.

Changes to the summary statement

No changes have been made to the summary statement, apart from adding the date of this inspection and removing the area of strength for *Premises and facilities*.

New summary statement

The British Council inspected and accredited the University of Leicester in November 2017 with a spot check in January 2023. The Accreditation Scheme assesses the standards of management, resources and premises, teaching, welfare, and care of under 18s and accredits organisations which meet the overall standard in each area inspected (see www.britishcouncil.org/education/accreditation for details).

The large English language teaching department of this university offers courses in general, academic and professional English for adults (18+) and for closed groups of adults (18+).

Strengths were noted in the areas of staff management, student administration, quality assurance, academic management, learning resources, course design, teaching, care of students, accommodation, and leisure opportunities.

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

Updated summary inspection findings

Premises and resources

The provision meets the section standard. The Centre for International Training and Education premises and facilities are currently of an adequate standard and provide staff and students with a comfortable environment for effective work and study. Classrooms are comfortable, light and quiet, with suitable furniture but teachers do not have a common area. Resources for learning and teaching are of a very high standard and there is generally good technological equipment; support for this is available, although this has lapsed in the Charles Wilson building classrooms pending renewal of equipment. There is a small CITE lending library and in-session and pre-session students on the shorter modules of ten or six weeks can benefit from the availability of a spacious library on the main campus. Resources are reviewed and updated regularly.

Organisation profile

Inspection history	Dates/details
First inspection	2008
Last full inspection	2017
Subsequent spot check(s) (if applicable)	January 2023
Subsequent supplementary check(s) (if applicable)	N/a
Subsequent interim visit(s) (if applicable)	N/a
Other related non-accredited activities (in brief) at this centre	Initial certificate in teacher training International CPD programmes In-country programmes Classes for refugees Contribution to MA TESOL PG Cert TEAP (online)

Other related accredited schools/centres/affiliates	N/a	
Other related non-accredited schools/centres/affiliates	N/a	
Student and staff profile	At inspection	In peak week: <i>Aug</i>
Total ELT/ESOL student numbers (FT + PT)	138	250
Minimum age (including closed group or vacation)	18	18
Typical age range	19–25	19–25
Typical length of stay	6 months	3 months
Predominant nationalities	Saudi Arabian, Japanese, Turkish	Saudi Arabian, Japanese, Turkish
Total number of teachers on eligible ELT courses	17	21
Total number of managers including academic	6	6
Total number of administrative/ancillary staff	4	4

Premises profile	
Address of main site	Charles Wilson Building, Leicester University, University Road, Leicester LE1 7RH
Additional sites in use	Centrally timetabled rooms in a number of buildings on campus
Additional sites not in use	None
Sites inspected	Charles Wilson and Attenborough buildings

Introduction

Background

The previous full inspection in 2017 was of the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) which was then housed off-campus in Readson House and two floors of the adjacent Prospect House. Since then, a new professional services department has been created: the Centre for International Training and Education (CITE). This includes the Sanctuary Seekers Unit, the Study Abroad (formerly Erasmus) Unit and the International Professional Development Unit as well as the ELTU.

With the recent pandemic and the marked increase in online teaching, the university took the decision to sell these buildings and move CITE to new on-campus premises in the centrally-located Charles Wilson building (CW). Two floors were allocated, the 4th and the 7th. A major water leak on the latter caused its closure with all CITE functions moved temporarily to the 9th floor. The intention is to renovate the 4th floor creating four classrooms, a reception area and a student common room and the 7th, when reopened, as the management and administration centre with a hub for teachers. Teaching is currently taking place in the un-renovated 4th floor rooms and centrally timetabled teaching rooms in other campus buildings continue to be used.

In addition to the conversion and renovation work for CITE, major works are required for CW's windows and ventilation systems which were found wanting in a recent inspection. These works will precede those for CITE but while funding has been allocated for the work on CITE's floors, it has not been arranged for the major works and will not be until the new financial year starting on 1 August. Against this uncertain background, it is not at all clear when CITE's 4th and 7th floor premises will be renovated.

CITE has asked for its full inspection to be postponed until November 2023. This spot check was called for to ascertain whether the uncertainty about its premises has led to any reduction in the level of service provided for its students.

Preparation

The 2017 full report was reviewed and discussions were held with the CITE director about the current situation and staff availability.

Programme and persons present

The inspector arrived at 11.00 and left at 16.00. He met the CITE director and assistant director, the centre deputy administrator, administrative staff and small groups of teachers and students. He visited a number of classrooms in two buildings, some empty and some with classes being held, and looked at facilities available to teachers on site.

Findings

Findings are reported in the following section and in the Action taken on points to be addressed.

Premises and resources (in 2017 Resources and environment)

Premises and facilities	Met
P1 Premises, including any external areas, are in a good state of repair, cleanliness and decoration, and provide a comfortable environment for students and staff.	Not met
P2 Classrooms and other learning areas provide a suitable study environment.	Met
P3 Students have adequate room and suitable facilities for relaxation and the consumption of food.	Strength
P4 Free drinking water is available. A choice of appropriate food at affordable prices is available to students on site, if not available locally.	Met
P5 There is adequate signage to buildings, routes, rooms and exits, and there are facilities for the display of general information.	Met
P6 There is sufficient space for all staff, for meetings, relaxation and the storage of personal possessions, and for teachers to carry out their preparation and marking.	Not met

Comments

P1 While CITE has a sufficient number of at least adequate classrooms, all of which can accommodate 16 students, in CW and other central campus buildings, there are structural problems in CW that are currently due to be remedied though it is not certain when this will take place.

P3 There is a large *Global Lounge*, provided principally but not exclusively for international students, on the ground floor of CW. It has a shop next to it with food and other products of use for students. The Students' Union is opposite CW with a number of outlets and a *Community Kitchen* where students can prepare their own food.

P6 Following the increase in working from home, the university has introduced a *WorkSmart* policy for professional staff that makes available computers for hot-desking and other workspaces in large open-plan suites. CW has one of these. With the introduction of this system, CITE teachers no longer have either individual or shared offices. Nor, in the current situation, is there a room where they can meet; when the floors allocated to CITE are renovated, it is planned to remedy this omission.

Learning resources	Area of strength
P7 There are sufficient learning resources for the number of students enrolled, appropriate to their age and the level, length and type of courses offered.	Strength
P8 There are appropriate resources for teachers, which are adequate in number, accessible, and well maintained and organised.	Strength
P9 Any educational technology inside the classroom and elsewhere is well maintained with adequate technical support. Staff receive appropriate training in using the available technology to support learning.	Met
P10 Any facilities provided for additional or independent learning are appropriately equipped and organised.	Met
P11 Students receive guidance on the use of any resources provided for independent learning.	Strength
P12 There is a policy for the continuing review and development of teaching and learning resources, and evidence of its implementation.	Strength

Comments

P7 A wide range of learning materials is available for students, including material on the VLE and the virtual self-access centre (VSAC). The ELTU continues to operate a small lending library with EFL and EAP practice books and a good supply of readers. Some lower level pre-session courses and examination preparation courses use coursebooks. Pre-session, in-session and Erasmus/study abroad students are given very detailed in-house student guides and appropriate handouts. For shorter courses and closed groups, materials are selected to meet the particular needs of those students.

P8 Teachers have access to all the learning materials for students. These are kept in a learning resource centre and on the staff area of the VLE. Teachers upload materials on the shared drive for others to use. There is also a good collection of books relating to ELT methodology in the main university library and the ELTU subscribes to a number of ELT and EAP journals. Photocopiers and printers are available for teachers' use in both buildings.

P9 Wi-Fi is available to students and staff throughout the university. The main method of day-to-day communication for teachers and students is via email and the VLE. All ELTU classrooms have a data projector, a good-sized screen and an overhead sound system. Teachers can borrow additional IT equipment such as laptops, voice recorders, camcorders and webcams for use in their lessons. Teachers make effective use of all the equipment. However, some of the technical equipment is not being supported pending the installation of new systems.

P11 Students are given a library induction early on in the course. An excellent online video gives students a very clear explanation of how to use the library facilities and access the material they need. Library staff are available to support students who need advice.

P12 The library and resources committee, course teams and the learning technologies advisors are constantly reviewing and updating materials. Informal reviews take place during course team meetings and more formal reviews are part of the very thorough annual course report process.

Action taken on points to be addressed

Management

M18 Initial student feedback is only gathered informally.

Partially addressed. More formal systems have been introduced in a number of courses and will be rolled out in the remaining ones.

M25 Costs for accommodation are not provided in the publicity; they are only provided to students once they receive their joining instructions.

Addressed. Costs are now provided in the publicity.

M26 Descriptions of all possible accommodation for university students are given on the university website, but in reality ELTU students only have a choice between three residences. This is not made clear in the publicity.

Addressed. This is now made clear in the publicity.

M29 Different versions of the Accreditation Scheme marque are used across the various mediums of publicity. The marques used do not include 'in the UK'.

This has now been addressed.

Teaching and learning

T23 In a few lesson segments there was some incorrect modelling of language and some confusing explanations of grammar and vocabulary.

T25 Some learning outcomes were too general, reflecting what the teacher planned to do rather than what the outcomes for the student were planned to be.

T26 There were some instances of ineffective strategies for teaching vocabulary, where check and concept questions were not used when they would have been appropriate.

T27 Students' understanding of instructions was not always checked.

Teaching observations during the spot check were too few in number and too brief to allow for judgement on these criteria. However, CITE management indicated that they were aligning observation and continuing professional development (CPD) systems to provide support in these areas.

Conclusions

While there is considerable uncertainty about the timing of the renovation of CITE's new premises and, indeed, of the building housing them, there was no evidence of diminished service levels. Four classes were observed, three in CW and one in the Attenborough building. The teaching in all was good or better. The students in the focus group, from all the courses currently being taught, were unanimous in their praise of the teaching and the teachers, and were consistently positive about their experience. Face-to-face contact with administrators and management is complicated by their offices being at the top of CW, a building with under-dimensioned lifts, but is no worse than when CITE was in Readson House, which is a ten-minute walk from central campus.
