

ACCREDITATION VISIT MAIN FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS

Name of Provider: International University of America (IUA)
MERC Education Ltd

Date of visit: 28-29 July 2009

Number of students enrolled on date of visit: 8

The provision in context

IUA/MERC education have applied for separate accreditation for their respective programmes. IUA and MERC education are based in Woolwich London. IUA was founded in 1995 to provide business degrees accredited by the World Association of Universities and Colleges (WAUC) for overseas students from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Since it was founded an average of 20 students per annum have enrolled at the institution. In the past few years numbers have diminished slightly. MERC education was established in 2005 to provide a British-style equivalent to the IUA programme. The programme is accredited by Institute of Administrative Management. Both programmes allow students to progress to UK degree programmes in business and related studies. No MERC education students are currently enrolled. The management, staffing, resources and accommodation are the same for both IUA and MERC education. IUA and MERC education have four administrative staff, and employ 8 teaching staff on a part-time basis. The owner and chief executive officer of both organisations manages the provision. During this accreditation visit the management, policies and procedures of IUA and MERC education have been scrutinised and teaching and learning within the IUA programme observed. The content of the IUA and MERC education programmes overlap sufficiently for IUA students to be credited with a MERC certificate on completion of their programme. Nevertheless, no separate MERC courses have been observed.

Overall judgement

The provision is satisfactory and can be approved for accreditation for a UKBA Sponsors Licence. In accordance with the UKBA Statement of Intent for Students Tier 4 of the Points Based System, continued approval is subject to satisfactory completion of the recommendations and the observation of specific MERC education classes within twelve months of the date of this letter.

Feedback

This feedback contains the findings from the accreditation visit brought together under the three main aspects of the Common Inspection Framework. The findings also focus on the five key questions of the Common Inspection Framework and the

requirements of the student entry Points Based System (PBS) operated by United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) for private education providers.

Achievement and standards

Since October 2006, 22 students have been enrolled on the IUA programme. Of these, seven have successfully completed the programme and eight continue to be on the programme. In the same period, seven have not completed the programme. All qualifications offered are level 3 or above. Some completers have successfully transferred into the third year of a degree programme in a UK University. The analysis of learner outcomes is at the early stages of development. The standard of work is generally good, with students demonstrating a good grasp of business concepts.

Quality of education and training

Courses meet UKBA minimum attendance requirements with 15 hours of taught sessions each week. Attendance is effectively monitored and punctuality is generally good. An 80% attendance rate is required for successful graduation. Tutors are experienced and highly qualified in their area of expertise. One teacher has a formal teaching qualification; all have experience of teaching in further or higher education. Students are positive about the quality of teaching they receive. However, a relatively limited range of teaching methods was observed. Most sessions were teacher led with little encouragement for student interaction. The assessment of students' work is satisfactory. Students find comments on their scripts helpful in improving their grades.

Students speak positively about their tutors and have access to a satisfactory range of books and information technology (IT) equipment with internet access. Classroom accommodation is adequate for current class sizes which are equipped with suitable whiteboards and information and learning technology (ILT) is available. Students have access to catering facilities and a small common room that is also used as a prayer room. Learning materials are of satisfactory quality and learners benefit from the different models of American and British approaches to study. There is no access for students with limited mobility but suitable alternative arrangements are in place.

Programmes are well designed and meet learners' needs. Academic programmes include an appropriate range of visits to enhance learning. However, few social events are arranged by the school for students. Students are positive about the support they receive and the approachability of staff. They receive good academic support; however, there are no formal arrangements for personal tutorials and the regular monitoring of student progress.

Leadership and management

The college is managed effectively, has a clear focus on providing students with a good education experience, and has well developed relationships with accrediting

bodies. Information available to students through the college web site and brochures is comprehensive, clear and accurate.

Quality assurance processes are being developed. Course evaluations by students are well established and are undertaken quarterly and lead to changes in programme delivery. A self evaluation process has recently started and self evaluation reports were produced for the accreditation visit. Although observations of teaching and learning have been undertaken, there is no formal, systematic observation of teaching and learning in place.

Suitable processes are in place to monitor attendance and students have a good awareness of course attendance requirements. However, communications with UKBA regarding recent student withdrawals had not been finalised and no formal attendance and withdrawal procedures are in place. A new electronic attendance and student progress monitoring system has been introduced but it is too early to judge its effectiveness.

The college has suitable policies in place to cover general health and safety and students have a clear understanding of fire evacuation procedures. The college is aware of the need to develop its safeguarding policies and procedures including the need to undertake CRB checks and to ensure the safety of students living with host families. Students benefit from good meeting and greeting arrangements when they arrive in the UK. Students new to the UK can use college accommodation but are encouraged to find suitable student accommodation. Visits to students accommodated with local families have been undertaken but are not systematic. The college has an equal opportunities policy but this does not refer to current relevant legislation. The college has recognised the need for staff training in, and to improve the awareness of, equality and diversity.