



**EDUCATIONAL OVERSIGHT INSPECTION OF PRIVATE FURTHER
EDUCATION COLLEGES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS**

EMPIRE COLLEGE LONDON

(Company Registration Number - 04725514)

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Website	www.ecl.ac/wp/london
Academic Head	Ms Rita Sandhu
Proprietor	Mr Qurban Ali Kakar
Age Range	18+
Total number of students	128
Numbers by age and type of study	18+: 128 FE only: 128
Inspection dates	14 - 16 June 2016

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the Framework for Educational Oversight of private further education colleges and English language schools. The inspection consists of a three-day team inspection of the institution's educational provision.

The ISI is an approved Educational Oversight body authorised by the Home Office to inspect privately funded further education colleges and English language schools in England and Wales offering courses on the Qualifications and Credit Framework. It is designed to improve the quality of education on offer to international students who attend UK colleges through Tier 4 of the points-based system for student visas.

ISI inspections are required to:

- Report on the extent to which colleges comply with the published Educational Oversight Standards;
- Assess and report on the quality of educational outcomes and provision;
- Where applicable, make recommendations outside the scope of the Standards to support continued improvement of quality.

Inspection provides objective and reliable reports on the quality of colleges, and by placing reports in the public domain, makes this information available to students, Government and the wider community. Inspection takes account of the context of each individual college, and of how it evaluates its own performance and demonstrates its success.

The inspection of the college is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on students. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit;
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the college, its services or other physical features;
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the college or its accounting procedures;
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the college's compliance with employment law.

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1. CHARACTERISTICS AND CONTEXT

- 1.1 Empire College London was established in 2003 and is based in Ilford which borders with Essex and London. The college is privately owned and is led by the academic head and a small team of senior staff. It aims to provide a high quality academic education with outstanding teaching.
- 1.2 The college has approval from City and Guilds, Awards for Training and Higher Education (ATHE) and Pearson to offer courses. Currently the college offers courses at levels four and five in business management awarded by Pearson, and a level five diploma in education and training awarded by City and Guilds. Students are selected according to the college's admission criteria. Support needs are identified as part of the admission process and support offered as needed. Currently there is one student identified as having special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection 128 students are enrolled, of whom 72 are female and 56 male. There are three students on Tier 4 visas. The large majority of students are British, with others originating from Pakistan, Turkey, India, Afghan, Nigeria and Ghana. A small minority of students have English as an additional language. The college accepts students aged 18 years and above.
- 1.4 The college was last inspected in July 2015 when it met all standards and the quality of education exceeded expectations.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 2.1 **The college exceeds expectations for the quality of education.** At the time of the inspection, all Standards for Educational Oversight were met and quality is excellent.
- 2.2 The quality of the curriculum, teaching and learners' achievements is excellent. Initial assessment of students is very thorough and is used effectively to select students. Consequently, students are on courses well matched to their aptitudes and abilities. Course provision is very well planned. Courses provide the opportunity for students to build on their own experience or on prior learning. Courses on offer to Tier 4 visa students meet the definition of an approved qualification as set out in the Home Office guidance. Teaching is excellent and leads to very high levels of success for students. Teachers have extremely good subject knowledge and support students very well in class. Classes challenge students to learn new ways of thinking and to relate theory to their own past experiences. Regular and effective tutorials are used to monitor students' academic progress and to set personal goals. The assessment of students' work is excellent and provides effective feedback on areas for improvement. The monitoring of students' progress is highly effective and leads to very high success rates.
- 2.3 Students' welfare, including health and safety, is excellent. Health, safety and security are managed very effectively; comprehensive policies and procedures are fully implemented. Premises are secure, of a satisfactory standard and fit for purpose, although there are signs of wear in some areas. As a result the college provides a safe and secure environment for students. Admission and attendance records are accurate and up to date. Attendance monitoring is excellent and results in very high attendance rates. Pastoral care is excellent and student report that they feel very well supported by staff. Induction prepares students well for their studies and helps them to quickly settle into college life, and students receive very good advice and guidance on further education and employment.
- 2.4 The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management is excellent. The proprietor maintains a close overview of the strategic direction of the college and contributes regularly to strategic decision making. Relationships between the proprietor and senior management are very good with a shared ethos of high expectations. Leadership and management are excellent. Managers are very clear about their roles and key responsibilities and discharge these to a very high standard. Consequently, the college has clear focus on student needs which leads to high success rates. Quality assurance processes are excellent. Quality and development plans are closely linked together resulting in clear and measurable targets for improvement. Feedback from students is used very effectively in conjunction with student achievement rates to prioritise areas for action. Management is very effective in using self-evaluation to identify areas for improvement and to set challenging targets. Staff recruitment processes are satisfactory and lead to the appointment of high quality staff although in a small minority of cases, references have not been taken up.

3. THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNERS' ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) Assessment of students prior to or on arrival

- 3.1 Assessment of students prior to or on arrival is excellent. Selection procedures are rigorous and not all students are accepted for study. The process to check entry requirements includes diagnostic testing of literacy and numeracy together with a formal interview. Aptitude for and attitude to study is carefully assessed through initial diagnostic testing and through an additional written task. Ability in English language is thoroughly evaluated during the interview process. As a result, students are accepted on to courses highly suited to their abilities and aspirations.
- 3.2 An effective one-to-one tutorial system provides support on all academic matters and for English language or for learning difficulties should these be identified. Students confirm that they feel very well supported through the tutorial process.

3.(b) Suitability of course provision and curriculum

- 3.3 The curriculum is carefully selected and very well planned to meet the needs of local and international students. Courses on offer allow for progression from level four to level five. The college has approval to offer courses at levels six and seven, although it has not recruited to these courses in the current academic year. The college supplements its curriculum offer with high quality advice and guidance through an external agency. Students are provided with clear and accurate information about their courses. Courses on offer to Tier 4 international students meet the definition of an approved qualification, as set out in the Home Office guidance.
- 3.4 Courses are very well planned. Modules offered are carefully selected to provide a balanced pathway for study and are well matched to the needs of students. All students are registered with an appropriate awarding body. Courses are supported by a highly effective tutorial system; support from teachers and managers is excellent.
- 3.5 Courses are in accordance with information provided within the prospectus and on the college website. The large majority of students successfully complete their courses.

3.(c) The quality of teaching and its impact on learning

- 3.6 Teaching and learning are excellent. As a result the vast majority of students make very good progress, are confident learners and progress rapidly.
- 3.7 Teaching is excellent. Classes are well planned; very effective use is made of a range of teaching methods and activities. Teaching empowers students to express their ideas confidently and to relate concepts being studied to their own experiences. Collaborative learning is used very effectively to encourage the sharing of ideas, and to develop skills appropriate to the course. Classes are well structured and

enjoyable. Teachers have high expectations in class which motivates students very well. Study skills are taught in addition to the main programme of study. Consequently students quickly assimilate the skills needed to succeed in class and make rapid progress.

- 3.8 Teaching and learning activities meet individual students needs very well and effectively encourage new ways of thinking. Teaching strongly encourages students to contribute in class. Class activities are well planned to take account of differing needs and capabilities. Feedback is used extremely well to inform students how to improve their work. The tutorial system is highly effective. Students receive one-to-one tutorials on a regular basis which supports their academic progress very effectively. Individual learning plans are used very effectively by teachers to clearly identify targets for improvement. As a result, students know what they have to do to improve.
- 3.9 Assessment strategies are highly effective. Feedback on marked work is detailed and of a high standard. Students know how they are progressing in relation to each module of study and what they must do next. Assessment is planned carefully to reflect the requirement of awarding body qualifications. Teachers are readily available to discuss progress and to support students with their assignment work, consequently students report very high levels of satisfaction with their studies.

3.(d) Attainment and progress

- 3.10 Students' progress and attainment are excellent. They make very good progress in class. The college closely monitors the attainment of students summative assessments. Records confirm that the proportion of students achieving their qualification and unit achievements is very high and improving.

4. STUDENTS' WELFARE, INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.(a) Health, safety and security of the premises

- 4.1 Arrangements for health and safety are good. The college is committed to maintaining a safe and secure environment for staff and students. Policies for health and safety are comprehensive, implemented thoroughly and are reviewed regularly for effectiveness. Fire safety equipment is appropriately sited and is sufficient for the premises. Firefighting equipment is regularly serviced. Fire risk assessment is thorough and well documented. Accurate records are kept of the testing of equipment and of fire alarms. Emergency evacuation notices are clear and well positioned. The college has an appropriate plan for emergency evacuation and there is a designated fire marshal. Security arrangements are very good. Students report that they feel safe on the premises.
- 4.2 The college has a comprehensive policy on first aid and implements this well. Appropriate first aid supplies are provided and there are two members of staff qualified in first aid. There is an accident log for the recording of incidents.
- 4.3 Premises are fit for purpose and suitably furnished. The college has provision for access and egress of all students, including for those with limited mobility. Washrooms are sufficient for student numbers. Decoration and maintenance are adequate, although in places the building shows signs of wear and tear. Classrooms are clean and tidy. Classroom furniture is of good quality and suitable for the needs of students.

4.(b) Student registration and attendance records

- 4.4 Registration and attendance records are excellent. Registers are accurate, up to date and maintained to a very high standard. Procedures for admissions are excellent. The quality of information captured during admission is first-rate. Attendance monitoring is rigorous. Senior management take a close interest in attendance monitoring and as a result attendance rates are very high.
- 4.5 There are robust procedures for reporting to the Home Office should Tier 4 students not meet the stipulated attendance requirements.

4.(c) Pastoral support for students

- 4.6 Pastoral support for students is excellent. The college culture is of an open door policy, including a 24 hour support phone number for emergencies. Support for students on personal issues is very good. Individual support needs are clearly identified during the initial enrolment stage. All teachers and managers see pastoral care as their responsibility. Students say that they feel very well supported on personal matters.
- 4.7 Student induction is thorough. Guidance given during induction enables students to quickly settle in to their programme of study and to the college. Relationships

between staff and students are excellent. There are no recorded incidents of bullying or harassment.

- 4.8 Advice and guidance are excellent. Students are very well supported by college staff through the tutorial system. They receive very good guidance on further study or on entering employment. The college uses an external provider to deliver specialist careers advice; workshops on interview preparation, interview skills and employability skills prepare students well to realise their future goals. The college provides a high quality social programme for students.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) Ownership and oversight

- 5.1 The proprietor provides good oversight of the college in line with its aims and culture. All aspects of college performance are closely and effectively monitored through a programme of regular meetings and updates. The proprietor receives reports on student progress, academic matters, finance and operational issues. Responsibilities for legal permissions are fully discharged.
- 5.2 The proprietor and senior staff work very closely together in strategic decision making, with operational responsibility clearly delegated to the management team. Relationships between the proprietor and senior management are excellent. Close and effective communication and very positive working relationship means that opportunities to improve are readily identified. Appropriate targets for senior staff are set and progress against them is effectively monitored. The college has a clear education direction with a strong emphasis on student needs.

5.(b) Management structures and responsibilities

- 5.3 Leadership and management are excellent. Senior staff are very clear about their individual areas of responsibility and manage these very well. Monitoring by management of outcomes for students is rigorous and contributes to very high levels of student achievement. The college has highly effective policies which are reviewed regularly for relevance. These are well implement and support a culture of high expectations in all areas of operation within the college.
- 5.4 Managers are highly successful in promoting the college ethos of high standards. This vision is shared effectively through detailed development planning with clear targets for improvement. Self-evaluation is effective in highlighting overall priorities. Managers are quick to act in remedying any issues identified, including where issues result from student feedback.
- 5.5 Management at all levels is highly successful in securing, supporting and developing sufficient high quality staff. Teaching staff are well qualified for their roles in meeting the needs of students. Relationships between the management team and teaching staff are excellent.

5.(c) Quality assurance including student feedback

- 5.6 Quality assurance is excellent. All aspects of college life are meticulously reviewed. Management is thorough and effective in ensuring that information gathered drives improvements or maintains the excellent standards already achieved.
- 5.7 Quality and development planning are now linked very effectively and include very specific measurable targets. Quality assurance data from classroom observations, attendance monitoring, and student achievement is used highly effectively to

establish clear targets for development. As a result, all college managers are aware of the targets in their area of responsibility and can effectively monitor progress.

- 5.8 Arrangements for the collection and analysis of student feedback are excellent. The college takes great care in determining the views and opinions of students. Student views are sought regularly through questionnaires and through meetings of student representatives with managers to discuss concerns. The college is highly responsive to student's views and actions have been taken in response to issues raised. Such responsiveness has an extremely positive impact in maintaining the culture of high expectations for teachers and students.
- 5.9 Managers monitor the quality of teaching very effectively through regular internal teaching observations linked closely to staff appraisals. Staff development for teachers is further supported very effectively by feedback from an external teaching specialist.
- 5.10 There are excellent mechanisms for student complaint resolution. No complaints are recorded for the past three years.

5.(d) Staff recruitment, qualifications and suitability checks

- 5.11 Staff recruitment procedures are satisfactory and lead the recruitment of suitable, well-qualified staff. Prior to the confirmation of new staff appointment, appropriate suitability checks are carried out to confirm qualifications, identity and right to work in the United Kingdom. Most records held on staff are appropriate although in a small minority of cases references have not been taken up.

5.(e) Provision of information

- 5.12 The college website provides clear and complete information for prospective students. The college was highly responsive in providing information requested during the inspection.

6. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for further improvement

In order to further improve the excellent quality provided, the college should:

- Ensure that information gathered for inclusion within staff personnel records is fully compliant with college policies and includes personal references.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with students and examined samples of students' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietor. The responses of staff and students to confidential pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the college.

Inspectors

Ms Elizabeth Rowan	Lead Inspector
Ms Margaret Arokiasamy	Team Inspector
Mr Philip Preedy	Team Inspector