

**The Eaquals Advisory Guide to Accreditation
The Scheme for Online Providers 7.3**



The Eaquals Advisory Services Guide to Accreditation The Scheme for Online Providers 7.3

Content

<u>The Eaquals Accreditation Scheme</u>	2
<u>The Eaquals Quality Standards</u>	6
<u>A Guide to the Eaquals Inspection Process</u>	9

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Eaquals Accreditation

Accreditation by Eaquals is the primary means by which a provider of language courses can demonstrate its compliance with Eaquals' values as set out in the Charters and with high international standards designed specifically for language learning services. The inspection process, based on the Quality Standards and the Detailed Criteria, verifies that all the promises made to staff, students and other stakeholders are respected by members or prospective members. A language centre which meets all the Eaquals Quality Standards is granted accreditation and becomes an Accredited Member. The **accreditation** period lasts **four years** and in order to be re-granted accreditation and maintain membership, members undergo a re-inspection every four years.

Eligibility for Accreditation

The **Eaquals Inspection Scheme for Online Providers** is addressed at language centres which offer **100% online language training programmes** delivered **synchronously, asynchronously or both**. Language courses offered by Online Providers must include **a significant proportion of tutor moderation and student interaction** in addition to online content. The Scheme does not apply to language centres which offer face-to-face tuition in addition to online or blended courses. The latter would be covered by the **The Eaquals Inspection Scheme for Language Centres** (see below).

Eaquals accreditation applies to the teaching of all languages in any country. To accredit a wide spectrum of language teaching institutions Eaquals operates three inspections schemes. In addition to the **The Eaquals Inspection Scheme for Online Providers**, Eaquals offers:

The Eaquals Inspection Scheme for Language Centres which is addressed at:

- language schools: stand-alone and groups of schools
- foreign language departments of mainstream education schools
- corporate training centres

The Eaquals Inspection Scheme for Higher Education Institutions is targeted at

- universities where completion of language programmes is a requirement for graduation
- English as a Medium of Instruction universities which run foundation programmes.

The scheme is designed to accredit university language centres and university language departments which offer language training programmes to undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate students.

The first inspection of a language centre can be organised after the centre has been offering language services for a minimum of 24 months.

The first inspection of language centres – **members of groups which do not have centralized management** and academic systems – can be organised after the centre has been offering language services **for a minimum of 12 months** if at least **one member of the group is already accredited by Eaquals**.

The first inspection of language centres – **members of groups with centralised management** and academic systems – can be organised after the centre has been offering language services **for a minimum of 6 months** if at least **one member of the group is already accredited by Eaquals**.

The Eaquals Accreditation Process

Eaquals Standards are demanding and therefore Eaquals offers advice and support to language centres which are considering applying for Accredited Membership.

Eaquals Advisory Services are designed to be supportive and constructive, and their main aim is

- to help a language centre to review its standards and practices in line with the Eaquals requirements
- to enable it to make a considered and realistic judgement on whether and when to proceed with the application for Eaquals Accreditation
- to avoid the risk of applying before it is fully ready.

The Eaquals accreditation process consists of four main stages: Self-Assessment, Consultancy online, the Advisory Visit and the First inspection.



Institutional Self-Assessment

The Self-Assessment is designed to facilitate a review of all aspects of the language centre's work and to help it decide whether to pursue accreditation by Eaqals and seek further advice from Eaqals in preparation for a successful inspection outcome.

The Self-Assessment process includes a review of systems, processes and standards of the language centre in relation to the Eaqals Quality Standards and it aims to:

- encourage reflection and initiate an internal dialogue about quality
- facilitate the language centre's internal development
- make an informed decision whether and when to proceed with the application for Eaqals Accreditation and draw up an action plan.

Self-Assessment mirrors the structure of the Eaqals Inspection Scheme and includes its Quality Standards. *The Eaqals Self-Assessment Handbook*, which can be acquired from the Eaqals Secretariat, covers the following sections:

- the Self-Assessment Questionnaire
- Self-Assessment Activities
- the Guide to Developing an Action Plan
- the Eaqals Glossary

Self-Assessment is a **mandatory phase** in the accreditation process and a completed Self-Assessment Questionnaire – submitted to Eaqals – is reviewed by the Director of Accreditation. The conclusion of the Self-Assessment forms the basis of the language centre's discussions with Eaqals about the next steps of the Accreditation process. Priorities and an action plan are agreed as well as the time frame to implement it.

Post Self-Assessment Consultancy

Post Self-Assessment consultancy conducted online is based on the outcome of the self-review and is not limited to ad hoc help and support. It may also include extensive document revision and support in developing documentation, e.g. course programmes, tests, CPD programmes, performance review procedures, etc. The scope of the consultancy is agreed with the Director of Accreditation.

Pre-inspection Advisory Visit (conducted online) is not mandatory but highly recommended. It **forms the core** of the Eaqals Advisory Service. It is conducted by one of Eaqals senior inspectors and its scope and focus relate to the findings from Self-Assessment conducted prior to the Visit. The length of the Visit is determined by the size of the centre, and varies from one to three days. The aim of the Visit is to see 'the institution in action', assess implementation of the academic systems, and conduct observations of sessions to make an informed decision whether a candidate institution is ready for the First Inspection. The written report defines the time frame of the accreditation project and formulates action points, i.e. what needs to be done before the inspection. It also includes suggestions for further improvement.

The outcome of the Advisory Visit is discussed with the Director of Accreditation and, if required, **further consultancy** on preparation work is provided, e.g. assistance with the review of documentation or training for tutors.

First Inspection is carried out by two Eaqals inspectors who are familiar with the centre's academic context and the result of the Advisory Visit (if applicable) as well as conclusions from Self-Assessment. The inspection report delivered by inspectors and moderated by the Accreditation Panel, includes a verdict statement, recommendations for further development, and if applicable requirements to meet the Eaqals Quality Standards.

If the **inspection is successful, accreditation** is granted for the period of **four years**. Re-accreditation is subject to a re-inspection conducted at the end of the fourth year of the accreditation cycle. Accredited members are also required to carry out a mid-cycle self-review and submit a report to Eaqals to ensure standards are maintained, and to report on changes and new developments.

If the result of **the inspection is a referral**, a language centre is given a **deadline to meet the requirements**. A follow up inspection is required only if it is the quality of teaching which is not compliant with the Eaqals Standards. In the case of other areas of the Scheme submission of documentation is sufficient.



Eaquals Inspections

Methodology

Eaquals inspections are based on a principled and effective methodology, which combines direct observation of all aspects of the language centre's activities with inspection of documentation and other evidence. The Eaquals inspection is conducted by 2 inspectors and generally lasts 2 days (3-4 days in the case of larger centres). Inspectors look for evidence of systems which can ensure sustained and consistent quality of services.

The inspection verifies that all the promises made to students, staff and other stakeholders are respected. Inspectors evaluate whether the language centre complies with the Eaquals Quality Standards in a given Category referring to detailed criteria.

Eaquals Inspectors

Eaquals inspectors are expert practitioners with considerable experience in language centre management. Before being appointed they undergo training and must demonstrate a good knowledge of the Eaquals Inspection Scheme together with the capacity to objectively evaluate a language centre's performance against the Quality Standards. They are required to comply with the professional Code of Conduct, follow the established inspection procedures and respect the principles of the Scheme.

Principles

The aims and ethos of Eaquals govern the way in which inspections are managed and carried out and the following fundamental principles are to be respected by language centres and Eaquals inspectors.

Confidentiality

Eaquals promises to fully respect the right of language centres to confidentiality with respect to all aspects of their operation and of their inspections and re-inspections. All written and orally communicated information about the language centre undergoing inspection – including the outcome of the inspection and any requirements and recommendations – is kept confidential and only discussed between the inspectors concerned, the Accreditation Panel and the Director of Accreditation. Eaquals does not publish inspection reports and such reports are only provided to the centre under inspection and the inspectors. Inspection reports are kept on file in the Eaquals Secretariat for further reference and rules of confidentiality apply as stated in the Eaquals Privacy Policy. Eaquals publicly announces the names of new Accredited Members only when accreditation has been granted following a successful inspection.

Impartiality and fairness

Complete impartiality and fairness are the overriding principles of Eaquals inspections and reports. The inspection is a formal process and a professional distance between the inspectors and all the language centre's staff is maintained, with over-familiarity avoided at all times. Inspectors must not allow themselves to be influenced or biased by prior knowledge of any staff concerned.

Consistency and reliability of inspections

In order for inspections to be valid and reliable, the Eaquals Quality Standards must be applied consistently across different language centres, and from inspection to inspection, including re-inspection of the same language Centre. Consistency and reliability of inspections is promoted in a number of ways:

- transparent and rigorous criteria for selecting inspectors, together with a thorough induction and regular compulsory training and standardisation;
- the grading system which is based on clearly defined Quality Standards and detailed criteria;
- thorough moderation of all reports by the Accreditation Panel, which is responsible for ensuring that standards are applied consistently;
- the right of language centres to comment on the factual content of the inspection report before it is finalised; the Accreditation Panel and the Director of Accreditation consider any comments with the inspectors, who amend the report when appropriate.

Comprehensiveness

The Eaquals Quality Standards cover every aspect of the language centre's work. All the Standards must be met, and each relevant aspect of the operation is inspected and assessed with equal thoroughness.



Professional collegiality and support

Eaquals inspections are carried out in a spirit of professional collegiality and supportiveness. The primary purpose of the inspection is to establish that the Eaquals Standards are being met. However, the inspection process is also an opportunity for professional exchange between inspectors and inspected, often involving a consultative element. Regardless of how, in the inspectors' view, the inspection is going, inspectors are required to remain objective and non-judgmental at all times.

Continuous improvement

One aim of the inspection process is to 'hold up a mirror' to the language centre and to enable it to benefit from the experience and to improve where possible, whatever the outcome. In addition to providing the evidence needed for Eaquals accreditation, the inspection plays a key role in maintaining the momentum of continuous improvement, and providing independent advice as to how this may be achieved. Consultative advice discussed during the inspection is expressed as 'Recommendations' in the report.

The scope of the Eaquals Inspection

Eaquals accreditation applies to the whole institution, not to individual courses or services. Therefore, all activities related to the provision of language learning services must be included in the inspection.

Teacher training (e.g. Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults – CELTA) and other courses, which have internationally recognised awarding bodies or are accredited by international bodies recognised by Eaquals, are not part of the Eaquals inspection and classes/training sessions are not observed. However, the staff teaching on any such courses should be included in tutor focus groups and/or other meetings.

Inspection procedures

The inspectors look for evidence that all services provided by the language centre meet the Eaquals Quality Standards.

They:

- hold meetings with management and academic managers
- meet focus groups of students and tutors, and where applicable, other stakeholders
- interview members of staff
- observe a representative selection of synchronous and asynchronous sessions
- check that academic management and administrative systems work in practice
- check key documentation
- inspect resources and Virtual Learning Environment
- inspect premises

Documentary evidence

Gathering evidence of compliance with the Quality Standards by inspecting documentation and online applications is an essential element of the inspection. Language centres are required to provide a range of supporting documentation in advance and during the inspection.

Meetings

The meetings held during the inspection provide further important evidence of compliance with the Quality Standards and assess the way the language centre operates in practice.

The Eaquals Quality Standards: Overview

The Eaquals Quality Standards are derived from the Eaquals Charters and are a practical expression of the philosophy of the Charters. They are arranged in 12 Categories, grouped in 5 Sections, which correspond to different aspects of a language centre's activities.

Section A – Institutional Management and Governance

1. Management and Administration

- 1.1 The language centre has been established and operates in compliance with all relevant international, national and local legislation.
- 1.2 There is an institutional mission which provides the foundation for the language centre's activities.
- 1.3 The leadership, management and organisational structure of the language centre support this mission and the achievement of its objectives.
- 1.4 There is a strategic approach to management with an awareness of the educational and economic environment.
- 1.5 There are effective administrative systems which support the delivery of the language centre's services.

2. Quality Assurance

- 2.1 There are systems and procedures to foster a culture of quality and to improve all aspects of the student experience through continuous evaluation, reflection and action .
- 2.2 The learning experience is fully monitored by management systems, including regular observation of synchronous and asynchronous tutor-student and student-student interaction, which are used to improve the quality of all services.
- 2.3 There are procedures which enable students, staff and other stakeholders to give regular feedback on all aspects of the learning experience, and this feedback is used to drive continuous improvement .

3. Communication with Staff

- 3.1 The responsibilities, lines of accountability and channels of communication between members of management and staff are clearly defined and documented .
- 3.2 There is formal, documented communication and consultation between staff and managers, scheduled as appropriate .
- 3.3 Information is available to staff about the language centre, its mission and any planned developments .
- 3.4 Information about Eaquals and its resources is available to staff .

4. Communication with Students and Clients

- 4.1 Published information accurately describes the language centre's products and services .
- 4.2 Contractual information provided to students, clients and other stakeholders is accurate and complete, and expressed in easily understood language .
- 4.3 There are effective measures to respond to any concerns raised by students, clients or other stakeholders, including a formal complaints procedure .
- 4.4 Accredited members make information about Eaquals publicly available: they display the Eaquals Guarantees publicly, and use the Eaquals logo correctly .

Section B – Academic Management

5. Course Design and Supporting Systems

- 5.1 There is a statement of the language centre's educational philosophy and its pedagogical approach .
- 5.2 Courses are designed to be coherent, relevant to student needs and aims and have specified learning objectives and content .
- 5.3 All course programmes are specified by levels which refer to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the Global Scale of English (GSE) or another internationally recognised language learning scale; learning objectives for each level are related to the global descriptors of one of these scales .
- 5.4 There is an academic administration and coordination structure, with systems which ensure the efficient delivery of course programmes .
- 5.5 There are systems for tutor induction and support which ensure the effective implementation of the language centre's educational objectives .

6. Learning and Learning Management

- 6.1 The pedagogical approach and methods reflect the language centre's stated educational philosophy .
- 6.2 Sessions are planned with reference to the relevant learning objectives, and the learning and motivational needs of individuals and the group .
- 6.3 The quality of course delivery and learner management consistently provides opportunities for effective language learning .
- 6.4 The opportunities offered for learning are varied, making good use of available resources and technology .
- 6.5 Students are given guidance on how to increase their effectiveness both as language learners and cross-cultural communicators in the classroom and beyond it.

7. Assessment and Certification

- 7.1 Assessment content and procedures reflect the stated mission and methodological approach.
- 7.2 Assessment content and procedures are aligned with the course learning objectives and with students needs.
- 7.3 Systems for assessing language competence provide consistent, reliable, and fair means of evaluating progress and achievement.
- 7.4 Formative assessment is used to provide students with feedback and advice on their learning .
- 7.5 There are systems in place to ensure security of assessment .
- 7.6 Student reports and certificates provide a reliable statement of student achievements in terms of the level and course learning objectives.

8. Academic Resources

- 8.1 Core and supplementary course materials are appropriate for the course types, the learning objectives and the pedagogical approach .
- 8.2 There is a system for monitoring the use of resources, together with advice to tutors and students about their effective application .
- 8.3 To ensure their ongoing relevance and quality, there are systems to review, update and develop resources as required .
- 8.4 Learning resources are available, accessible, and used as appropriate.

Section C – Student Services

9. Student Services

- 9.1 Information and advice is available to students and other stakeholders throughout the course .
- 9.2 Welfare support, including safeguarding arrangements where appropriate, is provided to students .

Section D – Staff

10. Staff Profile and Development

- 10.1 The competences, experience and qualifications of managers, tutors and administrative staff are relevant and appropriate for each area of responsibility .
- 10.2 There are systems to provide appropriate support and guidance for all staff including a regular staff performance review .
- 10.3 There is a formal framework to ensure appropriate continuous professional development for all staff .
- 10.4 Conclusions from observations of segments of synchronous and asynchronous tutor-student and student-student interaction are used developmentally to inform performance reviews and the tutor development programme .

11. Staff Employment Terms

- 11.1 All staff hold current employment contracts; these conform to local requirements, as confirmed by the statutory declaration of the language centre .
- 11.2 The terms and conditions of employment offered to staff are fair and conform to local requirements .
- 11.3 Grievance and disciplinary procedures are in place and known to staff.

Section E – Learning Environment and Facilities

12. Learning Environment

- 12.1 The learning environment and non-pedagogical facilities meet the requirements of course programmes, students and the services offered .
- 12.2 Online tools and all electronic equipment are state-of-the art technology .
- 12.3 Online tools and all electronic equipment are easily accessible and well maintained; electronic connectivity is reliable .
- 12.4 Arrangements are in place to protect the health and ensure the safety of students and staff as well as to promote care for the environment.



The Equals Quality Standards and a Guide to the Inspection Process

Section A – Institutional Management and Governance

1. Management and Administration

- 1.1 **The language centre has been established and operates in compliance with all relevant international, national and local legislation .**
- 1.2 **There is an institutional mission which provides the foundation for the language centre’s activities.**
- 1.3 **The leadership, management and organisational structure of the language centre support this mission and the achievement of its objectives.**
- 1.4 **There is a strategic approach to management with an awareness of the educational and economic environment.**
- 1.5 **There are effective administrative systems which support the delivery of the language centre’s services.**

Inspection procedures

Inspectors check the structures and systems which support the management and administration of the language centre. They look for evidence of leadership and strategic planning, and of co-ordination between management and administrative activity, by inspecting documentation and in meetings with senior management and key administrative staff.

Documentary evidence

- **Inspection Application Form**
- Declaration of **Statutory Compliance**
- Any documentation supporting the Declaration in areas such as registration of the language centre as a company and/or as a school, company law, insurance, employment and data compliance
- Any documentary evidence of compliance with **copyright laws**; for example any agreement with a national or international copyright licensing agency with regard to materials uploaded on to any online platform e.g. publisher permissions to put copyright materials onto online platforms
- **Data management** policies and protection systems including GDPR
- Any document including the language centre’s policy regarding the sourcing and use of technological systems and regulations on data and data security
- **Mission statement** or similar statement of the philosophy of the language centre (this may be part of the curriculum or other management strategy document)
- Organigram or **organisational chart**
- **Job descriptions** of key members of staff, including generic descriptions for tutors and other team members
- Risk assessment and crisis management documents
- Management and HR policies including non-discrimination and inclusion policies
- AI policy detailing the **principles, guidelines, and procedures** governing the **development, deployment, and oversight** of AI technologies.
- Environmental or Green Policy
- Any documentation which demonstrates **strategic planning** procedures and systems for review and analysis of the language centre’s performance and/or change management
- Marketing plans and any analyses of market performance
- Enrolment and student services administration systems and documentation



2. Quality Assurance

- 2.1 **There are systems and procedures to foster a culture of quality and to improve all aspects of the student experience through continuous evaluation, reflection and action.**
- 2.2 **The learning experience is fully monitored by management systems, including regular observation of synchronous and asynchronous tutor-student and student-student interaction, which are used to improve the quality of all services .**
- 2.3 **There are procedures which enable students, staff and other stakeholders to give regular feedback on all aspects of the learning experience, and this feedback is used to drive continuous improvement .**

Inspection procedures

Inspectors look for evidence of a culture of commitment to quality and improvement, and check the structures and procedures which support this. They gather evidence through inspecting documentation and by conducting meetings with management, academic managers, tutors and students.

Documentary evidence

- Reports/records of any additional **audits/reviews/inspections** apart from Equals – either internal or by other organisations
- Any written evidence of the language centre’s **approach to quality enhancement**, such as internal quality assurance procedures, self-assessment documents
- Written evidence of systems for reviewing **the quality of course content, materials and resources**
- Evidence of monitoring of the quality of **online delivery** including video recording and evaluation of **the use of technology**
- Written evidence of systems for **quality control observation** of synchronous and asynchronous tutor-student and student-student interaction and the way they help to develop and improve teaching and learning
- **Observation records** (for quality control) and other related documentation such as observation checklists, observation feedback sheets, records of any follow-up action
- Written evidence of systems for collecting feedback from students and other stakeholders including **completed student feedback questionnaires, analysis of feedback and records of any follow-up action**
- Written evidence of systems for collecting feedback from staff, such as **records of meetings with staff and/or staff surveys**



3. Communication with Staff

- 3.1 **The responsibilities, lines of accountability and channels of communication between members of management and staff are clearly defined and documented .**
- 3.2 **There is formal, documented communication and consultation between staff and managers, scheduled as appropriate .**
- 3.3 **Information is available to staff about the language centre, its mission and any planned developments .**
- 3.4 **Information about Equals and its resources is available to staff .**

Inspection procedures

Inspectors check the structures and procedures which support communication with staff within the language centre. They look for evidence that staff are well informed and feel valued and respected, by reviewing relevant documents and in meetings with managers, tutors and administrative staff.

Documentary evidence

- **Any records of regular briefings** such as meetings or newsletters from management to staff on development plans, state of the market, etc.
- Any evidence of a system **of two-way communication and consultation** between staff and managers such as agendas and minutes/notes of regularly held meetings
- Arrangements for **staff representation** and any unions, if applicable
- **Staff Handbook** or other document/s including information about the legal status and ownership of the language centre, and information on systems and procedures of relevance to staff
- **Organigram, organisational charts** and/or job descriptions which define line management and **communication channels**
- **Equals Guarantee to Staff** on display to staff (only for re-inspections of accredited members)



4. Communication with Students and Clients

- 4.1 **Published information accurately describes the language centre's products and services.**
- 4.2 **Contractual information provided to students, clients and other stakeholders is accurate and complete, and expressed in easily understood language .**
- 4.3 **There are effective measures to respond to any concerns raised by students, clients or other stakeholders, including a formal complaints procedure .**
- 4.4 **Accredited members make information about Eaquals publicly available: they display the Eaquals Guarantees publicly, and use the Eaquals logo correctly .**

Inspection procedures

Inspectors check the communication systems and materials used to promote and market the language centre and to facilitate communication with students and other stakeholders, such as sponsors and corporate clients. The systems are also checked at meetings with students, managers and staff responsible for sales and marketing.

Documentary evidence

- The language centre's **website and social media**
- Student **enrolment documentation**
- **Student Handbook** or an equivalent
- **Contracts** provided to students and/or sponsors and any other documents stating **terms and conditions** regarding tuition and other services offered
- Written evidence of **complaints procedures** for students and other stakeholders
- Written information about **Eaquals and its complaints procedures** (inspections of accredited members only)
- Eaquals **Guarantees** for Language Centres and to Students (inspections of accredited members only)



Section B – Academic Management

5. Course Design and Supporting Systems

- 5.1 **There is a statement of the language centre’s educational philosophy and its pedagogical approach .**
- 5.2 **Courses are designed to be coherent, relevant to student needs and aims and have specified learning objectives and content .**
- 5.3 **All course programmes are specified by levels which refer to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the Global Scale of English (GSE) or another internationally recognised language learning scale; learning objectives for each level are related to the global descriptors of one of these scales .**
- 5.4 **There is an academic administration and coordination structure, with systems which ensure the efficient delivery of course programmes .**
- 5.5 **There are systems for tutor induction and support which ensure the effective implementation of the language centre’s educational objectives .**

Inspection procedures

Inspectors check how the language centre’s educational philosophy informs course design, and how closely day to day course planning relates to prescribed learning objectives. They also check systems for tutor induction and support. Evidence of compliance is gathered by reviewing academic planning documents and at meetings with academic managers and tutors. Observation of segments of synchronous and asynchronous tutor-student and student-student interaction is the practical realisation of academic management systems and also contributes important evidence for this Category.

Documentary evidence

- **A statement of the language centre’s educational philosophy**
- A document defining **best practice in online teaching** and use of technology
- **Course programmes**, levels with learning objectives
- **Pacing/planning documents**
- Any forms and documents related to **needs analysis** showing how these are conducted and applied in course design for learner-defined courses, where relevant
- **A description of the language centre’s level system**, including how this maps on to CEFR levels or GSE or another internationally recognised scale
- **Tutor Handbook** and/or any documentation giving guidance and information to tutors on the language centre’s educational philosophy, the methodological approach and course programmes and administrative tasks expected of tutors
- **Student Handbook** and/or any documents giving information to students on the language centre’s educational philosophy, the methodological approach and course programmes
- **Website, social media and applications**
- **Job descriptions of the academic manager(s) or Director of Studies** including any supporting staff such as assistant academic managers, examinations officers, etc.
- Timetable and description of **induction programme** for new tutors
- Administrative documentation such as **completed records of work** and **student attendance, sessions timetables**.



6. Learning and Learning Management

- 6.1 **The pedagogical approach and methods reflect the language centre's stated educational philosophy.**
- 6.2 **Sessions are planned with reference to the relevant learning objectives, and the learning and motivational needs of individuals and the group.**
- 6.3 **The quality of course delivery and learner management consistently provides opportunities for effective language learning.**
- 6.4 **The opportunities offered for learning are varied, making good use of available resources and technology.**
- 6.5 **Students are given guidance on how to increase their effectiveness both as language learners and cross-cultural communicators in the classroom and beyond it.**

Inspection procedures

Inspection procedures for this Category include observation of segments of synchronous and asynchronous tutor-student and student-student interaction and reviewing academic planning documents and meetings with academic managers, tutors and students.

Session observation procedures

Inspectors aim to observe all levels and course types, including synchronous and asynchronous sessions. **Teacher-training courses** if delivered online which are accredited by internationally recognised awarding bodies recognised by Equals e.g. CELTA, DAF, FLE are not part of the inspection and training sessions are not observed. However, the staff teaching on any such courses are included in meetings with academic managers and/or with tutors.

- Inspectors attempt to observe as many as possible of the tutor team and in smaller language centres this usually includes all tutors. Inspectors aim to observe **at least 70% of all tutors timetabled to run sessions during the inspection**. Inspectors should ensure that sessions **observed cover a representative spectrum of languages, course types, levels and age groups**.
- The focus of observation is on the learning management in general and not the performance of individual tutors i.e. inspectors aim to carry out an overall assessment of the language centre's management of learning
- Students should be informed about the purpose and conduct of observation and reassured that they are not being evaluated.
- Inspectors normally **observe a session for 15 to 20 minutes**.
- Inspectors are **provided access to sessions plans and materials**.
- The first one or two observations are done by both inspectors together, who take time to discuss their views and reactions to the initial observations in order to ensure a common interpretation and assessment of those which follow.
- Individual tutors may be observed on more than one occasion.
- Inspectors will not take part in the session.
- In addition to observing sessions and evaluating session plans and other related documentation, inspectors also check numbers of students in the session, homogeneity of levels, and the quality of the virtual learning environment.

Documentary evidence

- **Session plans and other planning documents**
- **Attendance** records, **records of work** completed
- **Learning materials** to be used during the session
- Other resources when they form an integral part of the course programme
- Any **written guidance to tutors on methodology and use of technology** for example, tutor handbooks or similar



7. Assessment and Certification

- 7.1 **Assessment content and procedures reflect the stated mission and methodological approach.**
- 7.2 **Assessment content and procedures are aligned with the course learning objectives and with students needs.**
- 7.3 **Systems for assessing language competence provide consistent, reliable, and fair means of evaluating progress and achievement.**
- 7.4 **Formative assessment is used to provide students with feedback and advice on their learning .**
- 7.5 **There are systems in place to ensure security of assessment .**
- 7.6 **Student reports and certificates provide a reliable statement of student achievements in terms of the level and course learning objectives.**

Inspection procedures

Evidence of compliance is gathered by reviewing assessment and certification documents and in meetings with academic managers, tutors and students. Inspectors examine tests and assessment instruments, security measures and check their compatibility with the course programmes. They check procedures for any in-house test design and implementation, including any relevant training for staff.

Documentary evidence

- Written description of the language centre's **assessment policy** including policy regarding **security**
- **Placement tests** and guidelines
- Written procedures for dealing with **misplaced students** (Tutor Handbook, Student Handbook or any other documents)
- All **progress and end-of-course tests**
- Access to any **tests and assessment tools**
- Regulations and procedures regarding **high stake assessments** including where relevant **AI policy** detailing the **principles, guidelines, and procedures** governing the **development, deployment, and oversight** of AI technologies in assessment
- **Tutor Handbook** and/or any documentation giving guidance and information to staff on assessment aims and procedures
- Records of **induction, training and standardisation** for staff responsible for designing assessment instruments and administering assessment
- Students' **assessment records**
- Sample **reports and/or certificates** issued by the language centre for all course types
- Any **website, social media or online applications** concerning the language centre's educational and/or administrative services with regard to external examinations



8. Academic Resources

- 8.1 Core and supplementary course materials are appropriate for the course types, the learning objectives and the pedagogical approach.
- 8.2 There is a system for monitoring the use of resources, together with advice to tutors and students about their effective application.
- 8.3 To ensure their ongoing relevance and quality, there are systems to review, update and develop resources as required.
- 8.4 Learning resources are available, accessible, and used as appropriate.

Inspection procedures

Inspectors check the provision and use of all teaching and learning materials and equipment, including platforms and applications and any other online learning facility. Inspectors visit tutors' work spaces, e-libraries, platforms and applications designated for self-study. They interview academic staff and students on the relevance and quality of resources.

Documentary evidence

- **Policy statement** and **guidelines** on the use of commercial software and published resources
- Any **written guidelines for students** on learning resources
- **Lists of all teaching and learning** material
- Inspector access (as tutors and students) to **resources and platforms**
- Written procedures for review and development of resources



Section C – Student Services

9. Student Services

- 9.1 Information and advice are available to students and other stakeholders throughout the course**
- 9.2 Welfare support, including safeguarding arrangements where appropriate, is provided to students .**

Inspection procedures

Inspectors check procedures and arrangements to deal with students' queries, to offer them advice and support, to ensure their well-being and to handle welfare issues. Inspectors review all relevant documentation and have meetings with responsible staff. Discussion of these services is included in meetings with students and other stakeholders.

Documentary evidence

- Written procedures for dealing with **absence, lateness and discipline**
- Written guidelines on the use of **online tools and resources**
- Written guidelines for staff on serious student welfare issues such as **bullying, harassment or significant distress** and procedures for dealing with these
- All documentation describing the language centre's **safeguarding and student protection policy**



Section D – Staff

10. Staff Profile and Development

- 10.1 The competences, experience and qualifications of managers, tutors and administrative staff are relevant and appropriate for each area of responsibility.**
- 10.2 There are systems to provide appropriate support and guidance for all staff including a regular staff performance review.**
- 10.3 here is a formal framework to ensure appropriate continuous professional development for all staff.**
- 10.4. Conclusions from observation of segments of synchronous and asynchronous tutor-student and student-student interaction are used developmentally to inform performance reviews and the tutor development programme.**

Inspection procedures

Inspectors check personnel files and documentation related to performance reviews, CPD programmes, and developmental observations. Meetings with management, academic managers, tutors and administrative staff and observation of sessions provide evidence of compliance for this Category .

Documentary evidence

- **Up-to-date list of staff** with their experience and qualifications, as seen on the Inspection Application Form
- Staff CVs
- Copies of staff qualifications: **diplomas and certificates**
- **Qualifications of staff and external providers** who work with students under the age of 18 including **up-to-date documented proof** that they do not have any criminal convictions
- Any **policy documents** on recruitment (e.g. qualifications/experience required), deployment, induction ,etc.
- **Performance review documents for tutors** including signed records of reviews
- Any documents relating to the use of the European Profiling Grid (EPG) or the Equals Framework for Language Teacher Training and Development if relevant
- **Performance review documents** for administrative staff and managers including signed records of reviews
- Written policy and descriptions of systems for **staff training and development**
- Records of **in-service or/and on-the job training** for teaching and administrative staff
- Records of any **external training** undertaken by academic or administrative staff, and policies on **funding**
- Records of developmental **observations**, peer and self-observations and evidence of how they link to the programme of continuous professional development



11. Staff Employment Terms

- 11.1 **All staff hold current employment contracts; these conform to local requirements, as confirmed by the statutory declaration of the language centre .**
- 11.2 **The terms and conditions of employment offered to staff are fair and conform to local requirements .**
- 11.3 **Grievance and disciplinary procedures are in place and known to staff .**

Inspection procedures

Inspectors gather information on staff employment terms and conditions in meetings with managers and staff and by reviewing related documentation. They check whether there is full compliance with the declaration made by the language centre regarding proper payment of salaries, income taxes and any social security or other legally required contributions to the relevant authorities.

Documentary evidence

- Declaration of Statutory Compliance
- **Up-to-date list of staff** employed at the time of the inspection, as provided in the Inspection Application Form, showing number of years employed by the language centre and their employment status
- Samples of **contracts for full-time and permanent staff**
- Samples of **contracts for casual/hourly paid staff** and those on short-term contracts
- Letters of employment/appointment for **freelance/self-employed** staff
- Employment **terms and conditions**, if documented separately in addition to contracts
- Written staff **grievance and disciplinary** procedures
- Any additional documentation, for example appendices to contracts, **staff handbooks**, guidelines, job descriptions
- Any **salary scales** or documents dealing with reward systems for staff



Section E – Learning Environment and Facilities

12. Learning Environment

- 12.1 The learning environment and non-pedagogical facilities meet the requirements of course programmes, students and the services offered .
- 12.2 Online tools and all electronic equipment are state-of-the art technology .
- 12.3 Online tools and all electronic equipment are easily accessible and well maintained; electronic connectivity is reliable .
- 12.4 Arrangements are in place to protect the health well as to promote care for the environment.

Inspection procedures

Inspectors inspect Virtual Learning Environment and online tools and check their security and reliability. They also inspect premises and facilities used by the language centre to check safety arrangements. They check documentation on emergency evacuation and that these procedures are correctly applied in practice during meetings with management and staff.

Documentary Evidence:

- Equipment and online platforms **maintenance records**
- Insurance certificates
- **Any health and safety** documentation including records of **fire/evacuation** practices and **first aid** training
- **Notices** of emergency procedures and escape routes (in the case of any physical premises such as central offices)
- **Any statutory notices** required by legislation
- **Any risk assessment** document related to online delivery and premises
- **Any fire certificate** issued by local authorities
- **Analysis of carbon footprint** and **environmental action plans**



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