

Institution: EC Cape Town, South Africa

Inspector: Jim Ferguson

Dates: 20-22 November 2018



Section One: Inspection Verdict

Verdict statement:

When the institution has fulfilled the requirements below, it will meet the standards of the Equals Charters, and its accredited membership can then be confirmed.

Grades

Grade 2 = meets the high quality Standards required by the Equals Charters

Grade 2,5 = does not meet the Standards required by the Equals Charters with reference to one or more relatively minor indicators of compliance, which can easily and swiftly be rectified, and evidence, such as a document or photo, can be readily submitted

Grade 3 = does not meet the high quality Standards required by the Equals Charters

Grade 1 = exceeds the high quality Standards required by the Equals Charters and identifies a Category of consistent excellence in the institution

Grade 1,5 = meets the high quality Standards required by the Equals Charters and identifies a Category which, in some respects, exceeds Equals high Standards, exhibiting one or two indicators of excellence, while not achieving consistent excellence in this Category

| CATEGORIES | | Grade | CATEGORIES (CON'T) | | Grade |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| 1 | Management and Administration | 1.5 | 7 | Client Services | 1.5 |
| 2 | Teaching and Learning | 2 | 8 | Quality Assurance | 1.5 |
| 3 | Course Design and Supporting Systems | 2 | 9 | Staff Profile and Development | 2.5 |
| 4 | Assessment and Certification | 1.5 | 10 | Staff Employment Terms | 2 |
| 5 | Academic Resources | 2 | 11 | Internal Communications | 1.5 |
| 6 | Learning Environment | 2 | 12 | External Communications | 2 |
| TOTAL GRADE: | | | | | 22 |

Following the inspection, evidence has been provided by EC Cape Town and the requirement has been met.

Executive Summary

EC Cape Town is part of the Malta-based EC English group which, at the time of inspection, operated 25 schools in 7 countries. The organisation has over 400 employees and caters for 45,000 students each year. EC Cape Town benefits from the strong EC brand and is supported by a management team in Malta and the UK, which provides comprehensive institutional support – HR, Finance, Marketing, IT, Admissions etc. A strong corporate ethos, with shared values and vision across the network, and a common suite of English language programmes, are enriched by a local touch provided by a dedicated and highly professional group of employees. Constant attention to customer care and striving to provide a quality service for the learners are the hallmarks of the organisation. Staff and students alike agreed it was a fun place to be and considered themselves part of a big happy family.



Section Two: Account of the Inspection

Timetable

| Day 1 | Tuesday 20 November | | |
|--------------|--|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Time | Action | Staff involved (Job Title) | Inspector |
| 0800-0830 | Arrival, brief introduction to staff & tour of premises | Inspection Coordinator | JF throughout |
| 0830-1000 | Meeting with Centre Director (1): Leadership and Management issues | Centre Director | |
| 1015-1145 | Class observations | Teachers | |
| 1145-1230 | Teacher Focus Group | Teachers | |
| 1230-1250 | Class observation (Special Focus) | Teacher | |
| 1250-1345 | Lunch | | |
| 1400-1530 | Meeting with Director of Studies (1) | Director of Studies | |
| 1530-1600 | Inspection of Premises | | |
| 1600-1700 | Meeting with Senior Student Services Coordinator | Senior Student Services Coordinator | |

| Day 2 | Wednesday 21 November | | |
|--------------|---|--|---------------|
| Time | Action | Staff involved (Job Title) | Inspectors |
| 0830-1000 | Class observations | Teachers | JF throughout |
| 1000-1100 | Meeting with Centre Director (2): Admin, IT, systems, documents | Centre Director | |
| 1100-1130 | Meeting with Student Services Coordinator | Student Services Coordinator | |
| 1145-1230 | Student Focus Group | Selected students | |
| 1230-1310 | Class observations (Special Focus) | Teachers | |
| 1310-1400 | Lunch | | |
| 1400-1430 | Meeting with Assistant Student Services Coordinator | Assistant Student Services Coordinator | |
| 1430-1830 | Visit to Residences (2) and Host Families | Senior Student Services Coordinator | |



| Day 3 | Thursday 22 November | | |
|--------------|--|---|---------------|
| Time | Action | Staff involved (Job Title) | Inspector |
| 0830-0945 | Class observations | Teachers | JF throughout |
| 0950-1010 | Interview with new teacher: the induction process | Teacher | |
| 1015-1115 | Meeting with Director of Studies (2) | Director of Studies | |
| 1115-1145 | Inspection of resources and documentation | | |
| 1145-1230 | Inspection of Premises (cont) | | |
| 1230-1330 | Lunch | | |
| 1330-1545 | Class observations (Skills & Special Focus) and preparation for feedback to management | Teachers | |
| 1600-1630 | Skype meeting with Group Academic Director | Group Academic Director, Centre Director, DOS | |
| 1640-1800 | Feedback to management | Centre Director & DOS | |

Staffing of the Language Education Centre

The staffing and structure of EC Cape Town follows the corporate template. The Centre Director is responsible for the day-to-day running of the LEC and oversees all matters relating to Operations. He oversees the Ops Team made up of 3 Student Service Coordinators. The CD reports to the Director of Operations, based in the UK. The Director of Studies oversees the entire academic programme and the teaching staff of 15 to 17 and is an instrumental part of the group academic function as a whole, through regular input into the group academic strategy and various working projects. The DOS reports to the CD and the Group Academic Director, based in the UK.



Description of the Institution; provided by the Language Education Centre.

| Section E: Language Education Centre Background Information | |
|---|--|
| History | <p>Started in 1991 and now with over 25 years of experience and 25 schools in 7 countries, EC brings an innovative approach to learning English. Our commitment to developing our products, relationships and people has seen our organisation grow and strengthen to now operate in 24 destinations, in six countries, on three continents.</p> <p>In 1991, the European Centre of English Language Studies was founded in Malta, and rebranded as EC in 1997. In 2002, EC took its first international steps into the UK and opened the first ex-Malta school in Brighton. Over the next 11 years, we opened schools in Cambridge, London, Bristol, Oxford and Manchester.</p> <p>In 2006, we ventured into a second continent and EC Cape Town was born. The school moved to its current new and improved premises in 2015. With boutique design features inspired by the country's varied and vibrant population, and a student activity calendar that takes in the best of this breath-taking destination, the spirit of South Africa is certainly alive at EC Cape Town.</p> <p>EC has subsequently opened schools in 4 additional countries: The USA, Canada, Ireland and Saudi Arabia.</p> <p>EC is now one of the largest international language schools in the world. Five of our locations have special programmes for students aged 30 and above, and our Malta location has a special programme for students aged 50 and above. Every EC school offers state-of-the-art classrooms, stylish and comfortable living and learning spaces, and committed teachers and staff. Our student-centric approach and our award-winning Orange Carpet Experience means every student is treated as a VIP, and we work hard to ensure they receive a truly positive and memorable experience.</p> <p>Today, the EC brand is recognised, trusted and promoted to students around the world by an ever-growing international network of language travel specialists. Our head office is based in Malta, from where we coordinate our international business, and we continue to operate our first ever school in Malta in this location.</p> <p>Over 45,000 students come through the doors every year with a dream of fluency in English. Their success is our goal.</p> <p>We have also included a link to a video, "The EC Story", which was produced for our 25th anniversary three years ago: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02zFl-AgWgk&t=14s</p> |
| Methodological approach | <p>We draw on over 30 years of experience to create an engaging and relevant framework which delivers the results our students are looking for. Our methods are based upon engagement, communication and lesson plans tailored to students' individual requirements. Maximum Support - A team of two teachers support learners throughout their time learning English with EC. By constant assessment and feedback they monitor learner needs and offer the resources learners need to make progress. Measuring Satisfaction - We are one of the only English schools using the highly regarded Net Promoter Score (NPS) system to gather feedback constantly and act swiftly to correct anything reported as being 'less than perfect'. Academic Team - Our team is made up of industry professionals, published authors, experienced editors and educational technologists. We never stop researching the latest trends and methods to ensure you make the best progress possible. Free Language Workshops - In addition to the core components of the course, we offer teacher-led sessions which are available free of charge. These language workshops and leisure activities make the learning experience as broad and varied as possible.</p> |



| | |
|---|--|
| Premises | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 classrooms each with a seating capacity of 15 students • Student lounge area • Student library/resource centre • Reception area • Administration office • Staff room and kitchen • DOS office • Centre Director office • Meeting room • Computer hub for students with 10 PCs • Free WiFi • For Muslim students, a classroom is made available with prayer mats. |
| Facilities | The computer area can also be used for personal use and WIFI is available throughout the school. The school is well situated so students have access to shops and cafes to purchase lunch and open spaces to use between classes. Teachers have access to a well-resourced staff room that has 3 computers for planning purposes and kitchen facilities to prepare and store drinks and food. There are also water-dispensing units available for staff and students. |
| Classroom equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All classrooms are fitted out identically: • IWBs • Computer on a workstation • Data projector • Speakers • WiFi and internet access • Air conditioning • 7 rooms have tables and chairs • 5 rooms have tablet-chairs |
| Any other premises used by the Language Education Centre | From time to time – on an ad hoc basis – we might use a board room in one of the offices on the floor above us. This is in the event that we have a large Monday intake or one-to-one lessons and we require the extra space. |
| Location of in-company courses | n/a |

| Section F: Courses Offered | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| | Approximate percentage of total student hours as calculated below (for an academic year) | Approximate number of students (for an academic year) | Approximate number of teachers per language taught (for an academic year) |
| Language 1 English | 100% | 1400 | 16 |
| Types of course, e.g. national and international exam courses, and blended/ on-line courses over the year (add rows as needed) | | | |
| General Language | General English | 85% of all courses taught | |
| Special purpose | Cambridge Exam | 10% of all courses taught | |
| Special purpose | IELTS Preparation | 5% of all courses taught | |



| Any courses provided which are <u>not</u> language courses (e.g. teacher training). | | | |
|---|------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Name of course | Type | Number of students | Number of teachers |
| None | | | |
| | | | |

| Technology enhanced learning | |
|---|---|
| Are your face-to-face courses supported by digital /online tools and methodology? This may include the use of hardware and/or software both in and out of class during the period of the course. | |
| Yes. If yes: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is this a compulsory element of the course? | No – not for course content, but definitely for assessment and homework |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it a fully integrated part of the course? | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it used for homework? | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it used for assessment? | Yes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it used in class? | Yes |
| Please describe the use of educational technology briefly. | Every class is fitted with interactive whiteboards; use of and full access to a bank of 10 student computers; use of students' own devices; course content supplemented online with suggested learning activities & tracking of progress. |
| Blended Learning and e-learning courses Are any of the enrolled hours for any course(s) required to be completed online (either as asynchronous online learning or through synchronous interaction with a teacher online via a webinar or similar tool)? Are there any courses delivered exclusively online? | No. |
| % of student hours spent online as part of the course | n/a |
| Number of teachers for both synchronous and asynchronous learning | n/a |
| Blended Learning / e-learning courses: timing | |
| Please give details of e-learning likely to be taking place during the period of 3 weeks before and 3 weeks after the inspection period, including where possible: | n/a |
| Number of levels / courses | n/a |
| Number of hours, if synchronous | n/a |
| Synchronous (teachers and students online together): | n/a |



| | |
|---|-----|
| Asynchronous (material available for students to use at their convenience): | n/a |
|---|-----|

Section G: Staff and Student Numbers

Students

| | |
|--|--|
| Approximate total of number of all student hours of tuition provided by the Language Education Centre during the last 12 months. Include course participants taught in-company and in other off-site locations | To calculate student hours: multiply the number of course participants registered, by the number of 60-minutes clock hours each received (for example, 30 course participants doing a course lasting 60 clock hours is 1,800 student hours) Total Number: 168,000 (1400 students over last 12 months x 20 hours per week ave. x 6 weeks ave.) |
|--|--|

| | | |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Low and Peak Seasons (Please tell us which are your busiest and quietest months) | Low Season (April - Sept) | Peak season (Oct - March) |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Numbers of sites | One |
|-------------------------|------------|

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Low Season: One | Peak season: One |
|------------------------|-------------------------|

| | | | | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Approximate total of number of students at different times of the year | Q1 Jan-March: 450 | Q2 April-Jun: 300 | Q3 July-Sept: 300 | Q4 Oct-Dec: 450 |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|

| | | | |
|---|-------------|------------------|------------------|
| Approximate numbers of full time (15 or more hours per week) and part-time (under 15 hours per week) course participants age 18+ over the year | | Full-time | Part time |
| | Number: | 1260 | None |
| | Percentage: | 100% | % |

| | |
|--|----|
| Maximum size of classes taught: | 15 |
|--|----|

| | | | |
|--|-------------|------------------|------------------|
| Approximate numbers of full time (15 or more hours per week) and part-time (under 15 hours per week) course participants age 16 – 17. | | Full-time | Part time |
| | Number: | 140 | None |
| | Percentage: | 100% | % |

| | |
|--|----|
| Maximum size of classes taught: | 15 |
|--|----|

| | | | | |
|--|-------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Approximate Numbers of Junior (11-15) Young Learners (6-10) and Very Young Learners (6 and under) over the year | | Junior (11-15) | Young Learners (6-10) | Very Young Learners (6 and under) |
| | Number: | None | None | None |
| | Percentage: | % | % | % |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Maximum size of classes taught: | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|

Staffing

| | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Number of Full Time Teaching Staff | Q1 Jan-March: | Q2 April-Jun: | Q3 July-Sept: | Q4 Oct-Dec: |
| | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 |

| | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Number of Part Time/Freelance Teaching Staff | Q1 Jan-March: | Q2 April-Jun: | Q3 July-Sept: | Q4 Oct-Dec: |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |



| | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| Number of Full Time Administrative Staff | Q1 Jan-March: | Q2 April-Jun: | Q3 July-Sept: | Q4 Oct-Dec: |
| | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| Number of Part Time Administrative Staff | Q1 Jan-March: | Q2 April-Jun: | Q3 July-Sept: | Q4 Oct-Dec: |
| | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |



Section Three: Grading

1. Management and Administration (Eaquals General Charter: 1, 2, 3, 4)

Verdict statement:

The Inspector found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

1.1 There is an institutional ethos which provides the foundation for the institution's activities.

1.2 The leadership and organisational structure of the Language Education Centre support this mission and the achievement of its objectives.

EC Cape Town operates within the EC English global network and is overseen, monitored and supported by Head Office. The organisation is united by a strong corporate identity, vision, culture and structure. Its mission statement 'helping students succeed in a global community' and its core values – 'going the extra mile, loving what we do, having a can-do mindset and delivering what we promise' - are widely publicized in the Student Charter, posted in each classroom, in brochures and handbooks and underpin all activities undertaken by the Centre. Corporate culture is embedded in routines and rituals, such as the Orange Carpet Experience and the Sunday evening dinner with staff and teachers and the Monday morning breakfast for newly arrived students. The organisation subscribes to corporate social responsibility by sending teachers to Cambodia, and in Cape Town, the Rainbow Dreamers project involves students volunteering to work with underprivileged children in the city.

EC Cape Town is supported by centrally located functional departments, mainly in Malta, and sales offices in key market countries. Judging by results, it is a very effective and well-oiled machine and the Centre Director emphasised the benefits of the strong infrastructure and coordination, the good relationships and the constant communication between all partners. Individual centres also benefit from common policies and procedures, both academic – curriculum, assessment, materials development, tutorials etc- and non-academic – special needs, harassment, learning and development, discipline etc.

Each centre has a common structure comprising Centre Director (CD), Director of Studies (DOS) and Student Services Coordinators (SSC). Cape Town has a Senior SSC who is supported by 2 SSCs. Interns are occasionally taken on as the need arises. The reporting channels, both within the centre and with Head Office, are clear with the CD reporting to the Director of Operations in Head Office and the DOS to the Group Academic Director. An annual budget is given to the centre, with the Director being responsible for the day-to-day operations.

Corporate strategic planning is clearly effective considering the continued growth and success of the organisation since its establishment. EC Cape Town carries out regular SWOT analyses –the latest one was seen and judged by the inspector to be comprehensive and insightful. The CD feeds into the overall strategic planning process and submits a monthly Operational Balance Scorecard as the main reporting tool. This contains the strategic objectives and their corresponding Net Promoter Score (see Section 8) with indicators under the categories of Team Engagement, Student Satisfaction, Academic Quality and Financial Success.

Within the global EC English community, EC Cape Town has established its own identity and modus operandi. The Director described his leadership style as 'servant leadership', micro-managing when necessary. An open-door policy and empathetic attitude were very evident and the inspector was able to see the 4 values mentioned above translated into action. Distributed leadership was also observed with delegation and responsibility given over to middle management.

There are job descriptions, but as the team is small, they tend to go beyond these to be more task-driven. Coordination of management and administrative activity takes place in a formal and informal way with corporate documented procedures to back this up. All staff were adept at multi-tasking, but in the view of the inspector, some were being overextended. The DOS, who was highly praised by all stakeholders, had too much delegated to him and was involved in too many low-level tasks -doing timesheets for pay-roll, stock-taking, dealing with a variety of student issues- all this to the detriment of what he is very good at i.e. teacher supervision, training and development. This was also the view of other stakeholders and it was



pointed out that in the past there was an academic team in place. The appointment of a part-time Assistant DOS or senior teacher(s) would free up the DOS to be involved in more high-value activities and as a result would benefit the centre as a whole. The Senior Student Services Coordinator was seen to be undertaking a variety of tasks related to sales, finance, HR, and marketing to the extent that her job title does not do justice to what she actually does and a different title may be appropriate.

Administrative systems are transparent and well-coordinated and are clear to all stakeholders. There is a highly effective IT team based in Malta which is supported by a local provider in Cape Town. The electronic systems dealing with all aspects of administration are comprehensive, highly effective and user-friendly.

There is documentary evidence of compliance with copyright law and a statutory declaration has been made that the organisation complies with all relevant national and local legislation, including company law on insurance, employment, data collection, accounting and taxation.

Points of Excellence

1 is excellent because

- There is a highly effective, efficient and integrated management structure at corporate, regional and local level aligns closely with an institutional ethos and social responsibility, embraced by all employees
- There are highly effective electronic systems in place for all areas, academic and non-academic, of the institution's administration

Recommendations

- **Consider appointing one or more teachers as ADOS or Senior Teacher(s), with a consequent reduction in teaching hours, to free up the DOS to concentrate more on key academic responsibilities**
- Consider changing the job title of the Senior Student Services Coordinator to better reflect the tasks she undertakes

Requirements

None

2. Teaching and Learning (Eaquals General Charter, 1.2; Charter For Course Participants 1,2, 3)

Verdict statement:

The Inspector found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

2.1 The pedagogical approach and methods reflect the institution's educational philosophy.

2.2 The quality of course delivery consistently provides opportunities for effective learning.

2.3 Lessons are planned with reference to the course programme and the learning and motivational needs of individuals and the group; specified learning outcomes are shared with learners.

2.4 The opportunities offered for learning are varied, making use of available technology and resources.

2.5 Learners have the opportunity to develop their study skills and to share responsibility for their own learning.

Of the 17 teachers currently employed, 15 were observed. One was observed twice as she was giving a 1-1 lesson. One teacher was on leave at the time and, as the other had only started that week and was observing



peers as part of her induction process, the inspector interviewed her separately to gain insight into the induction process. All programmes offered at the time (see Section 3 for details) were observed. The teaching quality was high, with 4 examples of excellent practice and the others being between good and very good. Learners in the focus group were unanimous in praising the quality of the instruction they received.

The planning and organisation of the whole teaching-learning process is coordinated at corporate level and is highly effective and principled, reflecting the overall educational philosophy and pedagogical approach of the organisation. All teachers supplied detailed lesson plans with sections on Class Profile; Aims and Objectives/ Subsidiary Aims/ Personal Aims; Anticipated Difficulties and Solutions; Curriculum/ Full Session Connection and Materials/Resources. Stages, aims and procedures were described and in some cases, teachers included interaction patterns and timing. The inspector recommends that the complete model be adopted in future as the interaction patterns provide a monitor of learner and teacher talking time and the timing contributes to better balanced outcomes. It should be noted that most teachers were very conscious of timing, using a countdown facility on the Interactive Whiteboard.

Lesson plans and weekly schemes of work contain clear intended learning outcomes (ILOs) and course descriptors and schemes of work are displayed on noticeboards and are available on EC Online, the self-study learning platform for learners. Learning outcomes, within a framework of ongoing learner training, are constantly referred to, from the DOS's initial briefing to new students, through the post-progress test tutorials and learner portfolios to oral and written feedback following the exit test. Learning outcomes were sometimes referred to by teachers during the lessons, but a more systematic approach, with the lesson's ILOs being highlighted on a board and reference being made throughout the lesson, would be beneficial and would reinforce the learner training regime.

The rapport between teacher and learners and between the learners themselves was excellent and greatly enhanced the learning process. Learners stated they enjoyed their classes and were happy with the nationality mix, even though Arabic speakers dominated the lower levels. Communicative methodology was at the heart of classroom activity and the content of lessons and materials used were suitable for the age range and needs of the learners. There was a good balance between the teaching input on grammar, lexis and pronunciation, though in some cases the latter was a little neglected. Skills were dealt with in an integrated and imaginative fashion. The top-down schemes of work are comprehensive and relevant and provide a very solid framework for teachers and learners. They were however at times constraining. Opportunities for more task-based learning and activities involving small group projects on areas of common interest would have enhanced the learning programme. In the student Focus Group, participants expressed interest in more lessons, of the English in the City type (see Section 3), taking place outside the classroom.

Several examples of good error correction were observed, with teachers subtly monitoring and taking note of errors during pair and group work. It would be beneficial if teachers were to also note examples of good language use while monitoring and sharing these with the other learners. In some cases, it was also noted that error correction featured in the teachers' personal aims within the lesson plan. However, in other cases, errors were let pass without the teacher's intervention. Pronunciation is another area that warrants attention, both from the error correction point of view as well as the attention paid to it while teaching. Again there were some examples of excellent practice in teaching pronunciation, including stress and intonation. However opportunities were often passed over to correct pronunciation errors and very little repetition and no drilling was observed.

Teachers used a variety of techniques to manage changes of activity efficiently and engaged the learners in pair and group work effectively. The balance of teacher and learner talking time was considered optimum. Although a lot of pair work was observed, there was a tendency to have the same pairs always working together and it would be beneficial to mix up the pairs/groups more. Information was in general well presented and instructions clearly given. It was not always clear however whether learners had fully understood and more attention needs to be paid to concept checking and instruction checking questions. There was judicious and competent use of resources –coursebook, handouts, audio, video and on-line resources (see Section 5). Boardwork in general was of a high standard although, on occasion, handwriting was not clear and led to confusion.

Recommendations

- [Include interaction patterns and timing in the pro-forma lesson plans](#)



- **Encourage teachers to display the ILOs for the current lesson on the board and to make reference to (and call on learners to make reference to) them as the objectives are achieved**
- Encourage and support teachers to introduce more tasks and (mini) projects, driven by learners' needs, interests and preferences, into the learning programmes
- Consider steps to ensure systematic error correction, including pronunciation, takes place by addressing this in a teacher development forum
- Encourage teachers to note good examples of language use (as well as errors) during pair and group work and share these with the other learners
- Organise (further) teacher development sessions on the teaching of pronunciation and encourage teachers to use more drilling techniques
- Encourage teachers to get learners to alternate more between different pairs and groups
- Include the use of concept checking and question checking questions in TD sessions
- Ensure that teachers write clearly on the board, especially for learners whose L1 has a different script

Requirements

None

3. Course Design and Supporting System (Eaquals General Charter 1.2; Charter for Course Participants 2.2, 2.4, 2.6,)

Verdict statement:

The Inspector found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

3.1 There is a statement of the institution's educational philosophy and written descriptions of its learning programmes, including course objectives and content.

3.2 All language course programmes are specified by levels which refer to the CEFR, and learning objectives are related to the global descriptors of CEFR levels.

3.3 There is an academic management and coordination structure, with supporting systems, which ensure the implementation of the institution's educational philosophy.

The core programme is General English, accounting for 85% of learner uptake. This is split into 2 components, with one teacher dealing with language systems Monday/Wednesday/Friday and another with skills practice on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The organisation operates a double-banking system, with groups alternating between morning and afternoon classes. Cambridge exams (2 CAE classes at the time of inspection) make up 10% and IELTS (1 class), the remaining 5%. Learners have the option of doing additional Special Focus classes, programmed after lunch and before the second group session. Options include English for Work, English in the City, additional exam practice and, mainly at lower levels, general language practice. Some learners also opt for 1-1 classes in order to receive more personal attention. Occasional closed groups, such as air traffic controllers from La Reunion and banking personnel from Libya are catered for. In these instances, expertise and materials are sourced from Head Office. A summer programme (January/February) for Young Learners is advertised in the brochure. As yet there has been no take-up, but expectations are, as the market evolves, this will materialise. An on-line learning programme, Fusion, which is made up of a 12 week package, is advertised across the network, but this was dropped in September. Finally, free one-hour classes are offered 4 days a week. These are very popular and were favourably remarked on in the Student Focus Group.



EC's educational philosophy and pedagogic approach are sound, coherent and well documented. The brochure states that 'EC gives you a fully mapped curriculum, defined learning outcomes and outcome-focussed learning' and allusions are made to full immersion, cultural input and autonomous learning. There are written descriptions of all learning programmes with descriptors for all levels, covering the 4 Skills, Pronunciation and Use of English. CEFR level descriptors function as the syllabus and the course map then plots those descriptors. EC Online displays the CEFR levels and global descriptors, along with clearly marked learning outcomes and corresponding schemes of work. This is reinforced with posters around the centre. Learners are informed about the organisation and timing of content from the first day and through learner training are encouraged to focus on their learning objectives and to plan and self-assess.

Learners, in the Student Focus Group, during informal discussions and in comments made and grades assigned in formal evaluation, expressed high satisfaction with the course programmes. Teachers raised the issue of the somewhat arbitrary nature of the Skills component of the core programme. In documentation provided to the inspector pre-inspection, the impression given was that the coursebook was used in the Core Grammar component while supplementary materials provided the input for the Skills session (see Section 5). The coursebook was in fact widely used during the Skills component and this was justified, quite understandably, on the basis that the book dealt adequately with skills. Some of the Special Focus groups, predominantly at the lower levels, in fact lacked focus and hardly differed from the core programme. It would be worthwhile to re-examine the Skills Practice – Language Systems dichotomy and in the case of the Special Focus programmes, it would be worth consulting learners, teachers, colleagues in other centres to see if other interests could be met. Perhaps English in the City could be complemented with themes dealing with South Africa, its history, traditions etc; Business English, English for Academic Purposes, Project Work (see Section 2) etc as well as short Study Skills modules to support the strong emphasis on learner autonomy and learning-to-learn.

Supporting systems are provided at the corporate level by a Product Development Team, headed by the Group Academic Director. The Curriculum Director works with teams across the regions and monitors academic areas related to the curriculum. Reviews are carried out every 2 or 3 years, with Directors of Studies coordinating feedback from teachers for this review.

The DOS is responsible for the management of the academic programme and for ensuring the implementation of the institutional education philosophy. His role is full-time but as stated in Section 1 he requires support in carrying out the tasks assigned to him. It would be beneficial (and he is in agreement with this proposal) if he were to do some teaching, perhaps under a restructuring plan to establish an academic team or appointment of a part-time DOS. He has 17 years' experience in English Language Teaching (ELT), including 11 years as an academic manager and teacher trainer and holds a DELTA, M.A. in Materials Development and a postgraduate diploma in Organisational Development and Management.

Varied teacher support systems are in place. There is a Teachers' Handbook, with information and guidance on pedagogic issues; orientation and induction procedures are clearly documented and followed through (see Section 9). The inspector was able to observe the teacher induction process at close hand as a new teacher had just been recruited. She had observed 2 peers and at the end of the week was to be observed teaching by the DOS, followed by a meeting for discussion. The particular teacher is experienced and well-qualified, but in the case of the appointment of a less experienced and/or qualified individual, it would be worth considering a longer coaching or mentoring scheme, based on procedures already in place. The DOS did in fact mention that a buddy system was in prospect and this idea should be followed up.

Academic administration systems are consistent, coherent and comprehensive. Timetables are prominently displayed and there are class lists which are updated on a weekly basis and contain pointers to new arrivals, poor attenders, finishing students who will require an exit test. Attendance records are assiduously kept. Schemes of work become records of work once they have been completed and any changes are noted on EC Online. The GE classes are shared by 2 teachers and there was clear evidence of consultation and coordination between the two. On two occasions when the inspector observed at the beginning of a class, revision and recycling was done based on what the previous teacher had done. There are procedures in place for teachers calling in sick/absent etc and the inspector spoke with a group whose teacher had called in late following a car breakdown. They were earnestly engaged in a task given by the partner teacher.

Recommendations



- Consider whether an alternative to the Skills/Language dichotomy may be a more appropriate way to break down the GE learning programme
- Consider different options for the Special Focus programmes in consultation with relevant stakeholders
- Consider allocating, in so far as the business model allows, a limited teaching schedule to the DOS under an academic management restructuring programme
- Follow up on the idea of setting up a buddy/mentoring/coaching system for newly appointed teachers

Requirements

None

4. Assessment and Certification (Eaquals General Charter 1.2; Charter for Course Participants 1.2, 1.3, 2.10, 3.1)

Verdict statement:

The Inspector found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

4.1 Assessment procedures are compatible with the institution's educational philosophy and course objectives.

4.2 Placement procedures are appropriate to the learning context and to learners' needs.

4.3 Systems for assessing language competence provide reliable, valid and fair means of evaluating progress and achievement in a way that is appropriate for the course and the learners.

4.4 Reports and certificates issued to learners indicate their achievements in terms of the course objectives and content. They provide a reliable statement of the level achieved.

4.5 Where information on public examinations is provided, relevant advice and support is given to learners.

There is a robust testing/assessment framework in place which is consistent with the institutional educational philosophy, the learner profile and the learning context and it is clearly articulated within the corporate assessment policy and procedures documentation.

The Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT) is used and there is a 50% take up by learners pre-arrival. The remainder take the test on Day 1, with paper versions available when numbers are high. They then do a 10 to 15 minute piece of writing on 'My journey to Cape Town' and fill out a short questionnaire on their reasons for learning English and their needs and preferences. A short oral interview with the DOS then takes place, based on what they have written and on their on-line score with corresponding rubrics used for the relevant levels. The placement test was considered appropriate, efficient and effective by the learners and in their opinion they were placed at the right level. Teachers stated that it was rare for a learner to be misplaced. If learners feel that they are not assigned the correct level, they are requested to remain for the week, with the teacher requested to monitor, and should it be necessary, they can move up or down a level.

Weekly assessment of class speaking activities, based on rubrics corresponding to the particular level, is conducted by teachers on a Friday. The score feeds into the progress test which takes place every 5 weeks. This is a proficiency test centred on the Global Curriculum Level Descriptors. The other areas covered are Listening, Reading, Editing (grammar and lexis) and Writing, with all items being tagged to EC level descriptors. These tests are centrally produced and are closely aligned with the learning outcomes set out in the course design. The test is done on-line and lasts 1 hour, with an additional 20 minutes for the writing task. Tutorials are then held with individual learners, and their progress is discussed along with advice on ways to improve and on study skills. Learners attaining 75% are considered for a move up to the next level, following consultation with the class teacher(s). The progress test system would benefit from further work in order to ensure the same level of reliability for the speaking component as there is with the reading, writing and listening components. Improvements could be introduced, such as regular standardisation workshops in the assessment of speaking with all staff, swapping teachers at least once every 5 weeks so that



teachers do not always assess their own class, and creating speaking assessment specifications and tasks for each level to further enhance inter-rater reliability.

Systems are in place to provide feedback and guidance to learners on the progress they are making. All new arrivals have an initial tutorial with management, focusing on study skills and metacognitive strategies and the two teachers assigned to each class provide on-going support. Every 5 weeks, post-progress test tutorials are held and for those learners on the Academic Year programme (24 weeks+), they are given an EC Language Portfolio, similar in nature and content to the European Language Portfolio, containing sections on autonomous learning and learning strategies; records of tutorial meetings; examples of work/presentations/reading journal etc and a weekly diary to record experiences, thoughts and feelings.

For courses of 3 weeks and more, an exit test, consisting of the OOPT for Exit, is available. This test is optional and has a 60-70% uptake. It is followed by a 10 minute feedback session conducted by teacher or DOS.

The DOS oversees all issues to do with placement, progress and exit testing and deals directly with queries on learner progression and support. This is done within the framework of corporate procedures and policies and under the direction of the Group Academic Director. Documentation and sample tests were viewed and seen to be valid, reliable and appropriately administered.

Learners are awarded 2 types of Certificate: a *Certificate of Studies*, an attendance certificate, indicates the level, duration, dates, final level achieved and attendance record; the *OOPT Placement and Exit Test Certificate*, offered automatically to learners attending a minimum 3 weeks and on demand to others, gives the Placement and Exit test results for Use of English and Listening, with an overall score, along with the corresponding EC and CEFR levels. The reverse of the Certificate gives descriptors of the 8 EC levels, mapped to the corresponding CEFR levels and the Cambridge Assessment suite, IELTS, TOEFL and TOEIC bands/scores. A 'graduation ceremony' is held every Friday lunchtime for the awarding of certificates to those who are leaving. Final reports, containing grades and teachers' comments, are issued on request.

EC Cape Town is a Cambridge examinations centre and all exam preparation students receive an 'exam statement', giving detailed information, on Day 1.

Points of Excellence

4.1 & 4.2 are excellent because

- The whole testing/assessment cycle is conducted efficiently and effectively in line with clear corporate policies and procedures and is constantly treated as a formative as well as a summative exercise

Recommendations :

- Consider introducing some measures to increase the reliability of the speaking assessment such as regular standardisation workshops in the assessment of speaking with all staff, swapping teachers at least once every 5 weeks so that teachers do not always assess their own class, and creating speaking assessment specifications and tasks for each level to further enhance inter-rater reliability

Requirements

None

5. Academic Resources (Eaquals General Charter 1.2, 1.3; Charter for Course Participants 2.5)

Verdict statement:

The Inspector found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)



5.1 The coursebooks or other core course materials, online learning platforms and resources, and reference materials reflect course objectives and the methodology used.

5.2 There is a system for monitoring learning material developed in-house.

5.3 All equipment and electronic connectivity is accessible and well maintained.

Coursebooks are used on all mainstream courses and are included in the course fee. For the GE programmes, *Life* is used at A1 level and *Outcomes* (NGL/Cengage) at all other levels. Cambridge University Press publications have been adopted for the Cambridge Assessment courses and Focus on IELTS (Pearson) for IELTS. In the Student Focus Group, all participants expressed satisfaction with their coursebooks, which they found appropriate to their levels and needs. During observation of classes, the inspector did not witness much personalisation i.e. encouraging the learners to bring their own lives, backgrounds and personalities into play, or localization i.e. adapting situations to the Cape Town/South Africa context. However in the Student Focus Group, participants stated that they did have opportunities to talk about themselves and share experiences with their peers. They also stated that, in addition to the Life in the City elective, local and national themes were addressed in class. Certainly the coursebook was used in a selective way and activities were modified and adapted as necessary.

The Materials Development Policy lays down guidelines for piloting and reviewing materials developed in-house. Box files contained activities for Reading, Speaking and Writing, Academic English and English in the City. The quality of in-house material is monitored to ensure it is appropriate for the learners, their needs and the course learning objectives. The materials are in good condition and are located in the staffroom, with easy access. These materials were not widely used by the teachers and, as mentioned in Section 3, the coursebook, and copies from other coursebooks, were often relied on in the Skills lessons, even though supplementary materials were stated to be the focus. The teachers felt that the supplementary materials available were inadequate and it is clear that they need updating. Teachers developed their own materials, often sharing them with their colleagues. It was not evident however that there was a formal system for sharing and filing these materials.

Also available to teachers are a wide selection of coursebooks from different publishers as well as resource books labelled under General Resources, Skills, IELTS/FCE/CAE, and Business English. These too need to be updated and expanded and this was pointed out by the teachers. The resources were used in accordance with copyright law and copies of copyright material were fully acknowledged.

All classrooms were equipped with Interactive Whiteboards which were used judiciously and competently by the teachers. The Whiteboards are checked regularly. On-line materials were often sourced and a list of ELT websites is supplied to the teachers. EC Online is a valuable learning platform for learners. Once they have been placed, they are given access to activities that correspond to their level. Their progress is tracked and, in the tutorial, teachers are able to assign extra activities. Learners are able to preview upcoming classes, and should they be absent, they can see what has been covered in class and any assignments that have been given.

There is a student library/resource centre, with a capacity of around 18. Users can avail themselves of a selection of course books and fiction, mainly novels, and some non-fiction, travel guides and the like. These have been mainly donated and are not really of interest to the learners and rarely read. In the Focus Groups, both teachers and learners commented on the limitation of what was available. Students expressed an interest in having access to graded readers as a support for learning.

Recommendations

- **Continue monitoring teachers to ensure that they constantly seek to adapt the coursebook by introducing more activities involving learners talking about themselves and their experiences**
- Consider ways to update the bank of supplementary materials, particularly for the Skills component
- Establish a system for collecting and filing teacher-produced material
- Consider acquiring a selection of graded readers; this could be backed up with an intensive reading programme

Requirements



None

6. Learning Environment (Eaquals General Charter 1, Charter for Course Participants 2.3; Staff Charter 2)

Verdict statement:

The Inspector found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

- 6.1 The teaching and study environment meets the requirements of course programmes and learners.
- 6.2 Any non-pedagogical facilities and/or spaces required for the services offered are fit for purpose and well maintained.
- 6.3 Arrangements are made to protect the health and ensure the safety of learners and staff.

EC Cape Town is located on the first floor of a large commercial building, set back from the main road. Signage consists of a small A-frame notice at the ground floor entrance. More conspicuous signage is desirable – the low rate of walk-in clients is attributed to the lack of recognition – but, since it is a heritage building, requests to have this have been declined. There is strong security at the entrance and visitors are required to sign in. A lift is available for disabled clients.

One self-contained section of the first floor is occupied by EC and is bright, airy and tastefully decorated with the corporate logo and colours prominent. There is a large reception and student lounge area. Maximum class size is 15, with 12 being the average, and the 12 classrooms are able to accommodate the numbers comfortably. The set-up, with 7 rooms with tables and chairs and 5 rooms with tablet-chairs, maximizes the available space. The rooms are all clean (there is full-time cleaner employed), safe and well-lit and benefit from natural light and there is heating and air-conditioning. Acoustics are good and as the building is set back from the main road, traffic noise rarely interferes with normal hearing. The only exception is when service vehicles approach, when windows need to be closed. There are sufficient toilets for learners and staff, including one for the disabled, and they are in good repair and regularly cleaned. Soap, paper towels and hand-dryers are adequate.

The classrooms are tastefully decorated with carpets and distinctive wallpaper on one wall representing different South African ethnic groups. The other walls are plain, painted white and company orange and, in line with company policy, are kept clean and bare. The issue of learners' work being displayed along with the benefits of having posters, either language-related like phonetic charts, irregular verbs etc or posters of Cape Town, South Africa were discussed. Students in the focus group commented favourably on the appearance of the corridor wall with the image of Nelson Mandela and a selection of his well-known quotes. Peripheral learning could be stimulated if there were written language examples displayed in the classroom in view of the learners.

The Interactive Whiteboards in each classroom are in good condition and could be clearly seen from all positions. Noticeboards contain information on EC, its primary purpose, mission and values; general information, including emergency contacts and evacuation routes (see below) and general information about the learning programme. The Student Charter is affixed to the wall. There is a large, light and airy staff room with 3 work stations containing computers and a table. Teachers all have their individual lockers. A spacious kitchen area contains a fridge, microwave, hot plate and toaster and is regularly cleaned. Water dispensers were available in the corridors. Tea, coffee and snacks are not available on-site for the learners and they need to go down to an adjoining coffee shop at break-time (15 minutes) should they want any. Observing the post-break classes, the inspector noted some disruption caused by the late reappearance of learners. In their focus group, students proposed having drinks and snacks machines installed and some expressed a wish for a microwave.

Besides the library mentioned above, learners have access to a computer hub with 10 PCs, stretching along one of the corridors. In the Focus Group, students said they would have liked more library space and a closed area containing more PCs. They recognized that as space was at a premium, this would be difficult



to achieve. One concern that they raised however was that, as the PCs were in a passageway, when and if they were doing an online test, there were often distractions.

Safety equipment – fire extinguishers, a fire cabinet containing a hose and extinguishers, fire exits and escapes, fire and smoke alarms – are all checked on a regular basis. Emergency procedures are clearly documented and staff and students are familiar with these. A fire drill takes place twice a year. This is organised by the Centre Director, who follows procedures to inform the landlord and other tenants. The evacuation map in each classroom (mentioned above) was generic and quite small. The inspector indicated that more prominent door signage with emergency escape routes clearly marked from each room was necessary. Following the inspection, photographic evidence was sent to confirm compliance. There is a properly marked and adequately stocked first-aid box at reception. There are 2 trained first-aiders and 2 fire marshals.

Recommendations

- Consider ways of displaying learners' work, useful language items that have come up and language- related posters around the classroom as a spur to language learning
- **Consider ways to minimize distractions when on-line tests are being done, by timing them at a quiet time or, if possible, placing one or two PCs in a quieter location**
- Consider installing drinks and snacks vending machines, possibly in the reception area

Requirements

None



7. Client Services (Eaquals General Charter 2.3; 3.1; Charter For Course Participants 2.8)

Verdict statement:

The Inspector found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

7.1 Advice and support is available to learners and sponsors throughout the course, including welfare arrangements, where appropriate.

7.2 There are systems for monitoring and administering the provision of any leisure programme and/or accommodation. Any social programme takes account of learners' interests.

There are efficient ways of dealing with learners' queries and offering them advice and support. Procedures and guidelines are in place to deal with absence, lateness, discipline and complaints. The EC Intranet has a comprehensive set of policies, procedures and guidelines on welfare issues, ranging from special educational needs policies on autism spectrum disorders, language disfluency and attention deficit disorder to generalized anxiety disorder, mental health issues and bullying and harassment. Learners are aware of whom to approach if they have welfare concerns. Safeguarding measures are in place for the small number of under 18s attending the Centre. The Senior Student Services Coordinator is assigned guardianship over them. They are required to sign in every day and, in the case of absence, their accommodation is contacted. A special information brochure is available for minors, their parents and sponsors. The inspector was given access to guidelines and policies affecting Safeguarding and Child Protection, Care of Young Learners, E-Safety and Health and Safety. All teachers and host families have undergone police vetting.

An activities and leisure programme, consisting mainly of tours and excursions, is offered in partnership with a well-known local service provider. Until recently, the provider manned an information desk daily from 1130 to 1430, but now any queries are handled by the Student Services team on reception. A weekly schedule, approved by the Centre Director, is published and posted on the dedicated noticeboard and a monthly calendar is available for those wishing to plan ahead. Additional activities are provided by teachers; one teacher offers a hiking expedition and football each week and recently 2 teachers organized a Colour Run (coinciding with Diwali) and a Sunday Beach Day. Teachers are paid for their services. Feedback from learners indicated that, in general, they were happy with the activities provided. Some found the tours/excursions quite expensive and beyond their budget and would appreciate cheaper alternatives. The Beach Party proved a great success and learners thought more of this type of activity could be offered. They also suggested that 'movie nights', which were organized in the past, would be a popular event. Having learners themselves involved in the organisation of these activities is worth considering.

Accommodation is provided for the learners, with 23 beds available in the 2 residences and approximately 80 with host families. This represents over 50% of learner numbers, with the others making their own arrangements, often through Airbnb. Student Service Coordinators provide advice and support for learners looking for their own accommodation. The 2 residences are within easy access of the Centre, one on foot, the other by public transport. Each residence has a monitor, who has her own room and is there 7 days a week. They are responsible for new student arrivals and were described as 'the eyes and ears' of EC. General cleaning and changes of linen takes place on a regular basis. Both houses were visited by the inspector and found to be in good locations and to be bright, airy and comfortable. The Centre has just made arrangements to take out a lease on a new residence which will replace the other two in 2019, thereby increasing the number of beds.

The number of host families has increased from 15 to over 30 in the past 10 years and EC recently outsourced the management of the families to a person with experience in the area. There is a Host Family Manual and all the procedures and guidelines relating to recruitment, selection and monitoring of families, placement of learners as well as the means of reviewing and checking suitability, were reviewed by the inspector and found to be thorough. There is an on-site visit of host families every 2 years and Student Services Coordinators receive and review on-going student feedback and intervene when necessary. Contracts, laying down terms and conditions, with services to be provided and levels of remuneration, are clear and comprehensive.



Feedback from the accommodation files and from the Student Focus Group indicates high satisfaction with accommodation in general. Systems are in place to deal with learners', monitors' and hosts' concerns and queries, and house rules and rules of behaviour are clearly communicated.

Points of Excellence

7.1 is excellent because

- The level of customer care is very high and the systems in place to record, monitor and react to student satisfaction levels are extensive

7.2 is excellent because

- exceptional care is taken to place learners in suitable homestay accommodation, with efficient systems for matching learners to suitable homestay providers by taking account of personal and religious issues, hobbies, interests etc

Recommendations

- Consider offering alternatives/additions to the activities/leisure programme: cheaper outings/excursions, weekend social activities and 'movie nights
- Get learner(s) involved in organising events themselves through a representative working with student services coordinators and/or teachers

Requirements

None

8. Quality Assurance (Eaquals General Charter 1.3; Charter for Course Participants 2.2, 2.7, 3.2; Staff Charter 4, 6)

Verdict statement:

The Inspector found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

8.1 There are systems to foster a culture of quality through continuous evaluation, reflection and action.

8.2 The learning experience is fully monitored by management systems (including regular classroom observations) which are used to improve the quality of all services.

8.3 There are procedures which enable learners and sponsors to give regular feedback relating to the academic and other services provided.

It is clear that, at both local and corporate levels, the pursuit of quality is at the core of all the organisation's activities. There are systems to foster a culture of quality throughout the institution. An annual audit is carried out in all centres, led by the Director of Operations and the Group Academic Director. It covers academic and non-academic criteria and measures compliance against EC policies and procedures and specific location requirements. An audit report is issued at the end of the process, leading to discussions and, if necessary, action points.

EC Cape Town is recognised by the South African Ministry of Higher Education and Training under a scheme for post high school education, with an inspection conducted on an annual basis by Ministry inspectors. EC Cape Town is a member of Education South Africa (EduSA), an association of quality language schools focused mainly on joint marketing. EduSA is endeavouring to become directly involved in the Ministry recognition scheme in order to make it more relevant and robust.

There is a variety of internal mechanisms to enable staff and students to give regular feedback relating to academic and non-academic services. Quarterly engagement surveys are carried out anonymously with all



staff members. They cover management and employment issues and aim to identify areas for improvement. The process is overseen by Head Office, which sets engagement targets for each centre. For learners, there are coherent and comprehensive procedures to garner feedback throughout their stay. For those on 3 week plus programmes, there are 3 formal surveys – the arrival survey, conducted in the first week, and complemented with a Focus Group led by the Centre Director; the touchpoint survey, held every 3 or 4 weeks; the relationship survey, in the last week, with a follow-up meeting with the Director being optional. Surveys are emailed to the students and completed electronically. Besides these formal measures to obtain feedback, other informal measures are carried out on an ongoing basis, ranging from Friday surveys on the academic programme to satisfaction questionnaires on activities and tours.

EC uses a customer experience software programme, Satmetrix, to collect, analyse and report on feedback data and to track how effectively the organisation is operating. A Net Promoter Score (NPS) identifies ‘promoters’, ‘passives’ and ‘detractors’ and the inspector was shown in detail what measures are taken to deal with each category and the follow-up correspondence that ensues. For ‘passive’ and ‘detractor’ respondents, a member of the school team is required to meet with the student to discuss their concerns and offer solutions to improve their experience while they are still in the centre. Data from the relationship survey is used as a means of identifying trends, and areas for development. All EC centres are set NPS score targets each year, including a response rate. Those not achieving targets are asked to put action plans together in order to address the shortfall. It was noted that EC Cape Town had achieved an overall NPS score of 57, with an annual target set at 47.

Regular observations, both formative and for the purpose of quality control, take place. They are conducted by the DOS with the assistance of 3 of the DELTA qualified teachers. These are recorded and documented and appropriate action and feedback are carried out, in accordance with corporate policies and procedures. Observations comprise:

- Initial observations of all new teachers (20 – 30 minutes), with feedback given by the DOS
- ‘drop-in’ observations (10 -30 minutes) – Note: these were described as having a teacher development focus , rather than quality assurance (see Section 9)
- Reactive observations (20 – 45 minutes) which follow on from a student complaint
- Peer observations (20 – 60 minutes), also described as having a teacher development focus (see Section 9)
- Audit observations, as part of the annual internal audit (see above), when 60% of teachers are observed, with feedback being provided by the DOS.

The policies, procedures and documentation, including observation and feedback forms, were seen by the inspector and deemed to be transparent and effective. Evidence was seen of the link between these observations, remedial measures and internal teacher training and development programmes.

Points of Excellence

This category represents a Point of Excellence because

- There is an exceptionally comprehensive range of quality assurance procedures throughout the institution
- There is a broad range of procedures for obtaining feedback from learners, followed by communication of steps taken to act on feedback in completion of the quality assurance circle

Recommendations

None

Requirements

None



9. Staff Profile and Development (Charter for Course Participants 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.7 ; Staff Charter 5, 6, 8,)

Verdict statement:

The Inspector found that the Language Education Centre meets Equals criteria for this category in most areas but some action must be taken to fully comply with Equals standards. (Grade 2.5)

9.1 The competences, experience and qualifications of managers, teachers and administrative staff are relevant and adequate for each area of responsibility.

9.2 There are systems to provide appropriate support and guidance for all staff including a regular staff performance review.

9.3 There is a formal framework to assure appropriate continuous professional development for all staff.

The Centre Director and Director of Studies have degrees and post-graduate qualifications in Education and Educational Leadership and Management. The former has 20 years' experience in the field, the latter 17 years. Of the 16 teachers, 3 hold the DELTA and 7 the CELTA; the remainder have TEFL and/or TEYL Certificates. These 6 certificates meet the local requirements laid down by EduSA (see previous section) and teachers have been recruited on this basis up until now. Three are TEFL Academy courses and three Global Language Training courses. These meet Equals requirements with the exception that the teaching practice component is not included in the course programme of the latter. The inspector is however of the view that there are attenuating circumstances: the recruitment process includes lesson observation by the applicant, followed by a DOS-observed trial lesson leading to feedback; the induction process for new staff is extensive and thorough (see below); the teaching observed by the inspector was of a high level throughout (see Section 2). Notwithstanding this, the inspector recommends for future recruitment policy that the required TEFL qualification includes at least 6 hours of observed teaching. In addition, it is recommended that in the event that any currently employed teacher does not have a qualification which includes supervised teaching practice, the DOS follows the procedure which involves carrying out 6 hours of documented observation of satisfactory lessons, with lesson plans and written as well as oral feedback. One teacher is currently doing a DELTA module and it would be beneficial if the LEC were to expand this practice, supporting teachers to upgrade their qualifications to CELTA and DELTA respectively. 11 teachers have more than 6 years and up to 16 years' teaching experience; 6 have spent 4 years or more at EC Cape Town.

EC has a comprehensive Learning and Development Policy which includes CPD for all teaching staff and in-service and on-the-job training for teaching and administrative staff. HR policies cover the employment pathway from recruitment to induction, performance management and professional development. For senior staff, the induction process lasts for 6 months. The Centre Director initially spent time in Malta working with the Sales, Admin and IT teams under the direction of the Director of Operations and visited the London and Dublin centres. The DOS was able to shadow his London counterpart as part of his induction. Induction continues throughout the period with Skype meetings. The Senior Student Services Coordinator participated in the EC Take-Off programme, involving staff members from different centres spending time in Malta, with workshops on areas such as Finance, Coaching, Conflict Management etc.

The inspector was able to observe the teacher induction process in action and interview the teacher concerned. Procedures vary depending on whether the teacher is CELTA qualified or not. 2 peers are observed before the teacher herself is observed by the DOS, followed by discussion and feedback. Time is spent on demonstrating the EC Online system and instructions on how to complete the course plan. During this process, a comprehensive Teacher Induction Checklist is followed, prefacing "I know", under the headings of The Basics, Building on the Basics, Professional Development, Student Progress, Technology and Employment Facts. The document is signed and dated by the teacher and the DOS.

Staff performance reviews, known as 'Small Improvements' come under the EC Performance Management Cycle. The inspector was shown examples of mid and end of year Performance Reviews for staff, which included self-assessment and manager assessment with ratings given by both, agreed development aims and the document was dated and signed off by both parties. 360 degree appraisals form part of the EC cycle, with appraisees selecting the most appropriate appraisers. As for annual performance appraisals for teaching staff, procedures are documented, with lesson plans handed in, in preparation for a 60 – 90 minute



observation, with scheduled feedback and follow up with the DOS. These are planned twice a year for non-Diploma and once a year for teachers holding a Diploma. The formal documentation to accompany this process is detailed and includes a standardised Lesson Plan for Observations, a Formal Observation Sheet for the observer and a Post-Observation Sheet for the teacher. The Annual Performance Appraisal for Teaching Staff contains sections on Teaching, Admin Duties, Professionalism and Development and Learning and the criteria are evaluated by teacher and manager.

Up to the time of the inspection, no full-blown appraisals for teaching staff had taken place. One full round of 'drop-in' observations had been undertaken by the DOS, assisted by DELTA qualified teachers. These were conceived as formative exercises and led to a planned programme of CPD activities for teachers based on the outcomes. The teachers themselves had viewed the observations as a formative exercise and had appreciated the subsequent workshops. The inspector pointed out that these 'drop-in' observations, positive and useful as they were, did not meet the Equals requirements for a full performance review, nor indeed EC's own procedures for 'Formal Observations'.

The list of CPD activities emanating from the round of observations mentioned above was seen to contain 8 sessions from February 2018 up to the date of inspection. Attendance is compulsory and the teachers are paid. Attendance is high and teachers spoke positively about the programme. The sessions varied in scope – skills, systems, lesson planning – and were facilitated by the DOS together with 5 teachers. This is in keeping with the EC Learning and Development Policy, which requires that every staff member has an annual T&D or CPD plan in place which identifies both areas that may require development as well strengths and ways in which the individual staff member can use their strengths further.

All staff members have access to Ignite, the EC learning/CPD portal. This contains a wide-ranging training catalogue for use by management/ admin staff and teachers. For the former, there are learning resources on Leadership, Team Building, Customer Care etc. Teachers can access resources dealing with methodology, teaching skills, error correction etc. Points are awarded for activity completion.

Recommendations

- **For future recruitment, ensure that TEFL qualifications include at least 6 hours of supervised teaching practice**
- **In the event that any currently employed teacher does not have a qualification which includes supervised teaching practice, ensure that the DOS follows the procedure which involves carrying out 6 hours of documented observation of satisfactory lessons, with lesson plans and written as well as oral feedback**
- Continue sponsoring teachers to upgrade their qualifications to CELTA and DELTA
- **Ensure that the newly introduced Performance Appraisal Schedule is completed and maintained into the future**

Requirement

- **Set up a system that delivers professional performance and development (appraisal) interviews for teachers (including the self-assessment element and agreed self-development aims).**

POST INSPECTION NOTE

On 10 December, the LEC sent a Performance Appraisal Schedule including all teaching staff over the next 3 months. Two performance appraisals have been carried out and documentation covering the teacher appraisal forms, formal lesson observation sheets (with additional notes attached), lesson reflection from the teacher and copies of the lesson plans have been provided. In addition, the appraisal process was described.

This has been carried out diligently, effectively and efficiently and standards in Section 9 have now been satisfied.



10. Staff Employment Terms (Staff Charter 1,2, 3, 4, 5,6, 7, 8 9.10)

Verdict statement:

The Inspector found that the Language Education Centre meets Eequals criteria for this category (Grade 2)

10.1 All staff hold current employment contracts; these conform to local requirements, as confirmed by the statutory declaration of the institution.

10.2 The terms and conditions of employment offered to staff are fair and comply with all statutory requirements as stated in a statutory declaration made by the LEC.

There are written Contracts of Employment for all staff that comply with national labour legislation in terms of length, minimum pay and termination of employment. Terms for leave entitlement and sick pay are laid out in the contract. Management and administrative staff all have permanent contracts; teachers are on full-time zero-hour contracts and work on average between 22.5 and 24 hours per week.

Salary scales are transparent, with 12 bands related to qualifications (TEFL, CELTA, DELTA) and years of service. Bands were revised in January 2018 and as a result, increases of between 5.6 and 14.6% were awarded with the majority in the higher range. Teachers stated that pay rates were on a par with top schools in Cape Town and above others.

In accordance with the law, a document outlining the Basic Conditions for Employment in South Africa is posted in the staff room. Arrangements for working hours, overtime and extra hours are transparent, fair and legal. Staff are responsible for making their own arrangements for pension, health etc. Teachers in the Focus Group raised the issue of a company health plan, to which management responded that they were investigating. The issue of parking costs was also raised by the teachers. In response, management stated that 2 free places were available on-site and were not taken up. Discounted rates are also available.

Recommendations

- Look further into the setting up of a health plan for staff
- Remind staff of on-site free and discounted parking arrangements

Requirements

None

11. Internal Communications (Eequals General Charter 1.1, 2.3; Staff Charter 1, 4, 8, 10)

Verdict statement:

The Inspector found some Points of Excellence in this category (Grade 1.5)

11.1 The responsibilities, lines of accountability and channels of communication among members of management and/or staff are clearly defined and documented.

11.2 There is formal, documented, communication and consultation between staff and managers, scheduled as appropriate.

11.3 Information is available to staff about the institution, its mission and any planned developments.



11.4 Grievance and disciplinary procedures are in place for staff and are known to them.

11.5 Information about Eaquls and its resources is available to staff and learners.

The EC English Global Organogram illustrates the management structures at corporate, regional and local level and places EC Cape Town in the context of the whole organisation. Up-to-date job descriptions, outlining the roles and responsibilities of all staff members and making clear the lines of accountability, were seen.

Channels of communication, from Head Office and the functional departments to EC Cape Town, and within the local context itself, are transparent, effective and efficient. At corporate level, senior management meetings are held in which the Centre Director (CD) participates and the DOS is invited to join on a quarterly basis. A weekly 'Ops Update' is distributed to centre directors. The CD and DOS are invited to at least one Regional meeting per year, with all their regional counterparts. Every 2 weeks there is a Skype regional meeting involving the Director of Operations and all CDs and each CD has a 1-1 meeting with DOO, also fortnightly. Meetings are arranged with the functional departments (Finance, HR, Sales, Admissions, Marketing etc) as the need arises.

At the local level, there are formal and informal channels of communication. The CD operates an open-door policy and, as the team only comprises 5 members, discussion takes place daily – the CD talked of 'a daily catch-up with the team'. Formal weekly meetings take place with a fixed agenda and with minutes, containing action points emailed to all. Teachers' meetings take place every 2 weeks, attended by the DOS and, at times, the CD and these are minuted.

The EC Engagement Charter outlines how the company engages with staff in order to get feedback from them and allow them a platform to air their views, both positive and negative. The quarterly engagement surveys, mentioned in Section 8, permit staff to communicate their views, concerns, queries, on an on-going basis. Opportunities for upward appraisal are given through the 360 degree appraisal process. The CEO's letter briefs employees and a quarterly company-wide newsletter, Channel EC, keeps them updated on company developments. There is a Staff Handbook and information readily available so that all were familiar with the mission statement and values, the legal status and ownership and the affiliations of the company. Grievance and disciplinary procedures are clearly specified in the Staff Handbook and in the Contract of Employment. Staff were familiar with these procedures, which were deemed to be clear, transparent and fair. In the Focus Group, teachers considered it a caring and supportive environment and 'a fun place to work'.

Points of Excellence

11.2 is excellent because

- There are horizontal and vertical channels of communication within the organisation that permit constant dialogue and establish mechanisms to enable all staff to contribute to its development

Recommendations

None

Requirements

None

12. External Communications (Information Charter 1-7)

Verdict statement:

The Inspector found that the Language Education Centre meets Eaquls criteria for this category (Grade 2)



12.1 All promotional materials accurately describe the institution's learning services: the range and functionality of resources and/or online tools offered, and other services and facilities.

12.2 Contractual information provided to learners and sponsors is accurate and complete, and expressed in easily understood language.

12.3 Accredited members make information about Equals publicly available; they display the Equals Charters publicly, and use the Equals logo correctly.

All promotional materials, including the Full EC Adult Brochure and the Young Learner Brochure, are comprehensive, complete, truthful and verifiable. The brochures are generic, containing general information about all EC centres and specific information relating to particular centres. Entry requirements, with restrictions relating to age and level are stipulated. EC Terms and Conditions figure on the Pricelist and contractual information dealing with enrollment, payment, cancellations and refunds, is provided in a clear and comprehensible way. Disciplinary and grievance procedures are clearly laid out. Information relating to course programmes and their delivery is transparent, comprehensive and comprehensible. Students receive a 'Welcome to Cape Town' information pack once they have registered.

As mentioned in Section 1, Management and Administration above, very few students are contracted directly by EC Cape Town and it is the Admissions Department, dealing with the Sales Offices in key markets and the network of agents around the world who provide the vast majority of students. Agents are required to complete an Agent Application Form, following which they are given an Agency Agreement. In the Focus Group, students expressed satisfaction with the whole booking procedure, stated that they were well informed about all conditions and arrangements before their arrival and that, on arrival, their expectations were met.

Recommendations

None

Requirements

None



Section Four: Summary

Summary of Points of Excellence

| | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Management and Administration |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a highly effective, efficient and integrated management structure at corporate, regional and local level aligns closely with an institutional ethos and social responsibility, embraced by all employees• highly effective electronic systems are in place for all areas, academic and non-academic, of the institution's administration |
| 4 | Assessment and Certification |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The whole testing/assessment cycle is conducted efficiently and effectively in line with clear corporate policies and procedures and is constantly treated as a formative as well as a summative exercise |
| 7 | Client Services |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The level of customer care is very high and the systems in place to record, monitor and react to student satisfaction levels are extensive• exceptional care is taken to place learners in suitable homestay accommodation, with efficient systems for matching learners to suitable homestay providers by taking account of personal and religious issues, hobbies, interests etc |
| 8 | Quality Assurance |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is an exceptionally comprehensive range of quality assurance procedures throughout the institution• There is a broad range of procedures for obtaining feedback from learners, followed by communication of steps taken to act on feedback in completion of the quality assurance circle |
| 11 | Internal Communications |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are horizontal and vertical channels of communication within the organisation that permit constant dialogue and establish mechanisms to enable all staff to contribute to its development |



Summary of requirements

| | | Copy and paste bullet points | Action (e.g. evidence to be presented) needed to fulfil this requirement | Deadline for completion |
|---|-------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------|
| 9 | Staff Profile and Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up a system that delivers professional performance and development (appraisal) interviews for teachers (including the self-assessment element and agreed self-development aims). | Provide Eaquals with a plan to carry out appraisals with the 15/16 teaching staff, with evidence/ documentation to show that 2 have completed the initial phase | 2 months from receipt of report |

POST INSPECTION NOTE:

On 10 December, the LEC sent a Performance Appraisal Schedule including all teaching staff over the next 3 months. Two performance appraisals have been carried out and documentation covering the teacher appraisal forms, formal lesson observation sheets (with additional notes attached), lesson reflection from the teacher and copies of the lesson plans have been provided. In addition, the appraisal process was described.

This has been carried out diligently, effectively and efficiently and standards in Section 9 have now been met.

Summary of recommendations

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Management and Administration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider appointing one or more teachers as ADOS or Senior Teacher(s), with a consequent reduction in teaching hours, to free up the DOS to concentrate more on key academic responsibilities Consider changing the job title of the Senior Student Services Coordinator to better reflect the tasks she undertakes |
| 2 | Teaching and Learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include interaction patterns and timing in the pro-forma lesson plans Encourage teachers to display the ILOs for the current lesson on the board and to make reference to (and call on learners to make reference to) them as the objectives are achieved Encourage and support teachers to introduce more tasks and (mini) projects, driven by learners' needs, interests and preferences, into the learning programmes Consider steps to ensure systematic error correction, including pronunciation, takes place by addressing this in a teacher development forum |



| | |
|----|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage teachers to note good examples of language use (as well as errors) during pair and group work and share these with the other learners • Organise (further) teacher development sessions on the teaching of pronunciation and encourage teachers to use more drilling techniques • Encourage teachers to get learners to alternate more between different pairs and groups • Include the use of concept checking and question checking questions in TD sessions • Ensure that teachers write clearly on the board, especially with learners whose L1 has a different script |
| 3 | Course Design and Supporting Systems |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider whether an alternative to the Skills/Language dichotomy may be a more appropriate way to break down the GE learning programme • Consider different options for the Special Focus programmes in consultation with relevant stakeholders • Consider allocating ,in so far as the business model allows, a limited teaching schedule to the DOS under an academic management restructuring programme • Follow up on the idea of setting up a buddy/mentoring/coaching system for newly appointed teachers |
| 4. | Assessment and Certification |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider introducing some measures to increase the reliability of the speaking assessment such as regular standardisation workshops in the assessment of speaking with all staff, swapping teachers at least once every 5 weeks so that teachers do not always assess their own class, and creating speaking assessment specifications and tasks for each level to further enhance inter-rater reliability. |
| 5 | Academic Resources |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue monitoring teachers to ensure that they constantly seek to adapt the coursebook by introducing more activities involving learners talking about themselves and their experiences • Consider ways to update the bank of supplementary materials, particularly for the Skills component • Establish a system for collecting and filing teacher-produced material • Consider acquiring a selection of graded readers; this could be backed up with an intensive reading programme |
| 6 | Learning Environment |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider ways of displaying learners' work, useful language items that have come up and language- related posters around the classroom as a spur to language learning • Consider ways to minimize distractions when on-line tests are being done, by timing them at a quiet time or, if possible, placing one or two PCs in a quieter location • Consider installing drinks and snacks vending machines, possibly in the reception area |
| 7 | Client Services |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider offering alternatives/additions to the activities/leisure programme: cheaper outings/excursions, weekend social activities and 'movie nights • Get learner(s) involved in organising events themselves through a representative working with student services coordinators and/or teachers |



| | |
|----|---|
| 9 | Staff Profile and Development |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For future recruitment, ensure that TEFL qualifications include at least 6 hours of supervised teaching practice• In the event that any currently employed teacher does not have a qualification which includes supervised teaching practice, ensure that the DOS follows the procedure which involves carrying out 6 hours of documented observation of satisfactory lessons, with lesson plans and written as well as oral feedback• Continue sponsoring teachers to upgrade their qualifications to CELTA and DELTA• Ensure that the newly introduced Performance Appraisal Schedule is completed and maintained into the future |
| 10 | Staff Employment Terms |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Look further into the setting up of a health plan for staff• Remind staff of on-site free and discounted parking arrangements |

I confirm that this report is based on evidence found at the time of the Inspection and that my opinion is based on my professional judgement.

DATE 8 December 2018

Signed

Jim Ferguson

(Reporting inspector)

Ludka Kotarska
Director of Accreditation