

# ACCREDITATION SERVICE FOR INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS, COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES



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# 1. ASIC OFFICERS, ADVISORY BOARD AND OFFICE STAFF

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Chief Inspector and  
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## 2. INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Role and Purpose of Accreditation

ASIC is the trading name for ASIC Global Ltd (Companies House Registration number 07882636).

ASIC provides a wide spectrum of accreditation services worldwide to education institutions including schools, colleges, universities, training organisations and on-line/distance learning providers. ASIC is a member of the British Quality Foundation and is one of a very small number of international accrediting bodies recognised by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation in the USA. It is also an approved accrediting body for the purposes of compliance with regulations of the UK Home Office and Border Agency relating to the admission of students holding Student Visitor Visas and to the delivery of programmes in ESOL with Citizenship.

Our accreditation is holistic - encompassing institutions in their entirety rather than particular courses, programmes or qualifications. Institutions may, therefore, approach ASIC for accreditation regardless of their specific discipline focus.

The primary objective of the accreditation process is not to award a one-off kite mark, but rather to recognise and underpin an institution's commitment to providing a high quality learning experience for students in a safe, and hygienic environment, and to continuing quality enhancement of that experience.

ASIC inspections include an examination of the content and standard of the curriculum as well as the quality of its delivery to learners. We also pay close attention to the consistency and reliability of assessment. However, it should be noted that ASIC neither confers nor validates degree-awarding powers. Applicants for distance education programmes should always satisfy themselves that the level of recognition of a relevant award is sufficient to meet their needs.

ASIC is currently involved in the inspection of a truly diverse range of overseas education institutions, including universities, colleges, schools and training organisations to raise their academic standards and profiles, and to date has already undertaken accreditation inspections in various countries, including India, Sri Lanka, USA, Lesotho, France, Denmark, Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Philippines, Botswana and Canada.

In its accreditation, ASIC considers the performance of the institutions in relation to their features, facilities and

activities. These are divided into eight Areas of Operation as listed in Section 2.4; these are described in detail in a separate document downloadable from the ASIC website. While several of the features, such as health and safety, are based on (legal) requirements which apply in the UK, it is appreciated that these may not be matched or required in other countries. Similarly, the rules and regulations applying to students entering the UK for study purposes are likely to be different from those which apply to students entering other countries to study.

Nevertheless, ASIC's accreditation overseas sets out to demonstrate that students entering institutions in any country will receive a sound educational experience, delivered with the aid of appropriate human and physical resources in a safe, caring and hygienic environment; that, in addition, successful students will be rewarded by the award of genuine qualifications, which will enhance their careers and/or further study prospects. It is expected that the institutions will be able to demonstrate that they are operating within the legal educational framework of the country and that students from other countries will be admitted, subject to fulfilling the passport/visa requirements of the host country.

ASIC's accreditation arrangements normally involve two visits to the institution, namely a Stage 2 visit, which focuses on the premises, health and safety, education facilities, courses and their delivery, student welfare, and marketing and student recruitment; followed at a later date by a Stage 3 visit, which focuses on management, staff qualifications and development, observation of teaching, and meetings with groups of students, staff and senior managers/owners. To reduce costs, visits to overseas institutions usually combine these two Stages into a single visit, which may occupy one or two days depending on the size of the institution, and will normally be undertaken by two experienced ASIC Inspectors.

Visits to the institution will be undertaken following receipt of a fully completed ASIC Application Form (downloadable from the ASIC website), the provision of supporting documentation and the payment of the agreed fees and expenses (**see Section 7**).

**\* Throughout this Handbook, the term "institution" has been used to include all relevant educational institutions such as schools, colleges, universities and training organisations, whatever their name, and "Principal" has been used for the Head of the institution.**

## 2.2 Benefits of Accreditation

UK Accreditation by ASIC will help to raise the profile of institutions both within their own countries and worldwide as it confirms that they conform to internationally accepted standards in education.

Accreditation with ASIC is not a one-time process. ASIC believes in developing partnerships with its accredited institutions and will assist in activities such as ongoing quality assurance, ethical recruitment, working with agents, and the drafting of policies, procedures and codes of practice.

Ongoing development with accredited institutions will also incorporate training programmes on topics such as the use of high quality and ethical recruitment methods, monitoring the work of agents, the implementation of admission systems, the drafting and implementation of ethics policies and the creation of staff and student files

**ASIC is dedicated to the continual improvement of its member institutions; to this end, as part of the annual fee, the following will be provided:**

- assistance with internationalisation plans through networking with bodies such as UKNARIC, WEBA and other relevant organisations, and in developing academic partnerships worldwide,
- assistance with preparation for local government inspections,
- access to over 200 accredited recruitment agents in over 80 countries, through a reduced fee for membership of QISAN,
- access to marketing activities via ASIC, which include, exhibition attendance, printed and web based newsletters and publicity in numerous overseas publications, and access to WEBA exhibitions and agent workshops with a 30% discount,
- updated online information on all aspects of student recruitment,
- advice on agent contracts with sample agreements, their ethical behaviour and student satisfaction surveys,
- code of ethics for agents,
- guidance on the drafting of policies and procedures for quality assurance, including course review, classroom observation, staff appraisal and development, and student assessment,
- database of institutions worldwide to assist with developing collaborative partnerships,
- Certificate of Accreditation, artwork of ASIC logo for use on business cards, letterheads, publicity materials, website, facebook and twitter,
- a regular ASIC newsletter providing updates on international education developments; institutions are invited to submit articles and queries to the newsletter,
- access to ASIC facebook and twitter news updates (from July 2013),

### 2.3 Accreditation Principles

Accreditation by ASIC is independent and unbiased, and the accreditation of institutions will be undertaken by inspectors who have a wealth of relevant experience. While the assessment leading to accreditation covers the whole range of facilities, resources and activities of the institutions (see Areas of Operation listed in Section 2.4 and the Areas of Operation for International Institutions which are downloadable from the ASIC website), there is a focus on the whole student experience and on the underpinning staff expertise.

The student experience is seen as beginning with the recruitment and admission processes and these will be subject to particular scrutiny, including a review of systems for the appointment and management of agents and of the criteria used in assessing student applications. Similarly, there is careful evaluation of the systems for monitoring the effectiveness as well as the frequency of student participation in the courses on which they are enrolled.

In order to satisfy the needs of other stakeholders as mentioned above, ASIC has identified for assessment the eight Areas of Operation listed in Section 2.4; each of which includes several Sub-Areas of Operation. All of the Sub-Areas will be assessed as being satisfactory or unsatisfactory, while some may be deemed to be commendable. These grades in turn determine whether or not the Areas of Operation are satisfactory and, with the exception of Areas F and H, will determine whether each of the Areas as a whole may be deemed to be commendable. These grades will not only be taken into account in deciding whether or not to award accreditation to a institution, but will also be helpful in enabling students to make informed choices on where they might study. They also determine whether the institution may be deemed commendable overall, and thus be identified as an ASIC Premier University/Institution – **see Section 3.3.1.**

### 2.4 Areas of Operation

**The Areas of Operation are:**

- a. Premises and Health and Safety
- b. Governance, Management and Staff Resources
- c. Learning, Teaching and Research Activity
- d. Quality Assurance and Enhancement
- e. Student Welfare
- f. Awards and Qualifications
- g. Marketing and Recruitment of Students
- h. Systems Management and Compliance with Immigration Regulations.

### 2.5 ASIC Website

In the interests of transparency, ASIC hosts a dedicated website [www.asic.org.uk](http://www.asic.org.uk) where key aspects of an institution's report are highlighted, which will be beneficial to students and their parents in helping with the decision-making process. This will, of course, also be accessible to government bodies and other sponsors which may award scholarships to students. The contact details of the institution and their accreditation status is also provided.

### 2.6 Quality Enhancement Seminars

Ongoing development with the accredited institutions includes the delivery of a number of training programmes on topics such as the accreditation process itself, health and safety, relations with awarding bodies, quality assurance and enhancement, teacher training, appraisal, course review, high-quality and ethical student recruitment, the development of codes of practice and ethics policies, immigration compliance, and combating fraud.

These seminars are repeated on a regular basis and additional seminars will be offered in the light of future developments and institution requests.

### 2.7 Use of the ASIC logo

Accredited institutions are entitled to use the ASIC logo and any promotional materials produced by ASIC as long as they retain their accreditation. In the event of an institution terminating its accreditation with ASIC or having its accreditation withdrawn, the institution will be deemed to have given an implied undertaking to ASIC that its logo and promotional materials will not be used further.

## 3. ACCREDITATION

### 3.1 Introduction

ASIC is an independent body, providing education consultancy and accreditation service for schools, colleges, universities, training organisations and online/distance learning providers worldwide.

ASIC is recognised by UKBA in UK, is a member of the CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) in USA and is listed in their International Directory and has recently been accepted by the BQF (British Quality Foundation).

#### 3.1.1 Reassurance through Accreditation

ASIC accreditation gives reassurance to students, their parents, education representatives and scholarship providers that the operation of their chosen institution conforms with relevant legislation, laws and quality assurance systems and offers genuine courses, which are delivered to appropriate standards with acceptable quality, and which lead to recognised qualifications.

### 3.2 The Accreditation Process

Accreditation is based upon the on-site inspection of the full range of the institution's provision and supporting activities, together with a detailed consideration of the institution's documentation, which helps to ensure that the on-going operation of the institution is maintained at an acceptable level.

Institutions considering accreditation by ASIC should download the appropriate Application Form from the ASIC website. This should be completed and returned together with copies of the institution's documentation as detailed in the Application Form.

**There are then three stages in the accreditation process, namely:**

#### Stage 1 – Assessment of the Application and Accompanying Documentation

If the information provided is assessed as acceptable, the process moves to Stage 2. If it is not acceptable, the institution may be advised either on actions to be taken to rectify the perceived shortcomings, or that it is unlikely that ASIC would accredit it at this stage of its development.

There is a fee payable at Stage 1 (**see Section 7**).

#### Stage 2 – Initial Inspection Visit

This will normally, as a minimum, be a one day visit by an ASIC Inspector, who will focus on the institution's compliance with statutory and immigration requirements, premises and health and safety, management, the adequacy of the teaching resources for the advertised or planned courses, and staff and student records. A check-list of the documents which need to be prepared for the visit will be forwarded to the institution.

The Inspector will meet the owner(s) of the institution to discuss the business plan for the ongoing operation and development of the institution. In the event of the owner not being available, this meeting should occur with the Principal and senior management of the institution, and the meeting with the owner deferred to the Stage 3 visit. If the owner is still not available, then the reasons for this should be made clear and a person authorised to speak on behalf of the owner(s) should be identified and be present.

**The visiting Inspector will also discuss the format of and the arrangements for the Stage 3 inspection visit.**

#### Summary of the Inspector's activities:

- meet the Principal/senior management team
- meet the institution owner(s),
- undertake an initial tour of all of the premises,
- inspect the arrangements for health and safety and fire risk and related records,
- undertake a survey of the library where appropriate,
- assess the IT provision for staff and students,
- assess classroom facilities, and, laboratory and audio visual equipment, if appropriate,
- visit the student common room and refreshment areas,
- confirm that all documents on the checklist provided to the institution, are in place and satisfactory,
- visit institution-owned student accommodation (if appropriate).

When a Stage 2 visit has occurred, the visiting Inspector will submit a report of the visit, which will recommend whether or not to proceed to Stage 3 and identify any shortcomings that the institution may need to address before the Stage 3 event takes place.

### Stage 3 – Final Inspection Visit

While all eight Areas of Operation, identified in Section 2.4 and detailed in the document on the website, will be covered during the inspection, there will be an emphasis on academic matters, including learning and teaching, resources and quality management, together with student welfare and reporting to official bodies. The Inspectors will also ensure that the institution has responded satisfactorily to issues raised during Stage 2. In general, Inspectors will seek to encourage institutions to look for ways in which they might continue to improve their provision and suggest ways in which this might be achieved.

The inspection will normally last one day, though for large institutions with more than 1000 ftes (full-time equivalent students) and a wide academic programme this may be increased to two days. The number of Inspectors involved will depend on the size of the institution and diversity of the academic programme but there will normally be two. As a general guide, institutions with fewer than 1000 ftes and not more than six courses will be visited by two Inspectors, while larger and more diverse institutions may be visited by a team of three. One of the Inspectors will be designated as the Reporting Inspector with responsibility for writing the report of the whole accreditation process, including the findings of the Stage 3 visit, while the other Inspector(s) will be designated as Supporting Inspector(s).

During the visit the Inspectors will hold meetings with the senior management team, with other staff (without senior management staff being present) and with a group or groups of students (without any staff being present) to assess the operation of the institution. They will also observe a number of teaching sessions and inspect the learning resources and student/staff refreshment facilities and on-site accommodation (if appropriate).

Institutions are asked to inform all staff and students of the impending visit, to indicate that some staff and students will be required to meet the Inspectors and that some teaching sessions will be observed.

The precise format of a Stage 3 inspection visit is likely to vary in relation to the size, nature, location and complexity of the institution; though the likely format will be agreed during the Stage 2 visit (if appropriate) or by correspondence between the Principal and ASIC staff.

### Summary of the Inspectors activities:

- meet the Principal together with members of the management team,
- meet the owner(s) if this had not been possible at the Stage 2 visit,
- meet a representative group of staff without senior managers being present,
- meet course/subject leaders, if appropriate,
- observe a number of teaching sessions,
- meet one or two representative groups of students, depending on the number of students, without any staff being present,
- confirm all documents on the checklist provided to the institution are in place and satisfactory,
- hold a final meeting with the Principal to indicate what will happen in the immediate future, but not indicating the likely outcomes of the visit and whether or not accreditation would be granted since the final decision will be made by the Accreditation Committee.

The Stage 3 report will cover each of the eight Areas of Operation, identifying points of strength and of weakness which should be addressed. The report will summarise these under the heading "Conditions, Recommendations and Suggestions to the Institution".

As described below in Section 3.3.1, the Inspectors may recommend a grade of commendable for some Sub-Areas of Operation, which helps to determine the outcome of the inspection and accreditation process as a whole (see Section 3.3).

There will be a fee for the Stage 3 visit (see Section 7).

NB As already indicated, the Accreditation of international institutions will normally combine the Stage 2 visit and Stage 3 visit. In this case if the owner(s) is/are not available then a person or persons authorised to speak on their behalf should be present. There will be a combined fee for the Stage 2 and Stage 3 visits (see Section 7).

NB All documentation provided with the Application and/or available for inspection at Stages 2 and 3 must be in English.



### 3.3 Accreditation Decisions

Once the final accreditation report has been checked by the Accreditation Advisor, it will be considered by the ASIC Accreditation Committee, which will determine one of the following outcomes:

- award accreditation for a total period not exceeding four years, after which accreditation must be renewed.
- in some cases, especially for very recently formed institutions, the Accreditation Committee may decide to award accreditation for a shorter period or defer a decision when it is perceived that there are some weaknesses in the institution's provision which, it is felt, could be rectified in a period not normally exceeding three months.

Typically, the institution will be given a number of conditions to meet and, when it is believed that these have been met, accreditation will be awarded. The conditions may be met by the provision of additional documentation and/or photographs to prove that any required improvements have been made. In some cases, the Accreditation Committee may decide that there will need to be a further visit to the institution to confirm that that is the case.

There will be a charge for this visit.

- refuse accreditation on the grounds that the Inspectors believe that there are serious shortcomings in provision. In this case the institution has the right of appeal, the procedures for which are set out in Section 6.

#### 3.3.1 Grades

The grades which can be attributed by the Stage 3 Inspectors to each of the Areas of Operation, which have to be confirmed by the Accreditation Committee, are:

##### Commendable

- representing good practice and a very good level of provision

##### Satisfactory

- representing generally satisfactory practice and a level of provision which meets the expected threshold standards for accreditation identified in the detailed descriptions of the Areas of Operation. Some minor shortcomings in provision may be acceptable, but the essential conditions specifically relating to immigration and statutory requirements have been met.

##### Unsatisfactory

- representing weak, unsatisfactory practice with significant weaknesses, which do not meet the expected threshold standards..

Institutions which are deemed to satisfy a stipulated number of the indicators of commendable provision (listed at the end of each Area of Operation and marked with an \*) will be awarded Commendable for the Area overall.

The award of Premier Institution status is given when normally all of the six Areas of Operation capable of being commendable (that is, Areas A, B, C, D, E and G) are graded Commendable.

**NB 1.** Only the Commendable grade, which is available for some Sub-Areas of Operation, is displayed, when awarded, in the Final Report. The other grades of satisfactory or unsatisfactory are implicit in the comments in the Report in relation to each Sub-Area and any associated recommendations to the institution which appear at the end of the report.

2. Only whole Areas of Operation which are commendable are indicated on the Accreditation Certificate.
3. Not all of the Areas of Operation A, B, C, D, E, and G may be relevant to some overseas institutions and the requirements for Premier status will be adjusted to accommodate this.

To be awarded full accreditation for a period of four years, institutions must normally obtain at least a satisfactory grade in each Area of Operation. In particular, institutions must satisfy the Statutory/ASIC requirements identified by an (*italic, red*) S in the sub-Areas of Operation.

### 3.4 Accreditation of New Institutions

As observation of classes and meetings with students are mandatory aspects of the Stage 3 visit, new institutions which satisfy statutory and immigration requirements, and which have all of the facilities required to begin to deliver courses may be considered for interim accreditation for a period normally of up to 12 months. This period gives a new institution time to become established and recruit at least one significant cohort of students after which a standard Stage 3 visit would be undertaken with a view to considering the institution for full accreditation. Interim Accreditation may be awarded after a standard Stage 2 Accreditation visit and the fee is the same (see Section 7). The annual fee is payable when the institution gains interim accreditation.

### 3.5 ASIC Accreditation Committee (AAC)

The Accreditation Committee which, in the interests of consistent and knowledge-based decision-making, comprises the ASIC Officers listed in Section 1, will make all decisions regarding the award of accreditation, maintaining accreditation and the withdrawal/suspension of accreditation on the basis of

- a. evidence provided by the Reporting Inspectors following inspection visits;
- b. evidence provided by official agencies;
- c. evidence arising from the consideration of complaints and appeals; and
- d. documentation provided by the institutions.



### 3.5.1 AAC meeting frequency

ASIC will endeavour to arrange meetings of the Accreditation Committee at least monthly, but also as and when required in the interests of dealing with institutions' applications within reasonable timescales. It is intended that the time which elapses from the completion of the Stage 1 process, until the final decision on accreditation is forwarded to the institution should not normally exceed four months.

### 3.5.2 AAC review meetings

In addition to making decisions regarding institutions' accreditation, the Committee meets regularly, normally quarterly, to review ASIC's conditions for accreditation and any alterations in statutory requirements (which are forwarded to the Inspectors, accredited institutions and those seeking accreditation).

### 3.5.3 AAC quorum

The Head of Accreditation chairs the Accreditation Committee and a nominated alternative acts as Vice-Chair.

The quorum for meetings normally requires the Chair or the Vice-Chair to be present along with a minimum of two other members. This arrangement allows, in the event of an appeal, for members of the Accreditation Committee who were not involved in the original decision concerning the institution to become independent members of the Appeals Committee as described in section 6.2. The Reporting Inspectors are not required to attend unless the decision is likely to be contentious. ASIC Advisors or others may be co-opted or consulted as appropriate.

The Accreditation Committee may delegate authority to the Chair and/or Chief Executive to take decisions on progression from Stage 1 to Stage 2 and from Stage 2 to Stage 3 which will be ratified at a subsequent meeting of the Committee.

## 4. MAINTAINING ACCREDITATION

### 4.1 Institution Annual Reports

Institutions which have been accredited are expected to submit an annual self-assessment and internal audit report, commencing one year after the date of full accreditation, which provides information on the Institution's performance against ASIC's Areas of Operation. If an institution declines to provide regular reports then its accreditation will be withdrawn. The self-assessment and audit report includes topics such as:

#### Statements from the institution Principal

- confirming the institution's continued compliance with statutory requirements,
- confirming the institution's continued financial viability, attaching the latest set of audited accounts,
- identifying any significant changes in the operation of the institution, such as change of ownership, changes in senior management, location of main accommodation or significant changes in course provision,
- details of the courses delivered in the previous year, including numbers of enrolled students and pass/completion rates,
- an outline of planned developments in accommodation, course provision or links with other awarding bodies,
- details of any other issues which may impinge on the accreditation of the institution,
- details of any of the ASIC recommendations which the institution has put into place.

### 4.2 Change of circumstance visit

It is likely that a visit to an institution will be arranged if its annual report indicates that there are any significant changes in the operation of the institution, such as a change of ownership, appointment of new senior staff, introduction of several new courses affecting more than 40% of the enrolment or a major expansion of the premises/change of existing premises is planned. In particular, if the institution moves to new premises or opens a satellite campus there will be a premises visit to confirm that statutory health and safety requirements have been fully addressed, that the premises are in a good state of repair, clean and provided with satisfactory heating, ventilation and lighting, and that the learning/teaching resources are also satisfactory. There will be a fee for such visits (**see Section 7**).

### 4.3 Visits to investigate complaints

A visit will take place if any genuine complaint about an institution is received by ASIC, a Government Agency or an Awarding Body in order to investigate the complaint and to attempt to resolve the complaint satisfactorily and expeditiously. The Complaints Procedures are presented in Section 6.

It is a condition of ASIC's recognition that it will investigate any genuine complaints about the institutions they have accredited, especially if these relate to immigration requirements.

ASIC will inform the complainant of the progress and outcomes of the investigation where relevant. Institutions which have knowingly allowed a breach of visa regulations to occur will have their accreditation withdrawn with no right of appeal and the immigration authority informed accordingly.



## 5. APPEALS

### 5.1 Introduction

It is recognised by ASIC that institutions which have been refused accreditation or which have had their accreditation withdrawn or suspended should have access to a fair and expeditious appeals process.

If the Accreditation Committee decides to refuse or withdraw accreditation, the Head of Accreditation will contact the institution within ten working days informing the Principal of the decision and the reasons for it and, furthermore, reminding him/her of the right of appeal.

The Principal, or other appropriate representative of the institution, should submit an appeal within a further ten working days of receipt of the notification of the Accreditation Committee's decision. If the appeal is made by an accredited institution, then accreditation will remain in force until the appeals process is completed. ASIC reserves the right to withdraw accreditation with or without appeal. In particular, the right of appeal will be withdrawn if a institution is found to be guilty of deliberately providing false information.

### 5.2 Procedures

If the institution's application for accreditation is rejected after the Stage 2 accreditation visit, the Principal may request that the report of the inspection visit should be reviewed and that additional documentation, responding to the reasons for rejection, may be submitted.

Members of the Accreditation Committee, who were not present at the original meeting which rejected the application, will review the report and consider any new documentation.

If the Accreditation Committee upholds the appeal, then the accreditation process will proceed to Stage 3.

If, however, the Accreditation Committee upholds the original decision then the institution has the right of appeal as described below.

An institution wishing to appeal against rejection of its application for accreditation after the Stage 2 visit and subsequent review (as described above) or after the Stage 3 inspection visit, or against withdrawal of its accreditation for whatever reason, with exceptions such as deliberately providing false information, may request a hearing by an Appeals Committee of ASIC. The Appeals Committee will comprise members of the Accreditation Committee and/or Inspectors who were not involved in the original decision.

The appellant should submit a statement setting out the grounds for the appeal, together with any relevant additional documentation, within fifteen working days of notification of the intention to appeal. The Appeals Committee will then endeavour to meet not later than fifteen working days after receipt of the appeal.

The institution has the right to be represented at the meeting, which will also be attended by the Chair of the Accreditation Committee.

#### The Appeals Committee may decide to:

- dismiss the appeal
- order a new inspection of the institution at ASIC's expense,
- instruct the Accreditation Committee to grant or restore accreditation

The Chair of the Appeals Committee will submit a report of the meeting to the Chief Executive of ASIC giving the grounds for the decision and making any other recommendations which the Accreditation Committee should consider.

At this stage, the institution has no further rights of appeal. An institution which submits an appeal as described above will be required to pay a fee towards the costs of the Appeals Committee's meeting. This fee will be refunded if the Appeals Committee instructs ASIC to award or restore accreditation.



# 6. COMPLAINTS

## 6.1 Introduction

ASIC will consider any genuine and relevant complaints against institutions, which have been accredited by ASIC and where the complainant has exhausted the institution's own complaints procedures.

For a complaint to be considered to be genuine, it must be submitted in writing to the ASIC Institution Relations Officer (IRO) explaining the basis of the complaint, clearly identify the complainant and be related to the institution's alleged failure to comply with the accreditation criteria. Other complaints will normally not be considered by ASIC.

ASIC takes complaints seriously and will make every effort to mediate and recommend solutions that are mutually satisfactory for both the parties involved. ASIC, however, also encourages students to look carefully at the institution's refund and complaints procedures before signing an acceptance for the offer of a place on a course to avoid any future misunderstandings. Similarly, staff should consider carefully the institution's complaints procedures and contract of employment before accepting the offer of a post.

## 6.2 Procedures

**On receipt of a complaint, the complainant will be contacted by letter from the IRO to request that:**

- the complaint should be set out in a signed and dated hard copy letter sent to the IRO together with any relevant documentation,
- the complainant confirms that he/she has exhausted the institution's own complaints procedures without being able to resolve the issue(s) to their satisfaction, or that these are not relevant, and that the complainant authorises ASIC to attempt to resolve the complaint as described here (the procedure is copied to the complainant for reference).

**ASIC then deals with complaints as follows:**

- each complaint is logged by staff and its receipt is acknowledged,
- the documents submitted are checked and if further documents are required the complainant will be contacted to ask for them,
- the institution's Principal is then contacted and asked to investigate the complaint and provide details within 10 working days (the Principal will be reminded that he/she has undertaken, as a condition of accreditation, to cooperate in the resolution of complaints made against the institution). The letter will also contain details of the complaint(s) and proposals as to how it (they) may be resolved, initially by correspondence, followed by a meeting if necessary; the Principal's response will be checked to ensure that the institution has followed its accreditation commitments,
- ASIC will inform the complainant of the outcome and any recommendation that would have been made to the institution.

**The Complainant is required to provide the following documentation:**

- a written complaint giving full details of the nature of the complaint and evidence to support it such as the institution's response to their complaint or proof that a complaint was made to the institution
- receipts of payments to the institution if appropriate (please note bank statements will not be accepted),
- any other documents/evidence to support the complaint,
- ASIC may also ask the complainant for additional documents to help further investigate the complaint if necessary – full details will be provided.

The complainant and institution's Principal will be informed of the outcome of the complaint, or that a more detailed investigation is required and an Inspector will be appointed to undertake an unannounced visit to assess the basis of the complaint more thoroughly.

### 6.2.1 Inappropriate complaints

The following are complaints and situations with which ASIC will not become involved:

- complaints that are not relevant to ASIC accreditation,
- complaints where a student has failed to follow the institution's complaints procedure,
- complaints that are made anonymously, or by telephone or email. All complaints must be in writing as stated above, with evidence and details of the complainant such as name; address; telephone number and email address (if available) and signature,
- where insufficient evidence to support the complaint has been submitted,
- where a student has sought legal advice/commenced legal proceedings against the institution,
- where a student has entered into a contractual agreement with the institution that negates the institution's refund procedures,
- where a student has failed to establish the relevance of the course to their needs or established that the awarding body is fully recognised before enrolment,
- where there is a contractual agreement between the institution and its employees.

## 7. FEES AND EXPENSES FOR INSPECTION VISITS AND ACCREDITATION

### 7.1 Application for Accreditation of International Institutions

The fees for Accreditation are dependent on the size of organisation and on the country of operation.

As a guide full accreditation may cost between £3,500 and £15,000.

ASIC will endeavour to keep costs low if it is possible to accredit several institutions within the same period of time. This will enable travel costs to be minimised.

### 7.2 Post-accreditation visits

There will be no fees for one day post-accreditation visits or for random, unannounced visits.

### 7.3 Cancellation of Visits

£350 per inspector per day plus any expenses already incurred. The expenses include airline tickets and hotel bookings.

### 7.4 Annual Accreditation Fees

The annual fee will depend on the number of full time equivalent students there are in the institution as follows:

- up to 200 ftes: £1000,
- 200 to 400 ftes: £2000,
- over 400 ftes: £3000.

Note: the full-time equivalent (fte) count includes all students, that is, full-time and part-time.

The first annual fee will be due immediately after accreditation is announced.

All subsequent annual fees will become due on the anniversary of the initial accreditation (either interim or full accreditation) being announced.

### 7.5 Appeals

Institutions will be required to pay a deposit of £1000 for an appeal, which will be refunded if the appeal is successful.

### 7.6 Payments of Fees and Expenses

Institutions are normally required to have paid all of the fees and expenses associated with their application for accreditation before the accreditation visit can take place.

Once an application has been received and fees have been paid to ASIC, there will be no fee refund if the institution decides to withdraw from the accreditation process.

Fees are also not refundable in cases of; voluntary withdrawal from ASIC during the institutions period of accreditation, removal of accreditation, or if the accredited institution or company goes into administration or liquidation.

Please note all cheques should be made payable to ASIC.

NB Overseas universities, institutions and schools should contact the ASIC Office regarding the fees to be paid, which include the cost of flights and accommodation.

Payment of the fees and expenses should be made prior to the accreditation visit and in sufficient time to enable travel and accommodation arrangement to be made.