

The Eaquals Advisory Guide to Accreditation Version 7.2



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Eaquals Accreditation

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

Eligibility for Accreditation

Eaquals accreditation applies to the teaching of all languages and Equals accredits a wide range of language centres, both private and state institutions such as:

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

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

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

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

The Equals Accreditation Process

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

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

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

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

Institutional Self-Assessment

The Self-Assessment is designed to facilitate a review of all aspects of the language centre's work and to help it decide whether to

- pursue accreditation by Equals
- seek further advice from Equals in preparation for a successful inspection outcome.

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

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

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

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

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



Post Self Assessment Consultancy

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

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

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

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

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

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

Equals Inspections

Methodology

Equals inspections are based on a principled and effective methodology, which combines direct observation of all aspects of the language centre's activities with inspection of documentation and other evidence. The Equals inspection includes a site visit which is conducted by 2 inspectors and generally lasts 2 days (3-4 days in case of larger centres). The inspection could be also conducted in hybrid format if a high proportion of teaching is delivered online. Inspectors look for evidence of systems which can ensure sustained and consistent quality of services.

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

Equals Inspectors

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

Principles

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



Confidentiality

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

Impartiality and fairness

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

Consistency and reliability of inspections

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

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

Comprehensiveness

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

Professional collegiality and support

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

Continuous improvement

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

The scope of the Equals Inspection

Equals accreditation applies to the whole institution, not to individual courses or services. Therefore, all activities related to the provision of language learning services must be included in the inspection, as well as all sites where teaching takes place.

Equals inspections therefore include:

- off-site and in-company courses
- online and blended programmes
- classes and activities run at branches, annexes or satellite schools which operate as part of the same company or under the same trading name and are not separately accredited by Equals
- teacher training courses that are not separately accredited by international awarding bodies recognised by Equals (see below)
- seasonal courses (see below)

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



In the case of language centres which run seasonal activities (summer courses for juniors, specialised courses, etc.), it is a requirement that every second inspection takes place at a time when these activities can also be observed. If these seasonal activities are not taking place at the time of the inspection, the Director of Accreditation may decide to arrange to inspect these areas during a follow-up visit, involving an additional fee. This depends on the volume and general management of these activities.

Inspection procedures

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

- hold meetings with management and academic managers
- meet focus groups of students and teachers, and where applicable, other stakeholders
- interview members of staff
- observe a representative selection of the teaching
- check that academic management and administrative systems work in practice
- check key documentation – including material stored online and the main website
- inspect premises; resources and accommodation if applicable.

Documentary evidence

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

Meetings

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

The Eaquals Quality Standards: Overview

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

Section A – Institutional Management and Governance

1. Management and Administration

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

2. Quality Assurance

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

3. Communication with Staff

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

4. Communication with Students and Clients

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

Section B – Academic Management

5. Course Design and Supporting Systems

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

6. Teaching and Learning

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

7. Assessment and Certification

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

8. Academic Resources

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

Section C – Student Services

9. Student Services

- 9.1 Information and advice are available to students and other stakeholders throughout the course.
- 9.2 Welfare support, including safeguarding arrangements where appropriate, is provided to students.
- 9.3 There are effective systems for administering and monitoring leisure programmes, if provided.
- 9.4 There are effective systems for administering and monitoring accommodation provision, if provided.

Section D – Staff

10. Staff Profile and Development

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

11. Staff Employment Terms

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

Section E – Learning Environment and Facilities

12. Learning Environment

- 12.1 The teaching and study environment meets the requirements of course programmes and students.
- 12.2 Any non-pedagogical facilities and/or spaces required for the services offered are fit for purpose and well maintained.
- 12.3 All electronic and other equipment is easily accessible and well maintained; electronic connectivity is reliable and available for staff and students.
- 12.4 Arrangements are in place to protect the health and ensure the safety of students and staff as well as to promote care for the environment.



The Eaquals Quality Standards and a Guide to the Inspection Process

Section A – Institutional Management and Governance

1. Management and Administration

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

Inspection procedures

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

Documentary evidence

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



2. Quality Assurance

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

Inspection procedures

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

Documentary evidence

- Reports/records of any additional **audits/reviews/inspections** apart from Eaquals – either internal or by other organisations
- Any written evidence of the language centre's **approach to quality enhancement**, such as internal quality assurance procedures, self-assessment documents
- Written evidence of systems for reviewing **the quality of course content, materials and delivery**
- Written evidence of systems for **lesson observation** and the way they help **to** develop and improve teaching and learning
- **Lesson observation records** (for quality control) and other related documentation such as observation checklists, observation feedback sheets, records of any follow-up action
- Written evidence of systems for collecting feedback from students and other stakeholders including **completed student feedback questionnaires, analysis of feedback and records of any follow-up action**
- Written evidence of systems for collecting feedback from staff and other stakeholders, such as **records of meetings with staff and/or staff surveys**



3. Communication with Staff

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

Inspection procedures

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

Documentary evidence

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



4. Communication with Students and Clients

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

Inspection procedures

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

Documentary evidence

- The language centre's **website, social media and all hard copy promotional materials**
- Student **enrolment documentation**
- **Student Handbook**
- **Contracts** provided to students and/or sponsors and any other documents stating **terms and conditions** regarding tuition and other services offered
- Written evidence of **complaints procedures** for students and other stakeholders



Section B – Academic Management

5. Course Design and Supporting Systems

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

Inspection procedures

Inspectors check how the language centre's educational philosophy informs course design, and how closely day to day course planning relates to prescribed learning objectives. They also check systems for teacher induction and support. Evidence of compliance is gathered by reviewing academic planning documents and at meetings with academic managers and teachers. Lesson observation is the practical realisation of academic management systems and also contributes important evidence for this Category.

Documentary evidence

- **A statement of the language centre's educational philosophy**
- **Course programmes**, levels with learning outcomes including for online provision when applicable
- **Schemes of work** (work plans): weekly/monthly/termly as appropriate
- Any forms and documents related to **needs analysis** showing how these are conducted and applied in course design for learner-defined courses, where relevant
- **A description of the language centre's level system**, including how this maps on to CEFR levels or GSE or another internationally recognised scale
- **Teacher Handbook** and/or any documentation giving guidance and information to teachers on the language centre's educational philosophy, the methodological approach and course programmes and arrangements for cover classes, and administrative tasks expected of teachers
- **Student Handbook** and/or any documents giving information to students on the language centre's educational philosophy, the methodological approach and course programmes
- **Website, social media and any publicity material** giving information on course programmes, levels and the methodological approach
- **Job descriptions of the academic manager(s) or Director of Studies** including any supporting staff such as assistant academic managers, examinations officers, etc.
- Timetable and description of **induction programme** for new teachers
- Administrative documentation such as **completed records of work and student attendance, teaching and cover timetables**



6. Teaching and Learning

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

Inspection procedures

Inspection procedures for this Category include lesson observation, reviewing lesson plans and other academic planning documents and meetings with academic managers, teachers and students.

Lesson observation procedures

Inspectors aim to observe all levels and course types, including synchronous and asynchronous online teaching if relevant, and a good proportion of off-site and in-company courses, both group and 1:1 classes. **Teacher-training courses** which are accredited by internationally recognised awarding bodies recognised by Equals e.g. CELTA, are not part of the inspection and classes/training sessions are not observed. However, the staff teaching on any such courses are included in meetings with academic managers and/or with teachers.

- Inspectors attempt to observe as many as possible of the teaching team and in smaller language centres this usually includes all teachers. In a big multi-centre language centre (or one where there is a considerable amount off-site teaching) it may be necessary to do some sampling. Inspectors aim to observe **at least 70% of all teachers timetabled to teach during the inspection**. Inspectors should ensure that lessons **observed cover a representative spectrum of languages, course types, levels and age groups**.
- The focus of observation is on the teaching in general and not the performance of individual teachers i.e. inspectors aim to carry out an overall assessment of the language centre's teaching.
- Students should be informed about the purpose and conduct of lesson observation and reassured that they are not being evaluated.
- Inspectors normally **observe a lesson for 15 to 20 minutes**.
- Inspectors are **provided with lessons plans and copies of teaching materials**. For face-to-face observations, lessons plans are provided as hard copies, while for online observations plans are sent to the inspectors electronically.
- The first one or two observations are done by both inspectors together, who take time to discuss their views and reactions to the initial observations in order to ensure a common interpretation and assessment of those which follow.
- Individual teachers may be observed on more than one occasion.
- Inspectors will not take part in the lesson.
- In addition to observing teaching and evaluating lesson plans and other related documentation, inspectors also check numbers of students in the class, homogeneity of levels, and the quality of teaching equipment and, when applicable, the virtual learning environment.



On-site lesson observation

Inspectors are provided with a complete list of all courses and classes which will take place on-site during the inspection and they select a representative shortlist of classes to be observed.

Off-site lesson observation

Off-site visits to any in-company classes, or extra-curricular classes delivered in local primary or secondary schools, are organised before the inspection. The procedure for organising off-site visits is:

- Inspectors are provided with a complete list of all off-site courses.
- They select a shortlist of appropriate length (the number of visits is determined by the proportion of in-company courses or extra-curricular classes in the language centre's total course provision) and send it back to the language centre.
- The language centre arranges an agreed number of visits from the shortlist, aiming at an optimum use of time available, in consultation with the inspectors.
- To save time, transport arrangements offered by the language centre can be accepted, and a representative of the language centre may accompany the inspectors to off-site teaching premises. The language centre representative does not accompany the inspectors during the actual observation.

Special arrangements

In certain special circumstances, and in agreement with the language centre, inspectors will not be present on site in the classroom, **but will observe face-to-face lessons remotely via live online viewing**. The language centre sets up online live viewing and makes access available to inspectors, for example via zoom invitation.

Observation of online lessons

Lessons delivered online will normally be observed by the inspectors working from their home base, with access to the language centre's online teaching platform. The observation of any online teaching and the monitoring of any online platforms etc. may be carried out prior to the inspection visit.

Documentary evidence

- **Lesson plans**, weekly/monthly/termly plans and/or schemes of work
- **Attendance** records, **records of work** completed
- Copies of all **learning materials** to be used during the lesson
- **Classroom displays**, including notice boards and boards
- Any **written guidance to teachers on methodology and/or approach**, for example, teacher handbooks or similar



7. Assessment and Certification

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

Inspection procedures

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

Documentary evidence

- Written description of the language centre's **assessment policy**
- **Placement tests** and guidelines
- Written procedures for dealing with **misplaced students** (Teacher Handbook, Student Handbook or any other documents)
- All **progress and end-of-course tests**
- Access to any **online tests and assessment tools**
- **Teacher Handbook** and/or any documentation giving guidance and information to staff on assessment aims and procedures
- Records of **induction, training and standardisation** for staff responsible for designing assessment instruments and administering assessment
- Students' **assessment records**
- Sample **reports and/or certificates** issued by the language centre for all course types
- Any **website, social media or publicity material** concerning the language centre's educational and/or administrative services with regard to external examinations
- **Notice boards:** any notices and/or posters giving information on internal and/or external tests and examinations



8. Academic Resources

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

Inspection procedures

Inspectors check the provision and use of all teaching and learning materials and equipment, including online resources (platforms and applications and any other e-learning facility). Inspectors visit teachers' work rooms, libraries, computer rooms and/or self-study centres and any spaces set aside for student study, and interview academic staff and students on the relevance and quality of resources.

Documentary evidence

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

Some of the above may be found in a teacher handbook or any teacher induction documents.



Section C – Student Services

9. Student Services

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- 9.1 Information and advice are available to students and other stakeholders throughout the course.**
 - 9.2 Welfare support, including safeguarding arrangements where appropriate, is provided to students.**
 - 9.3 There are effective systems for administering and monitoring leisure programmes, if provided.**
 - 9.4 There are effective systems for administering and monitoring accommodation provision, if provided.**

Inspection procedures

Inspectors check the language centre's advice, support and welfare arrangements, as well as any leisure programme and/or accommodation provision, by reviewing all relevant documentation and in meetings with responsible staff. They visit student residences and conduct interviews with homestay providers, either on the phone or online. Discussion of these services is included in meetings with students and/or parents, guardians or sponsors where relevant.

Advice, support and welfare

Inspectors check procedures and arrangements to deal with students' queries, to offer them advice and support, to ensure their well-being, to handle welfare issues and to safeguard those who are under 18.

Documentary evidence

- Written procedures for dealing with **absence, lateness and discipline**
- Written guidelines on the use of **online tools and resources** where applicable
- Written guidelines for staff on serious student welfare issues such as **bullying, harassment or significant distress** and procedures for dealing with these

All documentation describing the language centre's **safeguarding and child protection policy**

- Written **safeguarding procedures** for staff including supervision of young learners
- **Student Handbook** including advice to students on how to get medical help (registering with a doctor, medical insurance, etc.) and welfare and safeguarding procedures

Leisure programmes

Inspectors check the suitability of leisure facilities and leisure programmes and that there is an appropriate number of staff to meet students' leisure needs and ensure their safety, especially in the case of students under the age of 18.

Documentary evidence

- Leisure **programmes**
- **Documented systems and guidelines for staff** for the effective planning, administration and monitoring of the delivery of any leisure programme
- Documents including **risk assessment, accident and emergency procedures** in relation to leisure programmes and **policy on supervision ratios**
- **Publicity materials** related to any leisure programme, including the website, social media and online applications
- Any **minutes of meetings** between leisure programme staff and their supervisors/managers

Accommodation

Inspectors gather evidence of compliance by checking documentation and by interviewing staff responsible for accommodation and talking to students, selected homestay providers (on the phone or online) and staff at residential accommodation, as well as by visiting residences.



Visits to student residences

Inspectors aim to visit a representative sample of residential accommodation and the language centre should contact these providers to ascertain their availability for a visit and arrange a timetable with the inspectors. Inspectors may be accompanied by staff, if necessary. During each visit, which should last about 15-20 minutes depending on the size and occupancy, inspectors check:

- whether the conditions offered reflect the description and commitments made by the language centre in publicity materials/on the website and in contractual information provided to students
- the overall standard of the premises
- their suitability for students, in particular for students under the age of 18 where applicable
- the security and safety arrangements including fire prevention and control systems
- all facilities, equipment and services offered
- the arrangements for multiple occupancy and nationality quotas, if any

Inspectors interview the staff on site to confirm safeguarding procedures, ways of dealing with queries and complaints and communication with language centre staff responsible for accommodation services.

Documentary evidence

- All electronic and other **administrative systems and records** for selecting accommodation providers, allocating accommodation to students
- **Contracts with** host families and student residences
- Procedures for dealing with **students' and hosts' concerns** and queries
- **Records of quality control visits** to accommodation providers both for initial approval and regularly thereafter
- Any **written rules for students** regarding, for example, use of facilities, receiving visitors, etc.
- Documented procedures and guidelines for host families, residence staff for ensuring **safety and supervision of students under the age of 18** including transport arrangements
- Written policy on **supervision ratios**

Any Other Significant Service(s) (such as airport transfer services) are similarly inspected.



Section D – Staff

10. Staff Profile and Development

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

Inspection procedures

Inspectors check personnel files and documentation related to performance reviews, CPD programmes, and developmental class observations. Meetings with management, academic managers, teachers and administrative staff, as well as lesson observation conducted by the inspectors, also provides evidence of compliance for this Category.

Documentary evidence

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



11. Staff Employment Terms

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

Inspection procedures

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

Documentary evidence

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



Section E – Learning Environment and Facilities

12. Learning Environment

- 12.1 The teaching and study environment meets the requirements of course programmes and students.**
- 12.2 Any non-pedagogical facilities and/or spaces required for the services offered are fit for purpose and well maintained.**
- 12.3 All electronic and other equipment is easily accessible and well maintained; electronic connectivity is reliable and available for staff and students.**
- 12.4 Arrangements are in place to protect the health and ensure the safety of students and staff as well as to promote care for the environment.**

Inspection procedures

Inspectors inspect all premises and facilities used by the language centre, and check documentation on emergency evacuation and other health and safety arrangements. They check that these procedures are correctly applied in practice during meetings with management, staff and students.

Documentary Evidence:

- Equipment **maintenance records**
- **Insurance certificates**
- **Any fire certificate** issued by local authorities
- **Any health and safety** documentation including records of **fire/evacuation** practices and **first aid** training
- **Displayed notices** of emergency procedures and escape routes
- **Any statutory notices** required by legislation
- **Any risk assessment** document related to the premises



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