



APPROVED FOR UK VISAS AND IMMIGRATION

ABLS Inspection Handbook

Quality Assured
English Language
Providers

2019



THE ACCREDITATION BODY
FOR LANGUAGE SERVICES

www.ablsaccreditation.co.uk

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The Accreditation Body for Language Services

Mission Statement

ABLS recognises that English is taught in a wide variety of contexts and has always stood for diversity and choice.

Established in 1993, ABLS is approved by the UKVI and has been accrediting schools for over twenty-five years. The inspection regime we operate is both supportive and constructive. Our constructive approach to ongoing quality improvement for language schools and accommodation providers is designed to not only be of benefit to the organisation being inspected, provide reassurance to agents and students but also to benefit the UK English language industry as a whole. Please note that the service does not extend to providers in receipt of public funding.

All providers of private and independently run English language schools are invited to apply and gain benefit from an external quality assurance system specialising in the delivery of English language tuition which is both rigorous and fair. Schools already in receipt of other accreditation may also apply.

To summarise ABLS:

- believes all students should be guaranteed a safe and effective learning environment with high standards of teaching and training, as well as the requisite levels of additional and necessary support.
- provides an independent inspection service which is both rigorous and fair.
- constantly reviews its inspection criteria.
- in addition to all year-round language schools assesses a diverse range of organisations such as those providing home-language tuition, study and cultural holidays and seasonal language programmes for students under the age of 18.

- conducts initial and repeat inspections to ensure that stringent quality assurance criteria (as defined in this document) and UK legal requirements are adhered to.
- operates a four-yearly inspection cycle for schools.
- allocates inspectors who are independent and experienced EFL professionals.
- supports and encourages the ongoing development of new and accredited schools.
- is committed to fairness and implements a policy of equal opportunities.

Accreditation of Accommodation Providers

ABLS also offers an accreditation service for organisations providing accommodation specifically for EFL students. Providers awarded this accreditation are entitled to display an ABLS accreditation marque. The information with regard to application and process in this handbook, apart from the criteria relating to academic matters will apply.

Please note accommodation agencies should refer to Appendix A before making an application.

Full terms and conditions can be downloaded from the website.

QALEN

ABLS is also a UK signatory to QALEN (Quality Assurance in Language Education Network) the global body. This network provides opportunities for participants and members from Accrediting and Quality Assurance bodies in the language education sector to communicate and collaborate with the aim of developing new, innovative methods of Quality Assurance and Accreditation. Other members: NEAS (Australia), FELTOM (Malta), ACCET (USA) and ENZ (New Zealand), Languages Canada, EduSA (South Africa) and Accreditation UK.
(www.qalen.org)



The aims of accreditation

Standards monitoring of language providers to ensure the quality of provision to students is satisfactory.

- Compliance monitoring to ensure that organisations are abiding by the requirements of UK law and regulations as well as by ABLS regulations and requirements.
- A demonstration of the organisation's commitment to quality assurance and to professional development in all areas.
- By definition, a mark of quality of that organisation that is universally recognised by government agencies, industry agents and the market.

The award of accreditation

Accreditation is awarded to organisations that meet the requirements of the ABLS Standard in all sections of the report.

Central to these requirements is a clear ethos of commitment to quality provision and this must be demonstrated in relation to the following:

- Management provision is organised for, and operates to, the benefit of the students.
- The learning environment is appropriate to the needs of the student and reflects a commitment to the learning activity. This includes the standard of facilities, equipment and staffing levels.
- Support to the teaching staff is professional, appropriate to the needs of that teacher and focussed on the need to provide a positive and effective learning experience for the student.
- Teachers are appropriately qualified and reveal compatibility and competence with regard to the level of the class they are teaching. This will be readily observable.
- Students are offered the opportunity and encouraged to take qualifications.

- Basic Health and Safety rules are met, guaranteeing the well-being of the students.
- Accommodation arrangements (where provided) are managed and monitored effectively.
- Pastoral and welfare provision is in place and is known to the students.
- Legal requirements have been identified and met, allowing students to have confidence in the integrity of the organisation.

Accreditation is not awarded if:

- Significant weaknesses appear during an inspection with regard to the areas noted above.
- Public literature/statements do not match the observations or deliberations of the visiting inspector.
- Mandatory actions from a previous inspection have not been acted upon effectively or there has not been an attempt to meet them and/or the provider has failed to inform ABLS of the progress being made in meeting recommendations within any given timeframe.
- A history of complaints/appeals against the organisation has presented itself.
- Allegations of serious misdemeanours, accountable to the organisation and/or its staff, have been investigated and upheld.
- Insufficient or unsatisfactory documentary evidence/records are kept.
- Agreement to undergo inspection within 3 months of the due date is not forthcoming from the organisation concerned (at the discretion of the Chief Inspector).
- There is evidence that a provider has acted in a manner that brings ABLS into disrepute.

It should be noted that the above applies to both new and existing schools signed up to the ABLS inspection process as described in this Handbook.

Application process

Consultation telephone call

ABLS encourages all providers who plan to apply for an inspection to contact the administration team by email to arrange a consultation telephone call with an advisor. This is a chance for the provider to ask specific questions with regard to the accreditation process. It is also an opportunity for the provider to be made aware of what action may need to be taken to maximise the prospects of being able to demonstrate compliance with the inspection criteria.

ABLS workshops

Workshops are available to prospective and existing ABLS schools and are usually arranged outside of the busy summer period. Topics previously covered include preparing for inspection and syllabus design. For further details of ABLS workshops please contact workshops@ablsaccreditation.co.uk.

English language providers

Organisations providing English language services are eligible to apply for an inspection. Subsequent accreditation is limited to the delivery of English language provision. It is a requirement that tuition fees will be charged to the learner for all courses to be assessed; ABLS does not inspect providers receiving funding or those from within the state sector.

It would be normal for a provider to have been offering English language courses for a minimum of one year before applying for inspection. At the discretion of the Chief Inspector an exception to this rule can be made; schools should email administration for further advice.

Newly established schools

ABLS is a supportive body with a constructive approach to quality assurance; newly established schools should contact administration to arrange to talk to an advisor for guidance. In the event of an inspection being conducted any additional conditions must be strictly adhered to and in the event of this not being the case accreditation could be withdrawn with immediate effect.

Seasonal operators

It is recognised that seasonal operators have a limited period in which to be inspected. ABLS works with the organisation and provides positive guidance.

Making an application

The ABLS Administrator should be emailed and an application form (**NP1A**) requested. This should then be submitted with the registration/administration fees, as published on the website. This amount is non-refundable in all cases.

ABLS will check the application and contact the provider should additional information be required. In the case of a provider operating from one site it may sometimes be possible for two inspectors to conduct the inspection on one day, but it is more usual for the inspection to be conducted over two or more days. ABLS will assess the number of days that should be allocated for the inspection and contact the school in advance of raising an invoice. It is normally possible to arrange for the first inspection of a provider (the initial inspection) within six to eight weeks of receipt of a completed application.

The full amount payable for the inspection must be settled 28 days before the agreed inspection date or immediately if, for any reason, the date of an inspection is agreed less than 28 days before the agreed date.

Pre-inspection interview

A pre-inspection interview with the Chief Inspector is provided as additional support for new schools entering the inspection process. This is usually conducted by Skype or by telephone and is free to all new applicants once a firm date for an inspection has been established.

Re-inspection of existing accredited providers

ABLS will notify the provider within three months of the expiry date of the accreditation period that a re-inspection is required. ABLS aims to find a mutually convenient time for the inspection, giving the organisation a minimum of six weeks' notice.

Change of ownership, premises and key personnel

All providers are required to inform ABLS immediately of any change in ownership, premises, key personnel or core business. It should be noted that accreditation is not transferable and therefore cannot be extended to a business under new ownership or in new premises. In such cases ABLS will



re-inspect, at the provider's cost, before accreditation is re-confirmed.

Failure to update ABLS immediately with regard to any changes as outlined above could result in suspension or withdrawal of accreditation.

Scope of accreditation

When accreditation is granted, it will only relate to those premises and products assessed during the inspection.

It should be noted that where providers operate from:

- one main administration site with permanent additional centres all sites will be subject to inspection.
- one main administration site with temporary seasonal centres, these will be inspected using appropriate sampling methodologies and could be subject to additional inspections at cost to the provider during the four-yearly cycle at the discretion of the Chief Inspector

Accreditation will only be extended to the courses and services provided during inspection. Any significant changes to the course profile or range of services must be reported to ABLS and may result in a re-inspection at cost to the provider.

It should be noted that in the event of an organisation operating a school/schools in the same name in separate locations accreditation for the organisation will be withdrawn should one centre fail to retain the ABLS standard.

Inspection of accommodation

Where a school organises and/or takes payment for home-stay accommodation (defined as a place of student residence where tuition does not occur) this will also be inspected using appropriate sampling methodologies regardless of the ages of the students. If a school chooses to contract out accommodation to an organisation not accredited by ABLS appropriate sampling will also take place.

Home language tuition

Where an organisation provides home language tuition (defined as a place of student residence and formal tuition) lesson observation will occur in addition to the normal procedure for inspecting home-stay accommodation. Inspection of this provision will be conducted over a minimum of two, but usually more days. If the organisation operates throughout the UK it will usually be necessary to allocate a reporting inspector to cover one or more of the regions. This would therefore result in the allocation of a minimum of two reporting inspectors in order to carry out rigorous sampling of the provision. The inspection of the headquarters of the operation would be led by one of these inspectors with the other acting in a supporting capacity.

In-company provision

In-company provision of language services will be inspected in the same manner as that available at the organisation's own premises.

Providers of Student Accommodation

Some schools choose to contract out to companies providing accommodation for EFL students. These companies can apply to be accredited by ABLS as Providers of Student Accommodation.

If successful at inspection the organisation is entitled to display a specific ABLS logo. Accommodation providers who also offer cultural and language courses are not eligible and should apply to be accredited as a school.

The application procedure as described in this handbook will apply.

Accommodation Providers should also refer to Appendix A for additional information.

Conduct of the inspection

The length of the inspection is determined by the size of the school. The minimum duration of an inspection is normally two days with two inspectors. However, depending upon size, complexity or other circumstances, ABLS may, at its discretion, reduce/increase the number of inspectors/length of the inspection visit. The school will receive a letter and invoice confirming the inspection dates. In the case of a new provider the letter will also confirm the time and date for the Skype interview with the Chief Inspector.

Prior to Inspection

A minimum of three weeks prior to the inspection ABLS administration must receive the pre-inspection documents, materials and information listed below. All material should be sent **via one Dropbox link in the sections as numbered**. This information is essential to enable the inspector to get to know as much as possible about the provider before the day of the inspection and to assist in the planning of the inspection programme. Hard copies of all pre-inspection documents are also to be available at the school during the inspection visit. Please note that failure to provide information by the requested date might, unfortunately, lead to a postponement or cancellation of the inspection at the provider's cost.

Schools are encouraged to include any other documents that provide an insight into the running of the organisation.

Providers of student accommodation are exempt from providing evidence under Sections 4 and 5.

List of Pre-inspection documents

Section 1

- A statement on premises ownership or lease
- A statement on first aid provision

Section 2

- A copy of all publicity material to include fees and website address
- A copy of the complaints procedures
- A profile of all staff including : Name / Position / Areas of responsibility / Qualifications for teaching, academic

management and welfare management roles / Experience

- All job descriptions for all roles, including welfare management roles
- All policies relating to staff employment
- A statement on DBS checks of staff and accommodation providers
- All student enrolment and administrative form proformas
- All terms and conditions for students and agents

Section 3

- A copy of syllabuses used during week of inspection
- A copy of all placement tests used
- A statement on continuous professional development opportunities
- The Policy for covering teacher absence

Section 4

- A list of students enrolled during week of inspection to include name, age, nationality, length of course, type of accommodation
- A timetable of courses during the week of inspection
- A timetable of courses on the day of inspection (including staff names and room numbers where possible). If there are any changes to this list on the day of inspection, an updated list should be given to the inspector on arrival.
- A catalogue of teaching materials

Section 5

- All welfare documentation, including a copy of the organisation's welfare policy for both adult and junior students which should include the Prevent strategy.
- A register of all accommodation including homestay names and addresses and any other types of accommodation, indicating which will be used during the week of inspection.
- Copies of any contracts for accommodation provision

Section 6

- The policy for supporting ill junior students

Prior to the inspection **the Reporting Inspector will:**

1. Examine the pre-inspection documents and contact the provider to make introductions and discuss the plan for the visit.
2. Email Section A and B of the Inspection Report Form in advance of the inspection for the school to complete (see note below).
3. Provide an estimate of expenses in advance of the inspection. Following inspection, ABLS will invoice the provider for these expenses.
4. Agree a timetable for the inspection with the provider.

The School will collate the following documents for assessment by the inspector/s during the visit and have them organised and ready for assessment:

- Licences e.g. ERA, CLA, NLA
- Records of fire escape practices
- Any fire authority documentation
- Planning permission (where appropriate)
- Accident / Incident Book
- Employer's Public Liability Insurance certificate
- Data Protection registration
- Evidence of the monitoring and recording student attendance
- Risk assessments for all premises and activities
- Contracts or letters of appointment for all staff
- CVs for all staff
- Evidence of qualifications for all staff (or rationales where necessary)
- Job descriptions and all handbooks and policies relating to staff
- DBS checks and related documents
- Copies of student work
- Student retention data
- Records of student attainment
- Examples of completed feedback questionnaires
- Complaints file
- Copies of syllabus and work records
- All academic management records (observations, testing, etc)
- Records of external examination results
- A directory of resources and equipment
- All lessons require lesson plans and copies of all materials provided to students to be made available for each inspector
- All accommodation records, policies and contracts
- Safeguarding record

Easy access to these documents will assist with the smooth running of the inspection and afford the inspector/s a more accurate perspective of the organisation. Other documentation and material may be offered for inspection by the organisation.

It is important to note that the inspector/s may request:

- to hold meetings with any of the organisation's staff or relevant individuals
- to see any other document or piece of information relevant to the organisation's activities
- to change the inspection timetable during the day for the purposes of efficiency and to support the inspection's validity

The Inspection will include:

- a meeting with the person in overall charge of the management of the organisation
- a meeting with the Academic Manager
- a meeting with the person responsible for health and safety issues
- a meeting with the person responsible for student welfare
- a meeting with a representative group of students
- a meeting with the academic staff
- a tour of the premises
- a visit to a representative selection of the accommodation
- observation of a representative selection of classes
- a final feedback meeting with the management

Notes on completing section B

- 'Academic Profile Student Body Information' (in week of inspection). In this part of the form schools are asked to provide data on full time students. These are defined as students enrolled on English courses with a minimum of 15 hours of supervised day time study per week. Students enrolled on courses with fewer hours or on evening courses are defined as part-time students. Schools should refer to these definitions when preparing the information for this section.
- 'Courses Assessed under ABLS Criteria' requires information about student numbers in the twelve months prior to the inspection.

The inspection report and outcomes

Summary of the reporting process

- The Reporting Inspector writes the report in conjunction with the second inspector.
- The report is moderated.
- The report is reviewed and signed off by the Chief Inspector.
- Once completed the report could also be reviewed by an appointed member of the Management Committee. This member will have no vested interest in the inspection result. The recommendation of the report would be considered and any subsequent feedback/request for clarification directed back to the ABLIS Inspectorate. Once any queries have been satisfactorily resolved the report is then signed off on behalf of the Management Committee.
- The provider is informed of the outcome and sent a copy of the report in electronic format with a letter outlining accreditation status.

Inspection result

ABLS aims where possible to make the results of an inspection available to the provider concerned between 6-8 weeks after the inspection has taken place. ABLIS has a policy of notifying providers of results earlier wherever possible.

Mandatory Action Points

In the event of there being mandatory action points evidence should be returned to the Administrator. The timescale with regard to mandatory evidence, as quoted on the report, must be adhered to in order for a school to stay within the accreditation process.

The evidence is sent to the Chief Inspector. Once all the evidence has been accepted the report is bound, signed and sent to the school with a covering letter.

In the case of a newly accredited provider the Administrator will forward a pro-rata invoice for accreditation fees together with the Declaration of Legal Compliance to be completed and returned to the office. The provider is sent a copy of the relevant ABLIS Accreditation logo to be used on all promotional material. Finally, details of the provider are uploaded to the ABLIS Accreditation website.

Possible outcomes

1. Accreditation is awarded with no mandatory action points. It is the experience of ABLIS that it is rare for providers to achieve unequivocal accreditation.
2. Although the general provision is satisfactory the provider is not fully meeting the minimum requirements. Accreditation is, therefore, conditional and not to be confirmed until all mandatory action points have been successfully evidenced within the given timeframe.
3. Accreditation is conditional and not to be confirmed until all mandatory action points have been successfully evidenced within the given timeframe and a successful follow-up inspection has been conducted.
4. Accreditation is deferred for a minimum of 6 months to allow the provider to address all identified deficiencies and weaknesses. Guidance in the form of a list of action points is provided at the end of the report. A further full inspection needs to take place with a successful outcome.
5. Accreditation is refused when the overall general provision is not satisfactory, a significant number of the minimum requirements are not being met and it is the opinion of the inspectorate that a period of deferral would not be sufficient for the provider to reach the ABLIS standard. The provider may apply to start the accreditation process again after the period of one year.

Report Summary

Following a successful inspection and the award of accreditation a summary of the inspection report will be posted on the ABLIS website. The summary will include a description of the school, the overall assessment for each section of the inspection and details of points of exceptional quality and innovation.

Newly-accredited Schools

If the first inspection (the initial inspection) is successful, accreditation will normally be granted for a one-year period. The provider will then be subject to a second full inspection one year later or at a time indicated by ABLs.

Ideally, inspections should take place at a time when the provider is operating at a reasonably representative level of capacity.

However, it should be noted that if a provider has undergone the initial first inspection when student numbers are low, for whatever reason, the inspectorate may instruct that a second full inspection takes place when student numbers are predicted to be higher.

All schools should note that every inspection is considered to be a full inspection which may lead to mandatory actions and require evidence to be provided. Failure to provide acceptable evidence would lead to withdrawal of accreditation.

Following the second full inspection, provided there are no mandatory action points requiring evidence of implementation, the school will normally be entered on to a four-yearly inspection cycle.

Exceptions to this can be found in the next section entitled 'Maintaining accreditation'.

Following confirmation from the ABLs Administrator that accreditation has been approved, it is a strict condition for the marque below to be displayed on electronic and print marketing:



Newly-accredited Accommodation Providers

If the initial inspection is successful, accreditation will normally be granted for a one-year period. The provider will then be subject to a second full inspection one year later or at a time indicated by ABLs.

Following a second full inspection the provider will be placed on a two-yearly cycle.

Ideally, inspections should take place at a time when the provider is operating at a reasonably representative level of capacity.

Following confirmation from the ABLs Administrator that accreditation has been approved, it is a condition for the marque below to be displayed on electronic and print marketing:



Refer to Appendix A for further information

Maintaining accreditation

The achievement of accreditation is an important stage in maintaining standards within the industry. However, ABLS has a duty to ensure that standards are maintained throughout the period of accreditation.

To this end, all accredited providers are required to participate in an ongoing monitoring process in order to retain their accredited status and failure to comply fully could lead to loss of accreditation.

There are four key monitoring methods:

1. Monitoring of compliance with requirements set out in inspection reports. Requirements are expressed as 'mandatory' and 'advisory' action points.

- *Mandatory action points* are concerned with issues which are central to the accreditation process and which must be addressed if the organisation is to achieve accreditation
- *Advisory action points* identify actions, which, if implemented, would enhance provision beyond the ABLS standard. They are offered for advice only and no evidence of implementation is required.

2. Interim visits: ABLS reserves the right to conduct interim inspection visits. The provider will be notified of these visits and a mutually convenient date arranged. The cost of the visit will be covered by ABLS. If, however, as a result of the visit weaknesses are identified and it is necessary to conduct a follow-up inspection this will be at cost to the provider.

The aim of these visits is to monitor that the provider is maintaining compliance with the accreditation criteria requirements. The inspection will be organised in the same manner as any other inspection except no documentary evidence need be provided prior to the inspection day. ABLS will determine the number of inspectors to be employed. The inspector/s will focus on key areas of provision but will particularly assess legal requirements, welfare and any areas of concern identified in the previous inspection. The inspector will contact the provider to agree a timetable and may need some

operational information to do so. During the inspection the inspectors may request to see documentation to assist in making an accurate assessment of the organisation.

3. Unannounced visits: ABLS reserves the right to make unannounced visits to any provider as deemed necessary. As a condition, if the visit is the result of a complaint and the complaint is upheld then the provider will be responsible for all costs of the unannounced visit and any subsequent follow-up inspection.

4. Annually the provider will need to complete and sign a Declaration of Legal Compliance and complete an Annual Return which includes data on the number of students enrolled, retention and achievement to the date of the return. This provides ABLS with up-to-date information about the organisation, its programmes, its staff and the student body. Failure to submit these two documents by the requested date may result in the suspension or withdrawal of accreditation.

The Declaration of Legal Compliance requires the provider to confirm that it is complying with all current statutory and legal requirements relevant to the provision of its services and that all the requirements set out by ABLS are being met.

The Annual Return requires organisations to provide information under the following headings and specifically to highlight any changes which have occurred since the last inspection or the submission of the last return such as:

- Ownership and management
- Premises
- Staffing and all key personnel
- Programmes offered
- Student numbers including details of country of origin, age, visa status
- Student retention and progression
- Examination results
- Evidence of compliance with new or amended legislation

It is obligatory for ABLS to be notified immediately of any significant changes to the provision including matters relating to key personnel.

Suspension or withdrawal of accreditation

Accreditation may be suspended or withdrawn if:

- the provider fails to cooperate with an investigation regarding a complaint.
- serious complaints or appeals against the provider are upheld following investigation by ABLS.
- serious weaknesses are identified at inspection.

For example:

- where there is evidence of an accredited organisation assisting in the illegal entry of immigrants.
- where the observed teaching has fallen below the ABLS standard.
- where there is evidence that accommodation is not satisfactory and the provider refuses to take action.
- mandatory action points have not been completed by the stated deadlines or other conditions set by ABLS have not been met.
- evidence with regard to action points has not been implemented.
- promotional materials are found to be misleading.
- the Declaration of Legal Compliance and Annual Return are not completed and submitted.
- ABLS fees or any other payments due to ABLS have not been settled.
- the provider has acted in a manner which could or has brought ABLS into disrepute.

A provider will remain suspended or have accreditation withdrawn until the matter has been resolved. Immediate removal from the list of accredited providers is at the discretion of ABLS.

Accreditation under review

The status of an accredited provider may be put under review, normally for a period of a year, as a result of serious concerns by ABLS with regard to the provider.

This review may not necessarily result from an inspection. During this time the provider will remain accredited but will be subject to an action plan with a strict time frame as instructed by the inspectorate.

If the action plan contains a spot check the school will be invoiced for this in advance of the start of the review process. Failure to comply with this plan could result in immediate withdrawal of accreditation.

ABLS reserves the right to raise an invoice for additional administration fees.

The ABLS Complaints Procedure

All accredited providers are expected to have a complaints procedure which is readily available and made known to students, staff, agents and parents. In the event that a provider's internal complaints mechanism does not provide a resolution then a complainant may invoke the ABLS complaints mechanism. All accredited providers have a duty to ensure that staff, students, agents, parents and other concerned bodies are aware of how to contact ABLS and access the complaints mechanism.

All complaints to ABLS must be received in writing in English and signed by the complainant with full contact details provided. The complaint should record whether action has already been taken directly with the provider concerned and state whether the complainant is happy for the complaint to be copied to that organisation.

It should be noted that ABLS does not receive complaints relating to issues surrounding employment.

The process for dealing with the complaint

The complaint will be recorded and referred to the Principal of the provider organisation.

The Principal will be expected to respond in writing to ABLS within 10 days. If appropriate, the Principal will further be expected to report in writing within a further 30 days as to whether subsequent action led to the resolution of the complaint.

If the complaint remains unresolved it will be passed to the Chief Inspector. The Chief Inspector will investigate and if he/she considers the complaint has been satisfactorily handled by the provider he/she may recommend that the complaint be dismissed. In this case the costs of the investigation will be met by ABLS and the decision reached final.

If, however, the Chief Inspector considers there has been unsatisfactory performance on the part of the provider he/she may recommend a full or partial re-inspection. In this case all costs are met by the provider.

If the provider is not satisfied by the resolution reached by the Chief Inspector, it may ask for the case to be reviewed by the Management Committee.

The case will be reviewed and a decision reached which will be final.

The ABLS Standard : Inspection Criteria

There are six sets of criteria which will be addressed during the inspection:

- (1) Corporate Responsibilities
- (2) Management & Administration
- (3) Academic Management
- (4) Classroom Management & Teaching Materials
- (5) Student Welfare
- (6) Junior Welfare and Safeguarding (relates to all students under 18)

In the following sections, information is provided regarding the aspects of provision which will be covered during the inspection and guidelines on how providers should approach the visit of the inspectors.

In addition to providing documentary evidence of the policies and systems in existence at the organisation, the provider must also be able to demonstrate how these are utilised, implemented and disseminated to all stakeholders.

All core documentary evidence needs to be made available to the inspectors; further evidence may also be requested during the inspection.

In each case the inspector will summarise the section and comment on how it relates to the ABLS standards.

Section 1 : Corporate Responsibility

Standard

The organisation must demonstrate that it is meeting all statutory and legal requirements connected with the operation of its business. This includes the provision of risk management, health and safety systems and suitable premises.

Assessment Criteria

1.1 Key Provisions

- (1) Premises information demonstrates continuity of provision
- (2) Employer's public liability insurance is valid and displayed
- (3) Risk assessments for the building and general operation which comply with all legal requirements have been prepared
- (4) An accident / incident book is available for inspection which, in addition to meeting Health & Safety Executive requirements (RIDDOR), records all actions relating to illness and accidents taken by the organisation on and off the premises
- (5) A current Health & Safety Law poster is displayed or pocket cards are provided for staff
- (6) The organisation is registered for Data Protection and has a data protection policy
- (7) Portable appliance testing has been completed and valid
- (8) Licences are held on record for relevant media usage and reproduction
- (9) First aid box(es) is/are provided
- (10) There are sufficient numbers of trained first aiders to administer first aid on and off the premises
- (11) The names of first aiders and location of first aid box(es) are displayed prominently on the premises

1.2 Fire Safety

- (1) Escape instructions are displayed in each area, including classrooms
- (2) Main escape routes are clearly signed and are unlocked
- (3) Fire doors are in place, labelled, kept closed and are unobstructed
- (4) Evidence is provided that escape access from upper floors meets current fire regulations
- (5) Fire risk assessments have been prepared

- (6) Clear procedures for fire drills, including head-count are in place
- (7) Regular fire drills are conducted. The frequency of fire drills takes account of the age and linguistic ability of students and the age and lay out of the buildings. All fire drills and incidences, including false alarms, are recorded
- (8) There is evidence that firefighting equipment is sufficient and is regularly checked
- (9) Alarm systems are in place with evidence of regular maintenance and testing smoke alarms are fitted and tested

1.3 Public Facilities

- (1) There is adequate recreation space for numbers and types of students
- (2) There are sufficient toilet facilities for maximum provision
- (3) There is a sufficient range of toilet facilities for type(s) of provision
- (4) Sufficient sanitary waste systems are in place
- (5) Classrooms are large enough to accommodate stated group sizes
- (6) Premises are in good decorative order
- (7) Classrooms are sufficiently sound-proofed against external noise
- (8) Rooms are adequately heated and ventilated
- (9) Furniture used by students and teachers is fit for purpose
- (10) Computer and internet access is available to students in accordance with the organisation's IT policy



Section 2 : Management & Administration

Standard

The organisation must be managed effectively and appropriately for the type of business being conducted with due concern being paid to the rights of its staff and students and the requirements of outside agencies.

Key areas of concern

It is expected that the management team will have qualifications and experience appropriate to their function.

Comprehensive staff contracts or contracts for services must be in place for all individuals working in the organisation.

Senior managers should ensure that staff and students are aware of the organisation's Equality and Diversity Policy. Records should be kept to show that the policy has been brought to the attention of those concerned e.g. the date on which the document was issued, in which format and that the staff/student member has read it. It may, for example, form part of a code of conduct or a job description.

ABLS does not determine the content of such policies. However, it is expected that managers are familiar with UK law relating to such areas and that such policies demonstrate sensitivity to such matters.

For schools providing courses to adults only, school staff will be expected to hold suitability declarations and accommodation leads will have undergone a recent Standard DBS check.

Where junior students are admitted, both school staff and accommodation leads will have undergone a recent Enhanced DBS check.

Assessment criteria

2.4 Employment Documentation (applying to all staff)

- (1) CVs are held on record
- (2) Original qualifications are seen
- (3) Copies of qualifications are signed and dated as true copies of the original and held on record
- (4) Job descriptions are in place and distributed
- (5) Copies of contracts or letters of appointment are signed, dated and held on record
- (6) Current DBS checks are held for all staff who have unsupervised access to students under 18 years of age
- (7) At least two written references are held on record for each member of staff
- (8) Rationales have been submitted for any member of the teaching staff without minimum ELT qualifications (as specified in the Inspection Handbook) and are accepted by the ABLs inspection team
- (9) Staffing policies and employment contracts provide suitable continuity of provision

2.5 Staff Rights and Responsibilities

- (1) Written information for staff is provided which includes a code of conduct and policies covering grievance, disciplinary action, equality and diversity
- (2) Staff demonstrate an understanding of their responsibilities concerning student welfare, including safeguarding and the organisation's Prevent strategy
- (3) A regular appraisal system is in place and documented for all members of staff who have worked for the organisation for more than twelve months
- (4) The appraisal system is supported by appropriate training
- (5) A clear management structure is maintained
- (6) The ABLs complaints procedure is made known to staff and key suppliers of services

2.6 Student Administration

- (1) Reasonable measures are taken to ascertain students' identity prior to the course start, with a copy of photo ID page and visa page (if necessary) of passport held on record
- (2) Full-time students are enrolled on English courses of at least 15 hours' supervised daytime study per week

- (3) Written policies on attendance, punctuality and absence exist to include any regulations relating to students with visas. Policies are well-publicised to students and supported by staff
- (4) A record of actions taken in response to poor attendance and performance is maintained
- (5) Administrative systems for Short Term Study Visa applications are robust, secure and readily available for inspection
- (6) Enrolment forms including next of kin and contact details, medical/allergy information and, for students under 18, parental permission in respect of emergency medical treatment and specific elements of the course for which permission is required, are completed and retained for all students
- (7) Accurate attendance registers exist and are retained centrally
- (8) Student records are up-to-date and retained centrally
- (9) Diagnostic / entry tests are used and results recorded
- (10) End of course attainment and/or examination results are retained centrally
- (11) An end of course certificate and/or report is issued to each student
- (12) Records of student feedback are retained and assessed
- (13) Complaints received from students, parents, guardians and agents are retained together with details of actions taken in response to them

2.7 Advertising of Services

- (1) Descriptions of premises, facilities and services in print and electronic material are accurate
- (2) A maximum number of students per class is clearly stated
- (3) Terms and conditions for students and agents are clear, comprehensive and agreed in writing by all parties
- (4) Information relating to fees, charges and refunds is clear and presented alongside full terms and conditions
- (5) All claims of accreditation and validation are accurate

Section 3 : Academic Management

Standard

The organisation must provide its students with real learning opportunities and have systems in place for monitoring students' learning and progress and quality assuring the performance of its teachers.

Key areas of concern

It is expected that all teaching staff will hold an ELT certificate (level 5 RQF) resulting from a course of at least one hundred contact hours and a minimum of six hours' observed teaching practice. All qualifications must be validated by a university or internationally recognised examination board.

If, in exceptional circumstances, an organisation employs teachers who do not have a TESOL/TEFL related qualification, the provider will need to submit written evidence (a rationale) to the inspector in support of the decision to employ a non-qualified member of staff. Acceptance of the rationale will be at the discretion of the inspector in line with his/her observation of teaching and learning sessions.

The Academic Manager is expected to have at least a Diploma in ELT/TESOL (level 7 RQF) and experience that would enable him or her to give good advice to new teachers and to assess their performance. The qualification must be issued by a nationally recognised validation body and include at least six hours' observed teaching practice.

Equivalent may be offered as part of a rationale which should explain how the Academic Manager's other qualifications, experience and achievements fit him/her for the academic management and leadership role he/she has within the organisation. However, any equivalent qualifications must be recognised to be the same level of study and inclusive of relevant teaching practice (e.g. PGCE in a relevant field). Qualifications lacking an integral observation module (e.g. Masters in ELT/TESOL) can be supplemented separately, but the individual must have been observed for six hours by a well-qualified ELT practitioner external to the organisation in question.

In order to maintain a high standard of teaching new teachers need to be made aware of the expectations of

the organisation. A policy and set of procedures for the induction of new teachers should be in place.

In-service and external training and development are to be offered e.g. providers and their employees should keep up to date with new developments in TESOL/TEFL.

The Academic Manager must demonstrate careful monitoring of teaching quality to ensure that standards are reached and maintained. ABLS expects procedures for the observation of teaching and learning to be in place and the completion of documentation to demonstrate that these procedures have been implemented. Records of formal appraisals should be retained and be available to the inspector.

Teachers' planning must reflect the needs of the students and be based on the results of tests or questionnaires given to the students before the course commences. All such tests/questionnaires should be retained by the organisation as part of a student's record. A good record of the work and attainment of each student must be maintained so as to enable the teacher to write a meaningful report at the end of a course if requested. It is expected that students will be appraised or assessed formally at various points throughout their course of study. If the organisation administers public/external tests or examinations, policies for the administration and conduct of the tests are required.

Core documentary evidence

Course outlines/syllabuses (see note below)

- Timetables
- Evidence of teachers' planning
- Records of teacher-appraisal and evidence of professional development
- Testing procedures and documents
- Student records
- End of course report or certificate of attendance, as appropriate
- Samples of students' work
- Attendance registers
- Student feedback and questionnaire results
- Provision for learners with special needs

Assessment criteria

3.3 Academic Systems

- (1) A comprehensive pre-course testing system is in place and is applied universally
- (2) Appropriate learning outcomes are identified and documented for individual students.
- (3) An accurate and reliable student placement system is applied
- (4) A student movement policy is in place and applied universally
- (5) Records of test achievement are retained
- (6) Homework is regularly offered and assessed
- (7) External examination preparation is offered

3.4 Study Framework (see note on syllabus)

- (1) A clear and practical syllabus is in place
- (2) Sufficient schemes of work are in place for all courses and classes
- (3) The syllabus includes opportunities for students to develop their learning outside the classroom
- (4) The syllabus includes opportunities to promote core British values
- (5) Samples of students' work are available for inspectors to see

3.5 Class Dynamics

- (1) Teaching group sizes are suitable for courses
- (2) Group size reflects publicity
- (3) Groups sizes are suitable for the ability levels of students
- (4) Procedures for covering teacher absence are maintained

3.6 Teacher Support and Guidance

- (1) Effective induction procedures are in place
- (2) Clear information is provided on expected standards
- (3) Regular staff meetings are held and minutes taken
- (4) Lines of communication are effective

3.7 Staff Training and Development

- (1) A regular and detailed teacher monitoring system is in place and documented. This includes regular lesson observations by the Academic Manager or another member of the academic management team with an ELT qualification at an appropriate level
- (2) Sufficient CPD opportunities are provided to support and develop all teaching staff

Definition of Syllabus

An acceptable syllabus is one that identifies and details course content, demonstrates regard for students' needs, acknowledges differentiation of learning styles and includes appropriate supplementary materials and activities. A syllabus which is limited to the contents of a single coursebook is not acceptable.

Section 4 : Classroom Management & Teaching Materials

Standard

Lessons must be planned and delivered in such a way as to provide each individual student with the chance to learn in a meaningful and enjoyable way.

Key areas of concern

Thought should be given to the length of lessons. Very long periods of teaching should be avoided especially with younger students.

Teachers must plan their lessons thoroughly. Each lesson must take into account the level, ability and the mix of students.

Lessons should involve a variety of activities to keep the students' attention. This can be achieved through the use of authentic materials, audio and visual aids and, where appropriate, games.

Teachers are expected to be sympathetic and helpful and to be sensitive to the needs of the students.

Individual learning styles should be taken into account when planning lessons.

Core documentary evidence

- Individual lesson plans
- Schemes of work
- Samples of classroom materials
- Lists of physical resources
- Lists of learning and teaching resources

During inspection all teachers should prepare to provide a copy of their lesson plan, classroom materials and register for the inspector for each lesson running during inspection.

Organisations should inform teaching staff that no personal comments will be made in relation to observations made during inspection. Students should also be informed of the reason for the inspector's presence.

Assessment criteria

4.2 Lesson Management

- (1) Quality lesson plans are produced for each lesson observed
- (2) Lesson plans are developed in the context of a course syllabus
- (3) Lesson lengths are appropriate for students
- (4) There is good variety in lessons
- (5) Different learning styles are considered
- (6) Order and punctuality are good
- (7) Teaching reflects what is advertised
- (8) Use of appropriate teaching aids is demonstrated
- (9) Classroom practice promotes core British values

4.3 Teaching Materials

- (1) Appropriate course materials are used for the type of student and course
- (2) In-house texts and materials are available
- (3) An up-to-date catalogue of teaching materials is maintained
- (4) Sufficient learning technology and materials are available

The organisation must provide resources of a type, quality and quantity fit for purpose. Adequate resources are essential for efficient and effective teaching. The organisation should be clear in publicity material about who is responsible for providing any course textbooks and what happens to the books at the end of the course.

A variety of textbooks should be made available to enable teachers to choose the best source for each topic they teach. Teachers should also be encouraged to prepare and share their own teaching materials.

Teachers should have access to a wide variety of teaching aids and a list of all teaching/learning resources held by the provider should be made available.

A minimum of one audio device per teaching area is expected. It is good practice to provide access to computers and the internet for students.

There should be a clear policy regarding the availability of reference books and dictionaries. A well-managed library is an asset to an organisation.

Section 5 : Student Welfare

Standard

The organisation needs to show that it understands and makes provision for the special needs of students who are studying away from home in a foreign country.

Key areas of concern

The organisation must show awareness of its responsibilities in terms of caring for its students by providing access to any relevant advice and help connected to the needs and particular circumstances of its students.

Staff Training in Welfare

The inspectorate requires there to be a Strategic Lead for Welfare who has undergone face-to-face external training (including Safeguarding and Prevent) for the role. The individual should be a senior member of staff. There should be a clear job description. Students should be aware of who is responsible for welfare and what they have to do in an emergency.

Schools which train additional members of staff to Safeguarding Level One (Induction / Awareness) and Prevent may choose online training.

School Welfare Policy

There should be an accurate and comprehensive statement of how the school fulfils its duty of care to students and ensures their welfare. This is a key document in a school's Prevent strategy. It should be an accurate and comprehensive statement of how the school fulfils its duty of care to students and ensures their welfare. It should contain (but not necessarily be limited to):

- A clear acknowledgement that the school retains overall responsibility for student welfare
- Details of how that responsibility is delegated to staff and host families
- Anti-bullying/Abusive behaviour policy
- IT policy
- School rules
- Attendance policy
- Emergency action plan
- Prevent Strategy policy (including risk assessment, monitoring & compliance procedures, staff training programme)

Guidance with regard to Prevent

In order to comply with Prevent, and to reflect this development in best practice in the welfare of all students studying in the UK, the ABL Standard requires schools to demonstrate the following:

1. An awareness of the risk of students being drawn into violent extremism

2. Strong leadership

A senior member in the organisation must be named as the Strategic Lead for Welfare with responsibility for the implementation of the organisation's Prevent strategy.

3. Staff training

All staff must complete Prevent awareness training. Free online courses are available at www.preventforfeandtraining.org.uk

4. Monitoring and compliance

Policies in respect of the above must show how the organisation ensures that its prevent strategy is implemented in practice.

5. Working in partnership with other agencies eg LSCB or Police

6. Sharing information

The strategic lead must know when and how to share concerns with other agencies.

7. IT policy

The school must show that it has taken reasonable steps to control / monitor students and staff's access to unsuitable websites / material in the context of the level of risk it has identified.

8. Promotion of core British values

In addition if the school offers courses to students under the age of 18, the Welfare Policy should also include:

- the school's safeguarding policy
- the school's policy regarding parental consent

- rules given to students governing free time, curfews and supervision ratios
- what support is given to Group Leaders, particularly during off-site activities, evenings and weekends

Register of Homestay

A detailed register of home-stay accommodation must be kept. A policy and system of implementation for the selection and inspection of homestay accommodation must be in place which takes into account student concerns and welfare as the first priority.

DBS checks for private accommodation provision

Regarding DBS checks and home-stay accommodation, the inspectorate requires at least the main host in the household to undergo a Standard DBS check. It is, however, regarded as best practice for all adults in the household to be DBS-checked and schools are recommended to adopt this policy with all new families. In the absence of DBS checks for other adults, a signed suitability declaration is required from all other regular occupants of the household aged 18 and over.

Where the school admits junior students, the main host will be expected to undergo an Enhanced DBS check (or other region equivalent).

Insurance and Homestay

Home-stay hosts should ensure that they have valid insurance cover and comply with current legislation covering paying guests.

Homestay Host Agreement

There must be a clear homestay host's agreement that lays out the duties and responsibilities of the organisation and the host. Students should be given guidelines for behaviour where appropriate. It is expected that individual student preferences are taken into account in allocating accommodation.

Students' Handbook

Documentation, usually in the form of a Students' Handbook, should be provided which includes information and advice on living in the UK and local area.

Core documentary evidence

- Names, qualifications, experience, DBS disclosures, where applicable, for those responsible for pastoral care, welfare, accommodation and social programmes
- Complete record of residential accommodation
- Complete home-stay register, with those highlighted that are being used in the week of the inspection
- Accommodation record details
- Policies for selection and inspection of accommodation
- Accommodation contracts

Organisations are required to demonstrate that staff and students have been made explicitly aware of policies and procedures relating to the above and, where appropriate, how to access those procedures.

Homestay inspection

Where homestay accommodation is offered, the inspection will include visits to a random sample of homes selected by the inspector at the start of the inspection. Visits will take place during the day or early evening as required. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that inspectors can make their selection from all the hosts on their register.

Schools should reassure hosts that they are being visited - not inspected - and that the inspector will spend approximately 15 to 20 minutes in their home. The inspector should be introduced to the host by a member of the school's staff, but the inspector conducts the rest of the visit unaccompanied.

Assessment criteria

5.2 Welfare Management

- (1) There is a named staff member who is the strategic lead for welfare in all aspects of the organisation
- (2) The strategic lead has completed recognised face-to-face training for the role
- (3) The strategic lead demonstrates relevant experience for the role

5.3 Policies and Procedures

- (1) Job descriptions are in place for all staff with specific responsibilities for the welfare of students
- (2) A welfare policy which reflects the organisation's commitment to protecting the welfare of all students and staff is maintained as a single written document, distributed widely and supported by staff training as required
- (3) The welfare policy is reviewed annually
- (4) A record is maintained of all welfare incidents, issues and concerns with details of actions taken, which is available for inspection
- (5) Students are given a handbook or other form of written information which includes information about the school and advice on local, key services
- (6) All students complete an induction to the school and local area
- (7) Advice on police registration is available to all students
- (8) A complaints procedure is made explicitly known to all students
- (9) Students are made aware of the ABLS complaints procedure

5.4 Activity Management

- (1) Risk assessments are prepared for all on-site activities and individually for each off-site activity that takes place
- (2) Procedures are in place to ensure that information/procedures arising from risk assessments are communicated to relevant staff
- (3) Suitably qualified staff are engaged to deliver the activity programme
- (4) Suitable staff/student ratios are maintained for activities

5.5 Accommodation Management

- (1) An accurate accommodation register for residential, homestay and home tuition accommodation exists

- (2) Records of regular accommodation inspections are maintained
- (3) A standard set of criteria is applied when assessing new accommodation
- (4) Homestay hosts are aware of their responsibilities for the welfare of students
- (5) A grievance / complaints procedure is made explicitly known to hosts and students
- (6) Homestay / home tuition codes of conduct exist and are issued to hosts and students at least annually
- (7) Procedures are in place for ensuring that hosts and students are able to voice concerns about each other
- (8) There is a clear policy in place regarding the maximum number of students accommodated in a homestay which does not compromise the host's ability to fulfil his/her responsibilities identified in other criteria
- (9) Guidelines are in place to ensure that the student is included as a member of the family
- (10) Students of the same mother tongue are not housed together unless requested and the school holds written evidence on file
- (11) DBS checks are conducted for the main host in each homestay accommodation. DBS checks or suitability declarations for other adult occupants are on file
- (12) The presence of all non-student occupants and frequent/regular adult visitors is assessed
- (13) Procedures are in place for ensuring hosts comply with their legal requirement to carry out a fire risk assessment of their accommodation
- (14) Hosts have been advised to seek guidance from their insurance company with regard to hosting students

5.6 Accommodation Standard

- (1) Accommodation is suitable for the age, gender and cultural background of the students
- (2) The condition, upkeep and cleanliness of the accommodation is good
- (3) Sufficient and well-maintained bathroom facilities are available
- (4) There are opportunities for private time and study
- (5) Suitable menus and quality of food are provided
- (6) The accommodation provider is aware of the ABLS complaints procedure

- (7) It is a safe environment for the age and type of student
- (8) There are appropriate smoke alarms
- (9) There is a gas certificate if required and carbon monoxide sensors are fitted



Section 6 : Junior Safeguarding

Where organisations work with under-18s this section will be applied to all activity.

Staff Training in Junior Welfare

If under-18s are admitted, there are more specific training requirements of the Strategic Lead for Welfare.

Training should be undertaken on face-to-face courses. Definitions of safeguarding training vary considerably. Inspectors will look for training that meets the requirements for Designated Safeguarding Leads as detailed in *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (Department of Education, 2016). Training providers sometimes refer to this as Advanced or Level 2 but organisations must satisfy themselves of the content of all training courses undertaken. This training may also relate to that required for Group 2 roles as per *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010). Further advice may be provided by Local Safeguarding Children Boards and the NSPCC.

There is also a need for additional trained staff to operate as Child Protection Officers, also trained to the same level. In small organisations, the Strategic Lead for Welfare may also operate as a Child Protection Officer.

It is considered good practice for all staff whose role requires some contact with juniors to undergo some form of safeguarding training, although this would be expected to be at a lower level than the Strategic Lead and Child Protection Officers.

6.2 Junior Welfare Management

- (1) The person named as the strategic lead for welfare in the organisation is also the strategic lead for safeguarding in the organisation
- (2) This person has completed face-to-face recognised Safeguarding training (as detailed in the ABLS Inspection Handbook)
- (3) There is a minimum of two Child Protection Officers (CPO) who have completed face-to-face recognised Safeguarding training (as detailed in the ABLS Inspection Handbook)
- (4) The organisation's welfare policy encapsulates its commitment to safeguarding, describes the steps taken to ensure the safety and well-being of

- students under 18 and includes guidance to staff responsible for junior welfare supported by training
- (5) There is adequate supervision of juniors outside class hours including during journeys to and from school
- (6) Adequate systems are in place to guarantee junior welfare during arrival and departure transfers
- (7) The organisation's welfare record referred to in section 6.5.3(4) includes all safeguarding incidents, issues and concerns with details of actions taken
- (8) All junior students are given an ID card and emergency number for the organisation
- (9) Provision of care for ill students is adequate

6.3 Homestay Accommodation

- (1) Homestay hosts are aware of their responsibilities for the welfare of junior students
- (2) There is a policy on curfew times which is known to students, parents, group leaders and hosts and implemented
- (3) Students of the opposite sex are not accommodated together unless they are aged 11 or under and supervised by a group leader or parents have specifically requested that siblings are accommodated together
- (4) Adults and juniors are not accommodated together
- (5) Private fostering regulations are understood and implemented by the organisation and homestay hosts

6.4 Residential Accommodation

- (1) Students of the opposite sex are accommodated in separate buildings / areas of accommodation and are supervised in a way which ensures that their privacy and welfare is maintained
- (2) Students and staff do not share bathroom facilities
- (3) Bedtimes are appropriate to the age of students and are implemented
- (4) On-duty residential staff understand their responsibilities for overnight supervision and students know who to go to if there is a problem during the night
- (5) The organisation's policy on alcohol and drugs is made known to residential staff and students and is implemented
- (6) Fire evacuation drills from the residential accommodation are conducted

Appeals and complaints procedures

Inspection process

Organisations are encouraged to provide feedback. This feedback is an important aspect of training and provides a mechanism for the quality assurance of the service offered by ABLS.

A questionnaire will be sent to providers with the request to return the document directly to ABLS Administration following the inspection. Specific feedback on an inspection is not passed on to the inspector until after the report has been submitted and signed off.

An organisation wishing to lodge a complaint regarding any aspect of the inspection process can either do so on this questionnaire or in writing to the Administrator no later than one week after the inspection date.

Accreditation outcomes

Right of Appeal

An organisation which fails its inspection has a right of appeal, but it should be noted that this process can be lengthy and incur costs to the provider. Please note that the provider will need to settle all appeal costs before the appeal can proceed.

If the provider fails to submit an appeal against an inspection outcome within the given timeframe (see First Stage below) ABLS will deem the result to have been accepted and in the event of a failed inspection of an existing provider details will be removed from the website.

During the appeals process outlined below an existing ABLS accredited provider will normally continue to be listed on the website. An unaccredited provider remains unaccredited.

First Stage

The provider must lodge an appeal with regard to the failed inspection in a written statement to the Administrator within two weeks of the initial inspection report being received. The statement must clearly define the grounds for the appeal. The matter will be reviewed by a member of the Management Committee who has not served within the process leading to the publication of the disputed inspection report. The reviewer will examine the written statement and the inspection report and any other material considered relevant. The provider will not be invited to attend at this stage.

The result of this stage will be forwarded in writing to the provider within 28 days of the appeal being lodged.

Second Stage

If the provider does not accept the decision reached at the First Stage the matter can be referred to the Appeals Panel who will examine the evidence at the earliest possible date.

Members of the Appeals Panel are normally drawn from voting members of the Management Committee. They will not have served as a reviewer or had any previous involvement with the disputed report and will have no vested interest in either the disputed inspection or subsequent result of an appeal. In order to ensure that proceedings are conducted in a fair and proper manner an external and independent chair will be appointed.

The panel is forwarded all documents relating to the appeal in advance of the hearing to be examined in advance and scrutinised at the hearing. The complainant is invited, and strongly advised, to attend the panel hearing.

Final Stage

If the provider does not accept the decision of the Appeals Panel, the matter will be put to the next meeting of the Board, normally held quarterly, whose decision will be final.

Terms and Conditions for Appeals

ABLS Administration and the provider will be notified in writing with regard to the outcome of all stages of an appeal.

If the appeal results in a partial or full inspection the investigating panel will determine the terms and the conditions to be adhered to.

It is understood that the provider has accepted all the terms of the above process when applying for inspection through ABLS Accreditation.

An existing provider when signing the Declaration of Legal Compliance will also be confirming acceptance of these terms and will have studied the current Inspection Handbook.

ABLS will follow the published procedure and no discussion can be entered into with regard to this.

Appeal Costs

Before the appeal can be addressed the provider will be sent an invoice outlining the cost of the appeal. These costs must be settled before the appeal can proceed. As a guideline, in the event of the provider operating from one site the cost will be equivalent to the fee for a one-day inspection.

In the event of a provider operating multi-sites the fee will be equivalent to the fees for the disputed inspection.

Appeal Upheld

In the event of an appeal being upheld

- appeal costs will be returned to the provider.
- accreditation status may be immediately reinstated.
- accreditation status may be granted in line with the published possible outcomes two, three and four of an inspection.

Appeal Not Upheld

If the appeal is not upheld

- appeal costs will be retained by ABLS.

Appendix A

Accreditation of Providers of Student Accommodation

This guidance note should be read in addition to the current Inspection Handbook. It provides additional information for those organisations applying for inspection for provision of student accommodation services. Unless varied here, the Inspection Handbook processes and criteria will be applied.

Eligibility of Providers

All organisations providing accommodation for EFL students may be considered for inspection with a view to accreditation. It should be noted, however, that Providers of Student Accommodation advertising additional services such as cultural and language courses are not eligible to apply. An application to be accredited as a school should be considered.

Scope of Accreditation

Accreditation will be extended to the premises inspected or to the type of accommodation sampled during inspection. Any change to the nature, scale, location or region of delivery may lead to a re-inspection.

If the initial inspection is successful, accreditation will normally be granted for a one-year period. The provider will then be subject to a second inspection one year later or at a time indicated by ABLs.

Following this point, a two-yearly inspection cycle is then implemented. ABLs reserves the right to conduct interim inspection visits at no cost to the provider.

Conduct of the Inspection

The inspection will include a visit to all administrative offices as well as a sample of all accommodation types. The Inspectorate will decide on a suitable sample of locations to visit in order to confirm the quality of the application of processes and to identify the overall standard of provision across the organisation.

Inspectors will meet with key staff individually to understand their roles and review standard processes.

A range of documentation and data will be reviewed. More detailed guidance in respect of the conduct of an inspection can be found in the earlier pages of this Inspection Handbook.

Pre-Inspection Materials

Once a date for the inspection visit has been agreed the organisation is sent a check-list of the items below which need to be sent to administration as a single Dropbox link at least three weeks before the date of the inspection or as directed by ABLs. Each document should be numbered as on the list below.

Hard copies of all pre-inspection documents also need to be available to the inspectors during the visit.

1. A copy of publicity material including fees and website addresses
2. Any relevant brochures
3. Proformas of all forms used for accommodation bookings
4. Terms and conditions for all customers
5. All welfare documentation, including a copy of the organisation's welfare policy for both adults and juniors, which should include provision for the Prevent Strategy
6. A list of all bookings for the week of inspection, including name, age, nationality, length of booking, type and location of accommodation
7. A list of all accommodation available with addresses and dates of last usage
8. Copies of any contracts with accommodation owners
9. A copy of the complaints policy
10. A copy of the equal opportunities policy
11. Any further documents that provide an insight into the running of the organisation
12. Organogram for the organisation and a profile of all staff noting names, roles and responsibilities

In addition, the organisation will be expected to complete a self-assessment which confirms a number of basic provisions and provides the key documents which evidence that the criterion is met.

School Exemptions

Where schools apply for inspection by ABLS and solely use an ABLS-accredited provider of accommodation, the school may be exempted from those parts of the ABLS Accreditation Standard and the related sections of the report.

The related sections of the Standard, where applicable, are:

Welfare

5.5 Accommodation Management

5.6 Accommodation Standard

Junior Safeguarding

6.3 Homestay Accommodation

6.4 Residential Accommodation

Where schools offer additional accommodation, either directly or through a third party all sections of the Standard will be inspected. Schools will be required to inform ABLS if they change accommodation providers and this may lead to re-inspection.

Inspection Criteria for Accommodation Providers

Accommodation Providers will be inspected against an abridged set of criteria from the ABLS Standard, as indicated below and on application will receive an abridged report form for reference.

Corporate Responsibility

1.2 Key Provisions

1.3 Fire Safety

1.4 Public Facilities (selected criteria)

Management & Administration

2.2 Organisational Management

2.3 Financial Management

2.4 Employment Documentation (selected criteria)

2.5 Staff Rights and Responsibilities

2.6 Student Administration (selected criteria)

2.7 Advertising and Marketing (selected criteria)

Welfare

5.2 Welfare Management Staffing

5.3 Policies and Procedures (selected criteria)

5.5 Accommodation Management

5.6 Accommodation Standard

Junior Safeguarding

6.2 Junior Welfare Management (selected criteria, where under 18s are admitted)

6.3 Homestay Accommodation (where under 18s are admitted)

6.4 Residential Accommodation (where under 18s are admitted)

