

Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight: CEA CAPA Education Abroad, monitoring report, June 2024

Outcome of the desk-based analysis

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that the CEA CAPA Education Abroad (CAPA) is making acceptable progress since the [June 2023 monitoring visit](#).

Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 In January 2023, CAPA formally merged with Cultural Experiences Abroad (CEA) and began working as one organisation under the name 'CEA CAPA Education Abroad', with programme branding revised to align with the new organisation. Within its June 2024 Educational Oversight monitoring report, CAPA highlights key changes that have resulted from the merger including the organisation's increased 'global reach' and programme portfolio. From the perspective of the London site, CAPA states that there has been no material impact on employment contracts of legacy staff and on the programmes offered. At the visit, staff confirmed that they have experienced no notable differences in their position since the merger, citing many benefits of working at CAPA including its collegiate and positive approach.

3 CAPA operates a fully face-to-face classroom teaching experience with the option of remote teaching on an exception basis (for example, to mitigate against transportation strikes). An option for remote internships also remains part of the CAPA offer should this be required. There are three sessions a year - each session attracting a new cohort of students

since the last QAA review in June 2023 in its monitoring, reviewing and enhancing the quality of its higher education provision. Benefits already experienced by CAPA due to the merger are the sharing of best practices and expertise across the expanded number of locations, as well as the hiring of additional student support staff and those for new key management roles. In response to a statement within its June 2023 Educational Oversight monitoring report - that CAPA should evaluate the impact of increased resources for internship administration and development - management cited the recruitment of additional internship senior managers as having significant impact on enhancing staff wellbeing and performance as well as reducing CAPA's reliance on outsourcing. The merger has not adversely impacted the student experience as students confirmed that they are enjoying their studies at CAPA and feel well-supported. Recruitment statistics show increases in staff numbers since spring 2023, with an extra nine faculty (three leaving and 12 hired) being in post.

5 In autumn 2023, reworked Student Learning and Development Outcomes (SLDOs) were introduced throughout CAPA to better reflect and encompass the whole CAPA student learning experience. SLDOs are communicated to staff via new staff induction, the Faculty Handbook, and through roundtable staff development events which staff at the visit confirmed had taken place. Students are introduced to the SLDOs upon arrival, and the course evaluation survey explicitly refers to the SLDOs within its questions. Results of this survey for a sample of courses confirm that students are developing the understanding, knowledge and skills allied to the SLDOs. Staff at the visit evidenced that they are aware of the reworked SLDOs and that they are used as a reference point to focus and enhance course curricula and co-curricular activities. However, the potential for the reworked SLDOs to situate the activities students undertake while studying at CAPA is not yet fully realised as the students at the visit are unaware of them. The review team analysed several course descriptions and found evidence that the SLDOs are being reflected within course descriptions although SLDO number references are not always explicit.

6 Since the last monitoring visit, CAPA has undertaken work to articulate and enhance the support available for new students. The review team consider this support to be suitable and comprehensive, as it communicates key information about relevant academic and non-academic topics - pre-arrival as well as during induction sessions upon arrival. CAPA provides extra support to students attending at Level 4 (year 1) of their US degree programme, including a dedicated faculty lead and a course covering study skills and professional competency - the benefits of which are evident within the UMass Report for fall 2023. Students affirmed in their meeting with the review team that they feel well supported by both faculty and support staff.

7 New faculty undergo induction that is structured and comprehensive, and which includes a one-to-one meeting with the Faculty Chair and is supported by key documents. Staff also confirmed that CAPA offers several support opportunities including mentoring and peer review for new faculty, and continuing professional development (CPD) and staff development activities for all staff. Staff consider the peer review process to be thorough and helpful. Although there was no cadence mandated for peer reviews of existing faculty, staff confirmed that the triggers for this activity mean that existing faculty are peer reviewed at least annually.

8 CPD of staff is delivered principally through: termly roundtables which tackle global themes and are delivered to all CAPA locations; support materials such as the Faculty Handbook; virtual tutorials; dedicated shared folders; and staff meetings. Several strategic changes, including CAPA's reworked SLDOs and new engagement (class participation) policy, formed topics of CPD roundtables during 2023-24. Some staff attended conferences relevant to their respective role. Faculty continue to participate as authors or as editing

remains unclear as to how CAPA's participation mark aligns with the achievement of assigned course learning outcomes, especially at threshold pass level where the common rubric states that little engagement with class preparation, materials and discussions is required.

12 In summer term 2023, CAPA London operationalised a system in response to the QAA Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight (RSEO) 2021 report'

University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Skidmore College. The London Programme and First Year Programmes fall in line with typical semesterly models, with condensed summer terms meeting the contact hour and credit requirements of the US higher education system. Retention is very strong, with no withdrawals during any term and the majority of students are awarded grades A to C.

Progress in working with the external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

18 To meet UK expectations for higher education, CAPA continues to align internal policies and procedures with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education where relevant and applicable to US Study Abroad programmes. The provider also ensures that provision meets the standards set by higher education institutions in the US, in alignment with the US Higher Learning Commission. Other responsible bodies include the Academic Advisory Board which provides advice on programme development and academic affairs, other individual university partners, and the Forum on Education Abroad which is responsible for ensuring that organisations delivering American study programmes abroad meet the criteria set for Quality Improvement Standards. CAPA received Forum of Education Abroad QUIP recognition in 2012, which was reaffirmed in 2020.

19 CAPA London engaged an external examiner pre-pandemic, even though CAPA's School of Record does not require one, to act as a critical friend. The role was suspended during the pandemic and was not reintroduced for the 2023-24 academic year, as was expected at the time of the June 2023 monitoring visit. When asked about this at the June 2024 visit, management announced that CAPA London is to employ an 'external academic advisor' from the 2024-25 academic year, which the review team welcomes as a key UK quality external reference point.

Background to the desk-based analysis

20 The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

21 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Christine Fidler, Reviewer, and Mr Ian Welch, QAA Officer, on 20 June 2024.

QAA2856 - R14641 - Aug 24

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2024
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557000
Web www.qaa.ac.uk