



IES Abroad London

Recognition Scheme for Educational
Oversight Review by the Quality Assurance
Agency for Higher Education

December 2020

About this report

This is a report of a review under the Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at IES Abroad London. The review took place in May 2020 and was conducted by a review team, as follows:

Professor Alan Jago
Barbara Howell.

The main purpose of the review was to:

- produce a commentary on how effectively the provider discharges its responsibilities for academic standards
- make judgements about the provider's delegated responsibilities for the management of quality and improvement of learning opportunities
- report on any features of good practice
- make recommendations for action.

A summary of the key findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. The context in which these findings should be interpreted is explained on page 3. Explanations of the

findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4. Page 28 of 55

Key findings

The QAA team considered evidence relating to the educational provision at IES Abroad London, both information supplied in advance and evidence gathered during the visits of the review itself. The review has resulted in the key findings stated in this section.

Judgements

The QAA team formed the following judgement about IES Abroad London.

Confidence can be placed in IES Abroad London's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities.

The QAA Review team also concluded that the provider **satisfactorily** manages its responsibilities for academic standards, as set out in its contractual arrangements with its academic partners

Recommendations

The QAA team makes the following **advisable**

Detailed findings about IES Abroad London

1 Academic standards

How effectively does IES Abroad London fulfil its responsibilities for the management of academic standards?

1.1 IES Abroad London is not an awarding body and relies on the support from the US-based academic partners to ensure courses and programmes provide the rigour expected to award credit. Those partners include a coordinating consortium of professors from appropriate institutions who provide feedback and advice. For example, those members oversee IES Abroad programme openings and closings, review and revise policies, and provide governance of IES Abroad education programmes and policies. The Centre Director at IES Abroad London has delegated responsibility for managing academic standards and is tasked with setting the centre goals annually, aligned to the Chicago goals.

1.2 Evaluation processes at IES Abroad London are guided by the IES Abroad mission statement and by the guidelines laid out in the IES Abroad MAP (Model Assessment Practice). The IES Abroad MAP is an educational evaluation system, with set guidelines for the planning and assessing academic quality in programmes of international education to support programme review.

1.3 The IES Abroad Programme Review

2.2 The responsibility for the student learning experience rests with IES Abroad London in the day-to-day operation of programmes. It operates a number of programmes including the Standard Programme with an option of a single 'outside course' at a British university, the provision of Direct Enrolment programmes at a number of British universities, the provision of full-time internships, and customised programmes for specific US universities. These were all subject to quality assurance by IES Abroad London itself and also its accountability to

learning and assessment with a mentor. Teaching is monitored through classroom observations, faculty meetings and using student evaluations of their courses. IES programmes provide a variety of learning opportunities within courses, including seminars, study trips, site visits and guest lecturers to enhance the overall experience. There is an effective approach to the management of student internships to ensure that students and employers have a clear understanding of how the placement meets the intended learning outcomes based on feedback from students and employers. The internship team coordinate all placements. They work with the students on their application, interview skills and connections. Student evaluations indicate positive feedback on the process.

How effectively does IES Abroad assure itself that students are appropriately supported?

2.9 The IES study centre is located in Bloomsbury, central London and includes teaching, office and social space. Due to increased student numbers, IES was also hiring additional classroom space locally. There was a plan to acquire new premises in 2021-22, but this plan is currently on hold due to the pandemic. The Centre also provides housing for its students locally.

2.10 The Student Affairs department at the headquarters in Chicago has written protocols for managing a wide variety of student issues, and staff in London are trained by head office staff with regard to a number of issues including mental health, risk assessments, successful field trips, access to medical care, best practice in regard to establishing community, and wellbeing in student housing. Students complete an orientation programme on arrival and this is assessed in the programme evaluation at the end of the first term. There is a strong focus on student health and wellbeing through a Wellness Programme which students attend alongside their academic programmes. Student support is available from student services staff with a dedicated Head of Student Affairs and Wellness managing the provision. Social media facilities may also be used by students for communications with support staff.

2.11 As noted above, the management of the transition to online learning occurred in April 2020, after its completion the Centre has had no students and some of the student affairs staff are no longer employed.

How effective are IES Abroad's arrangements for staff development in relation to maintaining and/or improving the quality of learning opportunities?

2.12 Most IES teaching staff are experienced higher education teachers, they are employed part-time and sessionally. Student evaluations are used to assess their teaching and these are reviewed by the Centre Director. Teaching staff are invited to bid for staff development funds to attend conferences. All permanent staff go through an annual appraisal process, which involves the completion of a self-evaluation form and the setting of goals for the year ahead. Training is provided for administrative staff in relation to their area of responsibility. Currently, there are no teaching staff employed by the Centre, due to the pandemic. The team recommends as **advisable** that IES Abroad London establishes and delivers a programme of staff development in the design and application of blended learning technologies (including online) so that staff, if the circumstances require it, are prepared and able to continue teaching.

How effectively does IES Abroad ensure that students have access to learning resources that are sufficient to enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes of their programmes?

2.16 Students at the Centre have access to facilities of the Centre itself, including classrooms and a small library. In the development of programmes with partner institutions, provision of appropriate learning resources is a key criterium