



# **Anglo American Educational Services Ltd**

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

November 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) of Anglo American Educational Services Ltd. The review took place on 10 and 11 November 2020 and was conducted by a review team, as follows:

- Dr Elizabeth Briggs
- Professor Alan Jago.

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.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>1</sup> More information about this review method can be found in the [published handbook](#).<sup>2</sup>

## The impact of COVID-19

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the review of Anglo American Educational Services Ltd in 2019-20, was subject to an interim outcome in May 2020 and was concluded in November 2020. The review was conducted online and included meetings with senior management teams, teaching staff and students. The scope of the evidence considered, and the nature of the judgements and operational milestones have remained the same but with some adjustments due to the online format. A risk assessment was carried out prior to the review to identify and mitigate any potential risks. Annual monitoring will resume again in 2021-22.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/rseo-handbook-for-providers.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/rseo-handbook-for-providers.pdf)

## Key findings

The QAA team considered evidence relating to the educational provision at Anglo American Educational Services Ltd (AES), 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 Anglo American Educational Services Ltd:

- **confidence can be placed in** Anglo American Educational Services Ltd management of its responsibilities for the quality of learning opportunities.

The QAA review team also concluded that the provider **satisfactorily** manages its responsibilities for academic standards in accordance with the requirements of its awarding partners.

## Good practice

The QAA team identified the following **features of good practice** at Anglo American Educational Services Ltd.

- The responsive, flexible and robust approach taken in response to the pandemic by AES, with its US partners, to the management of responsibilities for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.
- The negotiated arrangements for a US placement or a virtual internship which enabled students to complete their programmes during the pandemic.

## Context

Anglo American Educational Services Ltd (AES) is a private provider, established in London in 1995, offering study abroad programmes with internship opportunities to students from the USA as part of their degree programmes. AES delivers an extensive range of short-term and semester-length courses and arranges unpaid internships with UK organisations and companies under the terms of its UK Tier 4 visa sponsor licence. In the academic year 2019-20, there were 81 and 113 students attending in the autumn and spring terms respectively.

AES does not possess degree awarding powers but responds to the requirements of its US partner universities through written contracts which ensure that credits for study are awarded by the home universities. Accredited US universities and their academic departments have been involved in the development of AES programmes. Partner universities have ultimate responsibility for quality assurance of courses, academic standards, course publicity and student recruitment. University faculty periodically visit AES to monitor and report on all aspects of the student experience.

AES has responsibility for the management and oversight of the student learning experience, including provision of teaching facilities, adjunct faculty (the AES term for associate lecturers) approved by the home universities, accommodation, academic and pastoral support, advice and information, arrangement of study trips and liaising with visiting faculty from home institutions.

Students are recruited from institutions accredited by five US regional accrediting bodies. During 2019-20, students were recruited from The Catholic University of America, Richmond School of Law, Susquehanna University, Wake Forest University, the University of California Berkeley and the University of Wisconsin. The status of each university is monitored and checked before AES signs partnership agreements. There is a recently-signed agreement for AES to have 'School of Record' status with the University of Connecticut in 2021.

The academic standards and quality assurance of the provision are primarily the responsibility of the home universities. UK university partners provide courses reflecting relevant external reference points through written partnership agreements. A longstanding agreement with Birkbeck College, University of London, will end in September 2020 due to low student numbers. Currently, AES has partnership agreements with London South Bank University (LSBU), Queen Mary University of London, and the University of Westminster to enable students to experience a wider range of courses. The 2017 agreement with Queen Mary University to participate in its study abroad programme has not yet received support from US universities. A further UK partnership with Lancaster University Academy 92 (UA92) in Manchester is planned for 2021.

Participating US universities review the courses and internships provided by AES through faculty visits which assess the quality of the provision for which AES has delegated responsibility. Close collaborative arrangements also involve visits by AES faculty and staff to home universities and relevant academic departments.

In the context of the pandemic and travel restrictions, including quarantine requirements, which prevailed from March 2020, AES launched virtual internships in London for US university undergraduate students, who were originally due to undertake in-person placements as part of a study/internship programme in summer 2020.

## Detailed findings about Anglo American Educational Services Ltd

### 1 Academic standards

#### How effectively does Anglo American Educational Services Ltd fulfil its responsibilities for the management of academic standards?

1.1 AES has well-established and robust processes for the management of the academic standards of approved programmes for which it has delegated authority. While ultimate responsibility for academic standards, including selection of students, is retained by the home US university partners, AES has effective management oversight of the study abroad programmes and internships through its committee structure and continues to update and evaluate improvements in its action plan. Management of academic standards is shaped by the specific requirements of the individual partnership arrangements of the home universities across the AES programmes.

1.2 The effectiveness of academic standards management in 2019-20 was demonstrated clearly by the strategic and rapid AES response to the global pandemic. Students who attended in autumn 2019 were unaffected and completed the full study abroad programme as required by the home universities. Those students enrolled on the spring semester in 2020 had studied in London for approximately six weeks when they were given 48 hours to return to the US as borders closed. The potentially severe impact on their programme was reduced by the strong working and cooperation to secure agreements with US partners for adapted distance and blended learning packages with modified assessments which enabled academic standards to be maintained and students to complete their studies. The review team concluded that the responsive, flexible and robust approach in response to the pandemic taken by AES, with its US partners, to the management of responsibilities for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities is **a feature of good practice** (see also paragraph 2.4 below).

1.3 The bilateral partnership agreement with London South Bank University (LSBU) enables delivery across a range of discipline areas complementing those offered by AES. Students may elect to study between one and four modules per semester from the university catalogue. LSBU offers an additional London placement reflective learning seminar course to support AES internship students, with the university credits being combined with the AES internship grade on the LSBU transcript. AES is responsible for placing LSBU study abroad students in internships under an agreement renewed for three years from 2019. Management oversight is provided by the LSBU Academic Steering Committee which ensures that the courses meet the study abroad learning objectives and operate effectively.

1.4 AES operates different study abroad models with its US partners as a Tier 4 visa sponsor. One US faculty-led programme comprises five to 15 weeks with classes taught by faculty from the home institution and held at AES study centres. A second model is also US faculty-led, with additional teaching support from AES faculty across six to 15 weeks. The third model is the AES programme, of similar length but taught by adjunct AES faculty, based on a syllabus jointly developed by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and the home institution. All three study abroad models have degree credits awarded by the relevant US university.

1.5 Adjunct faculty (the term used for associate lecturers) are appointed by AES with the approval of the home universities and receive a comprehensive faculty handbook for guidance. AES uses routine classroom observations to ensure that adjunct faculty teach satisfactorily. Academic Committee meetings review teaching, internships, academic and

student support, and organisational matters with a view to identifying enhancements to provision.

1.6 Programmes leading to credits awarded by home US universities benefit from established cooperation between AES staff and visiting US faculty which ensures coherent delivery and continuous monitoring of the provision. Students value classroom interactions with home faculty and meetings with senior staff who, in normal times, make occasional visits to review the overall student experience. Until the pandemic, AES staff continued to make reciprocal visits to the US to discuss operational and managerial issues, and ensure effective oversight of the maintenance of academic standards. These arrangements moved online during 2020.

1.7 In addition to the robust selection and recruitment requirements of the home universities, AES also requires that applicants have a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.75. AES requires a SELT (CEFR level B2) certificate or IELTS 6.0 score for students whose first language is not English.

### **How effectively are external reference points used in the management of academic standards?**

1.8 AES uses the external reference points of the accredited home universities. Oversight of relevant reference points is provided through the close working relationships with each university and by the regular visits and reviews conducted by US faculty (see paragraph 1.6).

1.9 The 2016 QAA Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight (RSEO) report, and subsequent annual monitoring reports in 2017 and 2019, confirmed that AES makes effective use of the UK QAA Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) in the maintenance of academic standards. The partnership agreement with LSBU requires AES to align with UK reference points and particularly the relevant Core and Common practices of the revised Quality Code. From the earlier version of the Quality Code, AES makes use of *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others* as a key reference point for the effective management of student internships. Further information of the provider's alignment with the revised Quality Code is provided at paragraph 2.6.

1.10 The continuing management of academic standards is attentive to external reference points. Management of student assessment by AES on behalf of its partners is effectively overseen by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Adjunct faculty are appropriately qualified and have experience of both US and UK higher educational requirements for study abroad programmes. Grading of assessments and grade conversion is monitored by the home universities.

### **How effectively does Anglo American Educational Services Ltd use external scrutiny of assessment processes to assure academic standards?**

1.11 The LSBU agreement recognises AES assessment grading of the internship which the University then incorporates into the London Placement seminar mark awarded by LSBU tutors. External scrutiny is provided through the LSBU Steering Committee which monitors the effectiveness of programme delivery and provides a formal report to AES.

1.12 Assessment practices for partner US universities are overseen by each of the institutions which approve course content, intended learning outcomes and assessment strategy, as well as confirming the awarded grades. Course outlines for students clearly articulate assessment details and weightings of each component. Home universities provide written reports on the AES programme outcomes for their student cohorts. Faculty and

students rigorously follow the guidelines for maintaining academic integrity issued by US partners, LSBU and AES. The effectiveness of assessment processes to assure appropriate academic standards is monitored routinely, and benefits from the presence of US teaching faculty and occasional visits by senior US staff. US faculty and UK teaching faculty informed the review team that the modified assessments for pre-pandemic and current students in 2019-20 showed good comparability of student achievement.

The team has concluded that Anglo American Educational Services Ltd satisfactorily manages its responsibilities for academic standards in accordance with the requirements of its awarding partners.

## 2 Quality of learning opportunities

### How effectively does Anglo American Educational Services Ltd fulfil its responsibilities for managing and improving the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 Partnership agreements with US and UK universities have varying arrangements for the management of the quality of learning opportunities but all are clearly articulated in the agreements. AES continues to evaluate and monitor improvements to the quality of learning opportunities in its ongoing action plan considered at Academic Committee meetings.

2.2 All students selected to study abroad are enrolled on full-time undergraduate degree programmes at partner universities and are recruited using partner institutional processes. Student internships are a strong feature of the provision (see paragraph 2.9), with additional learning opportunities available in lecture courses, seminars, study, field trips and guest lectures - all designed to be relevant to the particular student cohort.

2.3 AES is responsible for providing teaching facilities and learning resources, accommodation, and academic and pastoral support for programmes with credits awarded by US partner universities. US faculty are involved in teaching and contribute to the close working relationships which enable improvements in the quality of learning opportunities. AES adjunct staff and US faculty, review course content and reading lists, and discuss relevant study trips. Discussion of programmes also takes place at Academic Committee meetings held each semester to which all AES adjunct and visiting US faculty are invited, and during reciprocal visits, actual or online, by AES staff to US partners.

2.4 When AES was faced with the sudden return of all its students to the US in March 2020, it moved rapidly to ensure that all its programmes, including the internship, could be continued online. With the cooperation of its US partners and of AES teaching staff, the transition to online teaching was managed as smoothly as possible during a period of great uncertainty. Students acknowledged the support they received from AES staff which enabled them to complete their programmes with appropriate credit awarded. The flexibility and responsiveness of AES in its management of learning opportunities during the period under review, contributes to the **feature of good practice** identified in paragraph 1.2.

### How effectively are external reference points used in monitoring and evaluation processes?

2.5 As with its management of academic standards (see 1.8), AES uses the external reference points of its US partners to monitor and evaluate the management of the quality of learning opportunities, and to ensure alignment of AES processes with their requirements.

2.6 Partnership agreements with UK higher education providers have required AES to align with both versions of the Quality Code and this has been monitored through the 2016 RSEO report and subsequent annual monitoring reports. Key foci for alignment with the revised Quality Code include student internships, teaching and learning, and student engagement, though plans have inevitably been revised in the context of the pandemic.

**How effectively does Anglo American Educational Services Ltd assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?**

2.7 AES employs well-qualified adjunct teaching staff as well as visiting teaching staff from the US partners. Teaching is monitored effectively through classroom observations, faculty meetings and student course evaluations. Student representatives provide further feedback on day-to-day issues affecting their learning experience.

2.8 Student engagement with their learning opportunities has been enhanced by improvements since 2018 to the AES database. The system has developed facilities for more effective communications with students and enables better dissemination of guidance relating to their study abroad. The database may be adapted to meet specific requirements of individual US partners.

2.9 There is a robust 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. This approach includes an AES Internship Manager who interviews students pre-departure, and reviews their CVs and completed internship questionnaires to ensure that applicants are suitable for the study-abroad programme and internship. Internship placements are discussed with the home university and are individually tailored to the student's specific requirements using an extensive list of employers. Students sign an internship participant agreement and a formal internship acceptance letter before commencing the programme. Employers are required to complete health and safety forms at the placement location to ensure that students work in a secure and safe environment. During the placement, students complete mid-semester evaluations to assess progress and are visited by an AES staff member. Where a student is not satisfied that a placement is providing opportunities which meet requirements, the internship staff attempt to find a more suitable employer. At the end of the placement internship, supervisors complete employer final evaluations of student performance. The internship department staff are proactive in finding new placement opportunities, particularly in more technologically and entrepreneurial fields of employment.

2.10 In the context of the pandemic, AES instigated a US placement or a virtual internship, both of which have been positively experienced by faculty and students. The review team considered that the timely, negotiated arrangements for a US placement or a virtual internship, which enabled students to complete their programmes during the pandemic, have been a feature of **good practice**.

**How effectively does Anglo American Educational Services Ltd assure itself that students are appropriately supported?**

2.11 AES study centre facilities have been improved by the acquisition of a new building in 2019 to supplement existing facilities in Russell Square, and new student housing, managed by the Facilities Manager. Eight new classrooms, faculty offices and lounge, a student study area and two private student counselling rooms, together with facilities for student services, internship management and housing teams, now occupy one dedicated building.



2.12 Academic and personal student support and information is provided throughout the programme of study, commencing with communications pre-arrival detailing student housing accommodation, courses information and internship arrangements. Students complete an orientation programme on arrival and a student arrival survey to provide feedback to staff on their initial experience. There is extensive support, without prior appointment, from student services staff, and a weekly opportunity to speak to the staff when students visit their office to hand in an attendance form. Social media facilities may also be used by students for communications with support staff. AES is committed to supporting student mental health and medical issues, and ensuring student awareness of personal health and safety in their accommodation.

2.13 As noted above, the management of the transition to online teaching was handled sensitively, flexibly and rapidly. AES ensured that online delivery was well resourced, adequately supported and enabled students to complete their studies with minimum disruption. AES students from a variety of US institutions spoke positively of the support amid the wider issues that prevailed during 2020. The level of support and the speed with which it was implemented, contributed to the **good practice** noted at paragraph 1.2.

### **How effective are Anglo American Educational Services Ltd's arrangements for staff development in relation to maintaining and/or improving the quality of learning opportunities?**

2.14 AES continues to improve staff development and communications through internship department meetings. Academic faculty and professional support staff have opportunities for personal development through attendance at conferences and workshops. Activities are focused on academic, cultural and practical aspects of study abroad and internship experience within international higher education. A staff away day enhanced departmental exchanges of ideas and development of forward planning, with a guest speaker reviewing mental awareness. Staff have attended mental health courses and a masterclass to increase their understanding of key issues affecting student wellbeing.

2.15 It is a measure of the experience and adaptability of the teaching staff that they rapidly moved to online teaching when it was no longer possible to continue with face-to-face delivery.

### **How effectively does Anglo American Educational Services Ltd 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 The AES website contains helpful documents and newsletters. The new study centre is managed by the Facilities Manager and provides improved resources and areas for teaching, study and public spaces for staff and student interaction. However, due to the unusual circumstances of 2019-20, full use of this new facility has not been possible. Students that the review team met, commented favourably on the way in which the transition to both online teaching and virtual internships was managed, appreciating the efforts of AES staff, in partnership with US universities, UK partners and internship employers. The outcome was that, despite the difficult circumstances, students had access to resources which enabled them to complete their studies on time and with appropriate credit.

The team has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and improving the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for students.

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