



Anglo American Educational Services Ltd

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

March 2016

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 Anglo American Educational Services Ltd. The review took place on 2 March 2016 and was conducted by a panel, as follows:

- Professor Christopher Gale
- Professor Alan Jago
- Mr Simon Ives

The main purpose of the review was to:

- make judgements about the provider's delegated responsibilities for the management of quality and improvement of learning opportunities
- draw a conclusion about whether the provider's public information is reliable
- produce a commentary on how effectively the provider discharges its responsibilities for academic standards
- 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. 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.¹ More information about this the review method can be found in the [published handbook](#).²

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us

² www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=202

Key findings

The QAA panel considered evidence relating to the educational provision at Anglo American Educational Services Ltd, both information supplied in advance and evidence gathered during the review visit itself. The review has resulted in the key findings stated in this section.

Judgements

The QAA panel formed the following judgement about Anglo American Educational Services Ltd:

- **confidence can** reasonably be placed in the soundness of Anglo American Educational Services Ltd's management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

Anglo American Educational Services Ltd satisfactorily manages its responsibilities for academic standards, as set out in its contractual arrangements with its academic partners.

Conclusion about public information

The QAA panel concluded that:

- **reliance can** be placed on the information that Anglo American Educational Services Ltd produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

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

- the regular presence of, and close working relationship with, US faculty directors (paragraph 1.3)
- the coherent and effective management of the process for selection, delivery and assessment of internships (paragraph 2.4).

Recommendations

The QAA panel makes no recommendations to Anglo American Educational Services Ltd.

Context

Anglo American Educational Services Ltd (AES), based in Bloomsbury, London, was established in 1995 and is a private provider of study abroad courses for students from the USA undertaking part of their degree programme (to a maximum of one semester) in England. It has formal collaborative agreements with a number of accredited US universities (home universities). AES provides unpaid internships (in accordance with the restrictions imposed by UK Visas and Immigration), the organisation and management of students' experience, including accommodation, teaching facilities, hiring adjunct faculty subject to home university approval, advice and information, study trips, and hosting visiting faculty from home universities.

The annual student roll is normally 200 to 300, with numbers spread throughout the year, but a slightly heavier concentration at the summer school than during the autumn and spring semesters.

AES is not a degree-awarding organisation and credit for study undertaken is given through its university partners. AES offers a range of courses to its US home university partners and some individual students who apply separately. These courses have been developed over the years in conjunction with US home universities and their academic departments, and recruit students only from home universities. In accordance with the requirements of their own accrediting bodies, AES's university partners retain ultimate responsibility for all aspects of quality assurance, academic standards, publicity, and student recruitment. AES assures itself of the accredited status of US home universities prior to signing partnership agreements, periodically monitoring the continuation of partners' status by checking information available from the US regional accrediting bodies. AES provides information packs to students both prior and subsequent to their arrival in London.

Additionally, at the time of the review visit, AES had an agreement with Birkbeck College, University of London to deliver programmes in the humanities and social sciences with credit awarded by Birkbeck. A further agreement is in place with London South Bank University to deliver programmes in media and business commencing in September 2016. AES is currently finalising an internship programme with Newcastle University's London campus.

AES was first accredited by the British Accreditation Council in June 2009 and has been subject to periodic inspections since. AES was subject to an RSEO review in February 2012 which identified four areas of good practice, one desirable, and one advisable recommendation. This review was followed up with monitoring visits in 2014 and 2015. The most recent monitoring report in 2015 confirmed that AES had made commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision, and had maintained and strengthened the features of good practice identified in 2012. All the recommendations raised in previous reviews and monitoring have been addressed.

Detailed findings about Anglo American Educational Services Ltd

1 Academic standards

How effectively does AES fulfil its responsibilities for the management of academic standards?

1.1 AES has robust and mature processes for fulfilling its responsibilities for the academic standards of the programmes for which it has delegated responsibility. It effectively ensures through its organisational procedures that it discharges all regulatory, accreditation and administrative responsibilities in respect of programmes where responsibility for academic standards rests with home universities. AES provides a number of programmes with its home university partners, with the arrangements for managing academic standards varying according to the type of programme.

1.2 There are two programmes where credit is awarded by Birkbeck College, University of London: the London Semester Programme and the Bloomsbury Summer Programme. For these two programmes Birkbeck College provides the resources and facilities for all teaching and related activity, and is responsible for the management of academic standards. Regular discussions about the delivery of these programmes take place each semester at the London Semester Programme Steering Committee, of which the AES Vice-President for Academic Affairs is a member.

1.3 For programmes where credit is awarded by one of its US partner home universities, AES teaches the curriculum devised and developed through discussion with the partner. There is considerable interaction with the home university partners in these programmes, with faculty from the partner closely involved in the teaching and monitoring of the programme delivered in London. Faculty members from home universities are regularly on secondment in London at AES and contribute to the delivery and management of programmes. This provides continuity for students and allows for ongoing dialogue with AES staff. The presence of, and close working relationship with, US faculty directors is **good practice**.

1.4 Adjunct faculty staff teaching on home university programmes are recruited by AES, with formal approval by the home university partner. Following the delivery of programmes, there is considerable discussion between AES and its partners about further improvements. These regular reviews support the monitoring and management of academic standards. All staff are invited to Academic Committee meetings held every semester by AES, which provide an effective forum for ensuring that responsibilities for managing academic standards are fully considered, and issues and good practice addressed. These well-established arrangements provide robust support for the maintenance of academic standards.

1.5 Where programmes involve a student placement, a careful process is in place to ensure that both the student and the employer fully understand the need to achieve the required learning objectives. This is facilitated and coordinated by the Internship Coordinator and requires the completion of a learning objectives form, which allows for regular monitoring of student progress.

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

1.6 The relevant external reference points are those to which the home university is subject. Other mechanisms, such as the regular presence of US faculty in London described in paragraph 1.3, ensure that full consideration is taken of relevant reference points. All home universities are accredited by appropriate bodies and agencies in the US. Birkbeck College, University of London and other UK-based partners fall under the remit of the QAA review process. Written partnership agreements between AES and its partners set out clear responsibilities that are well understood and effectively managed.

1.7 AES has made thorough use of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) as a key reference point for its maintenance and improvement of academic standards. It has mapped a number of areas of its work against the expectations of the Quality Code. It has made particular reference to *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others* in respect of the organisation and management of student internships.

1.8 External reference points inform the maintenance of academic standards effectively. Adjunct faculty teaching staff appointed by AES normally have teaching experience in

1.9 both the US and UK educational systems. Staff confirmed that grade conversion and grading systems are well understood by those responsible for assessment. The management of assessment practice is overseen by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Grade comparability between assessments carried out in the UK and the US is monitored by the home universities with assistance from AES and ensures a comparability of approach.

How effectively does AES use external scrutiny of assessment processes to assure academic standards (where applicable)?

1.10 For the delivery of programmes where credit is awarded by Birkbeck College, robust arrangements for assessment and external scrutiny of student achievement are in place.

1.11 For the programmes run in conjunction with home universities in the US, each partner approves the intended learning outcomes and confirms the assessment strategy and the marks awarded. Clear assessment criteria are provided and marked assessments are returned to students within two weeks. Students are positive about the return time for assessed work and commented that the detailed assessment feedback was often better than that provided at their home university. AES has oversight of the students' marks, which are ratified by partner institutions, including Birkbeck College. Partner home universities have processes for periodic review of assessed work, which provides a useful moderation process. The team concludes that AES uses external scrutiny of assessment processes effectively to assure that academic standards are maintained.

The panel has concluded that Anglo American Educational Services Ltd satisfactorily manages its responsibilities for academic standards as set out in its contractual arrangements with its awarding partners.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

How effectively does AES fulfil its responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 AES provides a number of programmes with its partners in the US and UK and delivers a diverse range of learning opportunities. The arrangements for managing the quality of learning opportunities vary according to the type of programme delivered, are clearly stated in the various partnership agreements, and are well understood by staff. The range of activities includes lectures, seminars, guest speakers, field and study trips, and visits to places of interest relevant to each cohort's focus and background.

2.2 For the two programmes where credit is awarded by Birkbeck College (London Semester Programme and the Bloomsbury Summer Programme), the College provides the resources and facilities for all teaching and related activity. AES's responsibilities include providing welfare, pastoral support and accommodation services. Discussions about the monitoring and enhancement of these programmes take place each semester at the London Semester Programme Steering Committee, with regular involvement of AES.

2.3 For programmes where credit is awarded by one of its US partner universities, AES provides all the facilities and resources necessary for the delivery of the programme. The interactive relationship with the home university partners (identified as good practice in paragraph 1.3) is very close, with faculty from the partner involved in the teaching and monitoring of the programme. Adjunct faculty teaching staff recruitment often involves an interview with home university staff as well as managers from AES. Following appointment there is extensive discussion with partner staff on the structure of the course, potential study visits and reading lists. All staff are invited to Academic Committee meetings, which are held every semester.

2.4 Where programmes involve a placement there is a careful process in place to ensure that both the student and the employer fully understand the mechanisms for achieving the required learning outcomes. This process is facilitated by the completion of detailed learning objectives forms, which inform students clearly of the expected outcomes, and through videoconferencing with students before they arrive in London. Internships are efficiently organised and effectively managed by the Internship Coordinator, and supported by academic staff. All placement supervisors are provided with an Internship Site Supervisor Handbook. Students spoke positively of the effective preparation and management of placements and the positive impact of this international work experience in enhancing their career prospects. The coherent and effective management of the process for selection, delivery and assessment of internships is **good practice**.

2.5 AES makes effective use of staff teaching observation, together with student evaluations, to assure the management of the quality of learning opportunities. Enrichment of the student experience is a feature of programme design and use is made of student visits, field trips and other activities. Student opinion is gathered by means of detailed questionnaires and through regular student representative meetings. In addition, students are encouraged to talk with AES staff in person, with many taking advantage of the ready accessibility of staff, and students commented positively about the level of support that is available.

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

2.6 The key reference points that AES uses to monitor and evaluate the management of the quality of learning opportunities are the requirements of its US partners, and its own processes for discharging its responsibilities. AES engagement with the Quality Code is demonstrated in paragraphs 1.6 to 1.8. AES documentation references a number of aspects of the Quality Code. Staff confirm that they receive regular communication about how the Quality Code and other reference points should inform teaching practice, student engagement and student internships.

How effectively does AES assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

2.7 There is a wide range of mechanisms employed to maintain and enhance the quality of teaching. Students spoke positively about the high quality of the teaching provided and the panel noted the considerable care taken by senior AES staff and partner staff to mentor and monitor adjunct staff. Regular observation of teaching by both AES senior staff and senior home university faculty staff ensures that the quality of teaching and learning is both monitored and maintained. AES prides itself on its ability to provide customised programmes for its US partners, examples of which are referenced in AES documentation. Formal student evaluations provide evidence of student satisfaction with individual programmes studied, and with the quality of teaching. One-on-one discussions with senior staff can be initiated by students at any reasonable time and matters of concern can be raised.

2.8 The care and attention taken in the process of setting up and monitoring of the internships ensures a highly effective student experience. Students who are on an internship commented very positively about the whole process and the level of support that they were receiving.

How effectively does AES assure itself that students are appropriately supported?

2.9 Students confirmed the quality of the academic and personal support provided from the time of their application to AES to the completion of their programme. This included personal and academic support before arrival, and the guidance from programme tutors and home university faculty staff on secondment in London. Students commented positively about the information they had received and the support available to them about the expected learning experience. Students from home universities with members of faculty present during their time at AES were particularly positive about the level of support they receive.

2.10 The assessment strategy ensures that students receive appropriate and timely feedback on their submitted work. Students stated that staff are committed to helping them improve and that one-to-one discussions in person and by email are regularly provided and support their progress.

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

2.11 AES recruits well-qualified and experienced teachers. It offers initial staff induction and mentoring if necessary. All adjunct staff are provided with a copy of the AES Faculty

Handbook, which clearly outlines both the responsibilities of the staff member and the responsibilities of AES in relation to a number of matters including staff development and training. A training budget has been set up for adjunct faculty staff.

2.12 All permanent staff are subject to regular staff appraisal and have access to relevant staff development programmes. A wide range of opportunities for staff development is provided, and staff spoke positively of this activity. Staff are encouraged to attend conferences and training sessions and the appraisal process identifies specific development needs and aspirations. Management training courses are additionally provided by the AES parent organisation.

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

2.13 Students whom the review team met confirmed the appropriateness of the learning resources available to them. Students undertaking the Birkbeck College programmes have full access to the resources available at the University. Students on the other programmes are taught in the AES building although some students commented that they would like additional computing and printing facilities. Students have access to the relevant online resources of either Birkbeck or their home university. AES provides and manages student accommodation.

The panel has **confidence** that AES is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for students.

3 Public information

How effective are AES's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing?

3.1 The AES website offers a comprehensive explanation of the range and nature of available services. However, primary responsibility for promoting and explaining information about the study abroad scheme to specific cohorts of students rests with the home universities. Home universities are able to corroborate any information received from AES by their own enquiries and visits by faculty. Students confirmed that the information provided to them is useful, accurate and complete and allows them to make informed decisions.

3.2 The information available from the website and from home universities is supplemented by further information. This includes the AES video about study abroad, available to prospective students before they commit to enrolment on programmes of study at AES. Students confirmed that information is available in a variety of ways, including by email, telephone and in person once in London, as well as handbooks and flyers. There is a documented process for ensuring that all information that AES publishes is subject to rigorous checks for accuracy and completeness and is signed off by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs prior to publication.

The panel concludes that **reliance can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that AES is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

4 Action plan³

Anglo American Educational Services Ltd action plan relating to the Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight in May 2016						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review panel identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the Anglo American Educational Services:				VPAA – Vice President Academic Affairs. DAP – Dir. Academic Programmes. SSM – Student Services Manager. PDM - Partnership Development Manager IC – Internship Co-ordinator		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the regular presence of, and close working relationship with, US faculty directors 	Support adjunct and visiting faculty by sharing information Enhance pre-departure information for US colleges	Create 'Visiting faculty handbook' Formalise standard report form (student grading) Revise partner university handbook Academic Committee	Sept 2016 June 2016 October 2016 Held each	DAP DAP DAP VPAA	Visiting faculty VPAA Partner University Visiting/ adjunct	Feedback from US faculty directors (both in UK and US). Feedback from partner institutions Feedback from

³ AES has been required to develop this action plan to follow up on good practice and address any recommendations arising from the review. QAA monitors progress against the action plan.

		<p>Meetings</p> <p>Pre-departure video about applying for a UK Tier 4 visa</p> <p>Create feedback survey for visiting faculty on short term study programmes</p> <p>Develop a seminar for adjunct and visiting faculty around the differences between the US and UK regarding teaching practice, standards and assessment</p>	<p>semester</p> <p>Sept 2016</p> <p>Jan 2017</p> <p>Jan 2017</p>	<p>SSM</p> <p>PDM</p> <p>VPAA</p>	<p>Faculty</p> <p>MD</p> <p>Visiting & adjunct faculty</p>	<p>students and partner institutions</p> <p>Greater satisfaction from students and partner institutions</p>
<p>10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the coherent and effective management of the process for selection, delivery and assessment of internships. 	<p>More formally incorporate Quality Code into all AES practices (with particular reference to Part B)</p>	<p>Revise 'Faculty Handbook'</p> <p>Update adjunct faculty contracts</p> <p>Staff training - degree Apprenticeship</p> <p>Revise proposals for overseas partners as new ones are requested</p> <p>Visiting potential new employers prior to placement to ensure they understand the academic component of the internship</p>	<p>July 2016</p> <p>July 2016</p> <p>Sept 2016</p> <p>From August 2016</p> <p>Jan 2016</p>	<p>DAP</p> <p>DAP/SSM</p> <p>MD & VPAA</p> <p>DAP</p> <p>IC</p>	<p>Faculty</p> <p>VPAA</p> <p>Overseas partner universities DAP</p>	<p>Feedback from faculty</p> <p>Staff satisfaction</p> <p>Students and partner institutions are happy with placements</p>

	Maintaining good practice	Review 'British Life & Culture' course to reflect cross-cultural analysis of the UK & US	Jan 2017	VPAA	US Universities	Feedback from students and partner institutions
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Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary. More details and formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [handbook](#)⁴ for this review method.

Academic quality A comprehensive term referring to how, and how well, higher education providers manage teaching and learning opportunities to help students progress and succeed.

Academic standards The standards set and maintained by degree-awarding bodies for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

Credit(s) A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education programmes of study, expressed as 'numbers of credits' at a specific level.

Enhancement The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

Good practice A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

Learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

Learning outcome What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

Programme (of study) An approved course of study which provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

Public information Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

Widening participation Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557050
Web: www.qaa.ac.uk

⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=202