

Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of the Foundation for International Education, June 2017

1 Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review panel concludes that the Foundation for International Education (FIE) has made commendable progress with implementing the action plan from the June 2016 [Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight](#).

2 Changes since the last QAA review visit

2 No significant changes have taken place since the last review visit. The number of students fluctuates from year to year in response to demand, and has fallen from 1,097 in 2016 to 1,070 in 2017. Following the recommendation made at the last review, FIE has revised its governance structure resulting in changes of names of the two senior committees, as discussed in paragraph 6.

3 Findings from the monitoring visit

3 In response to the feature of good practice identified at the last review visit, FIE has built on opportunities for staff development by increasing the amount of funds available for developmental activities, using star faculty members for the spring 2017 Faculty Enlightenment Matinees (FEM) and evaluating the opportunities for staff development through a staff survey. This showed the value of sharing good practice and, in particular, asked questions about the FEM schedule, attendance, ratings for structure, duration and content, suggestions for future topics and improvements. Members of teaching staff confirmed that changes have been made in response to staff feedback. Six applications for development funds have been received by the senior leadership team since January 2017 and all were successful. Teaching staff also confirmed that staff development funds had been used to support attendance at a number of conferences and workshops.

4 FIE has further supported and funded applications by faculty members for Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). At present four members of staff are Fellows of the HEA and a further four applications are currently under development, with the encouragement of, and advice from, staff mentors drawn from current Fellows.

5 FIE is also now showcasing the published work of their staff in a display case located in the front corridor of their building, with titles rotated periodically. Members of teaching staff commented on the value of sharing their work and also how the publications had been used in both course design and delivery.

6 FIE has responded to the recommendation to formalise the monitoring of the Academic Advisory Board with two distinct actions. The first was a name change for the FIE senior management team to senior leadership team (SLT) and, to better reflect the role of the Academic Advisory Board, it has been renamed the Academic Advisory Council. Secondly, FIE has introduced a response template for items raised at the Academic Advisory Council; the template has been used consistently and effectively in both spring and

autumn 2016 meetings. Senior staff confirmed that the new template adds clarity to the Council's oversight and serves as a very useful aid to focusing the Council's discussions.

7 FIE admits students based on a set minimum grade point average (GPA) from their home institutions. It also admits a small number of direct entry students as approved by its Admissions Committee. Non-native English speaking students may be required to sit and pass a test approved by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). Students the review team met were clear about the admissions process and GPA requirements.

8 Annual monitoring of the programmes takes place, comprising analysis of feedback data, trends or patterns, achievements and progress. A draft annual monitoring programme review template will be in use for the first time in 2017. Each SLT member is responsible for consulting with their respective teams as part of a two-way process, with academic and experiential education teams reporting directly to the Chief Academic Officer. Examples of recent outcomes of monitoring include consultations with students on the selection of elective modules and field trip choices.

9 The student voice is expressed through feedback gained by a variety of means including FIE's staff open-door policy, programme feedback questionnaires, course surveys, internships placement feedback and student focus groups. Feedback relating to placements is used by the Experiential Education Team, while members of the SLT are responsible for responding to general student feedback and producing action plans. The review team confirmed that changes had been made in response to student feedback with examples given of a change to the length of the assessment report and consideration to making the academic passport an online document. Students expressed awareness of surveys and found the staff easy to contact should they wish to provide feedback or complain. Responses to student feedback are provided by 'You Said, We Did' web pages. Students also commented favourably on the support group set up by FIE for students who may have suffered any anxiety after recent acts of terrorism in London as exemplifying FIE's concern for students' welfare. Students whom the team met had not been at FIE for long enough to have any experience of focus groups.

10 Some students expressed the view that some assignment tasks are vague and that some feedback on assignments is unclear. Students also commented on differences in assessment format across different deliveries of the same course. Teaching staff confirmed that, while staff do have flexibility to offer differing arrangements for assessment, assignments would nevertheless be in line with the course syllabus and that both the assessment task and marks assigned are cross-checked for consistency. Plagiarism-detection software is not currently used, although staff confirmed checks on plagiarism are carried out manually.

11 Students further commented that they find the virtual learning environment (VLE) difficult to navigate, with differing layout across the courses. Standard templates have been produced for the VLE that support the same branded look and feel and at the same time allow for adaptation to personal preferences. The SLT also outlined its ongoing plans to make the VLE more user friendly.

4 Progress in working with the relevant external reference points relating to academic standards and quality for higher education

12 FIE received accreditation from the British Accreditation Council (BAC) in 2016 and was found to be fully compliant. FIE is a member of the Forum on Education Abroad and, following a review under the Forum's Quality Improvement Programme (QUIP) in 2016, was found to meet the 'Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad'.

Recommendations from the BAC and QUIP are included in Team action plans. Although it is not a requirement for FIE to be accredited by BAC or QUIP, the SLT found the different requirements to be helpful in their advice and, in particular, noted enhancement in pre-departure information for students and greater clarity in processes for communication as helpful recommendations from QUIP.

5 Background to the monitoring visit

13 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.

14 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Stephen Ryrie, QAA officer, and Ms Barbara Howell, review panel member, on 8 June 2017.

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