



Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Anglo American Educational Services Ltd t/a Anglo Educational Services, March 2019

Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that Anglo American Educational Services Ltd t/a Anglo Educational Services (AES) is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision since the March 2017 [monitoring visit](#).

Changes since the last QAA review/monitoring visit

2 All students are studying on United States of America (USA) degree programmes which include a period of study abroad in London through AES. Student numbers vary throughout the year - there are 70 in the current semester which will rise to about 150 in summer 2019. Approximately 420 students are expected over the academic year and AES can provide accommodation at up to 17 locations across London. In addition to the team of staff employed directly by AES, students benefit from visiting professors and administrative staff from the partner universities who teach classes in London and liaise with both staff and students at AES. AES constantly works at developing relationships with existing and new partner universities with the most recent new partnerships being the Catholic University of America and the University of Connecticut in the USA.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The review team considered a range of evidence and concludes that AES has continued to build on its responses to the good practice identified in the March 2016 Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight (RSEO) review and to subsequent actions identified in the AES Action Plan January 2019. The team met with staff and had two meetings with a cross-section of students drawn from different USA home universities, AES partner universities in London, programme areas and study abroad programmes.

4 AES has continued to build on and embed further the two items of good practice identified in the March 2016 RSEO review and noted in the March 2017 monitoring visit report. These developments are embedded in a live action plan, which is updated each semester and was most recently updated in January 2019.

5 AES has maintained and developed further the close working relationships established with several existing USA partner universities and new relationships are planned for 2019-20 with a focus on STEM subject areas. Senior staff have undertaken a series of visits to USA home campuses and relevant conferences during the past year. Courses delivered at AES are designed in conjunction with partner USA universities, with classes and internships created to meet their requirements. All courses adhere to the academic standards of the home institutions, which validate the syllabi and assessment criteria.

6 AES has hosted visits to London for many senior staff from USA universities during the past year, including senior academic and study abroad staff. This gives the opportunity to speak directly to students about their experiences in London and to meet with the

Academic Programmes team at AES to discuss forward planning. This aids the evaluation of academic standards in terms of grading and assessment, and confirmation that the academic content of London programmes is complementary to USA degree programmes. It also provides opportunities for new courses to be developed and for revisions to syllabi. USA partner universities value the contribution provided by AES, noting attention paid to detail, and care taken both of students and academic standards.

7 AES continues to enhance its management of processes for selection, delivery and assessment of internships. New roles of Internship Manager and Internship Assistant were created in January 2018. This has allowed more time for the Internship Manager to visit potential new placements and attend networking events to increase the number and variety of internships, especially in areas of technology, digital marketing, enterprise and STEM. AES endeavours to visit all organisations that have not previously hosted interns to ensure suitable working environments and provisions for supervision. Students complete an online Internship Questionnaire followed by an interview, which help in the matching of students to relevant internships. The Internship Department holds regular meetings to discuss student progress and operational improvements.

8 Internship placements are known to students well before the date of departure from the USA in most cases. A learning agreement is used to define the internship and its goals. All students and their supervisors are visited on placement to assess progress and to identify any work or personal problems which arise. Students met by the team were generally highly appreciative of their internship opportunities, and of the care that had been taken to ensure relevance to their studies. In a minority of cases, problems have arisen and students report that AES has resolved matters very quickly by finding new placements.

9 Partnership agreements between AES and its UK partner universities set out clear responsibilities. AES has worked in partnership with Birkbeck, University of London since 2012 and with London South Bank University (LSBU) since 2017. AES has a bilateral agreement with LSBU, with AES placing students on a wide variety of modules at LSBU, and, in return, places LSBU students in supervised internships. AES and LSBU meet on a regular basis to discuss academic, student and operational issues.

10 AES signed an agreement with Queen Mary, University of London (QMUL) in July 2017. AES is also working with University Academy 92 (UA92) and the University of Lancaster to deliver short-term and semester-length programmes in sports management, exercise science, business and media-related subject areas, for visiting undergraduates at the newly-renovated UA92 campus in Manchester. The first intake of students is expected in spring 2020.

11 Agreements with new USA partners confirm the responsibilities of AES in terms of managing programmes, including UK Immigration and Visas, Tier 4 sponsorship, housing provision, provision of classroom space, and full pastoral support. AES is also responsible for managing academic operations including recruitment of staff, provision of syllabuses, academic liaison with USA home campuses and timetabling.

12 AES has clear systems in place for staff support and development. New lecturers are provided with an induction programme, a range of handbooks, informal mentoring and briefing on the requirements of the USA higher education system. The annual appraisal system is supported by an external human resources organisation. Staff development activity is identified at annual appraisal and staff are encouraged and supported to attend training courses, conferences and presentations. In addition to the newly-created roles of Internship Manager and Internship Assistant, AES also created the position of Marketing and Communications Manager in April 2018. From summer 2018, new contracts of employment are issued electronically and hosted at an external consultancy.

13 AES recognises the importance of student mental health issues both in the UK and the USA. It is recognised that students may arrive with mental health problems or develop them while on a study abroad programme. Staff access training on student mental health issues offered by external organisations, including the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) and the Association of American Study Abroad Programmes United Kingdom (AASAP/UK). The Student Services Manager and Internship Administrator both undertook Mental Health First Aid Training in November 2018 and the Director of Academic Programmes attended a Mental Health in the Workplace presentation. AES has also worked with a private clinic in London to develop an information sheet provided for students at orientation. However, students met by the review team are unaware of the information and support available to them.

14 AES has well-established processes for the evaluation and enhancement of its provision. Information and data are gathered from course and faculty evaluations, class observations, meetings with UK and USA partner institutions and feedback from USA home campuses. Enhancements to provision are considered each semester. Formal student feedback is largely received through evaluations for each course and include evaluations of the performance of teaching staff. Students also complete a mid-semester evaluation during their internship and an online evaluation at the end of the placement. Evaluations are shared with home institutions and feedback is also received from home institutions. Extremely positive feedback has been recorded through this route.

15 Although AES has a system of student representation. New Program Ambassadors are elected each semester and there is a formal role descriptor for these. They meet regularly but students met by the review team do not consider them to be an effective means of communication, as opposed to effective informal means. There is no established formal mechanism for AES to feedback the outcomes of students' meetings and evaluations to the student body. Communication channels are of high importance to AES, especially with students out on placement. Meetings with groups of students are held, for example, at breakfast meetings. Students are encouraged to speak to AES staff directly, and there is an open-door policy during office hours. AES also uses an encrypted social media platform to keep in touch with students. Students confirm that AES generally responds quickly to email communication.

16 AES works exclusively with USA universities which are accredited by one of the six regional accreditation bodies. All US students applying for study abroad programmes are enrolled on full-time degrees at their home institutions. USA universities determine their own selection criteria for study abroad programmes. In addition, AES specifies a minimum Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.75, confirmed by official transcript.

17 Most students are referred through their home institutions. USA partner universities arrange meetings on campus for parents and students planning to undertake the London programme. The universities screen all applications and undertake most of the admissions functions. Students may also apply to AES directly, by completing an AES Application Form. Internship candidates from USA partner institutions who do not hold a USA passport have to achieve an IELTS score of 6.0.

18 AES interviews all students, normally by video call and during the interview a list of set questions is used, as well as discussion of their CV and their academic and placement requirements. In 2018, due to a high number of applicants, the Internship Manager visited the University of California Berkeley to undertake face-to-face internship interviews, which is now planned to be an annual visit. Genuine intention to study is assessed throughout the application process. All applicants must receive authorisation from their home university and sign a Participant Agreement before being accepted onto a programme. Students intending to take an internship also must complete the Formal Acceptance of Internship once they

have received a placement, confirming their understanding of the requirements of the internship.

19 In May 2018, AES was granted Premium Account Service by UKVI to improve the service offered to students in case of issues with UK visa application, or lost passports. Students reported some difficulties with making visa applications to study in the UK. Information and guidance is provided by home campuses, and by AES as required. Students report visa guidance as being unclear but AES staff helpful.

20 During 2018, AES invested in a new database and a portal designed to focus student admission and administration information into one area. Students and home USA institutions can upload and track information as part of the application process. The portal also holds guidelines, documents and handbooks for reference and facilitates direct communication between students and staff. AES provides students with pre-departure information at various stages in the application process, including pre-departure checklists, backed up by social media groups to support both ends of the study abroad visit.

21 AES is proactive in ensuring that students are provided with good quality housing. The Student Services Manager meets regularly with the housing team to monitor and improve the service offered to students. A minority of students report difficulties with their housing placement and the lack of speed to resolve issues. AES has created a mobile application which is updated regularly to ensure that all essential contact details and information is easily accessible and held in one location. However, students who met the review team are unaware of the mobile application.

22 All students take part in an orientation event, ranging from a one-day event at AES to a week-long programme to which AES contributes at LSBU. Orientation includes aspects of living and studying in London. Students are provided with a handbook at orientation. Students confirm that orientation is helpful, particularly a contribution from a former Metropolitan Police officer.

23 Students undertaking study abroad programmes undertake assessments set by AES, UK partner universities and US home campuses. Assessment briefing documents do not contain comparable information, such as the inclusion of assessment weighting and grading criteria. Assessments set by teaching staff at AES are not produced on a standard template and submission mechanisms vary, including emailing direct to the tutor. Students met by the review team commented that feedback sometimes does not match the grade awarded, and that they are unsure of assessment weighting and the criteria used for grading. Students consider feedback to be helpful and timely. Students are well-informed about the penalties for plagiarism. USA accreditation requirements are stringent, and students sign a code of conduct, with severe penalties for academic malpractice. Assessments set on many of the courses are very specific and require individual responses. Text matching software is also used for written submissions.

24 There is a robust system for the assessment and grading of internships. All students complete a learning agreement. LSBU provides a detailed internship contract and learning agreement and Birkbeck has a work placement agreement for Tier 4 students. AES provides internship attendance sheets and a grading rubric of workplace attitudes and behaviours. Birkbeck students undertake a module in work-based learning, which provides 60% of the grade awarded for the internship, the remaining 40% coming from the workplace. Students at LSBU undertake a module in reflective learning to complement the placement. Grades for internships take into account feedback from the mid-point and final evaluations.

25 Students receive academic credit for all courses and internships undertaken in London. These count towards their degree programme awarded by their home institution. Grading is derived differently for different courses, but marks are awarded for a range of

activities. Final marks from UK partner universities as well as AES staff are submitted to the Vice-President Academic Affairs before being sent to the Registrar's Office at the home campus.

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

26 AES continues to work with a range of UK and USA external reference points. AES refers to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), especially *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*. The Academic Committee reviews policies and actions against the Quality Code. AES will update its systems to take full account of the revised Quality Code in August 2019. AES works with the reference points of its USA partner universities and their regional accreditation bodies. AES is subject to checks by the accreditation bodies, both in terms of academic and internship arrangements.

27 AES adheres to the requirements of the UKVI and has a Tier 4 Licence. It is an Associate Member of the Forum on Education Abroad and follows their Standards of Good Practice. It accesses training and information on student mental health issues offered by external organisations, including the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) and the Association of American Study Abroad Programmes United Kingdom (AASAP/UK) and MIND.

Background to the monitoring visit

28 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.

29 The monitoring visit was carried out by Dr Helen Corkill, Reviewer, and Kevin Kendall, QAA Officer, on 19 March 2019.

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