



## Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of CIEE Study Abroad London Ltd, February 2021

### Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the review team concludes that CIEE Study Abroad London Ltd (CIEE) is making acceptable progress since the February 2020 [Recognition Scheme for Education Oversight review](#).

### The impact of COVID-19

2 As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the monitoring visit of CIEE was conducted online and included meetings with the senior management team, teaching staff and former 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.

### Changes since the last QAA review

3 Since the last QAA review visit, CIEE has continued to offer a range of study abroad courses to students from US institutions - Block 1: 6 January-17 February; Block 2: 17 February-30 March; Block 3: 30 March-11 May. However, due to COVID-19, in-person programmes in London were cancelled on 15 March and students left the UK. All classes were moved online including those for Block 3.

4 CIEE's recruitment and enrolled student numbers have reduced considerably during this time due to the pandemic. In the autumn (fall) 2020 cohort, CIEE had three enrolled students compared to 29 direct enrolments in the preceding semester and approximately 325 enrolled on open campus provision, of which a proportion historically have chosen to study with CIEE London, or one of the other CIEE centres in Paris, Rome, Copenhagen, Madrid, Berlin, Cape Town, Sydney, Shanghai, Buenos Aires, Santiago (Chile), Monteverde, Yucatan or Rio. The direct enrollment forecast numbers for London were unable to show any direct indication of recovery at the time of the Annual Monitoring visit in February 2021.

5 The noted decrease in enrolments is directly attributed to the impact of lockdown and the pandemic, and CIEE expect that activity across its centres worldwide will resume gradually through to predicted levels by 2022, with proposed activity beginning with cultural summer abroad programmes in 2021 reflecting a variety of study options. The breadth of the delivery and the selection of locations have been greatly affected by the global pandemic since early 2020, however, guidance and oversight by Tulane University remains in place which has enabled undergraduate students to be awarded credits through successful online study with the Study Abroad programmes.

### Findings from the monitoring visit

6 The monitoring visit confirmed that CIEE has maintained acceptable levels of oversight and quality management intervention to reflect the requirements and

unprecedented challenges faced during the global pandemic. Teaching and learning practices, teaching modes and online support activity has been devised to suit remote delivery. Interactive and inclusive online tools have been discussed and shared within the teaching team and students have indicated an effective and positive response to these modes of study., and where relevant, personalised student support mechanisms, Management oversight during this period of change has been evident; management have ensured regular communications with academic staff across all CIEE centres. Evaluations and management observations through drop-in and supervised curriculum design activities have been of particular use during this period. Support and oversight have secured continuity of provision for students during periods of substantial challenge due to the deliver format being unexpectedly interrupted. to include closures of programmes; low to zero student recruitment for programs; operational closures of CIEE centres in other cities and the reduction in staff community; (across academic, professional and administrative staff support). CIEE London has continued to operate learning, teaching and assessment structures online that support completion of select credit bearing courses. Academic standards and protocols remain under the direction of the CIEE Academic Board with approvals operated by Tulane University.

7 CIEE has maintained a responsive and flexible approach to quality enhancement during this period, identifying areas that require action and oversight to reflect the immediate challenges of operating during the pandemic. Learning has been individualised; teaching and learning support - through selected modules - has been offered through a personalised programme of tutor guidance and individual supervision. This approach has been possible due to very small student numbers and rapid changes to online working. CIEE maintained regular channels of staff communication and facilitated developmental support for teaching staff to enhance online learning experiences. Where possible, academic colleagues maintained networks for sharing information updates; discussing and challenging academic or course design preparations in order to remain current in discourse relating to their academic specialism and to retain academic currency through dialogue with colleagues. CIEE continued with wider operational and academic groups and committees remotely, revising academic protocols as necessary during the pandemic. Student induction and support (both academic and pastoral) continue to operate **effectively** and have been shown to be suitable for student requirements during the period of transition and change in recent months.

8 In addition to the reinstatement of proposed provision from 2022, CIEE anticipate retaining some elements of distance, remote-based modular delivery for the majority of programme options. In addition to the reinstatement of proposed provision from 2022, CIEE anticipate retaining some elements of remote modular delivery for the majority of programme options. Distance-learning innovations have been positively received by staff and students, encouraging reflective and more personalised learning experiences.

9 Staff also expect to continue with aspects of online delivery devised in response to the pandemic including more regular staff meetings and increased knowledge exchange with international colleagues. This reflects the innovative interpretations of the challenges faced during the pandemic.

10 During the 2020 review, the QAA team provided an advisable recommendation to CIEE Study Abroad London Ltd to develop a formal agreement with their letting provider to ensure that the necessary resources are specified and in place for the rental of facilities necessary for the practical elements of the Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Sustainability and Environmental Studies, Psychology, and Computer Science programmes. The development of a formal agreement has been reprioritised in light of the current pandemic but remains an area of focus should the intended course provision return into practical delivery plans for CIEE. CIEE London indicate intentions to reinstate planned courses in these areas to

enhance its STEM provision and expect to hire an additional staff member for academic delivery and development.

11 In light of the current circumstances with the pandemic, no current student retention and achievement data was provided.

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

12 External oversight to standardise and review operational procedures and academic standards within CIEE remain under the direction of the CIEE Academic Board with approvals operated by Tulane University. The quality management of all learning opportunities for programmes that remained open during this year has been operated on a small scale, with limited student numbers and national lockdown restrictions. Where available and feasible, CIEE has maintained channels of internal and external communication including established external reference points from within the CIEE wider network for course and institution level benchmarking in student satisfaction outcomes and aligned course performance particularly with shared programmes. The capacity for international insight and a wide range of academic and professional feedback into programme evaluation and design is supported by the CIEE network of centres and this has been particularly evident during the provision of fully online delivery.

13 For the wider community of CIEE, global feedback from students is of central importance and CIEE London students maintained attendance at the Student Representative Council (SRC) meetings in early 2020 prior to the suspension of programmes enabling continuation of weekly student feedback mechanisms. These were replaced with 'drop-in' sessions online via Canvas (e-learning platform) from spring 2020 in order to offer an electronic presence for student representation. CIEE noted unsatisfactory engagement with this method and committed to individualised student support as a viable alternative due to very low student numbers.

14 Assessment practice continues to be viewed positively and staff are suitably assured of external assurance pertaining to both assessment and delivery standards across remaining programmes. Staff retain some additional scope and sector relevance through work with other higher education institutions and are involved in the sharing of academic practice and information exchange to maintain an active academic standard of scholarly practice during this year.

## **Background to the monitoring visit**

15 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.

16 The monitoring visit was carried out by Karen Chetwynd, Reviewer and Millard Parkinson, QAA Officer, on 24 February, 2021.

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