



Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight: desk-based analysis of CIEE Study Abroad London Ltd, March 2022

Outcome of the desk-based analysis

1 From the annual return and documentary evidence, the monitoring team concludes that CIEE Study Abroad Ltd (CIEE) is continuing to maintain academic standards and the quality of student-learning opportunities since the February 2021 [annual monitoring report for Educational Oversight](#).

Changes since the last QAA monitoring visit

2 CIEE, founded in 1947 by a consortium of faculty and university leaders, is the UK's oldest and largest nonprofit international exchange and study abroad organisation, annually attracting US and other international students. The organisation reports that student numbers have swiftly risen from zero recruitment in February 2021 to near pre-pandemic levels in 2022. As of early February 2022, CIEE had 118 students from Tulane University: 94 Open Campus students taking CIEE courses in-person at the London site or at other European centres remotely; 11 students at University College London; five students at Goldsmiths, University of London; and eight at the University of Westminster. A further 114 students were expected between February and May. Additionally, CIEE has been working towards building new partnerships with several US universities, including Vanderbilt University, University of Colorado-Boulder and Arizona State University.

3 Similarly, London staffing has returned close to 2019 levels. With the appointment of five full-time permanent posts since August 2021, there are now eight permanent staff members as well as a further seven members of academic faculty and academic support staff on short-term contracts. A team member normally working on faculty-led (short-term summer) programmes will resume work as short-term programmes return to pre-pandemic levels. Four other positions were pending at the time of the analysis.

Findings from the monitoring visit

4 CIEE has maintained student recruitment and a viable operation through innovative online provision, focusing on hybrid teaching, co-curricular learning and internships. Specialised learning outcomes and careful, regular programme monitoring underpin all academic provision. Partnerships with US universities have been strengthened and enhanced and there is evidence of progress in engaging with the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).

5 In the context of the pandemic, student recruitment, academic provision and staffing have been prudently managed. Considerable attention is given to the recruitment of staff and their training. A passion for teaching is among the various student endorsements of the provider. Well-structured staff development, including recent Diversity, Equality and Inclusion training, has been successfully delivered. CIEE intends to create better opportunities for Study Centres across Europe and liaise further over the delivery of hybrid courses and co-curricular provision. The provider has maintained quality while innovating effectively in a very difficult public health and economic context.

6 The [2020 Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight \(RSEO\) review](#) resulted in an advisable recommendation that CIEE should develop a formal agreement with its 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 provider now reports that its plans to offer STEM provision have been postponed until 2023 so that, currently, the recommendation is not being addressed.

7 CIEE has not produced a discrete action plan following the 2020 RSEO review and the February 2021 annual monitoring report. However, the provider has identified two major strands of development. The first is listed under quality monitoring processes where the annual return and evidence states that CIEE will address this once full staffing is re-established. However, it does outline a strategic approach to quality monitoring in addressing concerns regarding student evaluations and a perceived need to develop a more coordinated response to organising co-curricular activities offered in multiple locations on the same course. The overall approach to quality assurance is discussed at paragraphs 9 to 11.

8 Tulane University is the School of Record (SOR) for CIEE, acting as the accredited US higher education institution which records course grades, awards credits and provides detailed academic transcripts for students. In addition, Tulane SOR site visits provide an opportunity for Tulane faculty and CIEE staff to engage in scholarly interactions about courses on offer as well as learning, teaching and enhancement in the organisation's global context. CIEE London and CIEE's central Academic Consortium Board (ACB) work together to ensure the quality of study-abroad programmes evident in high-quality course syllabuses.

9 Clear and comprehensive learning outcomes underpin all teaching and learning. There are three global outcomes - to adapt interculturally, to build understanding, and to communicate effectively - which have been designed by the central CIEE Academic Affairs unit. Programme learning outcomes are developed by a range of subject specialists, including CIEE colleagues and local academics. Specific course learning outcomes are in the hands of instructors and subject to approval by CIEE London colleagues. Clear and precise assessment procedures require that students demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes. The provider reports that assessment design and procedures have been influenced by relevant sections of the Quality Code.

10 Termly monitoring of CIEE Study Centre programmes is undertaken by ACB which has overall responsibility for safeguarding standards and quality. Review of programme reports identifies areas in need of improvement. The ACB Executive Committee provides an additional layer of review for cases requiring further scrutiny. ACB members also carry out periodic evaluations of study centre sites and programmes. Special working groups can also be established where more in-depth review is required. Students are given the opportunity to feed back via mid-course and end-of-course evaluations, the results of which are reviewed in programme and monitoring reports.

11 The second identified strand relates to staff development in both hybrid teaching and learning and diversity, equality and inclusivity (DEI). For the former, where hybrid teaching and co-curricular learning are relatively new pedagogies for CIEE, Academic Directors have been encouraged to engage hybrid learning facilitators in support of faculty, and to ensure they have access to Online Writing Labs. They have also been tasked with identifying co-curricular plans and learning outcomes as models of good practice for other CIEE centres. CIEE has now created a portfolio of online training materials which can be accessed as a series of courses. Faculty are required to complete this training before starting to teach the next course. Existing faculty are also required to complete the training to update or refresh their knowledge and to develop a firm grasp on hybrid and online teaching.

12 The DEI training has been provided regularly for all faculty and other staff and includes techniques on dealing with DEI issues around gender and sexuality, body image, and race/ethnicity in the classroom. As an example, a specific training goal emphasises 'the importance of providing an Inclusive Orientation (Pre-departure and On-site) to foster a sense of belonging for all at CIEE'.

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

13 In 2021, a decision was made to suspend or cease the annual review by the British Accreditation Council (BAC). This was based on a belief that CIEE London's annual review by the QAA and the internal scrutiny from UK universities provide adequate insight into UK standards of higher education.

14 External oversight of CIEE's academic standards and quality procedures remain under the direction of the CIEE ACB with accredited courses approved by Tulane University, the School of Record. The provider is confident that global CIEE's close ties to its academic partners in the US and elsewhere in the world, provides it with abundant opportunities for reviewing standards and ensuring quality teaching, learning and professional development. During their orientation, students receive an academic orientation that introduces them to the US/UK university system and, critically, what they should expect from marking, grade boundaries and more independent study. Attention to external reference points is heightened by the experience of faculty members from relevant backgrounds in the UK and other US providers who are able to import their knowledge and experience. Staff also attend meetings of the Association of American Study Abroad Programmes UK and independent higher education.

15 The Annual Return does not make reference to the Quality Code, but the provider has produced a developed summary of how CIEE engages with the intention of the Core practices. However, there is a clear expectation that course approvals, academic standards and credit for qualifications must, first and foremost meet the requirements of US accrediting institutions.

Background to the desk-based analysis

16 The desk-based analysis 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 annual monitoring. 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 process or review.

17 The desk-based analysis was carried out by Dr Terence Clifford-Amos, Reviewer, and Dr Neil Casey, QAA Officer, in March 2022. No meetings were held with students or staff, and the conclusions presented in this report are based on the analysis of documentary evidence submitted by the provider.

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