



This review method  
is ESG-compliant

# Educational Oversight Review

Foundation for International  
Education

April 2025

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## About this review

This is a report of an Educational Oversight Review (EOR) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the Foundation for International Education.

EOR consists of a number of components. The Core component is a review of a provider's arrangements for maintaining the academic standards and quality of the courses it offers against nine of the Sector-Agreed Principles contained within the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2024). This subset of Principles has been mapped to the core requirements that have been set out by the Home Office in relation to educational oversight. Further information about the Core component of EOR can be found in the [Educational Oversight Review Guidance for Providers](#).

The review took place on 15 April 2025 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Ms Brenda Eade (Reviewer)
- Dr Margaret Carran (Reviewer)
- Mr Jonny Barnes (Student reviewer)

The QAA Officer for this review was Kevin Kendall.

In Educational Oversight Review (Core component) the QAA review team:

- determines an outcome against a subset of the Sector-Agreed Principles outlined in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- identifies features of good practice
- makes recommendations
- identifies areas of enhancement activity
- determines an overall judgement as to whether the provider meets the Home Office's quality assurance requirements for educational oversight.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission. A dedicated section explains the method for [Educational Oversight Review](#) and has links to other informative documents. QAA reviews are evidence-based processes. Review judgements result from the documents review teams see, and the meetings they hold, and draw upon their experience as peer reviewers and student reviewers.

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) provide the framework for internal and external quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area. QAA's review methods are [compliant with these standards](#), as are the [reports we publish](#). More information is available on our [website](#).

This review was conducted in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

## Executive summary

The Foundation for International Education (FIE) was established in 1998 and is a private, independent, non-profit International Education Organisation offering study abroad programmes for college undergraduate students. FIE is based in Cromwell Road in London and provides educational programmes for academic credit to students enrolled in accredited universities in the United States. Students usually study in London for one semester, one quarter or one summer of their academic year.

FIE Leadership comprises the President and Chair, the Chief Academic Officer and Provost, the Chief Operating Officer, the Chief IT Officer, the Chief Institutional Relations Officer and the Chief Finance Officer. Total staff numbers are 108, including 70 hourly paid faculty staff and consultants and 38 management and administrative staff.

FIE's mission is "to provide high-quality educational experiences to the global community. In pursuit of these goals, FIE is committed to the development of creative learning environments wherein an understanding of, and appreciation for, the privileges and responsibilities of international citizenship is fostered. This commitment is driven by the belief that interaction between people of diverse cultures is the base upon which empathy among nations is built."

FIE works with more than 50 partners and affiliated colleges and universities based in the United States. FIE has two Schools of Record (SORs), Drexel University and Marist University.

The Covid-19 global pandemic had a negative impact on the sector, but the main strategic priority of FIE is to continue to grow student numbers and retain staff. The regulatory environment relating to visas for students coming from the US is a challenge for all the sector and FIE closely follows the UK governments policies and positions on immigration. US policies and politics are also a challenge for the sector, for example, changes to equity, diversity and inclusion regulations have impacts on state-funded universities. Other challenges include exchange rate fluctuations, falling birth rates in the US, changing student populations and student mental health concerns.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which the FIE meets the Sector-Agreed Principles, the QAA review team followed the evidence-based review procedure as outlined in the guidance for Educational Oversight Review (July 2024). FIE provided the review team with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence. During the review visit, which took place on 15 April 2025, the review team held a total of four meetings with the senior staff, academic staff, support staff and students.

In summary, the team found six examples of good practice and identified four recommendations for improvement.

## Conclusions

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at the Foundation for International Education.

The QAA review team determines that the Foundation for International Education:

- **meets** the Home Office's Quality assurance requirements for educational oversight.

## Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice**:

- The effective embedding of FIE core values in the curriculum and the introduction of thematic courses and internships which support the core values (**Sector-Agreed Principle 1**).
- The availability of a Writer-in-Residence to offer support to the faculty on teaching methodologies, to help deliver a high quality and innovative learning experience (**Sector-Agreed Principle 3**).
- The monitoring of, and timely response to, issues raised by students during internships that enhances the quality of the student learning experience (**Sector-Agreed Principle 5**).
- The extra-curricular 1-to-1 academic skills workshops provided by the Writing Support Tutors that improve students' skills and confidence (**Sector-Agreed Principle 10**).
- The emphasis on experiential learning which enables students to take responsibility for their own learning and to take an active role in shaping and enhancing the learning process (**Sector-Agreed Principle 11**).
- The effective use of multi-media screens which enable faculty to provide a high-quality learning experience (**Sector-Agreed Principle 11**).

## Recommendations

For recommendations that relate to areas for development and enhancement that do not impact on the Sector-Agreed Principle being met the QAA review team makes the following recommendations:

- Review all on-campus wi-fi to ensure students are provided with reliable online access at all times (**Sector-Agreed Principle 3**).
- Review the student feedback form to ensure anonymity (**Sector-Agreed Principle 5**).
- Review the process of communicating agreed academic accommodations to faculty to ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are put in place for students in a timely manner (**Sector-Agreed Principle 10**).
- Remove the reference to the OIA from the Complaints and Appeals Policy and

reviews application of the early resolution process for assessment appeals to ensure that it is transparent and fair for all students and revises the appeals policy to clarify the parameters in which academic judgement-based amendments may be made at the early resolution stage of an appeal (**Sector-Agreed Principle 12**).

## **Financial sustainability, management and governance**

The financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) check has been **satisfactorily** completed. The outcome of the FSMG check for the **institution** is that **no** material issues were identified.

## Explanation of the findings – Sector-Agreed Principles

### Principle 1: Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards

**Providers demonstrate they have a strategic approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality that is embedded across the organisation.**

#### Findings

1 FIE takes a strategic approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality through its academic committee structure and management team. The Academic Advisory Council (AAC) is responsible for monitoring and advising on academic standards and quality across all FIE programmes. It meets twice a year and is chaired by the Director of Programmes from one of FIE's SORs – Drexel University. Membership of AAC is published on the FIE Website. The Provost of FIE, is a member of AAC and is responsible for undertaking the actions required and for managing the flow of information to and from FIE Leadership. FIE has a number of Standing Committees to manage specific areas of the delivery of programmes and the student experience. These include the Admissions Committee, Teaching and Learning Committee, Health and Safety Committee, and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Committee.

2 A clearly defined set of policies and procedures supports the monitoring and maintenance of quality and standards. These are available to stakeholders through the Faculty and Employee Handbooks and were reviewed and updated in 2024-25.

3 FIE Leadership is responsible for managing and monitoring quality and standards at the operational level. It meets every two weeks and is chaired by the Provost. Membership of FIE Leadership includes the Chief Operating Officer and those responsible for Finance, IT and Institutional Relations. Minutes of the meetings of FIE Leadership cover a range of operational issues such as student numbers, arrivals and orientation.

4 The award of credit for programmes and courses studied at FIE is the responsibility of the partner institutions who send students to FIE to study specific areas of their curriculum for one or two semesters. These institutions are UK National Information Centre verified, and are involved in the development of courses and programmes, offered by FIE, which they then approve and accredit. This process provides an external reference point for standards and quality at FIE as the partner institutions equate the standard of the courses completed at FIE to those in their own institutions. They also regularly visit FIE to monitor standards and the quality of the learning experience for their students.

5 For those institutions which do not offer their own credit for FIE courses, the two SoRs - Drexel University and Marist University can provide a transcript of credit for participating students. The SoRs are a further external reference points for quality and standards as they participate in the development and approval of programmes and courses, review each faculty member and carry out regular monitoring visits.

6 FIE's strategic approach to academic standards and quality is underpinned by its core values - sustainability, social justice and equality and diversity, which are set out in the Faculty and Employee Handbooks. The course catalogue includes annotations of how these values are embedded in the curriculum. Faculty confirmed that the values are reflected in the delivery and assessment of their courses, and gave examples of how they are embedded in such courses as environmental economics, sport, and the internships which often provide a

multicultural experience. FIE is introducing additional thematic concentrations curated from its course selections in the autumn of 2025 which focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Sustainability. The review team concludes that the effective embedding of FIE core values in the curriculum and the introduction of thematic courses and internships which support the core values is good practice and enables students and staff to fully engage with FIE's policies on equity, equality, diversity and inclusion, and environmental sustainability.

7 To support its strategic approach to quality and standards, FIE has a detailed equality and diversity policy which is contained in the Employee Handbook. It publishes data on equality and diversity annually which includes race and ethnicity (US students only), age, gender, country of citizenship, English as first language, and reasonable adjustments. Students are introduced to the equality and diversity policies as part of their orientation programme.

8 The Well-being, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Committee (WIDE) has produced a set of operating guidelines for all staff. Faculty have attended and presented at conferences on Diversity Abroad. FIE uses information from the US Association on Higher Education and Disability and the UK National Association of Disability Practitioners to support its policies and procedures. Information regarding specific needs is collected as part of the admissions process, and students are asked whether they need further help mid-term.

9 FIE partners, participating universities and SoRs provide extensive external expertise to support FIE's strategic approach to standards and quality. FIE refers to the UK Quality Code for developing, monitoring and improving its provision and has been successfully reviewed and monitored by the UK Quality Assurance Agency and the UKVI for more than a decade. It is a member of The Accreditation Network UK (accommodation and housing) and adheres to the standards set by the Forum on Education Abroad.

10 Overall, the review team concluded that through its well-defined committee and management structures, and supporting policies and procedures, FIE demonstrates a strategic approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality. FIE core values are effectively embedded across the organisation and external expertise in the form of partner institutions and reference to external bodies is a key element of the strategic approach. FIE, therefore, is **aligned** with the Sector-Agreed Principle.



### Principle 3: Resourcing delivery of a high-quality learning experience

**Providers plan, secure and maintain resources relating to learning, technology, facilities and staffing to enable the delivery and enhancement of an accessible, innovative and high-quality learning experience for students that aligns with the provider's strategy and the composition of the student body.**

#### Findings

11 FIE has a strategic and operational plan to secure and maintain resources relating to learning, technology, facilities and staffing. Teaching staff are recruited in line with the Faculty Selection Process. Interested candidates apply using standard application forms and undertake a formally structured interview. Upon commencement of their work, new faculty participate in an induction during which they receive a faculty handbook, meet with new colleagues from different departments and receive orientation on what is expected of them.

12 FIE's recruitment and onboarding processes are robust and thorough. The reliance on structured interview questions as well as the process that requires candidates to deliver a demonstration of their teaching and to articulate where the students will be exposed to experiential learning ensures that all candidates are treated fairly, are only recruited if they meet the competency standards and embrace the FIE's mission. These processes support a consistent positive student experience and facilitate better student achievement.

13 FIE allocates resources to ensure that staff receive ongoing professional development. This is facilitated formally by the requirement to undertake mandatory training offered by FIE, the provision of a developmental fund, and through appraisal and peer observation process. All staff are required to undertake mandatory training during induction and afterwards. This includes workshops on GDPR matters, diversity and inclusion issues and pedagogy.

14 Resources allocated for staff development and processes used for staff appraisal adequately support the delivery of high-quality and innovative student learning and research experience. Performance of administrative and support staff is monitored through end of year appraisals and through feedback collected from students in programme feedback and other surveys. The appraisal form contributes to the appropriate management of academic standards and quality enhancement as it is designed to support ongoing reflection and the creation of suitable and concrete actions plans. Staff complete their self-appraisal form that represents the basis for the formal discussion between the staff member and the supervisor and creates the end of year objectives for the next academic term.

15 Performance of teaching staff (faculty) is monitored through feedback collected from students on the delivery of their courses. They also participate in the formal peer observation process that requires all faculty members to be observed by the field study conveners each time they are delivering a new course, or if they are teaching the same course, once every three years. The Peer observation process follows a structured timetable that is monitored by the management. Guidance notes ensure that those who undertake observations understand what the process aims to achieve and work together to facilitate that.

16 The teaching staff are further supported by the 'Writer in Residence' who offers ongoing support on educational matters, including through workshops, and who has also created a popular podcast, 'In the FIEld'. Podcasts include topics such as decolonizing the curriculum, different teaching methodologies and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in assessment. The review team considered the availability of a Writer-in-Residence to offer support to the faculty on teaching methodologies, to help deliver a high quality and

innovative learning experience to be an example of good practice. Additionally, teaching staff receive the FIE Principles of Instructional Excellence, My Study Quick Reference Guide and Writing Support Handbook. They can also request to have a mentor allocated to them.

17 Staff and faculty members are eligible to apply for funding for professional development to support teaching and other professional activities annually from the development fund. Successful applicants receiving funding in full or in part for the relevant activity. Administrative and support staff who receive funding in excess of £500 commit to remaining employed by FIE for at least a year afterwards. This ensures that the funds are used for appropriate purposes and that resources are aligned with strategic development of FIE. The fund contributes to the enhancement of teaching and learning as it allows staff to further develop skills that can be used in and outside the classroom.

18 FIE maintains several physical spaces. Foundation House hosts teaching spaces, staff offices, and a student lounge. The classrooms have advanced IT infrastructure that offers high speed internet access and multimedia screens in the classrooms. Metrogate House offers students 24-hour study areas with PCs, additional offices and classrooms, laundry facilities, a mail pick up area and student accommodation. It also hosts a facilities support team that is on call for students during their stay. The physical spaces are risk assessed by the Health and Safety Committee to ensure safety and accessibility.

19 The FIE does not maintain its own physical library but students are able to access local public libraries and all online resources offered by their home universities. This ensures that students can achieve appropriate educational outcomes. They are also provided with extensive learning materials on FIE's virtual learning environment which has been thoroughly reviewed recently to ensure it is user-friendly and fit for purpose.

20 FIE's physical and digital resources are accessible, inclusive and facilitate a sense of belonging. The suitability of the physical spaces is reviewed based on usage and the facilities provide sufficient space for the number of students that FIE recruits. Student reliance on online materials and their home libraries means that FIE should always provide a reliable and secure wi-fi connection. Students' feedback indicates that this may not always be the case in student accommodation. The review team recommends that FIE reviews all on-campus wi-fi to ensure students are provided with reliable online access at all times.

21 The focus on experiential learning contributes to the maintenance of high-quality provision because it allows students to study in small groups and to learn through experience and exploration. The introduction of multimedia smart screens in rooms further facilitates a more diverse pedagogical approach. This benefits students directly because it allows for a more immersive learning experience and allows for different learning preferences to be accommodated within the same sessions.

22 Overall, the review team concluded that FIE plans, secures and maintains resources relating to learning, technology, facilities and staffing appropriately and this enables them to deliver and enhance their accessible, innovative and high – quality learning experience. FIE is therefore **aligned** with the Sector-Agreed Principle.

## Principle 4: Using data to inform and evaluate quality

**Providers collect, analyse and utilise qualitative and quantitative data at provider, departmental, programme and module levels. These analyses inform decision-making with the aim of enhancing practices and processes relating to teaching, learning and the wider student experience.**

### Findings

23 FIE collects data from partner institutions and from students. The data collected through partnership agreements is divided by partner institution, and includes enrolment numbers, demographic information and enrolment figures.

24 Data collected from students includes details of students' race, gender, age, English proficiency, country of citizenship, disability, reasonable adjustments' needs, whether students are first generation college students, whether they are, or are connected, to veterans or military personal, their previous or current mental health issues, and their LGBTQ+ status. The data is analysed on a semesterly basis to provide insights to increase student engagement, monitor diversity and to identify areas where support may need to be improved. Personal data is stored securely on the admission and application system.

25 Students' academic achievements, performance metrics and feedback on teaching and other support is collected at programme and course level. Attendance is monitored weekly. FIE collects data regarding late starts, early departures, extended absences, withdrawals and dismissals to ensure compliance with UKVI regulations and to ensure that students' wellbeing is monitored. Student feedback is collected in line with the Student Feedback Policy and Feedback Process Guide.

26 The process for collecting data is devised to comply with the GDPR. It is overseen by a designated Senior Responsible Individual and ultimately by the Data Compliance and Security Committee which meets regularly. Students are informed of their rights through information on FIE's website and through privacy notices. Staff are informed through privacy notices and through the information contained in the Employee Handbook and in the Faculty Handbook. Staff members are required to undertake compulsory GDPR training during induction. Subsequently they attend refresher workshops and receive updates and guidelines. All data that is collected is tracked through the Data Audit Tracker and reviewed by the GDPR Committee. Compliance with data protection policies by FIE's partners is assured contractually. Contractual agreements contain specific clauses that require third parties to process FIE's data ethically and in line with legal requirements.

27 FIE has a consistent, coherent and evidence-based strategic approach to collection, storage and management of data that is then used to enhance practices and processes relating to teaching, learning and wider student experience. The Student Feedback Policy and the Feedback Process Guide achieves this successfully because it provides clear and detailed articulation of what data is collected, why it is collected and what it can be used for. The rationale for data collection is clearly based on relevant legal or regulatory requirements that all institutions must fulfill and based on the need to ensure viability, quality and attractiveness of FIE's courses. This is appropriate because it aligns with FIE's mission and enables them to design courses that are of appeal to their target student population.

28 The process is also effective because the actual collection and usage is monitored by a designated individual (Senior Responsible Individual) and by the Data Compliance and Security Committee. This places responsibility and accountability on specific individuals and on a formal committee thus ensuring that reviews take place and that they are thorough. The

committee uses a data audit tracker that contains detailed step-by-step instructions on the type of data collected, where it is stored and who is allowed to process it. This means that only authorised personnel access and process data as the tracker's level of prescription is high, and instruction is written in a clear and unambiguous language.

29 FIE's policy and procedures ensure that staff and students are fully aware of the type of data gathered and how it is used. FIE's processes are reliable and robust because privacy notices and associated relevant information are communicated to them in a variety of formats and through different touch-points: on the website, in handbooks, and in clearly signposted policies. The language used in those communications is easy to understand. This gives everyone ample opportunity to familiarise themselves with all relevant aspects of data handling.

30 Staff are trained to undertake data handling ethically and securely. The training is mandatory and is not only offered at the commencement of staff employment but is repeated and refreshed regularly. It is further supplemented by detailed guidance and monitoring forms.

31 Student feedback further enables FIE to understand and respond to the needs of their students because it is collected based on a formal Feedback Process Guide and leads to the creation of formal action plans. Actions are concrete and measurable and are reviewed by the relevant committees.

32 FIE's data handling policies also extend to third parties. This is ensured as contractual provisions are clear, are reviewed when appropriate, and provide recourse to legal remedies for breaches, if needed.

33 Overall, the review team concluded that FIE collects, analyses and utilises data at the institutional, departmental, programme and module levels. The data is used ethically and in line with data protection legislation. FIE uses data to inform decision-making with the aim of enhancing practices and processes relating to teaching, learning and the wider student experience. FIE is therefore **aligned** with the Sector-Agreed Principle.

## Principle 5: Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision

**Providers regularly monitor and review their provision to secure academic standards and enhance quality. Deliberate steps are taken to engage and involve students, staff and external expertise in monitoring and evaluation activity. The outcomes and impact of these activities are considered at provider level to drive reflection and enhancement across the provider.**

### Findings

34 FIE monitors and evaluates its courses through internal and external processes. External monitoring is undertaken by partner universities through formal review processes and partner universities' visits to FIE. Partners' quality assurance processes review FIE's courses and the overall viability of the relationship with FIE with reference to three main criteria: adherence to external reference points such as the Association of International Educators (NAFSA), and the Forum of Education Abroad; adherence to academic benchmarks, and appropriateness of FIE's operational practices. FIE works in partnership with over 50 US schools and a formal quality review is carried out by two of them – Marist University and Drexel University. Partners' visits take place regularly and include discussions about FIE's courses and potential enhancements.

35 The ultimate responsibility for monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision internally is allocated to FIE Leadership who are supported by the formal structure of Standing Committees, working groups and the AAC (see Sector-Agreed Principle 1).

36 FIE collects written feedback from students using an online platform. Comments from students are intended to be anonymous. Feedback is sought on orientation activities, teaching faculty, quality of course delivery, scholarships and internship / placement experience. Feedback collection follows the Feedback Process Guide. This guide prescribes when and how feedback is gathered and includes detailed provisions on how to create surveys and how to generate reports. The academic faculty reviews the reports, responds to students within two weeks of the closing date and plans action in response. Feedback processes have been reviewed in 2022 to increase completion rates.

37 Response rates received by FIE are good. Included comments demonstrate that students feel able to respond to the questions honestly and to provide constructive criticism that can then be used for quality enhancements. However, students may still feel inhibited due to a design flaw in the survey that was highlighted by the students during the review visit. The survey responses are formally intended to be anonymous, but students are asked to identify their home university. Since several institutions send only a very small number of participants (including singular students from specific US universities) this represents an identifying factor. As such, the review team **recommends** that FIE reviews the student feedback form to ensure anonymity, and that FIE considers removing the requirement for students to disclose their sending university.

38 FIE offers students an annual round-the-table discussion where students are invited to raise any issues, concerns or queries regarding the programmes or their overall experience at FIE. Completion of actions relating to academic standards are monitored by the Teaching and Learning Committee. Students' experience on internship / placements is reviewed separately using Internship Performance Appraisal Forms and the Placement Feedback Form. FIE closes the feedback loop by sharing comments and details of actions that were taken via student blogs, designated 'you said, we did' page on their website and during new cohorts' inductions.

39 FIE's methodology of collecting feedback and suggestions through surveys and round-the-table discussions is effective in engaging students in monitoring and evaluation activities. During the review visit, students provided the review team with specific examples of suggestions and feedback that they provided to FIE that were positively acted upon. An example includes suggestions to provide more community building activities that resulted in FIE providing a group painting session. Students were also highly positive about FIE's responsiveness to concerns raised by them during internship / placements and highlighted that FIE is able to address such concerns very promptly. The level of praise was sufficient to recognise that FIE's monitoring of, and timely response to, issues raised by students during internship that enhances the quality of student experience represents an area of good practice.

40 FIE improves and enhances its provision in response to students' feedback and those are recorded in the feedback review and actions form. The use of a formal document ensures that responsibilities for actions are allocated to specific individuals, and implementation progress is formally monitored. It further facilitates a formal overview by the relevant committees and allows for evaluation of their impact.

41 FIE's policies and procedures are reviewed by the senior staff and the relevant Committees. The revision of their Social Media Strategy or the review of their risk assessment processes are the most recent example of a policy review. The review of the Social Media Strategy aimed to increase brand awareness, boost website traffic, engage and retain audience and promote success stories. That of risk assessment processes led to the introduction of a new Incident Report Form.

42 Course content is reviewed by faculty and module field study conveners during formal and informal discussions and through peer observation processes. FIE prides itself in being agile and responsive to students' needs that can be achieved due to small group sizes and ongoing discussions with students while registered on the course. This allows them to tailor the content of the courses to align with students' specific interests.

43 FIE has an established practice of monitoring and evaluating their course. Their practice aligns with their strategic mission of offering educational experience that are demanded by students who have a global outlook and understands international citizenship privilege, and those that adheres to the principle of sustainability. The practice is applied consistently and is appropriate to FIE's operational context because it follows step-by-step guidelines, students engage with the process at scheduled and regular intervals and evaluation focuses on matters relevant to education and student experience.

44 Overall, the review team concluded that FIE reviews and monitors its provision regularly and takes active steps to engage and involve students, staff and external stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation activities. FIE is highly responsive to students' feedback, considers all feedback and external evaluations holistically to drive reflection and enhancements. FIE is therefore **aligned** with the Sector-Agreed Principle.

## Principle 7: Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes

**Providers design, develop, approve and modify programmes and modules to ensure the quality of provision and the academic standards of awards are consistent with the relevant Qualifications Framework. Providers ensure their provision and level of qualifications are comparable to those offered across the UK and, where applicable, The Framework of Qualifications for The European Higher Education Area.**

### Findings

45 FIE designs programmes and courses to meet the requirements of the sending institutions so that on completion of the courses/programmes, students can be awarded credit by their home institution. Programmes are aligned with the credit frameworks and national qualifications of the American education system. The FIE categorises course levels as “lower division” or “upper division”. All programmes embody the FIE Principles of Instructional Excellence with clearly framed learning activities, strategies to support varied learning styles, and a focus on experiential education.

46 FIE has a policy for programme and course design, development and approval which clearly sets out a timeline for the stages of development and approval, including a process for modification of existing courses. Programme ideas may be proposed by faculty, FIE Leadership, a partner institution, students via course feedback, external stakeholders, or they emanate from the AAC. FIE uses a standard template to effectively capture course details which includes learning outcomes, level, content, assessment and resources. Faculty confirmed that they are familiar with the policy for programme development and approval and cited examples of new courses they have been involved in developing which included a “Harry Potter” course. They also indicated that five or six courses are reapproved each year, and that they can contextualize programmes in accordance with current events, for example the death of Queen Elizabeth II.

47 An example of a recently developed and approved course – “Angels, Whores and Angry Birds” – demonstrates the rigorous processes through which a course must progress before being added to the Academic Programme Options for delivery on the London campus. All courses and programmes are documented and available on the FIE website.

48 Most students are enrolled on courses which are approved (and in some cases designed) by the sending institution, which awards credit based on the curriculum studied and assessed at FIE. Details of what is available to study at FIE are available on the FIE website and via the course catalogue. At the time of enrolment, students are made aware of whether their home institution will award credit, or whether one of the SORs will provide a transcript of credit.

49 External stakeholders are involved in the approval process, including the AAC which has external membership, SORs and partner institutions. Programmes may be closed (that is, open to one partner institution only); or, if they are FIE’s own programmes, they will be available to all FIE students (subject to the sending institution’s approval). All courses/programmes are approved by one of FIE’s SORs to enable them to award credit. Each partner institution must approve the courses their students intend to study.

50 FIE's core values of sustainability, social justice and diversity and inclusion are embedded into the curriculum for all existing and proposed programmes. The FIE's Principles of Instructional Excellence provide a focus on autonomous and experiential learning.

51 As students study at FIE for a relatively short period of time (one semester, or a quarter) they are not formally involved in the validation of new programmes. However, as indicated in the approval and design process ideas for new courses and modifications to existing courses may be initiated by students through FIE's feedback processes. Similarly, faculty may propose new courses and modifications to existing programmes of study.

52 Overall, the review team concluded that FIE has effective policies and procedures for the design, development and approval of programmes, and the modification of courses which ensure the quality of the provision and that the academic standards of the awards are consistent with the relevant qualifications framework. The processes include the involvement of external stakeholders and align with FIE's policies and practices on equity, equality, diversity and inclusion, and environmental sustainability. FIE, therefore, is **aligned** with the Sector-Agreed Principle.



## Principle 9: Recruiting, selecting and admitting students

**Providers operate recruitment, selection and admissions processes that are transparent, fair and inclusive. Providers maintain and publish accurate, relevant and accessible information about their provision, enabling students to make informed choices about their studies and future aspirations.**

### Findings

53 In most instances, the responsibilities for recruiting, selecting and admitting students are divided between FIE and the partner US universities. Prior to advertising the programme to students, FIE and the partner US universities agree the programmes of study on offer, study period, and estimated student numbers. Once agreed, the partner US universities contribute to student recruitment activities, however all applicants are referred to FIE's website as the primary source of information. These processes are outlined in the contractual agreements between FIE and the partner universities, as well as the Admissions Policy.

54 FIE details the minimum academic standing and English language requirements to be considered for its programmes in the Admissions Policy. The partner US universities then conduct an initial assessment of a student's application and will refer batches of suitable applicants who meet the criteria to the FIE. FIE retains the ultimate decision as to who it admits to its programmes. Students may also apply as independent applicants if they do not have an affiliation to one of FIE's partner universities. Under these circumstances, the FIE's Admissions Committee conducts a full assessment of the student's application. The website and Admissions Policy contains a step-by-step guide for applicants outlining the application process and the relevant timelines. The team concludes the admissions process to be accessible, transparent and functional.

55 FIE has various access initiatives which include support programmes and scholarships, and a contextual admissions process. The contextual admissions process permits FIE to admit students who have a lower grade point average than they would usually require, subject to additional evidence demonstrating a link to illness/bereavement, or a recent substantial improvement in academic progress. This information would then be considered by the Admissions Committee. The team concluded information about these widening access initiatives to be clearly presented to applicants on the website and in the Admissions Policy.

56 The team reviewed the advertising materials present on FIE's website, particularly the course catalogue and syllabi, and considered these materials to be thorough and to clearly outline the programme structure and course content. Students noted that the information available was sufficient to see which programmes are available and how they align to their programme at their home university. Students are informed of the limited circumstances under which FIE may alter a programme in their offer letter. The Faculty Handbook also informs faculty that the syllabi form part of the contract between FIE and the student, and as such changes to the published information and syllabi must involve students' agreement. The team heard evidence of faculty members conducting this consultation process with students when responding to relevant contemporary world events in their teaching. The team concluded that FIE appropriately protects students' interests and ability to exercise informed choices.

57 The team reviewed a sample of curriculum vitae (CVs) and job descriptions of staff who support students during the admissions process. The team concluded staff to be suitably qualified, experienced and cognisant of the regulatory requirements relating to their

role. FIE is exploring increased use of social media as part of their advertising strategy to increase awareness of the programmes it offers and the benefits of engaging in a study abroad experience. FIE informed the team that they are planning to run additional training sessions relating to Competition and Markets Authority guidance to induct newer team members who will focus on social media development.

58 Overall, the review team concluded that FIE has appropriate processes in place to ensure accurate, relevant and accessible information about their provision is available, enabling students to make informed choices about their studies. FIE works in partnership with its US university partners to recruit, select and admit students in a transparent and fair manner. FIE, therefore, is **aligned** with the Sector-Agreed Principle.

## Principle 10: Supporting students to achieve their potential

**Providers facilitate a framework of support for students that enables them to have a high-quality learning experience and achieve their potential as they progress in their studies. The support structure scaffolds the academic, personal and professional learning journey, enabling students to recognise and articulate their progress and achievements.**

### Findings

59 Under the agreements in place with the partner US universities, which act as SORs, FIE has responsibility for providing thorough pre-departure and on-site orientations to prepare students for their studies in London, in addition to ongoing co-curricular support.

60 FIE is cognisant of student transition points and has strategies to support students appropriately. For instance, FIE is partnered with US universities to deliver integrated first-year programmes. As these students are early in their academic journey when they join their programme, FIE appoints mentors to support these students through this transition point and advise them on academic and pastoral matters. The mentors meet with students on three occasions during the first semester. The team considered this a suitable approach to induct students into the academic study abroad setting in London as it provides targeted scaffolding.

61 All students receive a series of 'Preparing for London' emails prior to their journey to London. These emails cover various topics, including the academic and pastoral support available to students in a manner the team considered to be timely and easily digestible. Students have access to a range of mental health support via the FIE, such as an associated counsellor and mental health first aiders. Student feedback reported that these services were being used, and the FIE staff would regularly signpost students to the appropriate sources for mental health support.

62 As part of the academic support provision, students can access 1-to-1 tutorials with a Writing Support Tutor. These tutorials provide support on a wide range of academic skills, such as referencing, evaluating research, and working to develop and clarify arguments. The Writing Support Tutors who spoke to the review team noted the iterative and formative nature of the support. Students, who had used the Writing Support Tutors, valued the offering and reported a noticeable difference in their confidence and academic performance as a result of the writing support sessions. The review team considers the extra-curricular 1-to-1 academic skills workshops provided by the Writing Support Tutors that improve students' skills and confidence to be good practice.

63 Prior to arrival in London, students are asked to notify FIE of any necessary requests for academic accommodations (reasonable adjustments), for example, for reasons relating to disability. The FIE considers the documentation received, such as the agreed accommodations at the student's home university, determines the adjustments it can offer, and notifies the student. Students are then asked to notify the teaching staff of the agreed accommodations. Staff and students, however, both noted some difficulties arising from the requirement of the student to notify the faculty member. For instance, the team heard from students who initially felt 'intimidated' about starting the dialogue with teaching staff, although the letter sent to students indicates that FIE staff can help facilitate these conversations upon request. Staff members also reported instances where they learned of the agreed accommodations relatively late in the programme and thus had to make particular efforts to ensure that appropriate support mechanisms were put in place. While the team concluded the process to be generally functional and achieved the desired result of

supporting students with specific requirements, the review team recommends that FIE review the process of communicating agreed academic accommodations to faculty to ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are put in place for students in a timely manner.

64 The team reviewed a sample of CVs for staff who routinely support students and found the staff to be appropriately trained with sufficient prior experience to support students with specific needs and requirements. Additionally, staff engage in an annual appraisal and objective setting cycle which helps inform their ongoing professional development. This has recently been exemplified through staff attendance at mental health training workshops, and The Student Services Organisation (AMOSSHE) conferences on reasonable adjustments.

65 FIE also facilitates internships with organisations in London for students who enrol on their International Internship Course and International Service Internship Course. Students taking the internship courses are supported pre-placement and during their internship by an Internship Advisor at FIE. Once in London, this support initially takes the form of an orientation session covering interview skills and cultural workplace expectations. Students considered the placement orientation session to suitably advise on the necessary arrangements. Students also receive ongoing support from an FIE Internship Advisor and a Site-based Supervisor (who is employed by the placement organisation) during their placement. Students reported that the FIE offers thorough and dynamic advice and/or practical support when students encounter issues during their placement. Supervisors at the internship organisations are provided with a handbook which clearly outlines the purpose of their role and expectations.

66 FIE recognises the benefits of activities outside of the formal curriculum and this is illustrated through the variety of opportunities available for students. Students reported engagement in field trips to places in the UK with historical and cultural significance. Students also shared examples of activities run to promote their sense of belonging and wider skills, such as painting. The team considered these initiatives to complement their formal studies well and students noted that FIE was responsive to suggestions of complementary activities.

67 Overall, the review team concluded that FIE provides a framework of support for students that enables them to have a high-quality learning experience and achieve their potential as they progress in their studies. The support structure scaffolds the academic, personal and professional learning journey, enabling students to recognise and articulate their progress and achievement. FIE, therefore, is **aligned** with the Sector-Agreed Principle.

## Principle 11: Teaching, learning and assessment

**Providers facilitate a collaborative and inclusive approach that enables students to have a high-quality learning experience and to progress through their studies. All students are supported to develop and demonstrate academic and professional skills and competencies. Assessment employs a variety of methods, embodying the values of academic integrity, producing outcomes that are comparable across the UK and recognised globally.**

### Findings

68 The FIE Learning and Teaching Strategy which is set out in the Faculty Handbook is underpinned by the FIE Principles of Instructional Excellence which aspire to “provide instruction that is rigorous and aligned with [FIE’s] values, bringing together a diverse set of students and faculty. FIE seeks to actively support faculty members in providing excellent teaching and learning opportunities to students, creating a student-centred, accessible, inclusive and adaptive teaching environment, with research led teaching, emphasising experiential learning”.

69 FIE offers a range of flexible opportunities for students to study on the London Campus - “Study”, “Study and Internship” or “Study and Service Internship”. The period of study is variable and can be for a semester, quarter, a summer or one academic year. The programme options or “concentrations” include Social Enterprise, Leadership and Comparative Public Health, and Diversity and Sustainability. Details of these programme options are clearly articulated on the FIE website. The course catalogue, also on the website, provides an overview of the courses available, and students can study a range of courses depending on their programme. These may be determined by their sending institution or by the student. Students receive credit either from the sending institution or from one of the SORs for the successful completion of courses/programmes of study. All courses and programmes are designed to provide direct articulation with the sending university.

70 FIE encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning through the emphasis on experiential learning which includes a range of different internship options, site visits and guest speakers. The “Experiential Education Team” effectively oversees internships. The review team considers the emphasis on experiential learning which enables students to take responsibility for their own learning and to take an active role in shaping and enhancing the learning process to be good practice.

71 Course templates provide clear information on the intended learning outcomes, curriculum content, assessment and resources. All courses have Assignment Level Learning Outcomes (ALLOs), designed to “demonstrate to students the constructive alignment between their academic output and the learning outcomes of the course.” The ALLOs include specific rubric for grading each assignment and are designed to ensure consistent grading outcomes across classes, terms, and instructors. Students access to these through FIE’s virtual learning environment. Programme levels follow those of the American education system and are defined as “upper” or “lower division”. A description of each level and its characteristics is set out in the FIE Course Levels document.

72 Staff indicated that they use a range of different assessment metrics which include presentations, portfolios and essays. Staff support students through the assessment process by providing feedback opportunities after classes and through continuous assessment metrics such as portfolios. Students confirmed that they receive effective feedback on their assessments, and that their tutors are accessible, enabling them to understand why a grade

has been awarded and how they can improve their future assessment grades. FIE does not have a system of second marking or moderation, but a sample of assessed work is cross marked as part of the peer review of new faculty members to ensure consistency in the marking process.

73 Students confirmed that they are familiar with the FIE Academic Integrity Policy which describes the various forms of academic misconduct, and sets out the penalties. Good academic practice is discussed during orientation and further guidance is given as part of the assessment process and by the “Writer in Residence”. Students confirmed that they are given clear guidance on referencing and the penalties for plagiarism and using AI for their assessments. Teaching staff indicated that they monitor student progress in class assessments to help to mitigate against academic misconduct.

74 Reasonable adjustments to the assessment process (known as accommodations) are available for students who have submitted evidence of requiring extra support for their learning and assessments. This endorses the inclusive approach to learning adopted by FIE. Staff and students confirmed that they are familiar with the policy.

75 There is a rigorous process for selecting faculty which includes an interview. Faculty resumes demonstrate that they are appropriately qualified and are research active. Several members of faculty are currently completing PhDs. Faculty indicated that their research informs their teaching, and contributes to the development of new courses, such as “Representations and Realities of British Women’s Lives since 1850”. The Faculty Handbook contains a clear policy in relation to research. FIE supports staff research and reimburses conference fees.

76 FIE has a policy of annual appraisal which is clearly defined in the Employee handbook. Examples of appraisal forms provided for the review team indicate that the process is tracked, uniformly implemented and rigorous. Faculty undertake peer review and indicated it gave them an opportunity to share best practice. Staff are also involved in a mentoring scheme where more senior members of staff support new or more junior staff to assess their progress towards meeting the goals they were set at the beginning of the year or during the appraisal process. Staff spoke positively of this scheme.

77 Staff development is supported by FIE and faculty and administrative staff can apply for their fees to be paid for training courses and other staff development activities. During 2024, staff attended a range of training events including mental health workshops, cybersecurity and risk assessment.

78 FIE has a coherent approach to technology which positively impacts learning, teaching and assessment. It has developed a “Focus on Artificial Intelligence” and the Senior Director of Quality and Enhancement participates in the Forum on Education Abroad’s Academic Leadership Community of Practice which is developing a project focused on AI. Multi-media touchscreen technology has recently been installed in all classrooms and staff and students spoke enthusiastically about its use and flexibility to enhance the learning experience. The review team concludes that the effective use of multi-media screens which enable faculty to provide a high-quality learning experience to be **good practice**.

79 Overall, the review team concluded that FIE provides an inclusive and high-quality learning, teaching and assessment environment with an emphasis on experiential learning, which is supported by appropriately qualified academic staff enabling students to demonstrate their academic and professional skills and competencies. FIE, therefore, is **aligned** with the Sector-Agreed Principle.

## Principle 12: Operating concerns, complaints and appeals processes

**Providers operate processes for complaints and appeals that are robust, fair, transparent and accessible, and clearly articulated to staff and students. Policies and processes for concerns, complaints and appeals are regularly reviewed and the outcomes are used to support the enhancement of provision and the student experience.**

### Findings

80 FIE works in partnership with the US universities who recruit students to its programmes and award the credit for each course. Within this partnership, FIE has overall responsibility for appeals and complaints.

81 The FIE Complaints and Appeals Policy outlines what can and cannot be considered during an academic appeal. These grounds for appeal comprise clerical and calculation errors. The academic appeals and complaints procedure is formed of three stages (early resolution, formal resolution, and review). During the early resolution stage, students are encouraged to contact the faculty member who taught and assessed the course to seek further feedback as to how the faculty member arrived at the awarded mark/grade. In line with the policy and advice to staff in the Faculty Handbook, during this stage the faculty member should provide further feedback to the student, correct any clerical and calculation errors, and signpost students to FIE's Academic Team if they wish to pursue a formal appeal.

82 An inconsistency was noticed in the application of the early resolution procedure in the appeal reviewed. The Policy states that 'students are made aware during their orientation that appeals made purely on the basis of a different estimation of the quality of their work will not be successful' However, evidence reviewed by the team demonstrated a faculty member had amended a student's awarded mark for a reason not permitted in the policy. When this discrepancy was presented to FIE's senior staff, they noted that this would be permitted practice as each faculty member was solely responsible for awarding marks and thus was permitted to amend them if they considered a new mark to be more reflective of the work. The team considered this procedure unsound as it may facilitate an environment where faculty amend awarded marks as a result of student persuasion, in a domain which has no oversight from the Academic Team or senior staff to ensure that the policy is being applied consistently. This discrepancy could indicate that more training for staff who engage in the early resolution stage may be beneficial to ensure that staff understand their role, responsibilities, and limitations in relation to academic appeals.

83 Additionally, the team considers the lack of transparency regarding the ability for students to appeal on academic judgement contributes to an unfair appeals process. The team considers there to be a reasonable assumption that some students have not appealed on academic judgement grounds on the basis that the policy explicitly notes that appeals for this reason will not be considered. Whereas, a student who chooses to pursue appeals on academic judgement grounds nonetheless had their appeal considered at the early resolution stage which resulted in a material change to their mark.

84 Furthermore, FIE's Complaints and Appeals Policy advises students that they may be able to appeal further to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) following unsuccessful internal appeals. FIE students would not be able to pursue appeal/complaint reviews through the OIA as FIE are not members of the scheme. Therefore, the team **recommends** that FIE remove the reference to the OIA from the

Complaints and Appeals Policy and reviews application of the early resolution process for assessment appeals to ensure that it is transparent and fair for all students and revises the appeals policy to clarify the parameters in which academic judgement-based amendments may be made at the early resolution stage of an appeal.

85 The team considers FIE's Complaints and Appeals Policy to be accessible to students. Students confirmed that they are aware of the policy, know how to access the policy, and felt comfortable approaching staff members for advice should they wish to initiate a complaint or appeal. The policy provides a simple and clear graphic which indicates the progression through each complaint/appeal stage, what is considered at each stage, and the associated timeline. The team is satisfied that the complaints and appeals procedures are conducted within the relevant timescale. The team and students considered the outcomes of student complaints to be proportionate and effectively resolved via the early resolution route. Additionally, FIE reviews the outcomes of concerns and complaints at its Teaching and Learning Committee to promote enhancement throughout the provider.

86 Overall, the review team concluded that FIE operates complaints processes which are accessible to students, clearly articulated and effectively enacted by staff. However, the team also concluded that, whilst accessible, the appeals process does have discrepancies during the implementation of the early resolution procedure which could impact the integrity and transparency of the process. However, despite this, the review team concluded that overall FIE is **aligned** with the Sector-Agreed Principle.



## Enhancement initiatives

### Commentary on institutional approach to enhancement

87 The FIE takes a strategic approach to enhancement through its academic committee structure and management team. The AAC supports enhancement initiatives and is chaired by the Director of Programmes. The Provost of FIE is a member of AAC and is responsible for taking actions through FIE Leadership. FIE has a number of Standing Committees to manage specific areas of enhancement relating to the delivery of programmes and the student experience. A clearly defined set of policies and procedures supports the development of enhancement initiatives.

88 The responsibility for monitoring, evaluating, and enhancing provisions internally is allocated to the senior management of FIE who are supported by the formal structure of Standing Committees, working groups and AAC. FIE collects written feedback from students and also offers them an annual round-the-table discussion where they are invited to raise any issues, concerns or queries regarding the programmes or their overall experience at FIE. FIE then improves and enhances its provisions in response to students' feedback and those are recorded in the feedback review and actions form. Actions suggested by student feedback are added to the Feedback Review and Actions Spreadsheet. As students are only at FIE for a short time, the Feedback Process Guide details how the voices of previous students are shared with current students so that current students can directly benefit from the engagement of previous students.

89 Examples of recent enhancement activities include a new course catalogue that highlights FIE's embedded values into the curriculum, the diversity, equity, inclusion and sustainability themes for courses and internships, the Writer in Residence initiative, and the creation of a podcast, the social media strategy to communicate with students more effectively, the incorporation of the impact of artificial intelligence into the Academic Integrity Policy and the review of all policies and procedures to ensure they are student centred.

90 The Academic Integrity Policy covers topics such as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorised collaboration, and participation in academically dishonest activities. Faculty are trained in academic integrity, and this is also detailed in the Faculty Handbook along with expectations in relation to artificial intelligence.

91 FIE recently did a review of its virtual learning environment to ensure it is user-friendly and fit for purpose and to facilitate communication and dissemination of learning materials between students and faculty. In addition, FIE has recently invested in multimedia screens in all classrooms to enhance teaching methodology and the student experience. Mandatory staff and faculty training has been provided in the use of this new technology.

92 In summary, FIE actively looks for opportunities to enhance the student experience and has systems in place to monitor and review their effectiveness.

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