



Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight: report of the monitoring visit of Educational Programmes Abroad, May 2017

Section 1: Outcome of the monitoring visit

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

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA review

2 There have been no significant changes since the 2016 QAA review. The number of students on the London summer, fall and spring programmes in academic year 2016-17 was 21. The number of students on the Edinburgh spring and fall programmes during the same period was 39, giving a total of 60 students for the academic year 2016-17. This compares with 55 for the academic year 2015-16.

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The QAA review in 2016 identified three areas of good practice, two advisable recommendations and three desirable recommendations.

4 In terms of the good practice, EPA has continued to engage a subject expert for the summer programme, but has also introduced a process whereby student feedback is given to the Professor on the programme, requiring him to act on any issues. Feedback to date has highlighted how satisfied the students are with the programme and no issues have been raised.

5 Students continue to be provided with effective and proactive support from before their application to the completion of the programme. Student feedback continues to be collected in the middle and at the end of the semester about internships, housing, pre-orientation, orientation and any general comments. Students met by the review panel stated they felt very well supported and gave two examples of this. The first was that after the terrorist attack at Westminster, the London Programme Director immediately phoned all the students to ensure that they were well and continued to do so for a few days afterwards. Another example given was that when the snap election was called, one internship had to end and the London Programme Director quickly found an alternative internship for the student involved.

6 EPA continues to find internships which are highly relevant to the students' career aspirations and students are extremely positive about their experiences. All the students continue to be visited by the London Programme Director halfway through their internships for a progress meeting. Since the 2016 review, EPA has also introduced a number of procedures to strengthen internships further. These include marking guidelines for students, supervisor guidelines to ensure consistency across internships, and a self-assessment guide for students. Although the students met by the panel seemed unclear how their internship was assessed by their supervisor, they were clear that their home university would grade their internship on the basis of a 20 page journal which they had to complete.

7 The first advisable recommendation was to consider ways of recording formally the monitoring of programmes to create a cycle of quality improvement. The delivery of modules continues to be undertaken by The University of Westminster and Edinburgh Napier University and be approved by the students' home institutions. Agreements between EPA Inc, EPA, the US institutions, and the UK universities outline the responsibilities for quality and standards. EPA is responsible for monitoring the internship and seeking student feedback on the programme. It does this using a variety of mechanisms including formally seeking student feedback mid-semester and at the end of each programme, and by reacting quickly to informal feedback from students. The London and Edinburgh Programme Directors are in regular contact via telephone and email to discuss the programmes. Since the 2016 review visit, EPA has also introduced an annual meeting of all Programme Directors. This is a significant development and allows good practice to be shared. This annual meeting has now been written into EPA's annual budget.

8 The second advisable recommendation was to introduce second marking for the summer programme to bring the process in line with the fall and spring programmes. A second marker has been identified and, in conjunction with the London Programme Director, will draw up guidelines for second marking ready for the forthcoming summer programme.

9 The first desirable recommendation - that of producing a document for internship supervisors - has been completed. This requires the supervisor to grade the student on a number of areas, including attendance and punctuality, rapport with staff members, willingness to perform tasks, maturity and professionalism in the workplace, the ability to communicate orally and in writing, the ability to work without supervision, and the ability to work effectively with clients and/or the public. The feedback given by the supervisor is sent back to the student's home institution and helps inform that institution's grading of the student internship.

10 The second desirable recommendation was to check that all terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout all documentation. While the annual return states that students study at NVQ level 6, the panel learned that this terminology was used only for the purposes of UKVI applications and not in any documentation meant for EPA staff, students or partners. The panel did not identify any other inaccurate or inconsistent use of terminology in EPA's documentation.

11 The third desirable recommendation was to update social media guidelines on an annual basis. This is now done by the EPA Inc Executive Director in the United States. Although social media guidelines have been given to students, the 2016 review panel discovered that they had not been updated since 2014. The current panel saw evidence that the guidelines have been updated and are now checked for accuracy by the EPA Inc Executive Director. The last check took place in February 2017.

12 The process for admissions is mapped against *Chapter B2* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). Information about selection and recruitment is made available to students through the EPA application process, and is made available to the US universities which provide the students and the UK universities that teach them. The information is checked by EPA Inc in the United States. The selection criteria are rigorous and consist of a Grade Point Average of 3.00 or more, official transcripts from their home institution, a curriculum vitae outlining relevant work experience, and two academic references.

13 The processes for annual quality monitoring of programmes and student engagement have been noted in previous paragraphs, for example the opportunities

for informal feedback from students and the formal mid-semester and end-of-programme evaluations.

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

14 As part of the annual return, EPA mapped its processes against *Chapter B2* and *Chapter B5* of the Quality Code, and the relevant indicators. Academic standards are set by the home institutions, and modules provided by The University of Westminster and Edinburgh Napier University are approved as being of appropriate standard by them. The summer programme is approved by the students' home institutions.

15 EPA is a member of AASAP, which is the organisation representing US study abroad providers. The London Director has attended a numbers of meetings including ways of introducing students to British life and culture, and one on helping students achieve international understanding.

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

16 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.

17 The monitoring visit was carried out by Mr Lee Smith, QAA Officer, and Professor Debbie Lockton, review panel member on 16 May 2017.

QAA1890 - R8222 - Jun 17

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557050
Web www.qaa.ac.uk