This review method is ESG-compliant

Educational Oversight Review

IES Abroad London

February 2025

Contents

About this review **1**
Executive summary **2**
Conclusions 3
Financial sustainability, management and governance 3
Partial Review Conclusions 3
Explanation of the findings – Sector-Agreed Principles **4**
Principle 1: Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards. 4
Principle 3: Resourcing delivery of a high-quality learning experience 5
Principle 4: Using data to inform and evaluate quality. 7
Principle 5: Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision. 9
Principle 7: Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes. 11
Principle 9: Recruiting, selecting and admitting students. 13
Principle 10: Supporting students to achieve their potential. 14
Principle 11: Teaching, learning and assessment. 16
Principle 12: Operating concerns, complaints and appeals processes. 18
Enhancement initiatives **19**
Commentary on institutional approach to enhancement 19
Addendum: Partial Review 21

About this review

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

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 24 February 2025 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Liz Crolley (Reviewer)
- Professor Sabine Spangenberg (Reviewer)
- Mr Matthew Kitching (Student reviewer).

The QAA Officer for this review was Dr Roshani Swift.

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

IES Abroad is a study abroad provider, founded in 1950, which now consists of 250 consortium universities. There are 32 IES Abroad centres of which IES Abroad London is one of the largest. Its mission and ethos is to ‘educate students to become global citizens through premier study abroad and internship programmes, which offer students worldwide experiential learning opportunities’. Grades awarded to IES Abroad students in London are transferred back to their home universities, and students can opt to take one of their five courses at one of three London partner universities under formal contractual agreements – Queen Mary’s University, London: City St George’s University, London or The London School of Contemporary Dance.

Priorities for IES Abroad London going forward are an increase in staff to address planned growth in student numbers, and a rolling implementation of new software systems. Student enrolments for 2024 were 282 and for 2025, 278. IES Abroad London employs five full time senior managers, seven managers (6.60 full time equivalent) and three full-time staff. There are also 64 academic staff all of whom are employed on a sessional basis.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which IES Abroad London 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, updated January 2025). IES Abroad London provided the review team with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence. During the review visit, which took place on 24 February 2025, the review team held a total of three meetings with the Senior team and representatives of partner universities; students; and academic and professional staff and observed the facilities and resources.

In summary, the team found three examples of good practice and identified one recommendation for improvement.

Conclusions

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at IES Abroad London.

The QAA review team determines that IES Abroad London:

- **requires action to meet** the Home Office's quality assurance requirements for educational oversight in respect of Sector-Agreed Principle 12 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

Good practice

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

- The way in which resources are allocated to ensure staff receive ongoing professional development to support and enhance the delivery of a high-quality student learning experience **(Sector Agreed Principle 3)**.
- The extensive range of pre-arrival support provided to students **(Sector Agreed Principle 9)**.
- The expansive programme of co-curricular and social activities that enriches the student experience **(Sector Agreed Principle 10)**.

Recommendations

Where the provider requires action to meet the Home Office's requirements for educational oversight the QAA review team makes the following recommendation:

- Ensure within six months that the recently developed complaints policy is aligned with best practice advice and guidance and disseminated fully across the student body **(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 IES Abroad London is that **no** material issues were identified.

Partial Review Conclusions

Following the original review judgement that IES Abroad London requires action to meet the Home Office's quality assurance requirements for educational oversight, a Partial Review was conducted in accordance with the procedure outlined in the guidance for Educational Oversight Review (July 2024). The QAA review team reached the following conclusion about the higher education provision at IES Abroad London.

The QAA review team determines that IES Abroad London:

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

For further information, please refer to the Partial Review addendum at the end of this document.

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 The strategic approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality is embedded across IES Abroad London in a series of key practices. There is a robust system of academic standards and quality assurance in place, overseen by the Academic Council and the Curriculum Committee, and framed by academic policies for programme approval and monitoring. The course development process is set out in an agreed policy document which sets the timelines for curriculum review. These policies are supported by guidance on areas including long-term planning, and the academic balance and focus of individual programmes.

2 The strategic approach to quality and standards is embedded in day-to-day operations through monthly all staff meetings and academic leadership forum meetings, both of which demonstrably disseminate strategy, policy and other initiatives to the whole IES Abroad community and include tailored agendas and the opportunity for participants to ask questions. The value and importance of this approach was confirmed during the review visit in the meeting with academic and professional staff, who highlighted collegiate developments within the broader culture and ethos of the institution.

3 The strategic approach to quality and standards of IES Abroad London aligns with its policy and practices on equality diversity and inclusion for students and staff. For students, IES Abroad London operates a deliberately targeted scholarship programme which focuses on students from under-represented groups. Public information on the website confirms the success of this and related initiatives, in that over one-third of the student community come from historically marginalised ethnic groups. The strategic approach to quality and standards of IES Abroad London includes specific aims of ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion, and facilitating access for students from historically marginalised ethnic groups. The Director of IES Abroad London is a member of the IES Abroad Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Council headed by a Vice Principal with specific responsibility for this area. The DEIA Task Force Report evidences the training in the development of inclusive curricula which took place, and the review team were able to identify examples of presentations on understanding what is meant by an inclusive education, and pedagogies of discomfort. This has enabled staff to be specifically aware of these areas in their teaching and learning practices, as part of a wider staff development. (see paragraph 7). The review team felt that these initiatives had a positive impact in terms of IES Abroad London's strategic approach to equality, diversity and inclusion.

4 Overall, the review team concluded that IES Abroad London is taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards, through its established committee structure, encompassing both IES Abroad and IES Abroad London, underpinned by a range of appropriate academic policies and procedures. IES Abroad London 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

5 IES Abroad's Model Assessment Practice for Study Abroad Programmes (IES Abroad MAP), provides guidance for overseeing the planning and monitoring of academic quality across the student journey, including pre-departure information, onsite cultural and academic orientation, quality of instruction and curriculum, language development and extra-curricular activities as well as return de-briefings. This constitutes comprehensive guidance for ensuring a high-quality learning experience throughout the student journey and is supported by a timeline. The team found that the timeline enables alignment of resources with the student journey through consideration and planning of appropriate teaching rooms, facilities, IT support and any additional costs. On an ongoing basis, IES Abroad London has a clear process to plan their provision each semester. The review of budgeting and resources aligns with the planning process and IT and technology are reviewed and updated as part of this process. The team found strong evidence of implementation of the planning approach through the introduction of a new programme which included planning for teaching spaces, facilities, staff resources as well as library resources. The team was made aware of the budgetary planning process which allows IES Abroad London to source additional funding in year to address changes. The team found that the resourcing and planning process was well aligned with the development and delivery of programmes.

6 IES Abroad London has its own facilities, teaching spaces and staff, though most of its academic staff are part-time and sessional. At the visit, the team confirmed that IT equipment was fit for purpose and IT support is available for staff and students. Areas identified for improvement identified by IES Abroad London included staff IT consultation and increased IT, audio visual support. Students have access to study resources for each individual module via the virtual learning environment (VLE) and access to internal, online and external reference libraries funded directly by IES Abroad London. In addition to library and online learning resources, students receive dedicated study skills sessions and have access to personal academic and professional services support during the semester. This provision ensures that students have equal access to appropriate resources and support. The agreement with partners includes a commitment to providing appropriate facilities such as textbooks, sufficiently equipped classrooms, computer facilities, library and web resources. There is also evidence of ensuring an inclusive approach to learning resources. In the Syllabus Guidelines staff are reminded to include readings from diverse perspectives, and the Engage Programme for student development while abroad (an extension of predeparture and onsite orientation programmes) encourages intercultural competence. One of the focuses of the forthcoming curriculum review is to reflect on the inclusive curriculum offered. Feedback from students and from staff evidence the impact in practice of the availability of resources and their inclusivity.

7 Staff have access to a range of resources to support and enhance the quality of delivery of their modules and programmes. The staff VLE is a 'one-stop' location for policies and procedures as well as academic resources. IES Abroad London provide staff with relevant training and updates on a regular basis to enhance the delivery of their provision. There is a IES Abroad London Faculty Lounge which is a dedicated space for resources on the staff intranet including resources and policies. The Centre of Excellence and Teaching

and Learning Abroad (CETLA) has a team of learning developers and information on activities and support is disseminated through a VLE page, newsletter and calendar of events. The team found that staff are encouraged to engage in continuing professional development (CPD) and can apply for funding to support this activity. During the visit, the review team heard specific examples of several members of staff using the funds to undertake CPD activities that contributed to the enhancement of the curriculum, learning and teaching. Students confirmed to the review team that staff are all very knowledgeable which confirms the impact of CPD activities. The way in which resources are allocated to ensure staff receive ongoing professional development to support and enhance the delivery of a high-quality student learning experience was noted as **good practice** by the review team.

8 IES Abroad London has a process in place to evaluate, monitor and review the effectiveness of the learning environment. Students can give their views via student surveys. The Student Evaluation Survey includes questions that relate specifically to learning resources within modules. Responses in the sample provided to the review team show that students are very satisfied with the use of technology in the learning process, though this sample was small. Students also responded positively to the statement that the tutor 'employed a variety of resources to create course content.' The End of Term Evaluation Comment Report also asks about resources and the physical learning spaces and facilities. While the feedback was mixed (including some comments about the dated nature of some facilities) no major issues were identified in the sample provided.

9 Overall, the review team concluded that the planning and processes in place ensure that IES Abroad London secures and maintains resources relating to learning, technology and facilities to enable delivery and enhancement of a high-quality learning experience. IES Abroad London therefore **is 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

10 There is a multi-layered approach to collecting, analysing and utilising data at IES Abroad. IES Abroad London collects, analyses and utilises quantitative and qualitative data at provider and module level. Students are offered the opportunity to provide feedback at mid-term, end of course and end of semester stages. This data is collected and analysed to enable IES Abroad London to understand and respond to the needs of their students in a timely way. Students are aware that this feedback is anonymous.

11 At the mid-term stage, students submit early module feedback relating to each course (module). This is reviewed by the Dean of Faculty and discussed with other members of staff, where appropriate. This enables changes to be made that can support students' learning early in the cycle. This survey is conducted and analysed locally, by IES Abroad London. At the end of the course, a Course Feedback Survey is circulated to students via central IES Abroad. All data is uploaded securely, and staff can see the data for their own module. The Dean also has access to all results and can discuss any emerging issues. Students complete an End of Semester Survey at the conclusion of their experience. This is administered via the central IES Abroad and covers the whole of the student experience. Results are shared with the Director of each IES Abroad centre, and any issues are shared with the programme team as appropriate. IES Abroad London also gathers qualitative feedback on their courses via meetings with student representatives.

12 Data and feedback are used to improve the learning experience for students. Examples provided included changes to course content, changes to course delivery to offer an extended orientation on the day of the onsite London academic orientation, review of the original course structure to provide additional support in the first half of the semester and changes to final assessments to include different format options, taking account of the different student backgrounds. The strategic curriculum review process provides for the use of data in respect of sector trends, demand data (enrolments) and benchmarking both within the IES Abroad provision, and more widely against perceived competitors and the UK Higher Education Sector.

13 The review team held detailed discussions about the provision of a Data Policy during the visit. As IES Abroad operates across several countries, who all have different data protection policies, there is no over-arching policy governing the use of data for the whole of IES Abroad. However, staff are very clear about what their responsibilities are in terms of data protection and UK GDPR requirements and have a Chief Data Officer who is responsible for working with local teams to ensure compliance with relevant legal requirements and regulations.

14 Students give IES Abroad the right to use and securely analyse their data on application. For students who study at partner institutions, a Memorandum of Understanding between, for example, IES Abroad London and Queen Mary's University London (QMUL) outlines the agreement to share data. IES Abroad London students sign an Authorisation for Release of Information as a condition of their participation in the programme, and this enables the two parties to share data.

15 Overall, the review team concluded that IES Abroad London collects, analyses and utilises qualitative and quantitative data at provider 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. IES Abroad London therefore **is 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

16 IES Abroad London's leadership team collaborates with central IES Abroad in the oversight of the processes for monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision. This is primarily achieved through seeking student feedback at various stages of their studies and experience, but IES Abroad London also consult externally with the members of their Consortium to ensure they enhance the provision. The team heard and reviewed evidence that these processes operate consistently at IES Abroad London.

17 IES Abroad London sets out its expectations and conducts regular student evaluations (see paragraph 11). This is driven partially from central IES Abroad but supported and complemented by IES Abroad London locally. There are locally organised orientation and mid-term surveys and centrally organised Course Feedback Evaluations and End of Semester surveys. Student representatives also ensure the student voice is represented at other times. Student representatives meet regularly with the Student Affairs team and Student Success Manager, who liaises with others as appropriate. Additionally, IES Abroad London has initiated its own curriculum review to evaluate the provision and specifically offer academic staff the opportunity to input into the process. This review (in the planning stage at the time of the review) includes a focus on 'inclusive excellence', promoting diversity, equality and accessibility in the learning environment.

18 The processes used for monitoring and evaluating activity are explicit in what is being evaluated and about what actions will take place as a result. IES Abroad London programmes and modules are subject to the strategic curriculum review process which considers teaching, learning and assessment at programme and course level. Staff also reflect on topics of diversity, equality and inclusion and aspects of sustainability within this process. IES Abroad London is keen to learn about the student experience more broadly to enhance their provision. In addition to the local midterm feedback survey to monitor the student learning experience, surveys on orientations and student housing are also conducted every semester by IES Abroad London staff.

19 The majority of feedback collation is devised, planned and administered centrally by IES Abroad, and shared with IES Abroad London through semester reports or, in the case of student feedback on teaching, with centre academic staff and individual lecturers. In terms of performance indicators, both overall course recommendation metrics and individual lecturer recommendation scores of no less than 4.0 are sought. These are disseminated to Centre Directors and where course feedback scores fall below the expected level, the Local Director will discuss with staff and devise an action plan to seek improvements. Training for completing student surveys takes place in London through staff onboarding and student representation. Staff and students are also reminded about the purpose of student surveys when they are circulated. An email accompanies the survey reminding students of the purpose and supporting them in how to complete the survey in a constructive manner. It also explains what happens to the results and reminds students about their anonymity.

20 The actions and outcomes from monitoring and evaluation activities are communicated in an accessible manner to staff and students. In practice, and given that the student

numbers are so small, this process mainly takes place informally. Most of the feedback that might necessitate action is communicated to staff through informal processes, in person and verbally in weekly meetings with student representatives. The team concluded that this is appropriate given the size and nature of the provision at IES Abroad London.

21 Improvements and enhancements have been implemented as a result of monitoring and evaluation, and these are, in turn, monitored and evaluated to ensure their impact is positive and remains fit for purpose. Staff provided examples of how they had adjusted the curriculum to accommodate the interests of particular cohorts of students. As modules run each semester, the iterative, continuous nature of the monitoring means that any impact of changes are reviewed regularly. Monitoring and evaluation activity facilitates insights and promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion via module surveys that ask a specific question about inclusivity and accessibility of resources. This will be strengthened further by the roll-out of the curriculum review (see paragraphs 6 and 17-18).

22 The IES Abroad Academic Council consists of representatives from the Consortium made up of over 250 US universities. IES Abroad draws on its Consortium of members to inform its decisions on the curriculum and to enhance its provision. This ensures that it remains up to date in the latest developments in higher education. It uses an appropriate forum to disseminate updated guidance and provides staff training workshops to influence good practice. Examples include the Diversity and Equality workshop initiatives, Inclusive Excellence training and Pedagogies of Discomfort training which serve to ensure IES Abroad London remains at the forefront of pedagogical innovation as it reviews its provision (see paragraph 7).

23 Overall, the review team concluded that IES Abroad London regularly monitors and reviews its 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. IES Abroad London therefore **is 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

24 The strategic approach to managing and securing quality and standards is published on the IES Abroad website. The Academic Governance webpage provides information about the IES Abroad General Conference and the academic governance committees, including the Academic Council and the Curriculum Committee. The role of the Academic Council is to oversee the IES Abroad programme quality assurance; while the Curriculum Committee is mandated to review all IES syllabi for compliance with MAP standards (see paragraph 5).

25 The general principles that govern the design, development, approval, modification and review of courses and programmes are laid out in the IES Abroad MAP. The guidelines for IES Abroad Standard Programmes provide information about the student learning experience requirements including curricular design; assessment and intercultural development; resources for academic and student support including academic advising; programme administration and development. Detailed policies and processes are made available to external stakeholders (including both the IES Abroad General Conference, and the Consortium of US Universities) in electronic format through the IES Abroad App. During the meeting with students, the review team was informed that students regularly use and refer to the app.

26 The process of course introduction and approval at IES Abroad London involves local staff and subsequent approval by the organisation-wide Curriculum Committee. Curriculum review is undertaken on a periodic basis and governed by a specific process and timeline. Major changes require review at the Curriculum Committee, including changes to pre-requisites, revision of course content, alteration of learning outcomes, changing the number of credits, or appointing a new instructor. Minor changes such as modifying one or more of the methods of assessments can be approved by the Assistant Vice Principal Academic Programmes. These minor changes are subsequently reported to the Curriculum Committee. Other minor changes such as the updating of the reading list are reviewed by the Centre Director and require no report to the Curriculum Committee. The academic and professional staff praised the agility of the process.

27 The Inclusive Excellence Training for staff provides guidance on course design with regards to the incorporation of diversity, equality, inclusion and sustainability. The training covers the creation of diverse learning environments through the curriculum and provides examples of inclusive curricula. The Course Revision Document defines the types of changes and the approval processes for each, and references ‘infusing more diverse perspectives or relevant global issues into the course through assigned readings, case studies, and course-related trips’ as a minor change which demonstrates explicit consideration of such issues.

28 The IES Abroad London Student Voice document sets out the London Centre Student Voice Representation Scheme to expand the student voice in service developments and feedback across all areas. Although the student involvement in the curricular design and

modification and approval process does not extend to formal student representation on decision-making bodies of the institution, the London Centre Student Representation Scheme encourages an enhanced involvement of students in all areas of activities including the academic provision. This extends to representatives encouraging and supporting students to identify potential course improvements and enhancements. Furthermore, the IES Abroad Course Evaluation Survey gives students the opportunity to feedback on opportunities provided through a course to consider diverse perspectives, learning through assessment, or any ways that the course could be improved to better support learning.

29 Overall, the review team concluded that IES Abroad London designs, develops, approves and modifies programmes and modules to ensure the quality of provision, and the academic standards of awards are consistent with the relevant Qualifications Framework. IES Abroad London 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

30 Students who apply to IES Abroad London submit either an application to their home school (provider) who will initially process applications to ensure they meet their study abroad requirements, make a direct enrolment application to programmes through the partner institution or submit an application to IES Abroad London for consideration by the institution through its admissions processes. IES Abroad employ dedicated College Relations Managers (CRMs) who work directly with schools, travelling regularly onsite to meet with home school coordinators and advisors and ensuring they remain fully up to date regarding all London programmes and application and admission requirements.

31 The direct application process for admissions at IES Abroad London focuses on verifying transcripts, Grade Point Average (GPA) requirements, class standing, and programme-specific criteria. An IES Abroad London Global Enrolment Management (GEM) Specialist confirms that students meet the programme GPA requirements before they are admitted. Partners also require students to submit a range of additional documentation, including personal academic statements and tuition disclaimers. The team concluded that these admissions procedures are transparent, fair and inclusive, as they apply clear and consistent criteria.

32 The institution has an established Admissions Committee, composed of staff across departments, that reviews applications when a GEM Specialist is unauthorised to make an admissions decision. This includes students with a GPA below 2.75 for semester programmes or under 2.5 for summer programmes. Direct Enrolment programme applications are not considered by the Admissions Committee, as GEM Specialists have the authority to automatically reject those with GPAs below the required threshold. Decisions are communicated by the admissions committee chair to applicable programme teams and if additional information is needed, a committee member contacts the student directly.

33 Students receive considerable support and guidance during the application and pre-arrival process. At the time of pre-registration, the IES London Academic Manager contacts all students and provides advice on available courses and other particulars about the student's chosen programme. The Academic Manager works with students to ensure they receive full approval for selected modules from their home school major/minor department. Staff in London also provide virtual pre-departure orientation, which includes information about institutional policies, classes and grading. Students informed the team that they considered they were effectively briefed about travel, housing and healthcare prior to arrival in the UK. The team therefore considers that the extensive range of pre-arrival support provided to students is a feature of **good practice**.

34 Overall, the review team concluded that IES Abroad London has established admissions procedures, and demonstrable and effective involvement from central IES Abroad and partner institutions. The range of pre-arrival support is significant and valued by students. IES London 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

35 IES Abroad London provides a range 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 IES Abroad London Centre Director is responsible for the support provision available at London and works in close collaboration with senior and programme staff to implement the institution's approach.

36 Support provision commences prior to admission, with staff from Global Enrolment Management (GEM) conducting online sessions with new students to familiarise them with academic policies, processes and support services (see paragraph 33). Students confirmed that these sessions made it clear what support was available to them during their studies and that further information was provided as part of the physical induction. Onsite support for students is provided by a range of additional staff and departments. Including programme staff who assist with academic queries and wellbeing assistance. The Student Affairs Department are responsible for organising co-curricular programmes and students can also seek assistance from the Diversity Department, who help to ensure that IES Abroad provision is inclusive.

37 The team found that IES Abroad London adopt a tailored approach to student support and wellbeing and in assisting students with special educational needs. Central IES Abroad collate and provide information to the London centre about individual students' specific needs, for example on health grounds, and this information is recorded on student files. The local London Student Affairs team then ensures these students receive ongoing support as needed. The team were provided with examples of reasonable adjustments that are granted and agreed with students, based on the accommodations the home school stipulates. Once agreed, this information is shared with staff to ensure accommodations are put into practice. The team also found that additional academic support is offered at certain points during the semester, for example academic writing labs are scheduled before midterms and final assessments.

38 IES Abroad London confirmed that academic operations are mapped out in semester and academic year timelines, ensuring that all tasks are carried out in a timely manner. The timeline includes specific actions to ensure that students are familiarised with the VLE, co-curricular programme, support services and additional sources of information. The team considered that the timeline provides a detailed and granular foundation to ensure communication about support interventions are implemented at suitable intervals throughout students' studies. Similarly, Student Affairs send timely communications about their extensive calendar of events and activities, with reminders at pre-set times during the semester cycle. Further communication about student support provision is provided by the Student Success Manager, who creates a weekly student newsletter (see paragraph 40).

39 The team determined that the institution provides appropriate training and support for staff with responsibility to provide student support. This includes sessions delivered by central IES Abroad for staff at local centres, including London. The team found that examples include training on IT new systems, specific updates for VLE administrators, and

dedicated training for centre-based Student Affairs staff to better support students with specific needs and requirements.

40 The team found that the IES Abroad London Student Affairs team offers students a comprehensive programme of co-curricular activities, that includes an event series focused on community, culture, and diversity in London, excursions and field trips, as well as wellbeing and life skills support, providing students with a holistic approach to learning and skills development, while complementing their academic programme. Students commented on the developmental nature of this programme and the extent to which it enhanced their experience and complemented their academic studies. The team therefore considers the expansive programme of co-curricular and social activities that enriches the student experience to be a feature of **good practice**.

41 Overall, the review team concluded that students are provided with a wide range of effective pre-departure and onsite support. This comprises assistance for students with disabilities, academic and welling support. Students also benefit from an extensive co-curricular offer. IES Abroad London 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

42 The IES Abroad London approach to learning, teaching and assessment is set out in syllabus guidelines and the syllabus examples considered by the review team demonstrate the alignment of teaching, learning and assessment through the teaching schedule and modes of delivery, the learning outcomes and the assessment types, weightings and requirements. The syllabus template writing guidelines specify the information that the syllabus needs to contain. The guidelines further provide examples of formative and summative assessments. The syllabus is made available on the website which is signposted to students during the orientation session. Furthermore, course information is provided to students via the VLE. Staff are further supported in assessment through the IES Abroad London Grading Rubric

43 The IES Abroad London staff recruitment and training approach supports a commitment to teaching, learning and assessment processes. The process of recruiting staff through essential criteria in job descriptions and interview topics confirm that IES Abroad London aims to provide learning and assessment that is informed by research and/or scholarship. The IES Abroad London staff induction process includes information about the student profile, student expectations, and guidance to staff on assessment requirements. Ongoing training is in place (see paragraph 7) and includes an Assessment for Learning workshop which focused on learning through assessment, engages with formative and summative assessment settings and links with learning outcomes.

44 Assessment literacy of students is enabled through feedback and feedforward on assessments which is exemplified through the examples considered by the review team that demonstrated feedback on the assessment and incorporated ideas to further develop learning. The review team were informed that the high number of assessments components provides a variety of assessment methods and were able to confirm that these assessment options were part of the syllabus.

45 IES Abroad London offers alternative forms of assessments for students with academic accommodations as defined in the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure. During the meeting with students, the team was informed that the respective information was accessible through the IES Abroad App.

46 The IES Abroad Code of Student Responsibility contains four parts: IES Abroad Academic Integrity Code; the Academic Integrity Code Violation Review Practice, the Student Code of Conduct, the Judicial Procedures. The Code sets out that students take responsibility for their own actions or failure to act. IES Abroad London enables students to take responsibility for their own learning through a variety of means. The IES Abroad Academic Policy require students to actively attend classes, be responsible for the submission of extenuating circumstances claims and timely submission of assessments. The team noted that definitions of student responsibilities are clear and facilitate their progress through their studies.

47 The IES Abroad Academic Integrity Code requires students to undertake their academic work honestly. The Integrity Code addresses violations of academic integrity. IES Abroad London has also taken action to provide students and staff with guidance regarding the use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), including an AI Guidance document and a course work cover sheet. Although it was noted that IES London does not subscribe to any anti-plagiarism software, the academic staff confirmed that they teach small courses and generally know their students and are therefore able to detect academic dishonesty. The team concurred that the guidance provided was clear, and appropriately accessible.

48 IES Abroad London addresses employability through its internship seminar for all internship students, focused on skills building in critical thinking, cultural intelligence, cross-cultural communication, career planning, and introduction to characteristics of the host nation's workplace culture. In addition, the Engage programme serves as an advising programme for all students to develop skills for meeting personal, intercultural and career goals which are arranged as five sessions with an associated impact assessment. Students spoke positively about these programmes and their impact during their time in London.

49 IES Abroad London makes use of its VLE to enable students to recognise the progression that they have made. The senior team confirmed that student progress is checked fortnightly, and that academic or pastoral support provided if necessary. In addition, attendance monitoring acts as a system to identify any potential issues. The team considered that these systems and processes are robust and welcomed by the students.

50 Overall, the review team concluded that IES Abroad London facilitate a collaborative and inclusive approach to learning, teaching and assessment that enables students to have a high-quality learning experience and to progress through their studies. IES Abroad London 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

51 IES Abroad London has policies that outline the rights of IES Abroad students, a Code of Student Responsibility, and an Academic Integrity Code. Arrangements for breaches of these codes and grade appeals are established and appropriate. These are accessible to students via the intranet and are introduced during induction. In terms of grading appeals, there is an IES Abroad wide policy, and the Dean of Faculty investigates and rules on any incoming grade appeals. Appeals relating to recruitment, selection and admission are dealt with by IES Abroad in consultation with the London Dean. At IES Abroad London, outcomes from concerns and appeals are regularly used to develop and enhance the teaching, learning and wider student experience.

52 At the time of the visit, the institution did not have a formal approved complaints policy or procedure that enabled students to raise concerns about aspects of their experience that they deemed to be deficient or to require action. IES Abroad London maintains an open-door policy and students are advised at orientation as to where they can raise concerns depending on the nature of the issue. Students confirmed that they would feel able to raise an issue with staff but were unaware of any formal complaints process. The team determined that current arrangements lack clarity and transparency, and that the absence of a formal procedure has prevented it from being clearly articulated to staff and students. Similarly, the absence of such a procedure meant that IES Abroad London were unable to provide examples where reviews of complaints have led to the enhancement of provision and the student experience. In addition, the team were informed by one partner higher education institution that complaints relating to activity at a partner institution would need to be considered through the partner complaints procedures initially. Therefore, the team determined that information pertaining to the delineation of responsibilities regarding complaints between IES London and partner institution was not formally established nor accessible for staff and students.

53 IES Abroad London recognised and acknowledged the gap in its complaints process and codified existing practice which clearly defines informal and formal complaints and incorporates an appeal stage before completion of the visit. The team found that the process stages did not include timeframes for resolution, transparency of principles in conducting investigation nor of delineation between IES Abroad London and partner institution complaints processes, where students experience an issue while working for the internship providers. The team therefore **recommends** that IES Abroad London ensure within six months that the recently developed complaints policy is aligned with best practice advice and guidance and disseminated fully across the student body.

54 Overall, the review team concluded that while the institution has clear, established and effective processes for academic integrity, grade appeals and student conduct, there is an absence of a formal and comprehensive complaints process that was transparent and accessible to students. IES Abroad London therefore **is not aligned** with the Sector-Agreed Principle.

Enhancement initiatives

Commentary on institutional approach to enhancement

55 Both IES Abroad and IES Abroad London have processes and activities to support the management of academic delivery and standards and their resourcing. Specific resources have been allocated to ensure academic standards and to pursue quality enhancement, and in the current programme cycle these relate to the introduction of second marking and moderation guidelines and Generative AI and Assessment Guidelines. There is continuing staff training, including workshops and webinars each semester on enhancement-related approaches (see paragraph 7). These are indicative of an institutional approach which prioritises the student learning experience as an area for enhancement.

56 There is a consistent, coherent and evidence-informed approach to the collection, storage and management of data (see paragraphs 10-15) which underpins the approach to the maintenance of academic standards and the assurance and enhancement of quality. For example, enhancements to the moderation of assessments were made as a direct consequence of data-led reviews of assessment processes.

57 Funding of continual professional development (CPD) activities has contributed to the enhancement of the student learning experience, including investment in the Virtual Faculty Lounge for IES Abroad London staff which is evidence of a commitment of resource into quality enhancement. Regular and relevant staff training organised both at organisation-wide and London centre level, ensures the support and enhancement of the student learning experience (see paragraph 7).

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Partial Review Addendum

IES Abroad London

September 2025

About this review

This is a record of a Partial Review, conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) of IES Abroad London.

The Partial Review took place on 11th September 2025 and was conducted by the following reviewers:

- Professor Liz Crolley (Reviewer)
- Professor Sabine Spangenberg (Reviewer)
- Mr Matthew Kitching (Student reviewer).

The QAA Officer for this review was Dr Roshani Swift.

In Partial Review, the QAA reviewers:

- Determine an outcome against the Sector-Agreed Principle which received a requires-action judgement during Educational Oversight Review.
- Determine an overall judgement as to whether the provider, following Partial Review, now meets Home Office quality assurance requirements for educational oversight.

Conclusions

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at IES Abroad London.

The QAA review team determines that IES Abroad London:

meets the Home Office's quality assurance requirements for educational oversight.

Explanation of the findings – Sector-Agreed Principles

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

1 In its report the review team recommended that the institution ensure within 6 months that the recently developed Complaints Policy is aligned with best practice advice and guidance and disseminated fully across the student cohort. In response, as part of its action plan the institution resolved to publish the IES Abroad London Complaints Policy as

part of the suite of centre policies from 2025.

2 IES Abroad London have now developed and published the Complaints Policy: Academic and Non-Academic Related Matters. The team found that the policy is detailed, clear and provides appropriate information for students. There is clear separation between the complaints policy and procedures for submitting a grade appeal.

3 The policy sets out examples of the range of academic complaints that could be submitted under the policy, including but not limited to: issues surrounding programme and curriculum design, perceived deficiencies in programme delivery, concerns about resources and/or personal tutoring. Non-academic complaints can relate to admissions, marketing and recruitment, finance, estates and facilities and IT.

4 The complaints process has three stages: 1) informal resolution; 2) formal resolution and 3) further review of the complaint. At the informal resolution stage students are encouraged to raise the complaint with the relevant faculty or administrative staff member. They can also raise the matter with the Dean of Faculty or Centre Director. Where students remain dissatisfied, they can raise their complaint to the Vice President for Student Life, Health, and Safety.

5 Formal complaints are submitted to the IES Abroad Center Director and the policy sets out specific arrangements for group complaints at the formal stage. The IES Abroad London Senior Leadership Team or designate will provide a response and solution within 10 working days of receiving the complaint, though there may be a delay if further investigation is required. Any meeting should be held within 15 working days of receiving the complaint. Students are entitled to bring one supporter to the meeting who can prompt and advise. A written report is produced by the IES Abroad London Senior Leadership Team, and where conflicts arise the complaint is referred to the IES Abroad Headquarters in Chicago.

6 Following the formal stage, students can request a review of the decision of their complaint to the IES Abroad Provost or VP for Student Life, Health, and Safety, or, if he/she was involved in the Stage II process, then the IES Abroad London Center Director or Associate VP of Academics based at IES Abroad's headquarters in Chicago, USA.

7 Students can seek support in operating the Complaints Policy from the Student Success Manager or any other member of the IES Abroad London Student Affairs department.

8 The institution provided the team with evidence that the new policy has been disseminated to staff by email, introduced to students as part of orientation and is readily available on staff and student pages on the virtual learning environment.

9 Overall, the review team concluded that the institution now has an established, clear, and publicised formal Complaints Policy. The policy contains explicit grounds for complaint, details the stages involved and their associated timescales and provides appropriate support. IES London therefore **is aligned with** the Sector-Agreed Principle.

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