



Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight: desk-based analysis of Foundation for International Education, April 2022

Outcome of the desk-based analysis

1 From the annual return and documentary evidence, the monitoring team concludes that the Foundation for International Education (FIE) is continuing to maintain academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities since the [April 2021 Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight Review](#).

Changes since the last QAA review

2 There have been no major changes since the last Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight Review (RSEO) in 2021. However, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a significant reduction in student numbers during 2021, but these are returning to pre-pandemic levels in 2022. During summer and autumn 2020, the only programme to run was the FIE online internship programme. In spring 2021, a small number of students returned in person and, in summer 2021, this number increased. During autumn 2021, FIE had approximately 50% of the capacity for the onsite London programmes. For the spring semester 2022, numbers have increased, approaching pre-pandemic levels. There have been no significant changes to the staffing structure since 2021. FIE currently employs 20 full-time members of staff and 13 part-time staff, which is a small reduction in previous staffing levels although recruitment is underway for several posts.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 The monitoring team scrutinised the Annual Monitoring Return, and the action plan, together with the supporting evidence submitted by FIE, and concludes that FIE has continued to maintain academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities since the RSEO review of 2021. FIE has continued to develop the areas of good practice identified by the previous review (paragraphs 4 to 5). Staff and students have been effectively supported on their return to FIE (paragraphs 6 and 8). The monitoring processes through the committee structures, student feedback, peer review, cross-marking and meetings with staff and faculty continue to be effectively implemented (paragraphs 9-11). The use of the Principles of Instructional Excellence standard provides an effective benchmark for all teaching and learning (paragraph 9). FIE effectively uses the advice and guidance of the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education in the policies set out in its Quality Handbook, and relies on its two Schools of Record, and various professional organisations as external reference points (paragraphs 12-15).

4 The RSEO review in April 2021 identified one area of good practice and made no recommendations. Through its action plan, FIE has continued to enhance its innovative and flexible approach to the continued development and delivery of programmes, and the provision of excellent and effective support for students and staff.

5 FIE has investigated opportunities for further promotion and expansion of FIE Online Internships, with a special focus on students who would not otherwise be able to participate in an internship abroad. The marketing team has promoted online internships

through the internet, and has also featured examples of successful internships through social media.

6 Teaching staff (faculty) were welcomed back in autumn 2021 with a presentation outlining changes to delivery including classroom Covid rules, quarantine, materials online, MyStudy/gradebook and Principles of Instructional Excellence (PIE). For staff, some flexibility has been introduced in the 'carry-over' of leave from 2021 to 2022 to accommodate those returning from furlough. The HR department has continued to assess operational needs and ways to facilitate work/life balance and flexible options for staff, in conjunction with the annual appraisal scheme. The appraisal form has been simplified and provides an opportunity for staff to comment on their wellbeing. Staff also complete an end-of-year objectives form which enables them to identify their objectives for the coming year and indicate any staff development they would like to undertake. A survey on the appraisal process has been implemented encouraging staff to indicate their preferences for future appraisals. Staff development opportunities during 2021 have been minimal due to COVID-19 restrictions, but for teaching staff there are plans to introduce more online access - for instance, to webinars.

7 Students following the iCharleston international bridge programme who spend their first semester studying abroad, were assigned FIE mentors who met with the students regularly and provided individual advice including writing support. Teaching staff were also able to refer any students they considered to be at risk.

8 FIE has maintained access to digital resources and has recorded short lectures to supplement support for students who may not have been able to attend classes. An internal audit of MyStudy online portal identified positive aspects of the virtual learning environment and areas for improvement which were circulated to teaching staff. Feedback from students regarding resources is mixed, with several students commenting on the restricted wi-fi facilities in their accommodation areas.

9 FIE continues effectively to monitor academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience through its deliberative committees and effective interactions with staff and students. All teaching is underpinned by the Principles of Instructional Excellence (PIE). The audit of the course pages of MyStudy resulted in key findings shared with teaching staff. Targeted video tutorials, based on the findings, are being developed to help teaching staff to make more effective use of MyStudy.

10 The system of cross-marking, monitored by the Academic Faculty Director, provides an effective form of internal verification to ensure consistency in the award of grades and to ensure standards are being maintained. This system also supports new members of teaching staff with the assessment process. The process of peer review has continued to be implemented and the outcomes, including best practice are shared with teaching staff.

11 FIE systematically collects student feedback through end-of-programme surveys and the Student Leadership Forum. Feedback from students is summarised and discussed with faculty. Students indicate that they are generally satisfied with the quality of their learning experience and particularly enjoy the co-curricular activities and excursions. The main areas of student comments relate to the length of classes and the emphasis on reading rather than active learning. Student feedback is discussed at the Teaching and Learning Committee with a view to addressing issues raised by students.

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

12 FIE's Faculty Handbook provides a clear reference point for teaching staff to access the Expectations, Core and Common practices and advice and guidance of the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). The process for Programme and Course Design, Development and Approval effectively uses the Advice and Guidance of the Quality Code.

13 The key external reference point for FIE is the School of Record, Drexel University, USA, which reviews and approves all new courses and faculty. FIE also seeks advice from its Academic Advisory Council.

14 The Academic Review from the other School of Record - Marist College - scheduled for 2020, has been postponed to 2022. FIE is recognised by the Forum on Education Abroad until 2025 following a review in 2017. The requirements of the interim report on the Quality Improvement Programme (QUIP) have been waived due to Covid.

15 FIE uses a range of other professional organisations including ASET, the Work Based and Placement Learning Association, and the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) as external reference points for quality assurance, best practice, guidance, networking opportunities, training and conferences. A full list of these organisations is available on the FIE website.

Background to the desk-based analysis

16 The desk-based analysis serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review/annual monitoring. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring process or review.

17 The desk-based analysis was carried out by Brenda Eade, Reviewer, and Simon Ives, QAA Officer, in March 2022. No meetings were held with students or staff, and the conclusions presented in this report are based on the analysis of documentary evidence submitted by the provider.

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

Tel 01452 557000
Web www.qaa.ac.uk