



Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight: desk-based analysis of Anglo American Educational Services Ltd, November 2021

Outcome of the desk-based analysis

1 From the annual return and documentary evidence, the monitoring team concludes that Anglo American Educational Services Ltd has continued to maintain academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities since the [Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight review](#) in November 2020. This annual monitoring report is based on a desk-based exercise conducted in November 2021.

Changes since the last QAA review

2 In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions, including quarantine requirements, which prevailed from March 2020, Anglo American Educational Services Ltd (AES) launched virtual internships in London for US university undergraduate students who were originally due to undertake in-person placements as part of a study or internship programme in summer 2020. AES plans a gradual return to face-to-face teaching in 2021-22. In summer 2021, there were 115 students enrolled on virtual placements with AES responsible for arranging, supervision and assessment. Eligibility requirements for online provision remain consistent with those applicable to students on in-person education for the programmes and include fulfilling home university academic requirements. In autumn 2021, AES began the delivery of five courses with face-to-face delivery planned for 135 students. This academic provision represents the building back of the course offerings which existed before the imposition of lockdown restrictions, while adding selected new courses to reflect curriculum needs for the 2021-22 academic year. To support this delivery, staff have returned from furlough and adjunct faculty staff have been reappointed. Additionally, work has taken place to build new partnerships with US universities.

Findings from the monitoring visit

3 AES has succeeded in maintaining viability, which has been achieved through efficient and creative online services, especially in its ever-widening virtual internship provision (paragraph 6). The two areas of good practice identified in the November 2020 Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight (RSEO) review have been further embedded (paragraph 4). The online Reflective Learning Seminar has received positive evaluations. Partnerships have been maintained and enhanced and new online programmes composed and implemented (paragraphs 5 and 8). Blended teaching, experiential visits and online platform-based learning, supported by interactive group-based exercises of various types, are among new pedagogies motivated by the response to the pandemic (paragraph 9). Rigorous internal and international discussions and academic monitoring, job chats and peer review continue to aid the quality processes (paragraph 13). Specialised academic and internship learning outcomes and regular office hours for students support the quality of the student experience. It is evident that some progress has taken place in utilising the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Further work is being undertaken to show how the relevant Core and Common practices have been mapped, and how the expectations for academic quality and standards are being explicitly addressed (paragraph 14). AES has

worked effectively to maintain its function, recruitment and academic processes during the pandemic and the very testing public health and economic downturn worldwide.

4 The action plan devised following the full RSEO review in November 2020 has allowed further development of the two areas of good practice identified in relation to the robust response to the pandemic taken in conjunction with its partners and in the systematic development of virtual internships. These actions have effectively improved the quality of the student experience.

5 New US university agreements have been established as part of the development plan including with Fordham University, New York, and US-based undergraduate student provider organisation, Verto. The relationship with Susquehanna University has benefitted from further development in 2020-21. In the UK, current relationships have been maintained, although work with Birkbeck College has ceased owing to lack of viable student numbers. This has not had a detrimental effect as AES has successfully continued to explore new partners. The most recent UK partnership is with the University of Westminster. A significant development has been ongoing with the schools of Media and Health Sciences at the University of Salford towards an agreed academic liaison for 2022. It is planned that following the resumption of in-person abroad programmes, arrangements will be recommenced with London South Bank University. Virtual meetings between the partners and AES continue to allow ongoing discussions.

6 AES has improved the management of virtual placements and has employed an Internship Assistant to source new placements and assist the Internship Manager. In further support, AES has created the role of Head of Experiential Learning and Placements. Video support for a range of student experiences has also been successfully introduced and there have been an expansion of opportunities and new relationships with internship companies UK-wide, offering greater scope for students. The internship application process has also been streamlined. Partner universities have the right to provide their own mechanisms for assessing internships, though they have confidence in leaving the assessment of internships to AES.

7 During 2021, through its US partner universities, a range of new syllabi have been developed. For autumn 2021, courses are planned in British Literature, Cultural Geography, International Relations, Macro-Economics, Psychology and Western Civilization. The School of Record Agreement with the University of Connecticut is advanced in planning and will be implemented in autumn 2022. The Reflective Learning Seminar is strengthening internships in exploring highly pertinent issues, including the post-COVID-19 work environment, evolving technologies and their impact on work practices and areas of opportunity, social justice, multiculturalism, media and politics, and gender and the workplace. The AES website has been updated and student feedback and testimonials have been successfully included. These developments have stemmed from the features of good practice identified in the institution's last RSEO. Free lectures, mentoring opportunities, and diversity and wellness student welfare support activities are in development for spring 2022.

8 Feedback from students, home institutions, internship providers and module leaders confirm the online reflective learning seminar to be a valuable learning experience. The seminar was received very enthusiastically. As a response to the pandemic, the reflective process encouraged positive contributions, satisfying common interests and contributing to valuable outcomes for all involved. For internships, learning agreements are now completed with supervisors. The agreements cover the actual work of the company and students' academic learning. Working with fast-track accelerator programmes, and the internship and student services office at the AES London study centre and its open-door arrangements, are recent and significant actions.

9 Blended teaching, experiential visiting and online platform-based learning, supported by interactive group-based exercises of various types are among pandemic-motivated new pedagogies that have been emerging. The Covid pandemic has allowed AES to innovate and re-examine methods towards its sustainability and vibrant future in student travel and study abroad.

10 Regular engagement with QAA and the established cooperation between AES staff and visiting US faculty ensures coherent delivery and continuous monitoring of the provision in terms of quality and academic standards. AES only works with US regionally-accredited institutions which are required to follow strict guidelines on student admissions criteria, course selection and management of academic standards. Students, who are enrolled on full-time undergraduate degree courses at their home institutions, earn recognised academic credit towards the qualification ultimately completed at their US home institution. Although not mandatory, AES follows the FORUM Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad.

11 The maintenance of academic standards is also achieved through the Vice-President for Academic Affairs who meets with faculty on a regular basis throughout each semester. In addition to the more formal meetings, these discussions serve to review and enhance learning opportunities and teaching practices.

12 The quality of the student learning experience is also maintained through the composition and implementation of learning outcomes. For academic programmes, learning outcomes for each class are outlined in the syllabi provided by AES partners. AES instructors may build on these in their modules. The home institutions reserve the right to make changes and amendments. Learning outcomes for internships are composed with the purpose of adding value to the internship experience. A research element ensures the inclusion of academic inquiry as part of the internship programme and can be supported by a Reflective Learning Seminar. Placement evaluations take place mid-semester between each student and supervisor. AES staff make visits to the workplace and conduct individual interviews with supervisors and students, with the principal aim of exploring how learning objectives are being pursued and fulfilled. Mid-semester reports provide an important evaluation of the management of placements and future developments. Supervisors receive an online final evaluation. Virtual internships have been a highly successful curricular innovation in response to the pandemic.

13 Quality checks and assessments include annual Job Chats with all senior members of staff. Heads of Department conduct the same, with their team members. Faculty are evaluated during the semester through in-class observations, by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs or visiting academic staff from US or UK partners. Attention is also given to the outcomes of online student evaluations conducted at mid and end-of-term. A further aspect of the quality provision is the accommodation of office time outside teaching hours and assistance to students when and where required.

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

14 AES has outlined its partnership agreements with UK universities, notably the agreement with London South Bank University, renewed in August 2021 as evidence of the accommodation of the relevant Core and Common practices in accordance the revised Quality Code for Higher Education. AES is committed to ensuring alignment to the Quality Code, notably through its partnerships with UK universities, although it is not clear whether plans are in place to undertake mapping of its provision to the Core and Common practices.

15 AES has complied with the procedures of UKVI and received its full application of confirmation of acceptance for studies (CAS) in March 2021, and had its license renewed by UKVI in July 2021. AES's Study Centre and Accommodation have been through a successful audit by 'Common Sense Compliance as a Safe Place to Visit and Work' and is accredited with AIM Secure as part of the Meetings Industry Association. These fully comply with COVID-19 requirements. AES has a Tier 4 License. As an Associate Member of The Forum on Education Abroad, 'Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad' are followed. Attendance at its annual conference has been an important involvement, including the online event in March 2021. Several AES US senior international programmes study abroad staff are members of the Forum's Academic Board.

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 Dr Terence Clifford-Amos, Reviewer, and Simon Ives, QAA Officer, in November 2021. 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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