



CAPA International Education, London

Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight

Review by the Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

February 2012

About this report

This is a report of a review under the Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at CAPA International Education's Programme Centre in London. The review took place on 14 February 2012 and was conducted by a panel, as follows:

- Brenda Hodgkinson
- David Gale
- Rebecca Ditchburn.

The main purpose of the review was to:

- make judgements about the provider's delegated responsibilities for the management of academic standards and the quality and enhancement of learning opportunities
- draw a conclusion about whether the provider's public information is reliable
- report on any features of good practice
- make recommendations for action.

A summary of the [key findings](#) can be found in the section starting on page 3. The [context](#) in which these findings should be interpreted is explained on page 4. [Explanations](#) of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.¹ More information about this review method can be found in the [published handbook](#)².

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/pages/default.aspx

² www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/eo-recognition-scheme.aspx

Key findings

The QAA panel considered evidence relating to the educational provision at CAPA International Education's Programme Centre in London (CAPA London), both information supplied in advance and evidence gathered during the visits of the review itself. The review has resulted in the key findings stated in this section.

Judgements

The QAA panel formed the following judgements about CAPA International Education, London:

- **confidence** can be placed in the management of academic standards
- **confidence** can be placed in the management of the quality of learning opportunities.

Conclusion about public information

The QAA panel concluded that:

- **reliance can** be placed on the public information that the provider supplies about itself.

Good practice

The QAA panel identified the following **features of good practice** at CAPA International Education, London:

- the mechanisms that exist to ensure that course content is kept up to date and is relevant to the changing context (paragraph 2.5)
- the way the My Education programme and other experiential learning opportunities are embedded in the curriculum, and the balance that is created between the theory and practice of academic/experiential learning (paragraph 2.8).

Recommendations

The QAA panel makes the following recommendations to CAPA International Education, London.

The panel considers that it would be desirable for the provider to:

- continue the ongoing review of the management of the internship programme, including the Learning Through Internships course (paragraphs 2.6, 2.7)
- formalise the Academic Faculty training and development (including staff access to resources) so as to increase the dissemination of good practice across the Faculty (paragraph 2.14).

Context

CAPA International Education is an international education organisation providing academic programmes for accredited American colleges and universities (that is, American study abroad programmes). CAPA International Education Foundation is a company limited by guarantee in the UK. It is wholly owned by CAPA International Education LP, a USA-based partnership, and provides educational services in Europe to its USA-based parent. This structure is strategically designed to facilitate working relationships with American institutions. This scrutiny is of the organisation's delivery of programmes at its London centre.

CAPA International Education has educational centres worldwide and has been delivering study abroad programmes since 1972. It states that its mission is to provide learning abroad opportunities that genuinely educate students and visiting faculty about the people and culture in which they are learning in a holistic educational environment. The programmes in London are delivered from the organisation's centre in South Kensington.

All students at the CAPA London are enrolled in USA-accredited, degree-granting institutions. CAPA International Education enters into formal agreements with American colleges and universities, its affiliates, and these accept credit from courses taken at the CAPA London.

Detailed findings

1 Academic standards

How effectively does the provider fulfil its responsibilities for the management of academic standards?

1.1 CAPA International Education does not have direct responsibility for academic standards. Several different partnering relationships and accompanying credit transfer procedures exist. The programmes are either CAPA programmes, customised programmes, or hybrid programmes. Therefore, the responsibility for academic standards varies in each case. For the customised programmes, the American institution that delivers a programme at the CAPA London gives academic credit and CAPA's responsibility is restricted to the student services provided. The University of Minnesota, the School of Record, validates CAPA programmes for USA education credit for the other programmes in London and so accordingly has responsibility for the academic standards of the courses delivered.

1.2 CAPA International Education is committed to working closely with its School of Record in each of its global sites and sets out clear guidelines for the conduct of that relationship in its Statement of Purpose and Practice. The School of Record, for example, requires re-approval of a course when there is a change to the title of a module and when there is a need to change study objectives or learning outcomes. New faculty members' CVs are sent to the School of Record that must approve the appointment.

1.3 The Academic Advisory Board (AAB) was created in 2005 to provide 'advice and counsel on the development of CAPA's Programme Centres' to the CAPA Board. Membership of the AAB includes representatives of all the Schools of Record from across CAPA International's provision. A subcommittee of the AAB, the Curriculum Committee, has delegated responsibility for the evaluation of academic rigour. Experts from across many different American institutions therefore consider and approve the design and review of the programmes.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management of academic standards?

1.4 The CAPA London works closely with the School of Record and undertakes regular reviews of all new and existing curricula to ensure that the standard of its courses have equivalency to USA education levels and industry standards for American study abroad programmes. The AAB includes members drawn from the field of education abroad at the School of Record and other affiliate institutions. This expertise provides for reference to be given to relevant external reference points in the approval and review of courses.

1.5 The CAPA London has also volunteered, in March 2012, to be part of a peer-reviewed Quality Improvement Programme run by the US Forum on Education Abroad. This forum has established Standards of Good Practice in the field of education abroad. This will allow further commitment to be made by CAPA International Education to industry standards in this area.

How effectively does the provider use external scrutiny of assessment processes to assure academic standards?

1.6 The review team noted that the usual procedures for external moderation and scrutiny of assessment processes in English Higher Education are not common in American Higher Education. The Academic Director in London and his counterpart at the American awarding institution reviews all assessment grades. Senior management at CAPA London reported that there is internal moderation of student work and that the Academic Director carries out a review of all marks to ensure that there are no inconsistencies both in relation to individual markers and across student profiles. Comparisons are made with the student grade point average on entry and exit to monitor any deviations. All profiles are then individually reviewed.

1.7 The provider is aware of the difficulties that may exist between perceptions in the application of USA versus UK grading scales by both staff and students. Clear guidance is given to students in this regard as well as to UK staff so that they are aware of potential misunderstandings that could arise when marking papers and in the giving and receiving of feedback.

The panel has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards to be conferred by its awarding bodies.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

How effectively does the provider fulfil its responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 Monitoring and evaluation of programmes is through a number of mechanisms. The AAB undertakes five-year site reviews and clear lines of enquiry are set out in the Site Review Guide. Recommendations made by a review are actioned by the CAPA Chief Academic Officer with the individual CAPA College. A site review of CAPA London took place in 2011. A number of areas for action were identified by the review. These have been presented to the AAB and ongoing actions as a result are being implemented at CAPA London through faculty meetings. A detailed 'narrative of the reforms' indicates that careful consideration is given to all aspects of course content and delivery.

2.2 The Annual Programme Assessment Report also identifies issues for improvement and development. These reports are compiled using student course evaluations, reviews by staff and available data. Student feedback is gathered through individual course evaluations and general student satisfaction surveys. In addition, feedback is gained through the Student Council on student support matters. Student evaluations are reviewed by the Chief Academic Officer at CAPA London and shared with the President, the Director of Academic Affairs and affiliated institutions. In the compilation of these annual reports, using a number of sources of information, the Academic Director at CAPA London is effectively able to address any issues. The Annual Report is also scrutinised by the AAB in relation to matters to be actioned by CAPA International Education in the USA.

2.3 The newly created Academic Council oversees academic management across all CAPA centres worldwide. This is made up of Academic Directors from each programme location and provides an excellent forum for discussion of matters that might be common to sites. It is chaired by the Academic Director at CAPA London and meets regularly to assure compliance with policies and to record and action issues that arise in the delivery of programmes on a day-to-day basis.

How effectively are external reference points used in monitoring and evaluation processes?

2.4 As noted earlier, the AAB provides an external reference point for the review and evaluation of processes in their review of annual assessment reports and the five-year site reviews. Staff also reported that the programmes are mapped against the academic levels of the American academic framework.

How effectively does the provider assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

2.5 The quality of teaching and learning is evaluated through the processes of site and annual review reports. Student evaluations and staff class observations play a key role in this evaluation. The scrutiny panel noted the overall aim of students having a full experience in 'the global city' and the need to be responsive to ongoing changes. The detailed 'narrative of the reforms' responding to the AAB site review indicates that careful consideration is given to course content and delivery improvements. Examples are given of changes being made to course content as a result. The recruitment of a staff member with particular expertise may be a driver for alteration to syllabi. Some flexibility is therefore required and the mechanisms that exist to ensure that course content is kept up to date and relevant to changing context are considered to be good practice.

2.6 CAPA London has a large number of active placements. An internships handbook sets out expectations for both site supervisors and students. The sponsor of the placement interviews the student before it commences. The need to create greater synergies in the Learning Through Internships module between the internship sites, the module and its assessment was identified. Affiliate universities were requiring reflection and theoretical assessment on the internship experience. A workshop was set up to consider all aspects of this module and the review team heard that this had resulted in a number of changes to the delivery in order to include more alignment between theory in the classroom and practical work placements.

2.7 Students appreciated this thematic approach developed in the class and acknowledged they are able to transfer this to their workplace learning. Site supervisors are invited to an annual meeting but there is currently no mentoring scheme. CAPA London recognises that this type of module must be continually appraised and the review team considers it desirable that this ongoing review is continued.

2.8 Important to the teaching and learning at CAPA London is the inclusion of My Education, service learning and field studies as an integral part of the programmes. As part of its review of programmes and review of student involvement, the CAPA London has in this academic year required all faculty to organise at least one contextualised field study. In addition, My Education is now a co-curricular activity. These elements ensure that experiential learning is embedded in the academic programmes at CAPA London. Students are very appreciative of all these activities. The scrutiny panel considered that the balance created through this integration, across the programmes, between academic and experiential learning is good practice.

How effectively does the provider assure itself that students are appropriately supported?

2.9 CAPA International in Boston is the first point of contact for students wishing to undertake a programme at CAPA London. Students reported that this centralised service had been very helpful and informative before their arrival.

2.10 CAPA London has support structures in place for students through a number of mechanisms. The Department of Student Affairs provides support for students on a pastoral level and processes are in place for 24-hour cover response should a student have difficulties. Students are visited in their homes, mid-term, by CAPA staff to ensure that feedback is given on any housing or other pastoral concerns. Students reported that all staff were accessible and approachable and that if they had any problems these were dealt with promptly. In addition, CAPA London has a number of strategic partnerships in London to provide additional social support for students through the Imperial College Students Union and International Student House. The Student Council is in place and students use this mechanism both to help organise social events and to give feedback.

2.11 Handbooks and materials are produced for each module and these are very useful and comprehensive. Students reported that guidelines on assessments are clear, for both traditional modules and for the internship module. Feedback is given on completed assignments, which is useful for further application to their studies.

How effective are the provider's arrangements for staff development in relation to maintaining and/or enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.12 All new staff are given an induction to CAPA London and training involves key challenges presented in delivery to international students. Class observations are undertaken routinely. Teaching staff are appointed with the relevant academic and professional experience so to ensure that the objective of 'global awareness' is implicit in their delivery.

2.13 Faculty meetings take place at least twice a term and newly introduced 'round table' meetings allow staff to focus on a particular issue. These meetings have proved popular with staff and allow for the dissemination of good practice and for a healthy interchange of objectives and ideas.

2.14 Staff also have the opportunity to apply for funding to a Faculty Development Fund for support for relevant activities such as conference attendance. Staff would appreciate more access to library resources and are grateful for the initiative with London South Bank University that will allow access to the university library. While senior staff acknowledge that many of the staff are fractional appointments, the CAPA London is keen to encourage further involvement and commitment. The review team considers that it is desirable for the CAPA London to further develop and formalise staff training, including staff access to resources, so as to increase the dissemination of good practice across the Faculty.

How effectively does the provider ensure that students have access to learning resources that are sufficient to enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes of their programmes?

2.15 Learning resources at CAPA London include a small resource library and a computer centre. CAPA London is responsive to student evaluations in this regard and, as a result, has installed a faster internet service by adding additional routers in the building to increase accessibility. Students reported that they found the teaching facilities of a good standard and that resources and electronic links worked well.

2.16 As a result of the AAB's five-year site review and in order to improve learning resources, CAPA London has recently entered into an agreement with London South Bank University. This will allow students and staff to access the university library and to have access to other social activities.

The panel has **confidence** that the CAPA International Education, London is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for students.

3 Public information

How effective are the provider's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing?

3.1 Public information is managed through CAPA International Education in Boston. Brochures and marketing materials are produced for all CAPA programmes at the various locations and full details are also on the organisation's website. Student evaluations play a key role in the assurance of the accuracy of information, especially with regard to pre-arrival information. These evaluations are electronic and information from them is fed back, through the Office of the President, to teams responsible for production of materials in order to ensure any necessary changes are made for the future. The Chief Academic Officer has responsibility at a local level to ensure that new information on changes to courses or syllabi is updated centrally for distribution to partner/affiliate institutions and other relative stakeholders. He/she liaises directly with the Boston office to ensure accuracy.

3.2 Students reported that the information they received was informative and accurate with only one exception in respect of the materials they might have to obtain when they arrive in London. The CAPA pre-departure team in Boston now works closely with CAPA centres worldwide to ensure that this type of information is accurate and complete.

The panel concludes that **reliance can be placed** on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

4 Action plan

CAPA International Education, London: action plan relating to the Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight, February 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The panel identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the mechanisms that exist to ensure that course content is kept up to date and is relevant to the changing context (paragraph 2.5) 	Design a generic faculty self and course-delivery evaluations, in which faculty members are asked to review their own course content and suggest how to update these in line with changing student expectations and new research	Start of autumn semester: 1 September 2012	Chief Academic Officer in consultation with CAPA's Directors of Academic Programmes	Obtaining from the teaching faculty their individual self and course-delivery evaluations with their own suggestions on how they can update the content of their courses	CAPA's Directors of Academic Programmes (and in extension, the Chief Academic Officer)	CAPA's Directors of Academic Programmes take responsibility to check that syllabi are appropriately updated before classes begin, and they speak to the professors if they find that this is not the case (assignments, field trips, reading materials and so on)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the way the My Education programme and other experiential learning opportunities are embedded in the curriculum, and the 	Add examples of how instructors can evaluate student assignments for experiential learning that has occurred outside of the classroom, so as to	Start of autumn semester: 1 September 2012	Chief Academic Officer in consultation with faculty members who have already used different assignment	Preparation of a number of examples of student assignments that come out of their participation in My Education events,	The Faculty Meeting planned for the autumn semester	Faculty self and course-delivery evaluations at the end of the autumn semester

balance that is created between the theory and practice of academic/ experiential learning (paragraph 2.8).	help the professors evaluating students' work		types and evaluation tools	and the manner in which these assignments can be evaluated by the professors		
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The panel considers that it is desirable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue the ongoing review of the management of the internship programme, including the Learning Through Internships course (paragraphs 2.6, 2.7) 	A new format of the Learning Through Internships course will be completed and approval obtained by the School of Record of the University of Minnesota	Summer 2012, in time for the start of the autumn semester 2012	Vice-President for Academic Relations and the Curriculum Committee	Formal approval of the new Learning Through Internships course for inclusion in CAPA's London Programme	Chief Academic Officer and the London-based Assistant Directors of Academic Programmes	Student evaluations of their Learning Through Internships course at the end of the autumn 2012 semester
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formalise the Academic Faculty training and development (including staff access to resources) so as to increase the dissemination of good practice across the Faculty (paragraph 2.14). 	Launch a series of Faculty Workshops at which a methodical approach to training teaching methods and techniques will be offered and where all faculty members can contribute their knowledge and experience of how they teach and what	Summer 2012, in time for the start of the autumn semester 2012	Chief Academic Officer	Feedback/ evaluations from the faculty members after they attended one or more workshops	CAPA's Academic Advisory Board	Reports back from the Academic Advisory Board about the evaluations/ feedback from the faculty members who attended

	they find most successful					
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Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to key terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. For more details see the [handbook](#)³ for this review method.

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality:

www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx.

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx.

academic standards The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

Code of practice *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* published by QAA: a set of interrelated documents giving guidance for higher education institutions.

credit(s) A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education programmes of study, expressed as 'numbers of credits' at a specific level.

feature of good practice A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned **programmes of study**, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios) and staff development.

learning outcome What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

programme (of study) An approved course of study which provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

public information Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

widening participation Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/eo-recognition-scheme.aspx

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