



**EUSA**

## Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight

Review by the Quality Assurance Agency  
for Higher Education

**March 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 EUSA. The review took place on 5 March 2012 and was conducted by a panel, as follows:

- Professor D Meehan
- Professor R Harris
- Dr X Zhou

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.<sup>1</sup> More information about this review method can be found in the [published handbook](#)<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/pages/default.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/eo-recognition-scheme.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/eo-recognition-scheme.aspx)

## Key findings

The QAA panel considered evidence relating to the educational provision at EUSA, 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 EUSA:

- **confidence** can reasonably be placed in the soundness of EUSA's management of academic standards
- **confidence** can reasonably be placed in the soundness of EUSA's management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

## Conclusion about public information

The QAA panel concluded that:

- **reliance can** be placed on the public information that EUSA supplies about itself and the programmes it delivers.

## Good practice

The QAA panel identified the following **features of good practice** at EUSA:

- staff members respond to feedback on any aspect of students' academic experience in an efficient and effective manner (paragraph 2.3)
- arrangements for initiating and overseeing internships are both effective and flexible (paragraph 2.11)
- both staff and adjunct faculty provide continuing academic and pastoral support for students in a conscientious and responsive manner (paragraph 2.13).

## Recommendations

The QAA panel makes the following **recommendations** to EUSA. It is desirable that EUSA:

- put in place formal terms of reference for the Academic Committee (paragraph 1.4)
- develop an effective means of prioritising and monitoring planned enhancement activities (paragraph 2.2).

## Context

EUSA is a UK-based not-for-profit educational organisation operating across six different countries. It has been accredited by the British Accreditation Council since 2007. Owned and controlled by Boston University since January 2011, EUSA works in partnership with accredited US universities to provide a variety of customised programmes, including work placements, academic courses, housing, programme management, student life, social programming and logistics. Its vision is to promote the advancement of cultural understanding by integrating learning, working, and living abroad. It is confirmed that all partnerships are governed by formal letters of agreement, which outline the responsibilities, conditions and terms for each party regarding the management and delivery of the academic programmes.

Programmes are run on behalf of, and have the full backing of, individual universities; therefore, the universities remain involved throughout the course of a programme's development and delivery. EUSA develops and delivers academic courses; credit for these courses, including the work placement, is granted by the university partner. Partners, supported as appropriate by EUSA, have ultimate responsibility for student marketing, application and selection.

EUSA offers two programme models from which partners may choose. Under the EUSA Programme, the most frequent option, all aspects of the programme are delivered through EUSA: hence EUSA designs courses and associated assessments, submitting them for approval to the individual partner universities concerned. Under the Work Placement Only Programme all services other than internships, including visa sponsorship, housing, faculty and programme management, are provided by the home university.

## Detailed findings

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 Primary responsibility for the award of credit rests with EUSA's academic partners, all of which are accredited by the US institutions recognised by the National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) for the UK. Programmes, which run for between eight and 16 weeks and include a credit-bearing work placement comprising no more than 50 per cent of the total course period, are designed to meet the requirements of each university partner and adhere to their individual academic standards.

1.2 Partners are responsible for student recruitment and set minimum admission levels. EUSA's programmes are mainly aimed at students in their junior and senior years, although a minority of freshmen also participate. The panel also heard from both staff and students that the close working relationship between EUSA and its partners contributes to ensuring that students gain maximum benefit from the experience.

1.3 The Academic Director is responsible for ensuring that EUSA fulfils its full range of duties, including those relating to academic standards. In this role he is supported by the Academic Advisory Committee, chaired by Boston University's Executive Chairman of British Programmes and comprising members of EUSA management team, staff and faculty. Its remit includes overseeing the quality management of academic affairs, standards and structure, reviewing course delivery, and ensuring courses are appropriately assessed. It is also responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the Academic Policy Manual, which sets out the academic procedures in respect of course development and approval, delivery and assessment.

1.4 The panel notes that although the role of the Academic Advisory Committee is set out in EUSA's Academic Policy Manual, the Committee lacks formal terms of reference. It is, however, clear from minutes that it is an effective and appropriate body with a clear understanding of its general remit. At the time of the visit EUSA had decided to review the work of this Committee, including renaming it the Academic Committee. Given the Committee's role in quality management and in the oversight of academic standards, it is desirable that EUSA put in place formal terms of reference for the Academic Committee.

1.5 As a matter of policy, EUSA appoints lecturers with extensive experience of teaching study-abroad students from the USA. Work is assessed and graded by individual tutors, and moderated by the Academic Director; where a student challenges a grade a second marking system operates. Recommended grades are sent to the partner universities concerned, which then award credit.

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

1.6 EUSA's programmes are designed to meet partner universities' academic requirements and are therefore subject to formal approval on the basis of those universities' academic management procedures. Hence the main external reference points utilised in the design and delivery of courses are those of the partner universities, which have themselves been subject to accreditation procedures in the USA. EUSA has also adopted the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code*

*of practice*), Section 9: *Work-based and placement learning* with reference to its placement opportunities, and is currently giving consideration to mapping its activities against the forthcoming UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).

1.7 EUSA has, since 2004, been accredited by the British Accreditation Council, and has recently undergone an interim inspection, the outcome of which was positive. As a Tier 4 sponsor, EUSA is subject to current UK Border Agency legislation. The panel concluded that EUSA is making effective use of appropriate external reference points.

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| The panel has <b>confidence</b> in EUSA's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards to be conferred by its awarding bodies. |
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## 2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 Responsibility for managing the quality of learning opportunities and delivery of academic courses rests with EUSA's Operations Director, supported by the Site Director and Programme Manager. These management processes are overseen by a comprehensive regular reporting system supported by extensive feedback from student surveys, staff evaluations and partner reviews.

2.2 The panel noted that EUSA is considering, or is in the process of implementing, a number of procedural enhancements (examples include the introduction of both an evaluation form allowing tutors to comment on student performance and a formal student complaints policy to provide a mechanism for the formal registering of grievances). These initiatives were explored in the course of the visit and several are commented on in this report (see in particular paragraphs 2.6, 2.7, 2.8 and 2.16). Senior staff reported many of these enhancements as ongoing, but the envisaged timescale and respective prioritisation of the different initiatives were not always clear to the panel. It is desirable that EUSA develop an effective means of prioritising and monitoring planned enhancement activities.

2.3 EUSA states that it responds to formal student feedback through the course review process and to informal feedback as it arises: the panel confirms that it found examples of changes being made in response to such feedback. These include: changing an academic course for a group of students (with approval from the partner university), separating the teaching of audit and credit students, scheduling academic courses prior to placements rather than concurrently with them, and introducing a separate placement induction process. The panel identified the efficient and effective manner in which EUSA responds to feedback on any aspect of the students' academic experience as a feature of good practice.

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

2.4 EUSA's partnerships are governed by formal letters of agreement: these specify the respective responsibilities of both partners and are intended to ensure that students have a high quality learning experience. Feedback, both from partners on the delivery of the programmes and from students on their learning experience, is central to monitoring and review.

2.5 As noted in paragraph 1.6, the main external reference points utilised by EUSA are those of its partner universities. EUSA has, in addition, adopted the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* to ensure the quality of placement arrangements: the panel confirms that such arrangements are indeed aligned with *Code of practice* expectations. EUSA provides placement guidelines for both students and workplace supervisors, obtains agreement from supervisors regarding the nature of the placement, monitors placements through visits and student feedback, has procedures in place for necessary placement changes, and obtains supervisor evaluations on placement completion.

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

2.6 As noted in paragraph 2.1, the Operations Director is responsible for overall management of the academic delivery of programmes, delegating specific operational matters to the Site Director and Programme Manager. Teaching is delivered by appropriately qualified academic faculty with relevant and often considerable experience of teaching study-abroad students from the USA: their curricula vitae are currently held by the Site Director, although EUSA intends to transfer them to a central database made available to all staff (see paragraph 2.2).

2.7 The Academic Advisory Committee conducts a biannual review of course delivery, informed by comprehensive student, partner and staff evaluations. These were found to make effective contributions to quality management and enhancement. Class observations are currently undertaken on an ad hoc basis by EUSA staff, and reporting methods are informal. The panel learned that discussion of the proposed mechanics of class observation is on the agenda for the next Academic Advisory Committee meeting, with the goal of establishing a clear protocol on how such observation is carried out (see also paragraph 2.2).

2.8 EUSA's placement managers have a clear role which involves liaising with companies, placement supervisors and students. EUSA provides considerable support for both students and supervisors, including, for the latter, detailed guidance on matters which include legal requirements and best practice, and envisages that in future all supervisors will complete an online supervisor agreement which will include detailed information on their rights and responsibilities (see also paragraph 2.2).

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

2.9 EUSA's student support structures are well established, starting with online registration and continuing with a comprehensive range of pre-arrival, pre-departure and on-arrival materials. Following their arrival, students receive a welcome pack and an orientation programme covering academic courses, health and safety, pastoral care, emergency contacts and support, cultural immersion and work placement information.

2.10 The Programme Manager attends the start of all formal classes and participates in field trips and excursions. The panel also heard from students about the continuing conscientious support provided by faculty, which extends well beyond the scheduled class timetables, with tutors making themselves readily available on email and social network sites.

2.11 A major part of the student experience is the work placement. EUSA has comprehensive support structures in place to ensure both that students are appropriately

placed and receive continuing support. A Placement Manager conducts a face-to-face or virtual meeting with each student prior to arrival to identify interests and options. Once a suitable match has been identified, the Placement Manager emails a provisional offer supported by relevant information about the company, the student's expected role and responsibilities, and all relevant protocols. If an expression of interest is received an interview is arranged, after which either student or company may decline the placement; a placement orientation follows, and once a placement is confirmed the student is obliged to attend. Thereafter, any issues arising (up to and including necessary withdrawals, for which a procedure is in place) are the Placement Manager's responsibility.

2.12 Students spoke in very positive terms about their experiences, confirming that their internships met their expectations and that EUSA had supported them throughout. Supervisors' evaluations of students are sent to partner universities within two weeks of programme completion. While satisfactory performance is a prerequisite for credits to be awarded, the evaluation does not contribute to the grade: this derives solely from a directed academic internship study paper. The panel identified the effective and flexible manner in which EUSA makes arrangements for initiating and overseeing internships as a feature of good practice.

2.13 In terms of pastoral support, EUSA employs a full time counsellor and students have ready access to support, including a permanent oncall system accessed by a dedicated mobile telephone number printed on their identity card. Students spoke in highly complimentary terms about the comprehensive academic and pastoral support provided, stressing the helpfulness and accessibility of all EUSA staff. The conscientious and responsive manner in which both staff and adjunct faculty provide continuing academic and pastoral support for students is a feature of good practice.

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

2.14 EUSA appoints fixed-contract, part-time academic faculty with appropriate academic qualifications and experience of teaching study-abroad students from the USA. Procedures for recruitment and induction are clearly specified and are the responsibility of the Site Director, who ensures that they are briefed on key aspects of the programmes and courses they are engaged with, including assessment and grading criteria; continuing support is provided by the Academic Director. EUSA has recently introduced formal faculty meetings as a procedural enhancement: these have been welcomed by faculty but it would be premature to assess their effectiveness.

2.15 Permanent staff members are provided with an employee handbook; they are subject to an induction process, undergo annual performance review, attend monthly team meetings, and have access to a range of training and staff development events.

### **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?**

2.16 EUSA's Academic Policy Manual states that it is the responsibility of programme managers to ensure that appropriate resources are in place for course delivery. Students are provided with all reading materials needed to support their programmes, including textbooks and handouts relating to individual course content, and have access to a small library of core texts. Although the panel heard that EUSA is considering, as one of its future enhancements, the possibility of developing a research library, the plans currently in place for its establishment, nature and extent have yet to be fully formulated (see also



paragraph 2.2).

2.17 Students receive a comprehensive range of support materials and information, both on EUSA's website and in hard copy, including course syllabi, timetables, a student handbook and health and safety information. Those who met the panel expressed satisfaction with the resources available, confirming that they are sufficient to enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes of their programmes.

The panel has **confidence** that EUSA 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 EUSA regards its website as the key medium for public information. Published content is reviewed by programme and placement staff on a termly and annual basis. All updates and corrections are supervised and implemented by the Information Director, who is the gatekeeper for all public information. It is the responsibility of the Information Director to work with appropriate teams, including the Operations and University Relations Directors, to ensure that the public information provided by EUSA across a variety of media and audiences is accurate, consistent and functional. EUSA solicits feedback on the usefulness and accuracy of its website and printed materials by student surveys and evaluations, and formal programme reviews with partners. As noted in paragraph 2.17, it is confirmed that EUSA produces comprehensive information for students, prospective and current partner universities, and placement supervisors.

3.2 Partner universities are responsible for recruitment and marketing study-abroad opportunities to their students. To ensure that information provided about EUSA is consistent and accurate it provides potential and active partners with standard templates and information. Current partners also have access to an Advisor Toolkit which contains information about programme delivery, key contact names and relevant forms and templates.

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

| EUSA action plan relating to the Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight March 2012  |   |             |                |  |   |   |
|---|---|-------------|----------------|--|---|---|
| Good practice   | Action to be taken  | Target date | Action by      | Success indicators   | Reported to                               | Evaluation  |
| The panel identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:  |   |             |                |  |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>staff members respond to feedback on any aspect of students' academic experience in an efficient and effective manner (paragraph 2.3)</li> </ul> | Feedback to be discussed at monthly site meetings and suggestions/ changes referred to Operations or Academic Director as appropriate | June 2012   | Site directors | Positive feedback from student, faculty, site director course evaluations and partner evaluations  | Academic Director and Operations Director | Evaluation at Academic Committee meetings twice a year  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>arrangements for initiating and overseeing internships are both effective and flexible (paragraph 2.11)</li> </ul>                               | Monitoring of internships through targeted site visits by internship team on a termly basis   | Sept 2012   | Site directors | Positive feedback from students and work placement supervisors drawn from student's programme evaluations and supervisor's student evaluations<br><br>Positive feedback from monthly site meetings | Operations Director                       | Operations Director takes responsibility to review and assess internship arrangements with site directors at annual meeting |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>both staff and adjunct faculty provide continuing academic and pastoral support for students in a conscientious and responsive manner (paragraph 2.13).</li> </ul> | Cross training of non-academic staff to promote academic understanding and elaborate on EUSA's expectations for student support in faculty handbook | October 2012       | Operations Director and Academic Director   | Positive feedback in: student course evaluations/programme evaluations/partner evaluations  | Management Team    | Reviewed by Management Team and the Academic Committee on a termly basis                             |
| <b>Desirable</b>  | <b>Action to be taken</b>   | <b>Target date</b> | <b>Action by</b>  | <b>Success indicators</b>   | <b>Reported to</b> | <b>Evaluation</b>  |
| The panel considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the provider to:  |   |                    |   |   |                    |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>put in place formal terms of reference for the Academic Committee (paragraph 1.4)</li> </ul>   | Academic Director to draw up terms of reference for presentation at Management Team meeting for approval  | 20 July 2012       | Academic Director, Management Team  | Terms of reference to be approved at July 2012 Management Team meeting  | Academic Committee | Terms of reference to be reviewed at Spring 2013 Academic Committee meeting for operational accuracy |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop an effective means of prioritising and monitoring planned enhancement activities (paragraph 2.2).</li> </ul>   | Proposals for enhancement activities submitted to the Management Team on a termly basis<br><br>Management Team will discuss and                     | July 2012          | Overall responsibility- Executive Director<br><br>Management of enhancements - Executive Director and | Ongoing comprehensive record of enhancement activities with a clear timetable for implementation, recorded in Management Team minutes | Management Team    | Enhancements implemented according to process  |

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|  | determine enhancement priorities and timetable |  | Operations Director Monitored at weekly meetings and Management Team minutes |  |  |  |
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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](#)<sup>3</sup> 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](http://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](http://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.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/eo-recognition-scheme.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/eo-recognition-scheme.aspx)

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**The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**

Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000  
Fax 01452 557070  
Email [comms@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

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