



This review method
is ESG-compliant

Educational Oversight Review

Educational Oversight Review of
ACCENT

February 2025

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About this review

This is a report of an Educational Oversight Review (EOR) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at ACCENT International Consortium for Academic Programs Abroad.

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) (the UK Quality Code). 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 19 February 2025 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Colin Stanfield (Reviewer)
- Dr Tommie Anderson-Jaquet (Reviewer)
- Jonny Barnes (Student reviewer)

The QAA Officer for this review was Kevin Kendall.

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
- 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

ACCENT International Consortium for Academic Programs Abroad, known as ACCENT Global Learning (ACCENT), was founded in 1991 and designs and supports university study abroad programmes. ACCENT has study centres in London, Paris, Madrid, Florence, Rome, and Syracuse in Sicily. The ACCENT London Study Centre (ACCENT London), based in Bedford Square, opened in 1998 and is the home base for visiting faculty and students from the USA.

ACCENT's stated vision is to, 'provide an exemplary study abroad experience in collaboration with our university partners'. Partners in the USA include the University of California (Berkeley); Washington University in St. Louis; the University of Southern California and Michigan State University. Programmes and internships are offered in a range of academic disciplines including the Humanities, Communications and Business. Programmes aim to provide students with a global learning experience, to help them be global citizens, to place their chosen field of study within a broader intercultural context, and to challenge students' worldview through experience inside and outside of the classroom.

Student numbers have been constant in recent years, at 926 in 2022, 928 in 2023 and 950 in 2024. Students study on short-term study abroad programmes of under six months in length, for which they get credit towards their USA undergraduate degree. Some programmes are semester-long, and there are many 2–3-week programmes led by professors from the home university that take place in the summer. Staff at ACCENT London include the Centre Director, two Senior Programs Coordinators, four Programs Coordinators and an Internship Manager. Faculty staff are generally part-time and teach at other universities in London.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which ACCENT meets the relevant Sector-Agreed Principles, the QAA review team followed the evidence-based review procedure as outlined in the guidance for Educational Oversight Review (July 2024). ACCENT provided the review team with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence. During the review visit, which took place on 19 February 2025, the review team held a total of six meetings with senior staff, academic and support staff, students and the Internship Manager.

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 ACCENT International Consortium for Academic Programs Abroad.

The QAA review team determines that ACCENT International Consortium for Academic Programs Abroad

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

Good practice

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

- The flexible and student-centred approach to academic, professional and pastoral support throughout students' learning journey, for instance via the extended availability of both academic and professional support staff (**Sector-Agreed Principle 10**).
- The extent to which course content and delivery is informed by external expertise, both from the partner US universities, the wider ACCENT Consortium and the expertise of staff, much of which is derived from current and previous engagement of staff in industry and with other UK universities (**Sector-Agreed Principle 11**).
- The extent to which teaching, learning and assessment is enhanced by the deliberate approaches of managers and teaching staff to actively utilise resources in the locality, that enriches the learning and pastoral experience of students (**Sector-Agreed Principle 11**).

Recommendations

For recommendations that relate to areas for development and enhancement that do not impact on the Sector-Agreed Principle being met, the QAA review team makes the following recommendations:

- Develop formalised complaints and appeals procedures, outlining the local/informal stages undertaken prior to referral to the partner university's procedure, to ensure that these steps are transparent to students (**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 the **institution** is that **no** material issues were identified.

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 ACCENT's strategic approach to provision is based on a series of formal agreements with partner higher education institutions (HEIs) in the US. Partnership agreements are an overarching longer term, (for example, three-year) agreement to deliver a portfolio of summer study abroad programmes. Separate agreements are established with the partner HEI with respect to individual programmes. Other agreements are 'standalone' in nature with regard to specified bespoke programmes. Relationships with partner US universities, including governance of programmes, is set out in the partner agreements which form a transparent basis for the operation of all programmes.

2 As part of its strategic aims, ACCENT is currently informally exploring the potential for non-US partnerships. In the meeting with senior staff the review team heard that such explorations are at an early and informal stage but are likely to be based on the approaches currently in place for US partners.

3 The ACCENT organogram sets out the wider strategic organisational structure, while the London team organogram further clarifies how staff are strategically deployed to manage quality and standards. Senior staff and academic and professional support staff have a good understanding of the strategic approach and their roles, both in the context of ACCENT London, and for ACCENT as a whole.

4 ACCENT's Program Development Team are responsible for the strategic identification, typically in liaison with existing US partners, of new programmes or the modification of existing programmes. This team then takes responsibility for the design and development of such new programmes, in conjunction with the London team. The team comprises ACCENT staff members, based in the US and across Europe, managed by ACCENT's Director of Partnerships and Program Development.

5 Details of the approach and processes for programme development and approval are detailed in a Partnerships and Program Development document which provides a strategic overview of the approach and clear, detailed and comprehensive guidance on the procedures involved, including timescales and responsibilities. For example, the proposal for a Global Seminar Program in Communication, Culture and Sport, includes details relating to academic content and programming along with a proposed schedule. The response to the proposal is detailed and in itself constitutes the agreed programme content and the definitive programme documentation on which delivery is based. The document details academic matters, including orientation and induction, subject matter and course content and provides a sound basis for the operation of the programme. The review team heard from the Director of Partnerships and Program Development how this process is followed in practice and from staff how they are able to use this process to suggest and take forward programme developments.

6 Strategic oversight of the management of quality and standards falls within the remit of an Academic Advisory Board (AAB) which ensures collaboration with university partners and the maintenance of academic standards of ACCENT London programmes. The AAB Charter

clearly details the AAB Mission, Vision, membership, meeting schedule and content. Minutes of the AAB demonstrate how the Board meets its remit.

7 In addition to the role of the AAB, there is a regular series of meetings to ensure that there is a culture of collaboration between ACCENT and its various centres and partners, and that the strategic management of quality and standards is understood wherever and however provision is delivered. Examples include annual meetings between centres to discuss best practice, innovation and programme enhancements; monthly online calls and Academic Coordinators meetings with those responsible for academic programmes in each of ACCENT centres including ACCENT London; weekly meetings of the ACCENT London team to review current programmes, future programmes, academic development, social media, cyber security, health and safety and any other business. Additionally, there are regular interactions between the ACCENT London Centre Director and, for example, the US Director of Program Development and the US Associate Director of US Operations, regarding the student academic experience. In review meetings the review team heard further evidence of the value of these engagements.

8 ACCENT's strategic approach to managing quality and standards is informed by the external expertise found in the AAB membership which includes senior staff from a wide range of US universities. The review team heard that ACCENT also continues to develop relationships with UK universities. Further external expertise is derived from ACCENT's membership of and engagement with a range of UK-based and international organisations that are relevant to ACCENT's mission to deliver high-quality study abroad programmes. Examples include the Association of American Study Abroad Programmes in the UK; the Forum on Education Abroad; Diversity Abroad; NAFSA: Association of International Educators in the US; the University of Westminster and Queen Mary University of London. The review team found and heard extensive evidence (as detailed above) of the wider engagement of senior staff, both those at ACCENT London and across the wider Consortium, in external bodies, engagement in which is used to inform, at a strategic level, the development and delivery of programmes at ACCENT London. The engagement of ACCENT senior staff in the Association of American Study Abroad Programmes helps to ensure that ACCENT provision is informed through a wider perspective of external expertise.

9 The evaluation procedures document describes how programme evaluations should be captured and shared with relevant parties. They include detailed guidance at programme and centre level outlining how procedures relate to and differ for each partner university. These internal evaluations are reviewed by the Program Development Team. The review team examined an email which evidences the operation of these procedures with regard to student concerns about the scheduling of the programme, which were resolved through discussions with the tutor delivering the programme in question. Evaluations are then used to inform content and delivery of future programmes. For example, the review team heard about the 'course discussion' to address matters raised by students, such as clarifying assessment schedules and aligning assignments more closely to student business interests.

10 ACCENT's Academic Advisory Board Charter is detailed, clearly setting out the strategic approach to managing quality and standards and the role of the AAB in this regard. The Charter is available to all staff and is augmented by an Academic Management Handbook. This handbook deals with a range of matters including partnerships, programme development and programme management. In the meeting with teaching staff the review team heard that staff had a good appreciation of how these approaches work in practice and are very positive about how ACCENT seeks to monitor and enhance provision, in partnership with teaching staff.

11 ACCENT has many approaches to ensure a strategic approach to managing quality and standards. These approaches are established at Consortium level and applied consistently for provision at ACCENT London. The AAB which operates at Consortium level is key to these approaches. These approaches are underpinned by a series of clear and

detailed formal agreements with partner HEIs in the US. These inform and give rise to academic handbooks and programme syllabi which are used by staff and students as definitive documents for programme and module delivery. Approaches are informed by extensive engagement with external expertise, derived from US HEI partners, UK HEIs, study abroad networks and the high-level expertise of teaching staff, derived from their industry experience and work with other higher education providers.

12 Internal approaches to assuring quality and standards are based on a clear management structure which is fully understood by staff at all levels and underpinned by what staff considered to be valuable informal, day to day, communications across the organisation. There is a matrix of meetings at Consortium level and at ACCENT London level which formalise communications relating to matters such as programme development and approval, recruitment and student orientations and responses to programme evaluations. Internal approaches include staff observation, student evaluations at programme and module level, and a student ambassador system.

13 Staff and students are very positive about these approaches. Staff are able to describe examples of how they are able to influence programme design, using their high-level and extensive industry expertise to inform such changes. Students speak positively about the extent to which they are able to engage with staff at all levels both informally and formally, through, for example, the student ambassador system. They are confident that their voice is heard and that they are able to influence the quality of their learning experience.

14 Overall, the review team concluded that ACCENT has a strategic approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality that is embedded across the organisation. ACCENT, 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

15 In consultation and agreement with US partner institutions, ACCENT has designated responsibilities for ensuring the adequate provision of facilities and learning resources in all of its study abroad centres. Arrangements are contractual, with resourcing requirements formally set out in the Partnerships and Program Development document, Section 6 of ACCENT's Academic Management Handbook and the Partnerships and Program Development Procedure Manual. Processes are overseen by ACCENT's Director of Program Planning and Development.

16 Contractual arrangements between ACCENT and each US partner set out specific resource requirements in respect of facilities, technology, learning and staffing, but exact particulars vary according to programme, particularly in respect of requirements set for teaching delivery and enhancement. For example, the contract for the University of California Education Abroad Program (UCEAP)'s British and Entrepreneurship Program, delivered by academic staff hired in the UK, sets out precise requirements for lecturer course delivery, while the short-term summer courses covered in the University of Michigan's umbrella contract delivered primarily by US faculty requires ACCENT London to provide guest lecturers for each course delivered on the programme to enhance students' learning experiences while in the UK.

17 ACCENT London has delegated responsibility for ensuring that the resources relating to facilities, learning, technology and staffing required for each programme are planned, secured and maintained effectively in ways that enable and facilitate the delivery and enhancement of a high-quality learning experience for students. Suitable facilities constitute an important strategic factor in attracting students to existing programmes and, as evidenced in the Program Proposal Pro-forma, constitute a key factor in ACCENT London's strategic objectives to generate the interests of US partners in developing new programmes. ACCENT London facilities deemed to be attractive for students include a fully staffed central reception area, spacious multipurpose classrooms with audio visual equipment, Wi-Fi access throughout classrooms and common spaces, and a student lounge and computer lab with printing services.

18 The principal mechanism for conveying all programme and course information to students is the Centre's Academic Course Management System. Accessed through a dashboard system, the virtual learning environment (VLE) provides students with the academic and general administrative information required outside of face-to-face classroom sessions and experiential activities, as well as serving as the central point for assessment submission. Students confirm this to be the case. ACCENT London requires academic staff to upload course materials onto the VLE prior to the beginning of term, and, to ensure compliance, requirements are set out in the Faculty Handbook. To make certain that students understand the importance of the VLE to their studies before classes start, they are provided with Academic Handbooks, issued in a standardised format to cover programmes offered by US university partners, which outline that ACCENT London will provide them with a brief demonstration on how to use the VLE in academic orientation sessions.

19 ACCENT London has delegated responsibilities for selecting and recruiting local staff,

subject to securing final approval for teaching staff from the home university. To ensure candidates meet the standards set, ACCENT London has produced a document entitled the Faculty Hire Process, which sets out procedures relating to selection criteria, interview procedures and processes to be followed for securing the US partner's approval. For example, successful academic candidates are normally expected to have doctoral degrees, demonstrate subject expertise in the course(s) to be delivered, and have teaching experience in a US university environment. ACCENT compiles and distributes profiles of the lecturers selected to teach on the various courses and programmes. In the meeting with students, attendees confirmed that access to the profiles of teachers delivering on their programmes added value to their learning experiences. Professional staff are selected on the basis of their fit with the particular job description, relevant information provided in current CVs and personal interview outcomes. Senior staff and teaching staff confirm this process and teaching staff welcome the extent to which their sector experience is valued in the appointment process and beyond.

20 ACCENT London has produced the Faculty Handbook to ensure that all staff members are advised of current regulations and requirements, informed of their duties and responsibilities, briefed on contractual and financial arrangements and, in the case of academic staff, provided with the information required to upload teaching materials on ACCENT London's VLE and to access ACCENT's Course Management System (CMS). Handbooks are updated periodically, distributed to staff members, particularly new recruits, and recipients are required to confirm receipt and then to sign off once the document has been read.

21 To ensure that staff have the requisite skills and training to conduct their roles effectively, ACCENT London provides opportunities for staff training and professional development. For example, newly hired professional staff are required to undergo extensive in-house training to perform their duties effectively. Academic staff and guest lecturers benefit from classroom observations and visits undertaken by peers, senior managers, and site visitors from US partner universities, with the feedback provided used to enhance their personal and professional development as lecturers. Staff also benefit from ACCENT London staff meetings convened periodically to discuss academically related topics, such as artificial intelligence. In the review meeting, academics confirmed their view that ACCENT London meetings were useful because they created opportunities for widening discussion and integrating with staff from other disciplines.

22 Overall, the review team concluded that ACCENT London plans, secures and provides the facilities required and the resources deemed requisite for maintaining academic standards and enhancing quality in respect of each of the programmes offered, in consultation with US partners and ACCENT. To accomplish this aim, senior leaders ensure that resources for learning, technology and staffing are not only sufficient but add value to students' learning experience. ACCENT, 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

23 ACCENT takes a strategic approach to evaluating its study abroad provision. All study centres are required to collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data relating to the programmes, courses and experiential activities offered and to use the findings gained to inform decision making aimed at enhancing the quality of students' learning opportunities and experiences. To ensure consistency in approach, requirements are set out in the evaluation procedures document and in the Partnerships and Program Development Procedure Manual.

24 ACCENT London has delegated responsibility for ensuring that the procedures and processes for data collection, analyses and usage required by ACCENT are implemented, and the results obtained are used to inform decision-making in respect of improving teaching, learning and the wider experiences of students. Additionally, ACCENT London uses quantitative measures from US universities, against which to reference its own provision. Quantitative measures are based on ACCENT's internal programme evaluation procedures which are fully detailed in ACCENT's processes for programme evaluation.

25 To ensure the quality of delivery and content is maintained in respect of each course (module) ACCENT London collects and analyses quantitative and qualitative data aimed at capturing student opinions about their learning experiences in specific courses. Results are anonymous and are reviewed by the ACCENT London Centre Director, who analyses the information gained to identify strengths and weaknesses in present course design and delivery and suggest future improvements. In the case of small issues, the director discusses matters in-person with the lecturer associated with the specific course. If a larger issue exists which may need to be addressed with a partner institution, then the matters is referred to ACCENT's Program Development Team.

26 ACCENT London has effective procedures and processes in place for conducting course evaluations that ensure the best prospects for involving all students in the feedback process and gaining a representative picture of student opinion. Details for implementation are set out in the Faculty Handbook. To counteract problems associated with persistently low student response recorded in online surveys, course evaluations are paper-based, completed in the classroom in the absence of the lecturer, and results are delivered in sealed envelopes to the Academic Coordinator. To reduce the risk of bias in respect of a student's personal dissatisfaction with or dislike of a particular lecturer or mode of delivery, students are asked to evaluate the quality of their own involvement and contributions in the course or module at the beginning of the survey. To encourage students' honest responses to the six questions asked about the lecturer and her/his approach to delivery and assessment, lecturers are precluded from viewing results until final grades have been awarded.

27 ACCENT London also uses the qualitative feedback provided by academics from US partners visiting the London Centre who take part in class observations and meet with students, staff and the ACCENT London Centre Director, and from visits undertaken by ACCENT staff to US partners aimed at improving the quality of programme and course delivery. During a recent visit to Michigan State University by ACCENT staff, for example, concerns were raised about the negative feedback received about a particular lecturer in a London programme evaluation. Officials in ACCENT Central Headquarters took note of the

negative feedback and referred the issue back to the London director, who rendered a formal response reporting positive actions taken to improve course delivery in the next iteration.

28 Virtual and in-person meetings take place with US partners to discuss evaluation data and recommendations for programme and course improvement. For example, in September 2024, meetings with the ACCENT London Centre Director and UCEAP officials took place at ACCENT London to discuss course evaluation data collected on UCEAP programmes in 2024. On the basis of student feedback obtained and student enrolment ranking, several recommendations were agreed for course improvement in autumn 2025, including renaming courses to reflect the content more clearly and replacing courses deemed to be of limited function with courses deemed more relevant to the programme.

29 With respect to future directions, ACCENT is also looking to develop new programmes in consultations with US partners but also with existing ACCENT centres. Such intentions are likely to be influenced heavily by the feedback provided by students in programme and course evaluations, as well as initiatives put forward by US university partners, ACCENT and individual study abroad centres such as London.

30 Overall, the review team concluded that ACCENT London collects and analyses quantitative and qualitative data at programme and course levels and has developed effective systematic and iterative procedures for doing so. Results are used to inform decisions made to enhance practices and processes relating to teaching, learning and the wider student experience. ACCENT, 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

31 In consultation with the Academic Advisory Board (AAB) and US university partners, ACCENT has developed set procedures and processes for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating study abroad provision on a periodic and iterative basis. Details are set out in the ACCENT Academic Management Handbook, available to staff only in electronic format and updated as required. All study abroad centres are required to comply with the requirements set.

32 The AAB undertakes periodic reviews of each centre's academic and experiential provision to ensure that the strategic direction, operational procedures and delivery of each centre's provision remains fit-for-purpose and aligns with the requirements set by Central Headquarters and the expectations of US partners. Monthly team calls involving senior managers, administrators and academics drawn from all study centres also inform and shape centralised monitoring and evaluation processes through discussions that identify gaps and share good practice across the provision. For example, in a recent Academic Coordinator and Director meeting, attendees discussed the need to address bias and inequality in study abroad course evaluation templates to ensure alignment with ACCENT's global commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

33 ACCENT London, in compliance with the requirements set by ACCENT, regularly monitors, reviews and evaluates programme and course provision to ensure that the academic standards and the quality expectations set by US partners are met. To ensure close collaboration, virtual meetings between the ACCENT London Centre Director and ACCENT take place on a periodic basis to discuss existing arrangements and identify potential for future enhancement as detailed under Sector-Agreed Principle 3.

34 ACCENT's approach to internal quality assurance is based on anonymised programme and course evaluations for each taught module which are completed by students. Examples of these evaluations and meetings with students demonstrate that students are asked to evaluate their experience regarding a wide range of aspects, including pre-departure information, goal setting and achievement, teaching and learning and orientation. Students are positive about the extent to which they can input to course evaluation through both formal and informal mechanisms. Outcomes, both quantitative and qualitative, from these evaluations are received and reviewed by ACCENT London's Centre Director and the assigned Programs Coordinator. Any areas of development or enhancement are discussed with faculty for course feedback or partners, either directly or through the Program Development Managers for overall programme feedback and changes implemented during the subsequent programme.

35 In addition to programme and course evaluation, ACCENT London uses Student Ambassadors to engage the wider student population to evaluate and monitor its approaches to quality assurance. Minutes of Student Ambassador meetings show consideration of student feedback on a wide range of matters, including the quality of classes, student health and wellbeing, housing and programme assessment. Students are positive about the student ambassador system, commenting that it is a useful formal means to raise matters, alongside their regular informal interactions with teaching staff and managers.

36 These approaches to managing standards and quality are augmented by on-site visits and observations of teaching staff by managers at ACCENT London. Staff explained how a new guest speaker, who is not a regular staff member, was identified and selected for input to a programme. They described how the speaker was observed by ACCENT London staff and how the observation was recorded on a class observation form. Following site visits and any class observations, the Program Coordinator debriefs the ACCENT London Centre Director or Program Development Manager and provides feedback. If any concerns about the class, speaker or visit emerge, then a follow-up observation and discussion with the relevant faculty member takes place.

37 ACCENT London's processes and procedures for monitoring, review, evaluation and enhancement are iterative. When working on the next instalment of course delivery, any possible improvements identified are discussed with faculty and, if deemed appropriate, incorporated into the relevant syllabus, where they will be subsequently reviewed and assessed with respect to their potential merit and impact in the next review cycle.

38 ACCENT London takes deliberate steps to involve and engage staff in monitoring and evaluation activities. For example, standardised practices have been developed to ensure that course enhancements generally associated with the provision of guest lecturers add value to students' learning experiences. To ensure standards are maintained, academic staff observe sessions taught by guest lecturers, and complete detailed programme development forms recording their assessment of the visiting speaker's delivery, the level of student engagement in sessions and the presentation's utility in enhancing the quality of course provision. Records of all guest speaker reports are uploaded onto ACCENT London's internal database. Thereafter, as is the case with all teaching observations undertaken, forms are reviewed by the ACCENT London Centre Director, discussed in weekly team meetings and uploaded onto ACCENT London's program development database.

39 ACCENT London also takes external expertise into account in monitoring and evaluating standards and enhancing the quality of its academic provision. On-site visits to and from US partner institutions undertaken by academic and professional staff provide additional opportunities for improving processes and facilitating enhancements. For example, in response to enhancements to programme and course provision recommended by two on-site visitors from the UCEAP, changes have been approved and are scheduled for implementation in autumn 2025. Additional recommendations subsequently made by UCEAP academics and officials for enhancing course and programme relevance and increasing student interest will also come into effect in autumn 2025. Although it is too early to assess the extent to which the enhancements introduced in both cases will positively impact on the quality of programme delivery, in the next review cycle, ACCENT London's iterative processes for monitoring and evaluation should provide useful insights about the effectiveness of the changes introduced. Staff members are encouraged to comment on the results obtained in the next annual monitoring review.

40 In addition to standards set by US university partners, and study abroad organisations, external reference points specifically focused on UK Higher Education standards and expectations also inform ACCENT London's monitoring and evaluation processes. For example, with respect to QAA and the revised UK Quality Code (the Quality Code) for Higher Education published in July 2024, senior staff have undertaken a mapping exercise to assess the extent to which the current study abroad provision aligns with the UK HE sector-agreed principles and key practices set out in the Quality Code. In addition, positive relations with UK universities, in particular, the University of Westminster and Queen Mary University of London, have deepened knowledge and understanding of UK HE sector expectations and standards.

41 Overall, the review team concluded that ACCENT London regularly, systematically and effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the study abroad programmes offered and takes deliberate steps to secure academic standards and enhance the quality of provision. To

achieve the aims set, iterative evaluation processes and procedures have been put into place that encourage and monitor student and staff involvement in local evaluation processes and the results obtained feed into overarching reviews of study abroad provision undertaken by the Academic Advisory Board and ACCENT. External expertise and sector benchmarks form an integral part of the evaluation process and are used continually to enhance the quality of provision. ACCENT, 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

42 As described under Sector-Agreed Principle 1, ACCENT's Program Development Team are responsible for the strategic identification, typically in liaison with existing US partners, of new programmes or the modification of existing programmes. This team then takes responsibility for the design and development of these new programmes, in conjunction with the ACCENT London team. The Program Development Team comprises ACCENT staff members, based in the US and across Europe, and managed by ACCENT's Director of Partnerships and Program Development. Details of the procedures for programme development and approval are described in the Partnerships and Program Development Procedure Manual. The manual is clear and detailed with comprehensive guidance on the procedures involved, including timescales and responsibilities. As such it provides a sound basis for the consistent development or modification of programmes.

43 ACCENT London states that programmes are credit-bearing, leading to credit towards the students' undergraduate programme at their home university, the respective partner of ACCENT. As such, the academic and credit level of the programme is set by the home university and is agreed in the process for programme development or modification as described above.

44 As an example, the proposal for a Global Seminar Program in Communication, Culture and Sport, includes details relating to academic content along with a detailed proposed schedule. The response to this proposal is detailed and in itself constitutes the agreed programme content, the definitive programme documentation and legal agreement, on which delivery is based. The document details academic matters, including orientation and induction, subject matter and course content and provides a sound basis for the operation of the programme. The review team heard from the Director of Partnerships and Program Development how this process is followed in practice and from staff how they are able to use this process to suggest and take forward programme developments.

45 There are three different mechanisms by which programme development may be instigated. Each is structured around ACCENT's Program Outline Guidance Document which provides a structure which aims to ensure consistency and detail. For example, in relation to the roles and responsibilities of those engaged in the development of a programme, timelines and the preparation and support from ACCENT, in partnership with the proposer, typically a US partner. The three mechanisms are designed to manage: customised proposals based on specific requests from a partner; the design of entirely new programmes based in London, under a certain theme, for example Climate Change or Business and Entrepreneurship, or the revision of existing programmes.

46 The review team found that the approaches that ACCENT London has with regard to the design, development, approval and modification of programmes are consistent and effective. Approaches are underpinned by detailed documentation, which describe the strategic overview and detailed procedures for programme design, development, approval and modification. The review team found evidence (as detailed above) that these procedures

are followed in practice and involve close engagement with the partner university to ensure that the agreed programme meets the credit requirements of the student's US undergraduate programme and the needs of students in terms of academic content, teaching, learning and assessment. Academic staff are able to contribute extensively to course development and to modifications to existing programmes.

47 Overall, the review team concluded that the design, development, approval and modification of programmes and modules ensure the quality of provision, and the academic standards of awards are consistent with the relevant qualifications framework. ACCENT ensures that the provision and level of qualifications are comparable to those offered at the partner university in the US. ACCENT, 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

48 The responsibilities for recruiting, selecting and admitting students are divided between ACCENT London and the partner US universities. Prior to advertising the programme to students, ACCENT London and the partner US universities agree the programme of study, study period, and estimated student numbers. Once agreed, the partner US universities are primarily responsible for student recruitment and advertising of the ACCENT London programme(s). These processes are outlined in the contractual agreements between ACCENT London and the partner universities. ACCENT London adopts a quality assurance and support role in relation to recruitment. In this role ACCENT London performs checks on the partner universities' websites to ensure that advertising materials are complete and accurate. Additionally, ACCENT London supports the promotion of their programmes through virtual webinars and visits to partner university campuses, carried out by ACCENT's university relations team. During these visits students can hear more about the programme and engage in a question-and-answer session. These sessions also occasionally engage students who have previously studied on an ACCENT programme. During the review, students reported that the information provided to them via their home university's website and joint university-ACCENT London visits/webinars is reflective of their experience.

49 Selection is wholly the responsibility of the partner US university; ACCENT London is not involved in the selection process for any of their programmes. The minimum threshold ACCENT stipulates is that students must be enrolled on a full-time undergraduate degree at their US university and meet their university's selection criteria for a place on the ACCENT London programme. Accordingly, the partner US universities set their own admissions criteria above this threshold and undertake their own selection processes. The outcomes of the selection process are then communicated to ACCENT London by the partner US universities. As ACCENT predominantly partner with 'National Universities' and 'National Liberal Arts Colleges' (roughly equivalent to high and medium UCAS tariff institutions), the review team considered this method of selection appropriate as these institutions typically have higher entry thresholds for their undergraduate programmes and thus ensured a suitable level of attainment on entry. This view was confirmed by academic staff.

50 Although in the early stages, the team noted ACCENT's medium-term plans to begin recruiting students from non-US universities. ACCENT noted that they would wish to be more involved in the admission of non-US students than is currently the case with US partners and are beginning to review their admissions processes to ensure that they remain suitable should this expansion occur.

51 Overall, the review team concluded that ACCENT London works in partnership with its US university partners to recruit, select and admit students in a transparent and fair manner. ACCENT London also has appropriate processes in place to ensure accurate, relevant and accessible information about their provision is available, enabling students to make informed choices about their studies. ACCENT, 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

52 Under the agreements in place with the partner US universities, ACCENT London has responsibility for providing thorough pre-departure and on-side orientations to prepare students for their studies in London. ACCENT London is cognisant of students' requirements during the key transition points and as such differentiates their offering from other similar providers. ACCENT London's pre-departure provision primarily takes the form of a pre-departure handbook, with accompanying webinars. These cover travel/visas, housing, and cultural integration; the webinars also offer a question-and-answer opportunity. Upon arrival, students receive two orientation sessions, one covering pastoral provision and one covering academic provision. The pastoral session informs students of the support services available and how to access them. The review team also observed these services being promoted around ACCENT London's campus. Students informed the review team that the information provided to them during the pre-departure and arrival sessions regarding pastoral support was relevant and timely.

53 The academic orientation session covers academic/classroom expectations, academic integrity, grading criteria, and assignment submission procedures. This is further expanded upon in the Academic Handbook, students' first teaching session, and programme/course syllabus. Academic office hours are a key student support mechanism for ACCENT. Although the syllabi listed specific office hour times, students and academic staff reported a flexible and student-centred approach to office hours and additional academic support provided by academic staff. This approach is highly utilised and appreciated by students.

54 ACCENT London is made aware of any students with disabilities or other specific needs by the partner US university prior to arrival. Following this disclosure, ACCENT London works with the partner university to agree to any reasonable adjustments. Academic staff confirm that they are informed of the agreed adjustments in good time and are supported by ACCENT London's leadership and administrative staff to make practical and/or pedagogic adjustments where necessary. Leaders provided examples of interventions, such as implementing additional one-to-one tutorial sessions for students, which are routinely used to enable students to achieve. The ACCENT London Centre Director is ultimately responsible for ensuring that reasonable accommodations are implemented, however, the review team noted the proactive approach to inclusion across all staff members that they met. The review team noted this flexible and student-centered approach to academic, professional and pastoral support throughout students' learning journey, for instance via the extended availability of both academic and professional support staff, as **good practice**.

55 ACCENT London facilitates internships with organisations in London for students who enroll on several of their programmes including the UCEAP Business and Entrepreneurship study programme. Students applying to study this programme are supported through a one-to-one meeting with the Internships Manager covering curriculum vitae (CV) standards and application/interview advice. Once accepted by ACCENT London and assigned to an organisation, students receive another orientation session covering the cultural workplace expectations prior to entering the workplace. The Internships Manager contacts and visits the student interns and interns' supervisors (based in the interns' organisations) regularly to support and guide both sides of the partnership to ensure a fruitful experience. The team

considered this level of support to be comprehensive and of particular benefit to students who had no prior work experience.

56 ACCENT London has engaged with a third-party therapy/counselling and mental health support service. The review team judged the procurement of this service to notably strengthen ACCENT London's support for students with mental health considerations due to its extended availability and ability to speak to a qualified therapist/counsellor, expertise ACCENT London would not otherwise be able to provide through internal resources.

57 ACCENT London also provides opportunities aimed at meeting the welfare needs of students through digital means. For example, to assist students with concerns about physical, social and/or mental wellbeing, ACCENT London provides digital access to an online wellbeing service. Through the website, students have opportunities to book an appointment with a therapist, consult with a counsellor on a 24/7 basis and attend a variety of online seminars.

58 ACCENT London is bound under the agreements in place with the partner US universities to offer and promote cultural activities outside of the formal curriculum. These activities span, for example, historical and theatrical disciplines. Students informed the review team that these activities were engaging, enjoyable and complemented their formal studies well. Students are informed of these activities via a bulletin board (virtual and physical); students find this method of promotion to be accessible.

59 Overall, the review team concluded that ACCENT London provides suitable academic and pastoral scaffolding throughout students' journeys to support them to achieve their potential. Students are well informed of the support services on offer, and staff proactively provide high-quality support to students. ACCENT, 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

60 The Academic Advisory Board (AAB) Charter sets out the overarching vision for ACCENT in terms of its vision for teaching, learning and assessment on the programmes that ACCENT delivers globally. A key element of the vision is to, 'ensure academic excellence, incorporate technology with local expertise and traditions so that each student optimizes their opportunity for intellectual, professional, and personal development'. Sitting under the vision, the Charter emphasises the place of academic staff and student support and engagement in achieving this vision.

61 The AAB Charter lists aspects of provision, such as health and safety, co-curricular activities, research and library resources, IT and integration of online learning platforms, the development of a writing/communication/mentoring workshop or seminar services, research and writing strategies, public speaking and presentation skills, academic integrity and plagiarism, as key elements that it seeks to promote. The review team found this reflected in meetings with staff and with students. Staff gave examples of how they are able to influence curriculum design and delivery, using their sector and wider higher education experiences. Students commented positively on their academic experience, noting the high expectations placed on them and, for example, how assessments are adapted to take account of academic integrity in relation to emerging artificial intelligence technologies.

62 Staff speak enthusiastically about how their sector knowledge informed programme content and their teaching practices. Similarly, students are positive about the expertise of staff and how this impacts their learning and the currency of the approved syllabus that they follow, describing, for example, opportunities to visit contemporary sector venues that brought the curriculum to life for them. During the review, staff described examples of how they use their sector engagement to enhance both the curriculum and pastoral experience of students through visits and workshops at a wide range of establishments in the locality. Examples given included theatres, higher education and private organisation libraries and collections and meetings with senior level staff working at such venues.

63 As described in Sector-Agreed Principle 7, academic staff work jointly with ACCENT's Program Development Team to develop course work and assessments, and they speak enthusiastically about the extent to which they can use their sector and wider higher education expertise to inform course design, content and delivery, for example, in updating the curriculum to reflect contemporary developments in the sector.

64 The input of external expertise is augmented by the extent of staff academic and industry experience and their engagement with other UK and European universities. The review team found and heard extensive high-level staff expertise in their respective sectors. The review team recognise that this positively impacts on programme development and the experience of students. Students are very positive about the subject expertise of staff and were able to explain how this enhanced their learning and teaching experience. The extent to which course content and delivery is informed by external expertise, both from the partner US universities, the wider ACCENT Consortium and the expertise of staff, much of which is derived from current and previous engagement of staff in industry and with other UK universities, is considered to be **good practice**.

65 The academic orientation presentation, the Academic Handbook and course syllabi are student-facing and provide useful information regarding ACCENT's policy and procedure, classroom culture and expected academic practice in relation to assessment and grading. Course syllabi include the course description, outline approaches to methods of study, learning outcomes, course policies, assessment criteria and grading scales. These syllabi also outline ACCENT's approach to, diversity, equity and inclusion. All student policies and agreements are included in pre-departure documentation. These include ACCENT policies in relation to student codes of conduct, wellbeing and support, housing, identity and diversity. Students are positive about the information that is provided to them about ACCENT's approaches to standards and quality and confirm that this gives them a good understanding about expectations, for example on the use of emerging technologies.

66 The review team concluded that the extent to which teaching, learning and assessment is enhanced by the deliberate approaches of managers and teaching staff to actively utilise resources in the locality, for example libraries, theatres, and historic buildings, that enriches the learning and pastoral experience of students, is **good practice**.

67 In meetings with staff and with students the review team heard that students value the direct engagements they have with staff in these relatively small classes and in the wider London Centre. Staff too recognise this and comment that they feel that such close engagement with students enhances the overall experience of students on the various programmes. Students also confirm that the information they are given prior to joining their programme, and the expectations arising from this, is accurate and fully meets their expectations.

68 Each course has a syllabus that is designed by ACCENT London's faculty jointly with US partners. This is given to students once they arrive in London and is made available for the duration of the term on the VLE. These syllabi outline, for example, course expectations, assessments and schedules. The course syllabus is used in the first course session as a point of discussion, with students given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification, with the general expectation of students fully engaging in their studies and academic success. The syllabus serves as a valuable point of reference for students because it has details with regards to course content, assessment, teaching and learning. These align with the Academic Handbook and concur with the information provided to academic staff in the Faculty Handbook. These points of information for students are supplemented by the VLE, where students can access syllabi, readings, class by class information, their Academic Handbook and more generic information on matters such as health and safety, and academic and London life orientations. Students also submit their assignments through the VLE. Students confirm that the course information they are given is clear and useful in helping them to transition through their study programme. This information provided for students is comprehensive and valuable as a readily accessible resource prior to and during their study abroad programmes.

69 Course syllabi are based on the approved programme specification and include details of the assessment strategy for the course as a whole and for individual modules. Approved programmes carry academic credit towards the students' home university undergraduate programme and while assessments are set, marked and moderated by ACCENT, the assessment vehicles themselves are approved by the home university.

70 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is monitored through a formal observation process and enhanced through a voluntary peer to peer observation process. The review team examined two completed observation documents and found that the observation record and written feedback to the tutor was effective and likely to enable strengths and areas for development to be identified. Formal observations are recorded centrally, and managers use the process to identify individual staff strengths and areas for development and any good practice or developmental themes. Staff have high-level and current sector and higher education experience, and the team heard that they are supported

by managers to enable them to ensure that this expertise is used in their teaching practice.

71 The student ambassador system is used to provide ongoing feedback from students during their studies and this is supplemented at the end of each programme by the completion of student evaluations. The samples of course evaluations submitted show high levels of student satisfaction with their study abroad programme experience. This was reflected in comments by students which were very positive about the student ambassador system and their overall experience. In particular they valued the expertise of staff, and the opportunities afforded to them in terms of academic and pastoral related visits, using the wide range of institutions located in the area. Students also speak positively about the informal engagement they have with teaching staff and with managers, valuing the ready access they have to all staff both in-person at ACCENT London and via email and other mechanisms. Staff also commented on this, agreeing that this informal engagement was a key part of the success of programmes.

72 Students with additional learning needs and academic requirements are identified by the US partner and ACCENT London is informed of these needs through a formal letter from the partner, which outlines the specific needs of the student. The review team found and heard a strong commitment to the support of all students. All students have ready access to academic staff through a scheduled 'office hour'. The review team examined examples of how additional needs are identified and found them to be clear and concise, showing the measures taken to address such needs. In further exploration of this matter the team heard examples of adjustments to modes of teaching and learning and to assessment. For example, additional learning time and staff support, changes to teaching materials, provision of assistive learning technologies and an increased allowance of time for formal assessments.

73 The review team found that ACCENT has a clear overarching approach to teaching, learning and assessment, derived at Consortium level from the detailed AAB. Furthermore, the team found that this overarching approach is reflected in practice at ACCENT London, for example in regard to the appointment of staff with high-level, contemporary sector and higher education experience, which is used to provide a high-quality student academic and pastoral experience. The review team's evaluation was particularly informed by meetings with teaching staff and with students. Staff speak enthusiastically about the ways in which they can influence the curriculum to ensure its currency and to 'bring it to life'. Students concurred with this in their positive comments regarding their learning and assessment and the support they receive in both academic and pastoral manners. Senior staff, academic staff and students emphasise the value they place on informal engagement with students.

74 Overall, the review team concluded that ACCENT London facilitates 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. ACCENT, 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

75 ACCENT London works in partnership with the US universities who admit students to its programmes and award the credit for each course. The universities have overall responsibility for appeals and complaints.

76 ACCENT London promotes early resolution of complaints and appeals and as a result primarily undertakes informal consideration of complaints and appeals. Students are informed of the grounds for appeal that can be considered by ACCENT London, the appeals process and the primary contact in the Academic Handbook. Information on how to make a complaint is briefly covered during the students' orientation session. Students informed the team that they know where to find complaints and appeals information, should they need to refer to it, and are aware of the appropriate avenues for support to make a complaint or appeal. Students noted no barriers to making a complaint or appeal.

77 Academic staff are informed of the complaints and appeals processes via the Faculty Handbook. During the review, academic staff confirmed that if approached by a student requesting an appeal, they would first check for miscalculation and then (if correctly calculated) provide further feedback on the assessment to the student to convey a more thorough insight of the strengths and weaknesses of the work and why the mark was considered appropriate. The review team considered this to be consistent with the informal and early resolution approach. Where a student remained unhappy, they would be directed to the ACCENT London Centre Director. A similar process was described for complaints; staff would address the complaint locally if possible and refer the complaint to the ACCENT London Centre Director if it required escalation. Once a complaints or appeals process is exhausted internally, students can direct their complaint or appeal to their home university. ACCENT London then liaises with the students' home university to address the complaint/appeal. Students are not restricted to exhausting ACCENT London's internal complaints/appeals processes before raising a complaint/appeal with their home university for factors that are not considered under ACCENT London's appeals policy.

78 The review team noted that the documentation provided directed students to their home university's policies on complaints and appeals in the first instance, whereas the team observed a culture of enabling and addressing complaints and appeals via early and informal resolution. Therefore, the team **recommends** that ACCENT London develops formalised complaints and appeals procedures, outlining the local/informal stages undertaken prior to referral to the partner university's procedure, to ensure that these steps are transparent to students.

79 Staff and students noted that complaints are received in a positive manner, and that ACCENT London works with the Student Ambassadors to further explore general feedback from students. Student Ambassadors then receive updates on how the complaint/feedback is being addressed. Staff noted that the learnings from complaints and appeals are shared throughout ACCENT London via leadership communication channels and networking meetings organised for ACCENT London's academic staff. The review team considered this a suitable mechanism for reviewing complaints and appeals to promote enhancement due to

ACCENT London's small size enabling sufficient response times.

80 As noted in Sector-Agreed Principle 9, admissions selection decisions are not made by ACCENT London. Accordingly, applicants' admissions complaints and appeals are addressed directly to the applicant's home university and ACCENT London are not involved in the complaint/appeal consideration or review process.

81 Overall, the review team concluded that ACCENT London operates complaints and appeals processes which are accessible to students, clearly articulated and enacted by staff. ACCENT London utilises their small size to routinely share learning from complaints and appeals to further enhance the student experience. ACCENT, therefore, **is aligned** with the Sector-Agreed Principle.

Enhancement initiatives

Commentary on institutional approach to enhancement

83 ACCENT London has recently initiated monthly meetings of senior management, administrative staff and academic coordinators. Recent agenda items include feedback from the last Academic Advisory Board meeting, use of artificial intelligence and academic integrity, and comparison of assignments between US campuses. Senior management also meet in person every year in one of their global locations for meetings, workshops, idea sharing and training.

84 ACCENT London, in conjunction with its US partner institutions, utilises an online Program Evaluation Form across its European study centres. The online system via MS Forms provides automatically tabulated results for reporting and analysis. Course evaluation data for each taught module is collected using a paper template, circulated during the penultimate week of teaching, and completed anonymously. The qualitative and quantitative information from these two types of evaluation is viewed by the ACCENT London Centre Director and the Programs Coordinator, and any areas of development or enhancement are discussed with faculty for course feedback or partners for overall programme feedback and implemented during their next programme.

85 ACCENT London staff meet weekly to re view current programmes, future programmes, academic development, social media, cyber security, and health and safety. The ACCENT London Centre Director also has regular meetings with the Director of Program Development, the Assistant Program Development Manager, the Director of European Operations, the Associate Director of US Operations, the Director of US Operations and the European Centre Directors to discuss student welfare and their academic experience.

86 ACCENT London makes efforts to have productive relationships with both UK universities and other study abroad providers, as well as their US partners. These are used for sharing best practice and as a support network particularly through the Future of Study Abroad network.

87 Assessed internships form a core part of several of programmes, with participating students benefiting from an academic, cultural and professional experience of London. An area of growth is in spring break programmes, of which there were three in 2023, two in 2024 and five planned for 2025. These programmes usually take place in March when US students have a week off class and have the opportunity to study abroad.

88 ACCENT has an Inclusion team with a nominated officer in each study centre, and all staff have been involved in training on diversity, equity and inclusion. ACCENT also complies with their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy.

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