

Academic Consortium Board

Site Evaluation Executive Summary

Evaluation of the CIEE Program(s) at Alicante, Spain

Spring 2018

Date of last site evaluation: 2009

CIEE Center evaluations are conducted every 10 years and evaluation teams are selected to review the programs and study centers for best practices in study abroad. Because the Director of the CIEE programs in Alicante left the program immediately after this review was completed (to become the Director of the CIEE program in Seville), the ACB evaluation team recommends that a follow-up review be conducted in 1-2 years.

Evaluation Team members:

- Mary Dando, Director, Education Abroad, University of Colorado Boulder, ACB Vice Chair
- Nigel Cossar, Director, Penn Abroad and Global Programs, University of Pennsylvania, ACB member
- Nina Namaste, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Spanish, Department of World Languages and Cultures, Elon University

I. Program Background/History:

The CIEE program in Alicante offers an alternative location for students that do not want to be at the large centers such as Madrid, Barcelona, and Seville. The program began in 1985 and had various directors until Francisco (Paco) Diez became the Director in 2006. The current three program system for the semester was developed in 2003, and the current iteration offers Language in Context (for students with 0-2 semesters max of Spanish), Language and Culture (for students with max 3-4 semesters of Spanish), and Liberal Arts (5 or more semesters of Spanish.) The number of required language courses was reduced in 2016-17 to give students more flexibility. Internships were added in 2016 and currently enrolls between 3-7 students a semester.

The summer offerings in Alicante have undergone numerous versions over the years. We did not evaluate the Summer Intensive Language program but did see that enrollment in this option has declined, probably due to the drop in enrollment in language programs overall at U.S. institutions. Alicante offers Sessions I and II in the summer, but work remains to be done to identify successful summer offerings that will attract enough students.

The program has experienced enrollment fluctuations in the past five years. In 2014 enrollment fell by 30-40% which unfortunately led to the necessity to lay off several staff. Enrollment has since improved, but the eliminated positions have not been filled.

Enrollment Statistics – Liberal Arts

Term	2015 - Fall	2016 – Spring	2016 – Fall	2017 – Spring	2017 – Fall	2018 – Spring
# of students	20	37	19	24	28	35

Enrollment Statistics – Language + Culture

Term	2015 - Fall	2016 – Spring	2016 – Fall	2017 – Spring	2017 – Fall	2018 – Spring
# of students	10	16	10	11	11	14

Enrollment Statistics – Language in Context

Term	2015 - Fall	2016 – Spring	2016 – Fall	2017 – Spring	2017 – Fall	2018 – Spring
# of students	6	14	5	18	8	10

Enrollment Statistics – Summer Intensive Spanish Language

Year	2015	2016	2017
# of students	9	12	12

Enrollment Statistics – Summer Modular Language + Culture

Year	2015	2016	2017
# of students	54	25	16

The relationship with the University of Alicante has had its ups and downs, and the Director has worked effectively to navigate these changes. In 2010, the CIEE study center was moved just outside of the UA campus. Currently, the relationship with UA has improved, and talks have begun to move the center back on campus. CIEE signed a new agreement with the University of Alicante in 2017 which appears to indicate a new era of collaboration. It should be noted that for many years CIEE offered the only U.S. provider program in Alicante, and enrollment on this mid-size program was healthy. The program now has several competitors, all of whom are located on campus.

After the evaluation team left Alicante, we learned that the Director would be leaving Alicante immediately, to become the director of the program in Seville. A search for his replacement will happen, but in the meantime the Student Services Coordinator will serve as the interim director. These changes cannot help but impact the program. The department director has cultivated a close working relationship with UA, and it now

remains to be seen what the leadership change means for the program. For this reason, the ACB evaluation team recommends that the program be reviewed again in 1-2 years.

II. Key Discussions/Findings:

The Alicante program is for the most part a successful medium-size program in Spain, offering student an alternative location outside the major urban environments of Madrid and Barcelona. The departing director has been key to the program's success, so finding his replacement who can immediately develop a good working relationship with the University of Alicante is essential. The Student Services coordinator, now the interim director, has been working at maximum capacity, so it will be critical in the short term to also offload some of her responsibilities.

Enrolment on the Alicante program has been falling. It is worth undergoing a marketing campaign for this program to distinguish the CIEE offering from other competitor's programs in Alicante. The web site needs major improvements to clearly brand and describe this program in a way that does not confuse student and advisors. Because this issue was noted by so many stakeholders and students, and because the team also had problems in finding information, this report includes a section dedicated to specific recommendations on overhauling the web site.

The program over the years has undergone a search for its identity. Many sending institutions still think of Alicante as a program for beginning and intermediate language students. While the Liberal Arts option was no doubt a good idea, this track suffers because in some classes taught in Spanish, intermediate level students are mixed with the advanced students. This track needs to have dedicated courses taught in Spanish that do not include students at lower levels.

The summer programs are also searching for their identity. The move this year to offer summer courses in English has not led to increased enrollment. Stakeholders have requested a return to summer Sessions I and II courses offered in Spanish; perhaps this will address the enrollment issue, but improving the web site will do even more to attract summer applicants.

The team noted that in many respects, Alicante is an island program. It will become less so if it can move to a building on the main campus. It is reassuring to see the strong support from the dean of the Centro Estudios Internacionales for CIEE, which is based, however, on the strong personal relationship with the now-department CIEE director.

The majority of this report was written before the evaluation team learned that the director was leaving Alicante. Edits have been made to note the impact of his departure. The void left by the director's departure is of serious concern. The success of the program has been largely the result of the director's vision and leadership, and his carefully cultivated relationships with colleagues at the University of Alicante. The evaluation team is concerned about the disruption to the program caused by his sudden departure at mid-semester. We therefore recommend that the ACB conduct a follow-up review in the next 1-2 years.

III. Priority Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Fix incorrect or missing information on the web site. Give on-site staff immediate editing access to make updates/corrections to the website, which can be controlled/approved by CIEE. Provide a landing page for Alicante in general and clearly explain differences among the programs. Clarify the language and eligibility requirements to avoid confusion among students and their home institution advisors. Change the Overview section for each track from a blurb selling the location of Alicante to an actual clear description of the program, its eligibility requirements, and its content. Review content from the audience perspective (students, faculty, advisors), and less from a marketing angle.

Recommendation 2: Simplify, consolidate, and clarify the program requirements. Consolidate Language in Context and Language and Culture into a single program for beginning and intermediate language students. If Liberal Arts remains a program, separate LA completely from LC, including providing its own content courses taught in Spanish for advanced language students. Make it clear whether or not direct enrollment courses are required. Add content courses in Business or Tourism to both the LIC/LC and LA tracks, and discontinue offering content courses that have had the highest cancellation rates.

Recommendation 3: Offer courses in both summer sessions in Spanish. Consider offering a summer course in Tourism in the Mediterranean that would complement, not compete with, a summer Tourism course in Palma. For semester programs, clarify policies on direct enrollment. Offer one or two Business classes taught in English for LIC/LC programs, and taught in Spanish for the LA track.

Recommendation 4: Update classroom facilities to make teaching easier, provide faculty with dedicated office space where they can work and meet with students, give all faculty office hours, give them access to Canvas, and give all faculty access to databases and research tools at UA.

Recommendation 5: Move the Alicante program to the central campus as soon as space becomes available. By moving students to the center of campus, their classes would be scattered in various buildings on campus, classroom facilities would be top notch, there would be better access to UA technology and research databases, and students would by default be able to mingle with Spanish and international students more. In sum, the CIEE Alicante program would become less of an island program.

Recommendation 6: Conduct a follow-up review by the ACB in the next 1-2 years, after the program has run for several semesters under the new RD.

IV. Action Plan/Program Update:

First, CIEE Portland, the Regional Director of Operations for Southern Europe and the resident staff of the CIEE Alicante site would like to express our gratitude to the ACB team for the time they took to visit the CIEE Alicante site and prepare the very thoughtful and insightful report with excellent recommendations to improve our existing program. We would also like to confirm that each one of the recommendations in the full report will be considered and implemented to the best of our ability. For the purpose of this report we will respond specifically to the five priority recommendations listed above.

Recommendation 1: Fix incorrect or missing information on the web site. Give on-site staff immediate editing access to make updates/corrections to the website, which can be controlled/approved by CIEE Boston. Provide a landing page for Alicante in general and clearly explain differences among the program. Clarify the language and eligibility requirements to avoid confusion among students and their home institution advisors. Change the Overview section for each track from a blurb selling the location of Alicante, to an actual clear description of the program, its eligibility requirements, and its content. Review content from the audience perspective (students, faculty, advisors), and less from a marketing angle.

Action to be taken: Over the last few months a new system has been implemented to consistently update the CIEE website in a more consistent and timely manner. This new process has been put in place to maintain a rigorous update of the information provided to students and our sending institutions. Thanks to this new system, onsite staff now has the possibility to keep track of the different web changes and updates submitted, from their locations, for web posting in a more proactive way. Onsite staff will work on revising and correcting any outstanding mistakes. The feasibility of developing a landing page for the site will be discussed with the CIEE Web Team.

Recommendation 2: Simplify, consolidate, and clarify the program requirements. Consolidate Language in Context and Language and Culture into a single program for beginning and intermediate language students. If Liberal Arts remains an a program, separate LA completely from LC, including providing its own content courses taught in Spanish for advanced language students. Make it clear whether or not direct enrollment courses are required. Add content courses in Business or Tourism to both the LIC/LC and LA tracks, and discontinue offering content courses that have had the highest cancellation rates.

Action to be taken: Aligned with the information provided in the previous recommendation, CIEE Alicante onsite staff will work on a proposal to simplify, consolidate and clarify the current programs offered at the CIEE Site in Alicante, Spain. The goal is to submit a program change proposal in Fall 2018. A new program will be created to combine these two pre-existing programs into a single new one. In this same line, a request will be made to modify the existing requirement of 5 or more semesters of college-level Spanish (or equivalent) to 4 semesters of college-level Spanish in the Liberal Arts program to be consistent with the requirements of all LA programs in Spain locations. Ideally this change would be presented as part of a comprehensive review of all Spain programming.

In addition, as we obtain additional data on course enrollments, we will continue to review the existing course offerings and will propose the elimination of those courses that have consistently been cancelled. We will also explore the possibility of adding new courses.

Recommendation 3: Offer courses in both summer sessions in Spanish. Consider offering a summer course in Tourism in the Mediterranean that would complement, not compete with, a summer Tourism course in Palma. For semester programs, clarify policies on direct enrollment. Offer one or two Business classes taught in English for LIC/LC programs, and taught in Spanish for the LA track.

Action to be taken: With the cooperation of the onsite Spanish Language Coordinator, onsite staff will reschedule the timing of the Summer 2019 courses of the summer

Intensive Spanish Language (ISL) program so that Language and Culture Summer session participants can enroll in some of those language courses. This change may also increase the number of students enrolled per course, thus reducing the possibility of course cancellations.

As part of a CIEE-wide review of summer enrollments and course offerings, the possibility of adding an area content course taught in Spanish per session will be evaluated. It should be noted that in the sessions in which no language courses are offered, a Communicative Spanish course will be offered. It is a CIEE goal to avoid last-minute cancellations of summer courses which create many inefficiencies.

For semester programs, onsite staff will work to make it clearer whether or not direct enrollment courses are required. First, on-site staff will improve the information posted in the Know Before You Go (KBYG) online pre-departure orientation module. Second, the academic session to be offered during the onsite orientation will be also reviewed. The simplification, consolidation and clarification of the current programs will help to reduce the confusion created in the past among participants.

Recommendation 4: Update classroom facilities to make teaching easier, provide faculty with dedicated office space where they can work and meet with students, give all faculty office hours, give them access to Canvas, and give all faculty access to databases and research tools at UA.

Action to be taken: The CIEE Alicante facilities include 4-5 classroom spaces of different size and a small faculty lounge for preparing course work. Faculty also have access to a small meeting room that can fit up to five people. In all these different spaces (faculty lounge, classroom spaces, and meeting room), faculty have access to a computer/ laptop as well as cable or wi-fi connection. Every term on-site staff will re-evaluate the use of these spaces and will connect with professors as soon as class schedules are configurated with the aim to share information about specific space availability at the site. Professors will be offered the possibility to make reservations in advance so they have a space to meet with students or work.

All CIEE professors will be granted access to Canvas by 2020. Over the last 3-4 years, CIEE has been implementing the adoption of Canvas at different CIEE locations around the world, in phases. Regarding the recommendation around giving all faculty access to databases and research tools at UA, staff will offer professors the possibility of being trained on those.

Recommendation 5: Move the Alicante program to the central campus as soon as space becomes available. By moving students to the center of campus, their classes would be scattered in various buildings on campus, classroom facilities would be top notch, there would be better access to UA technology and research databases, and students would by default be able to mingle with Spanish and international students more. In sum, the CIEE Alicante program would become less of an island program.

Action to be taken: Although there might be several advantages to moving the Alicante program to the central campus, there also could be several disadvantages—including limited space availability and accessibility when the campus is closed as well as lack of control regarding the implementation of the CIEE academic policy. CIEE Alicante offers other programs in addition to its semester and summer study abroad programs, which should be taken into consideration when analyzing the option to move. Further conversations and analysis of the viability of a potential move need to take place prior to

any final decision. In summary, this is an action item that would need to be evaluated in the long term.

Recommendation 6: *Conduct a follow-up review by the ACB in the next 1-2 years, after the program has run for several semesters under the new RD.*

Action to be taken: We understand that the intent of this recommendation is to confirm that the Alicante site and programs continue to function properly despite the change in leadership. However, we believe that the existing monitoring system actually does perform that function, as evaluations and term reports allow a term-by-term assessment of all aspects of program quality.