

Review of UK Transnational Education
Caribbean 2014



Case studies

Managing large-scale TNE delivered by distance learning

Following its Review of Transnational Education (TNE) in the Caribbean in November 2014, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has compiled a set of case studies exploring the approach taken by four UK universities in delivering large-scale TNE in the Caribbean. The review reports and an overview report on UK higher education delivered in the Caribbean are published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/TNE-Caribbean-2014.aspx.

Since the majority of Caribbean-based students registered with UK universities are distance learners the case studies provide snapshots of the variety of models that providers have developed to deliver distance learning. They illustrate the strategic approach of providers to TNE and the ways in which quality assurance and enhancement processes are adapting to increasing numbers of TNE students. Common themes include the important role played by partnerships in the delivery of TNE by distance learning, the extent to which globalised programmes of study can be localised to take account of regional and national contexts, and the extent to which the powerful connectivity offered by distance learning is developing global academic communities and global citizenship.

The case studies are intended to be informative for the sector but they do not reflect QAA endorsement of the particular arrangements described.

Case study 1: Managing large-scale independent and locally supported distance learning

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University of London International Programmes

This case study looks at the organisational model developed by a degree-awarding body which organises and manages the delivery by distance learning of some 200 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of study to over 54,000 students in 180 countries using a network of over 70 in-country partner institutions.

Case study 2: Delivering TNE in partnership with a professional body

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Oxford Brookes University and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)

This case study considers the partnership between a UK university and a professional body which bridges the academic professional divide by enabling students throughout the world to work concurrently towards a professional qualification and an undergraduate degree in accountancy. Some 2,500 students graduated from this programme in 2013-14.

Case study 3: Delivering TNE in partnership with a specialist online learning provider

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University of Liverpool and Laureate Online

This case study examines the TNE model adopted by a UK university which has chosen to work in partnership with a specialist online distance-learning provider in preference to developing in-house online distance-learning capabilities. It currently has around 10,000 students registered on over 20 postgraduate programmes of study in over 150 countries.

Case study 4: Refining the TNE model progressively in the light of experience

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Heriot-Watt University

This case study looks at the steps taken by a UK university to address the organisational and procedural challenges of maintaining academic standards in the context of a fast growing TNE student body, which currently stands at almost 21,000 students based in over 150 countries worldwide, the majority studying at postgraduate level.

Map of the 15 member and five associate member states that make up the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)



Case study 1: Managing large-scale independent and locally supported distance learning

University of London International Programmes

Introduction

University of London International Programmes (International Programmes) have featured in a number of previous QAA audits and reviews of overseas provision including the Audit of Overseas Provision in India in 2009 and the Audit of Transnational Education in Singapore in 2011. The International Programmes was subject to Institutional Audit in May 2011 and has also featured in QAA's *Outcomes from Institutional Audit 2009-11: Assessment and Feedback* in 2012.

A small number of UK providers, because of their global reach, are likely to feature repeatedly in QAA's reviews of UK TNE. Therefore, this case study begins with an account of the International Programmes' global transnational education model which may be referenced by future reviews before moving on to consider its localised implementation in the Caribbean as exemplified by the undergraduate programme of study in Law. Students taking the Undergraduate Laws Programme may do so as independent distance learners or as supported distance learners by enrolling with a recognised centre in the Caribbean.

The International Programmes' mission

The International Academy is the name given to the central academic body of the University of London which works in collaboration with a number of the University's constituent colleges to deliver the University of London International Programmes. Students are registered with the University and receive University of London awards. The International Programmes is the world's oldest provider of degrees through flexible and distance learning. It traces its origins to the mid-19th Century and its organisational model has been refined progressively as student numbers have increased. The International Programmes' mission is 'to offer life changing access to high quality university education that meets the diverse needs of a global community'.

The scale of the International Programmes' global operations

The scale of the International Programmes' activity has grown substantially from around 10,000 students in the 1960s to the 54,000 students currently registered in over 180 countries on 200 programmes of study, the majority of them at undergraduate level. The International Programmes has six recognised centres in the Caribbean one of which, the University College of the Caribbean, is based in Jamaica and the remainder in Trinidad. These include the School of Business and Computer Science, the Institute of Law and Academic Studies, the College of Legal Studies, K Beckles and Associates, Academy of Tertiary Studies (ATS) and the University College of the Caribbean. The main expansion of student numbers occurred from 2001 onwards and programmes in law have followed this trend. The University attributes this to factors which include growth in the global economy and an aspirational and growing global middle class.

Academic oversight of the International Programmes

The work of International Programmes academic provision is overseen by the governance of the International Academy. One of three central academic bodies, the International Academy is responsible for the worldwide promotion of programmes of study intended primarily for students who cannot access an on-campus programme offered by one of the colleges of the University of London. This is achieved through administering and managing the work of 12 Lead Colleges of the University of London, which provide academic direction for its International Programmes. The Lead Colleges are responsible for developing, maintaining and reviewing individual programmes of study and for supporting the academic progress of students taking them. This division of responsibilities is set out in a quality schedule and bound by contract between the University and the Lead College(s). The Annual Programme Planning and Review (APPR) process monitors the quality of the programmes and comments specifically on the interface between the International Programmes and the Lead College or consortium in managing and enhancing programme delivery.

Programme approval and review

Initial approval and review processes are based on the learning and support needs of independent and locally supported learners and this is reflected in the pedagogy of learning materials design. Curriculum design is mainly generic because of the practical difficulties that would be attendant on country-specific course design, particularly in subjects such as law where professional recognition is also jurisdiction-specific. Nonetheless, programme content in law may be adapted to reflect specific variations in some countries; for example, the inclusion of a Skills Portfolio in the final year of the LLB enables students to draw on their local or national context. The International Programmes' network of in-country recognised teaching centres, with which students may enrol, also plays an important role in localising the curriculum. Students take the view that although the content of the majority of the learning materials is UK-influenced, connections with the Caribbean are easy to find because of a shared legal tradition. Furthermore open-ended essay questions in respect of topics as varied as extradition, immigration and defamation allow them to reference local contexts and cases when appropriate. Overall, they feel that they have ample opportunity to contextualise legal theory both in Caribbean and international contexts, and that this duality raises awareness of shared global concerns and therefore promotes global citizenship.

Support for students

Distance learners have ready access to the International Programmes' Student Advice Centre. The Student Advice Centre deals with a substantial number of queries. In 2012-13, for example, it handled over 32,000 queries from existing students relating to the Undergraduate Laws Programme. The Student Advice Centre analyses the queries received, passing them on to the Undergraduate Laws Programme Team where a programme response is appropriate and where necessary updating the frequently asked questions (FAQs) relating to the Laws Programme. This process ensures the progressive refinement of FAQs in response to the information needs of distance learners, and students needing to contact the Student Advice Centre are satisfied with the speed of response and level of attention received.

Because increasing use is being made of the University's virtual learning environment (VLE) a number of system refinements and support structures have been introduced in recent years to develop the digital literacy of students and their use of new technologies and media. These include the introduction of a single access portal which fields student enquiries through the Enterprise Service Desk (ESD) and provides access to all information, resources and social networks within the VLE, a skills-bridging course, and a suite of videos to support use of the VLE and the online library. Students also benefit from peer

support through student forums, social media and email communications, which they see as being as important as more formal academic activities in creating a sense of belonging to the International Programmes' academic community and, through it, to a global learning community. While fully committed to the development of online learning the International Programmes remains mindful of the continuing importance of printed materials and students routinely receive printed materials for each module, with digital versions being made available through CD or the VLE.

Assessment

The International Programmes takes the view that secure, time constrained examinations remain a preferred assessment instrument with international regulators. Lead Colleges are responsible for the setting and marking of all assessments. Students can sit examinations in over 550 designated examination centres in 184 countries and in 2012-13 students took 122,893 examinations with around 1,000 examiners appointed as part of the assessment process.

The majority of examiners are academics based in the 12 Lead Colleges who mark the International Programmes assessments to the same standard as on-campus assessments, and thereby assure the consistent standard of the final award. Examination scripts are double-marked by UK-based examiners appointed by the International Academy. Samples of marked examination scripts are sent to external examiners and recommended marks are confirmed by the Board of Examiners in their presence. External examiner reports are not routinely copied to recognised centres, though they can be accessed via the International Programmes website. Discussions with centres reveal a degree of terminological overlap between programme-level external examiner reports on the one hand and module-level 'Chief Examiner' reports on the other. The latter are seen as extremely helpful by staff and students alike.

Students do not receive individual feedback on their examination performance. In some cases students are unclear about how their examination marks are arrived at and feel their learning would benefit from individual feedback on their examination scripts. Feedback is provided by examiners' commentaries. The Undergraduate Laws Programme has introduced a new template for these commentaries which incorporates extracts from actual student scripts and this has been well received by students. The International Programmes acknowledges that, in an assessment regime mainly consisting of summative written examinations, it should continue to develop opportunities for formative assessment and feedback to illustrate to students its expectations in respect of summative assessment and to provide guidance on their academic progression. The University's Centre for Distance Education has commissioned a report on the use of formative assessments by institutions supporting the Undergraduate Laws Programme; the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Sub-Committee is currently reviewing assessment policies.

Although the University's management information systems are not, at present, able to compare fully the level of achievement of independent and supported distance-learning students against each other or on-campus students, the International Programmes acknowledges that on-campus students achieve on average higher degree classifications than distance-learning students. The University believes that this is partly explained by the different educational backgrounds of campus-based and International Programmes students, and the Undergraduate Laws Programme is currently evaluating the impact of a modular approach to assessment on different levels of student achievement.

From 2012-13 formative assessment has been trialled in some courses, including two subjects in law, with a view to providing additional feedback for students and the 2013 Undergraduate Laws Programme Annual Programme Report states that take up has been positive. Students confirm that multiple choice questionnaires are used to check their understanding of learning materials in some modules.

The International Programmes recognises the role of technology in developing feedback opportunities such as computer-marked assessments and is currently assessing the potential of Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) in this respect. One such MOOC, a short course in the Structure and Principles of English Common Law, ran for the first time in 2012-13 and achieved a completion rate of 18 per cent, as well as generating a significant amount of publicity.

In-country study support

The International Programmes model provides students with the opportunity to study independently or to obtain study support locally, or a combination of the two. Local support is available from a global network of independent teaching institutions known as recognised centres. The latter do not operate as franchised providers of University of London awards but are recognised by the International Programmes as independent providers equipped to augment the student learning experience by teaching the relevant syllabus, or by providing revision support locally using delivery methods ranging from blended learning to face-to-face classroom teaching. The International Programmes estimates that 60 per cent of undergraduate distance learners opt to receive this local, flexible support which is available in a range of full-time, part-time and weekend-delivery modes. It further estimates that the progression rate of students receiving local support is around 10 per cent higher than that of independent learners, but that examination performance is broadly comparable across the two groups.

There is clear demarcation between the responsibilities of the International Programmes on the one hand and those of recognised centres on the other. The University does not delegate responsibility for curriculum development or for the setting and marking of summative assessment. Similarly, while recognised centres may engage in marketing and recruitment activities they are not empowered to make admissions decisions except, in some cases, to sub-degree level awards designed as part of the International Programmes' mission to widen access to its programmes. Sub-degree awards include a International Foundation Programme developed by the London School of Economics with a particular focus on improving skills in mathematics and statistics and a *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) Level 4 diploma designed to address difficulties associated with a 12 year school system prevalent in some countries, which would prevent applicants from meeting the University's general entry requirements.

Most students learn about the International Programmes through a combination of personal research, personal recommendation and adverts placed by recognised centres in the local press. Students describe recognised centres as offering applicants valuable assistance with both their International Programmes application and their application for Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) funding. Some students use recognised centres strategically during the first two years of study until they acquire the confidence to become independent learners for the remainder of their programme. Independent distance learners describe online registration and continuing registration with the International Programmes as an easy and straightforward process.

When describing their reasons for applying to the International Programmes both independent and supported distance-learning students cite familiarity with UK secondary education, the status and worldwide recognition of 'UK brand' higher education, and the academic reputation of the University of London as important factors in their choice. Possession of a UK degree is regarded as a CV asset to support promotion aspirations within current posts and global professional mobility in later career. Other factors included the convenience of studying part-time for a reputable degree without leaving Trinidad and Tobago and of studying while working. The perceived lack of higher education capacity and of local universities in the Caribbean also influences student choice.

The Teaching Institutions Recognition Framework

The University has developed rigorous processes for awarding and reviewing recognised centre status. These include a candidacy phase of up to three years during which the University works with the centre and monitors aspects of its performance including student recruitment. Once candidacy has been satisfactorily completed, recognised centre status is acknowledged through signed agreements formalising compliance with the Teaching Institutions Recognition Framework (TIRF). Recognised centre status includes a commitment to engage with the University's quality assurance processes and to comply with the expectations of the University's Code of Advertising and Promotional Materials.

The Framework recognises two types of relationships between the International Programmes and its recognised centres - Affiliate Centres and Registered Centres. Candidate institutions refer to institutions that are seeking, but have not yet achieved, recognition. There are currently 77 recognised centres and a further 62 candidate institutions spread across 50 countries. Twenty-seven of the recognised centres have been awarded Affiliate Centre status.

The criteria which applicant institutions must satisfy in order to achieve and retain recognition are set out by International Programmes as a set of seven expectations and associated indicators covering organisation, facilities, administration, staffing, teaching and learning, student support, and quality mechanisms and feedback. These expectations and indicators align with *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* and with Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Registered Centres are expected to meet these threshold expectations and indicators, and Affiliate Centres are expected to exceed at least some of them.

The International Programmes also carries out appropriate due diligence checks during the candidacy phase. When a candidate institution is deemed ready it submits a self-evaluation document which forms the basis for an Institution Periodic Review (IPR) conducted in-country by a University Review Panel. If successful, centres are subsequently subject to annual monitoring and periodic review. Reports are scrutinised by the Institutions Sub-Committee whose recommendations are considered by the Board of the University of London International Academy. Outcomes are generally communicated to recognised centres and depending on the level of risk can influence the frequency of University staff visits. At present centres do not routinely receive full copies of periodic review reports and APPR reports. However, it is understood that International Programmes will in future give centres an opportunity to comment on APPR and external examiner reports, and to receive feedback on the final APPR report.

As part of the recognition process the International Programmes engages with in-country agencies such as the Council for Private Education in Singapore, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications, and the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) in the Caribbean.

Recognised centres take a strategic approach to their relationship with the International Programmes and to achieving and retaining recognised status. They demonstrate a clear understanding of the TIRF Recognition Criteria and acknowledge the support provided by the International Programmes during and after the candidacy phase. Some Registered Centres aspire to achieve Affiliate Centre status and appear to have a realistic appreciation of what this is likely to involve in respect, for example, of staffing and facilities.

The University's Institutions Sub-Committee is responsible for proposing new relationships and overseeing the monitoring of existing relationships. This includes the maintenance of a risk register which facilitates a risk-based approach to periodic review. The Institutions Sub-Committee reports to the Board of the University of London International Academy which is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor. This provides for senior-level oversight of the granting, continuation and, on occasion, removal of recognition.

The International Programmes in the Caribbean: the Undergraduate Laws Programme

The scale of the International Programmes' operations in the Caribbean

Some 3,000 of the International Programmes' 54,000 students are based in the Caribbean, with the majority (2,337) registered on 77 study programmes in Trinidad and Tobago, and the remainder registered on 50 study programmes in Jamaica. Around 80 per cent of the International Programmes students in the Caribbean are registered on its Undergraduate Laws Programme. Around 35 per cent of them are registered on the graduate entry route which enables applicants with accredited prior learning, such as a relevant first degree, to study for nine papers rather than 12.

Academic oversight of Law Programmes

The academic direction of the Undergraduate Laws Programme is provided by a consortium of six of the 12 Lead Colleges, managed by a centrally-based team led by a Programme Director and overseen by the Dean of Undergraduate Laws Programme. The International Programmes, including the Undergraduate Laws Programme, fall within the remit of the University's International Academy which is led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International), who also chairs the International Academy Academic Committee to which the Institutions Sub-Committee reports. Meetings of the Board of University of London International Academy are chaired by the Vice-Chancellor.

The most recent periodic review of the Undergraduate Laws Programme in 2012 found that collaboration between the consortium of six Lead Colleges and the International Academy was working well. The International Programmes has created the new role of Subject Convenor for each of the 26 subjects of the Undergraduate Laws Programme. Subject Convenors will assume responsibility for academic delivery, maintenance and development of their subjects as well as acting as Chief Examiner for them.

Accreditation of Law Programmes

The International Programmes has obtained recognition of its Undergraduate Laws Programme by accrediting and professional bodies based in the UK and in the Caribbean.

The 2012 periodic review of the LLB incorporated review and recognition by the UK professional body for legal education at the time - the Joint Academic Stage Board (JASB) - leading to five-year unconditional approval as a qualifying law degree. As a result the University of London LLB is recognised for entry into the legal profession in most Caribbean countries, along with England, Wales and other jurisdictions, provided certain course requirements are met. The award qualifies students for entry to the Hugh Wooding Law School in Trinidad and the Norman Manley Law School in Jamaica, where they are able to study for the Legal Education Certificate to practise as a lawyer in the Caribbean.

In 2009 the University achieved recognition for a period of seven years from the ACTT as a foreign awarding body. Trinidad and Tobago-based students are eligible for financial assistance through the GATE scheme to cover the cost of tuition at local institutions registered with ACTT. The University and its recognised centres in the Caribbean are required to submit an annual report to the ACTT in order to maintain recognition. The University

fosters a strong relationship with ACTT through regular communication between the two organisations, the involvement of International Programmes staff in ACTT conferences and ACTT representation at graduation ceremonies.

London-based study support for Law Programmes

On registering with the International Programmes students receive comprehensive general information relating to undergraduate studies, as well as access to the laws VLE. The latter provides a centralised resources bank which includes generic study support information, law subject pages with materials authored by legal academics, audio guides, newsletters and news items, recent developments, computer marked assessments, discussion forums and facilities for students to set up their own profile page. To assist with preparation for assessment the VLE also provides past examination papers and Chief Examiners' reports which students find useful. The VLE also supports the online law library and online legal research activities. These digital resources are complemented by (paper) statute books, textbooks and other learning resources as required. Students are content with the study tools and with the clear and comprehensive materials and guidance provided which give a full understanding of what is expected of them. Additional academic support is available if required and digital literacy is addressed in ways ranging from the International Programmes induction videos on the VLE and related resources to presentations by staff based in recognised centres.

The International Programmes provides opportunities for students to meet University of London staff, either in the UK or in their own countries. Students able to travel to the UK can attend four face-to-face intensive Study Support Sessions in London each year, though few students based in the Caribbean are able to avail themselves of this opportunity. These UK-based sessions are complemented by overseas visits by programme teams and subject specialists which enable students to have limited face-to-face contact with academics from the Lead Colleges and discover more about the expected approaches to assessment. Students are appreciative of the opportunity to meet London-based academic staff and would welcome more opportunities to do so.

In-country study support for Law Programmes

Some 70 per cent of International Programmes students in Trinidad and Tobago choose to study at a recognised centre. The figure is lower (22 per cent) in Jamaica which is a smaller and newer market.

To meet this demand the International Programmes works with five recognised centres in Trinidad and one in Jamaica. Another provider has started the process of formal recognition and is therefore referred to as a candidate institution. All five recognised centres in Trinidad are registered with the ACTT.

The University assures the quality of its recognised centres using annual monitoring and periodic review processes. The former is conducted remotely using a desk-based approach focusing on student recruitment and achievement, progress made against previous recommendations and staffing, while the latter includes the completion of a self-evaluation document by the centre and a subsequent visit by a panel consisting of London-based staff. This visit takes place during the teaching year. The panel reviews facilities, undertakes classroom observation and meets a range of staff and students. The University produces a guide for students explaining why their views are important, that staff will not be present at their meetings with the panel and that confidentiality will be maintained at all times. The most recent periodic review for recognised centres in Trinidad took place in November 2011 and for Jamaica in 2013. Between periodic reviews, feedback from students is elicited using a range of module and course-level surveys and students are generally content that their voice is listened to and acted upon.

In addition to providing academic support, recognised centres enhance the student experience by arranging social activities such as charity and volunteering events, and course-related activities such as courtroom visits, field trips and exchanges, internships,

competitions, and engagement with governmental bodies. Students feel that the verbal skills in debating and public speaking acquired as a result of such activities stand them in good stead when progressing to solicitor training.

Whether they attend a recognised centre or study independently, students based in the Caribbean are assessed in one of five approved examination centres. The work of these centres is subject to independent audit and overseen by the Quality Assurance and Student Lifecycle Sub-Committee. Over 5,500 assessments were taken in Trinidad in 2012-13. Students have concerns about the adequacy of current examination centres in the Caribbean, complaining of inappropriate examination rooms, late rooming changes, unacceptable noise levels, poor lighting and inconsistency in invigilation practices. The International Programmes is currently considering how this situation can best be resolved and has been in contact with the Ministry of Education to discuss enhancements.

Achievement of Law students in the Caribbean

The University monitors retention and progression in annual monitoring and periodic review. The majority of successful International Programmes undergraduate students of Law complete their studies within three years, with completion rates falling slightly after three years and significantly after five years. The Programme Team report that they have received some anecdotal evidence that dissatisfaction with support services, including University of London International Academy systems, may also be a factor. Around 50 per cent of International Programmes students achieve the award for which they initially register and the Undergraduate Laws Programme Team has recently developed intermediate awards and a non-qualifying BA Law to provide alternative exit qualifications. The 2012 Periodic Review of Undergraduate Programmes in Law acknowledges that pass rates are at the lower end of the available range, and states its intention to increase student achievement by a range of measures, including improving support available to students and by enhancing learning and teaching methodologies including the assessment feedback available to students. The 2012 Periodic Review of Law acknowledged that proficiency in English is crucial to the successful study of Law and recommended that consideration be given to the provision of Legal English language both via a web-based platform and via recognised centres, and to the inclusion of an 'English for Law' course within the diploma and foundation programmes.

Future plans

The Undergraduate Laws Programme is currently being reviewed in the light of changes in the external market, technological developments and the Legal Education and Training Review. Despite increased competition in some of its traditional markets, the Laws Programme continues to recruit strongly and expects modest growth in student numbers in the coming years. It sees the Caribbean as historically and strategically important, and is planning to diversify its course portfolio to include the study of Law with other subjects, as well as to consolidate its presence in new markets in the region such as Guyana. The Undergraduate Laws Programme has arrangements with some teaching institutions which allows students at these institutions to study for an International Programmes LLB in parallel with their local studies by taking a number of core Laws courses. The Laws Programme is considering extending the model of this arrangement to other established institutions approved by the Laws Programme in the future. It will also explore the potential of MOOCs to deliver skills training following its successful summer 2013 pilot of a six-week MOOC in English Common Law, which received over 40,000 initial registrations.

Case study 2: Delivering TNE in partnership with a professional body

Oxford Brookes University

Introduction

The BSc (Hons) in Applied Accounting at Oxford Brookes University (Oxford Brookes) has been the subject of an earlier case study, *Bridging the Academic Professional Divide*, published in the context of QAA's Review of UK Transnational Education in China (2012).

A small number of UK providers, because of their global reach, are likely to feature repeatedly in QAA's reviews of UK TNE. Therefore, this case study focuses initially on developments in the generic BSc (Hons) in Applied Accounting model which may be referenced by future reviews, and moves on subsequently to consider its local implementation in the Caribbean.

The BSc (Hons) in Applied Accounting is the product of collaboration for more than 15 years between Oxford Brookes and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).

Oxford Brookes is committed to developing mutually beneficial partnerships to facilitate the application of its education, research, and knowledge transfer nationally and internationally, and to prepare its graduates to be engaged global citizens. The principal aim of the BSc (Hons) in Applied Accounting is to widen access to Oxford Brookes and enable ACCA students across the world to obtain an Oxford Brookes degree.

ACCA is committed to supporting accountancy students around the world and to developing the accountancy profession. It provides technical and professional qualifications and continuing professional development to 428,000 students and 162,000 members in 173 countries. The ACCA programme includes tax and law and variants of these papers are sometimes localised to reflect practice in different countries and legal jurisdictions. ACCA has a global network of 91 offices and support centres and operates a number of Joint Examination Schemes with accountancy bodies in other countries. Joint Examination Schemes provide globally accepted qualifications with local recognition and relevance.

The mutual relevance of professional qualifications and degree courses in accountancy has been recognised through a range of admission with credit and exemption arrangements in the UK higher education sector. The distinctiveness of the Oxford Brookes-ACCA model lies in the fact that it has bridged the academic professional divide by enabling students throughout the world to work concurrently towards a degree and a professional qualification in accountancy with over 2,500 students graduating in 2013-14 and over 20,000 students graduating since the degree was first awarded in 2000.

Annual monitoring statistics show high employment rates among graduates, with 75 per cent in employment and 67 per cent in a professional managerial position. The added value of holding an undergraduate degree also enables students to progress to postgraduate study at Oxford Brookes and other universities, with a number of students taking the University's own Global MBA.

The TNE model

The model works through a system of dual registration. Students who register for a professional accountancy qualification with ACCA are automatically registered for the BSc (Hons) in Applied Accounting unless they choose to opt out at that stage. Once they have passed their Fundamentals Papers and completed the Professional Ethics Module students can choose to complete their degree by undertaking a Research and Analysis Project (RAP) that develops and tests transferable skills expected of a UK accountancy degree, but which are not necessarily met through professional examinations.

Academic standards

The model required complementarity to be established between the syllabuses of ACCA professional examinations on the one hand and that of the BSc (Hons) Applied Accounting on the other. This was achieved by mapping the capabilities identified in ACCA's professional syllabuses, themselves regulated by the International Federation of Accountants and the Financial Reporting Council, against the skills identified in the Subject Benchmark Statement for Accounting and the expectations of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

This mapping revealed appropriate coverage of subject-specific knowledge and skills in accountancy but a deficit in cognitive abilities and non-subject specific transferable skills, which are not explicitly taught or tested by ACCA but which the FHEQ defines as the wider abilities that the typical student could be expected to have developed. The RAP was designed to fill this gap.

Quality assurance and assessment

The degree consists of 360 credits with 30 credits each for Papers F1-F3 and the RAP, complemented by 40 credits each for Papers F4-F9. Degree classification is based on ACCA average mark for the six fundamental subject examinations (Papers F4-F9) and the grade for the RAP.

In order to be eligible for the award of the BSc in Applied Accounting students must pass all nine ACCA professional subject examinations (Papers F1-F9), complete ACCA self-assessed Professional Ethics module, and pass the Oxford Brookes RAP, the latter within 10 years of initial registration. They are also required to satisfy the University's English language requirements and to pay a project submission fee. The RAP counts for 30 credits and consists of a 7,500 word Project Report and a 2,000 word Skills and Learning Statement, which together assess abilities such as report writing, referencing, analysis, IT skills, and reflective practice.

The quality of the assessment process is assured using two distinct sets of procedures. The first of these deals with the setting and marking of ACCA professional papers, while the second deals with the RAP, which is managed by Oxford Brookes. Oxford Brookes and ACCA work collaboratively on these procedures.

With regard to the latter there is a shared understanding of the respective responsibilities of ACCA and University Assessment Boards and Panels. In order to ensure that the professional subject examinations and student achievement are of honours degree standard, ACCA and Oxford Brookes have shared oversight of the setting, organising and marking of ACCA assessments and the RAP. ACCA's preferred assessment instrument is the written examination paper. Examination papers are set by a combination of examiners, external writers, assessors and ACCA's Qualifications Content Team. The resulting proposed papers are then agreed by Oxford Brookes and tested prior to final production by a 'sitter' sitting the draft examination paper blind under examination conditions. Prior to commencing the marking of scripts ACCA holds an Examination Review Board which the University attends. This is followed by a range of standardisation activities to ensure consistency and comparability of marking standards. Marks are moderated by examiners and overseen by a Chief External Examiner, all of whom are employed jointly by ACCA and Oxford Brookes.

The University attends a sample of examination panels as an observer and attends the Exam Review Board.

The RAP is assessed and moderated by Oxford Brookes with ACCA involvement in the Exam Board, Subject Committee, annual review process and working groups. Markers' meetings, informed by marking guidelines and assessment criteria, are held in each submission period and a project external examiner oversees the appropriateness of assessment processes and standard of student achievement.

Major developments since the 2012 case study

Since the 2012 case study, ACCA has engaged in a major review of the examination process to align it more closely with the needs of stakeholders. Outcomes include doubling the number of examination periods from two to four each year and the progressive introduction of computerised examinations. Additional examination periods will provide students with greater flexibility in respect of pace of study and progression, while online assessment will facilitate standardisation and consistency in marking and make it easier to scrutinise student achievement and trends. Online submission will speed up the marking process by removing the need to move large numbers of paper scripts between locations, markers and moderators (a paper script may currently experience up to 16 moves during the assessment process). Although it anticipates a continuing need for paper examinations in some parts of the world, the ACCA is moving quickly towards normalising the use of computers as an examination medium and expects that most examination papers will be available in computerised format by 2016. It sees this as an essential tool in delivering assessment to a global standard. Online marking has been in place for the RAP since December 2012.

Alongside developments in assessment technology Oxford Brookes and ACCA have been progressively aligning their disciplinary processes. One consequence is that the University now brings cases of serious academic misconduct identified during the RAP to the attention of ACCA in case they involve behaviours that might be prohibited by ACCA's professional code of practice. Such cases are dealt with jointly by the University and an ACCA case officer. The Project Handbook warns students that serious academic misconduct in the RAP could lead to suspension or permanent exclusion from membership of ACCA.

The RAP has been the subject of significant development in recent years. In 2008-09 its word length was increased from 5,000 to 6,500 words plus a 2,000 word Skills and Learning Statement, and its credit weighting was increased from 15 to 30 credits. The intention was to reinforce the academic content of ACCA examination syllabus by giving students greater opportunity to engage in theoretical discussion of accounting and business tools and sharpen the critical evaluation of their project findings. To this end the RAP also develops research skills, conventions of academic writing, communication, and interpersonal and metacognitive skills. In 2011 the RAP was revised to reflect syllabus changes made by ACCA to accommodate additional requirements of the Financial Reporting Council. In 2013 the RAP word limit was further increased to 7,500 words in total.

Students are allowed up to three attempts to pass the RAP, both components of which must achieve passing grades. Suggested RAP topic areas are based on different aspects of ACCA syllabus and the two-thirds of students already in work can base their RAP on their own organisation if they wish to do so. Some 20 indicative topics are listed in the RAP Project Handbook which can be accessed by students and mentors from the RAP website.

Because the RAP is not assessed by examination, Oxford Brookes has strengthened safeguards against plagiarism and related academic offences through the development of online submission and marking, the implementation of a 100 per cent plagiarism-detection policy using Turnitin, and the appointment of two dedicated Academic Conduct Officers, charged with investigating suspected cases of plagiarism referred to them by markers and moderators. Annual monitoring reports suggest that this system is proving effective. Additional checks on the authenticity of RAP reports are provided by project mentors. While students preparing the RAP may do so independently or register with an approved

study centre, they are required in both cases to identify a local project mentor, such as an ACCA tuition provider, a senior colleague at work or a qualified Chartered Certified Accountant. Potential mentors who do not fall into these categories may be considered but there is a general expectation on the part of Oxford Brookes that they will have professional standing and/or degree-level qualifications. The role of the mentor is to support students preparing the RAP by holding a minimum of three meetings with them, one of which includes a presentation, and by providing advice and feedback as necessary. The mentor is also required to be familiar enough with students' RAP preparations to confirm to Oxford Brookes that it is their own work. Mentors based in Trinidad confirm that their understanding of the role encompasses these responsibilities and that students are asked to give their RAP presentation to a small audience of other students and field questions in order to develop their ability to present information in a professional manner.

More generally, feedback from students indicated some concerns with mentoring and external examiners noted inconsistency in mentoring practice in some countries. The University has responded by creating an online mentor development programme which all mentors will be required to take from June 2015. This course will provide potential mentors with the knowledge and skills needed to support students in the mentoring process, as well as with the option to be listed on a global database of registered mentors. The data will be presented in both list and geographical 'mentor map' form in order to be of maximum help to mentees seeking mentors. ACCA is backing this initiative by enabling members to count time spent on the online mentoring course towards their annual Continuing Professional Development requirement. Other training initiatives include a programme of student and mentor development, with Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad being visited by the University in May 2014. Tutors at ACCA centres in Trinidad felt they benefited from this training, though they had not yet undertaken the new online mentor development programme.

At present less than five per cent of students who are eligible to progress to the RAP choose to do so and the global RAP pass rate is around 50 per cent. Pass rates vary substantially from country to country, with average pass rates of around 70 per cent in some Asian countries, 50 per cent in the UK, and 30 per cent in some African countries. In the view of RAP mentors based in Trinidad the research and critical thinking components of the RAP, taken in conjunction with the requirement to structure and write a substantial report, represent significant challenges for students used to a diet of examinations. The conceptual demands of the RAP, the timescale for its production and the need for extended report-writing skills may together account for high non-completion rates.

In order to better understand this Oxford Brookes intends to undertake further analysis of achievement by different constituencies of students. This will include analysis of the value added of approved study centre support by comparing the RAP success rates of locally supported students on the one hand and independent students on the other.

Oxford Brookes assesses student satisfaction in a number of informal and formal ways including an online survey. Though it identified areas for improvement, mainly around mentoring, the 2013 survey also evidenced very high levels of student satisfaction with the BSc (Hons) in Applied Accounting, with the quality of information about the RAP and with learning provider support.

Caribbean links

The programme currently has around 5,500 students registered in the Caribbean, consisting of approximately 3,300 in Trinidad and Tobago, 1,800 in Jamaica and 400 in Barbados. Of these, some 950 students have successfully completed their ACCA examinations and Professional Ethics, and are eligible to progress to the RAP. Of them some 10-20 submit a RAP each year and achieve a pass rate of around 50 per cent.

ACCA has an office in Champs Fleurs, Trinidad, through which it establishes and maintains relationships with employers, development agencies and professional bodies in the Caribbean. Like other ACCA offices the Trinidad office website provides links to generic promotional material for the BSc (Hons) in Applied Accounting and the blended-learning Global MBA, which is also the product of Oxford Brookes-ACCA collaboration. The website gives details of how learning providers can achieve ACCA Approved Learning Partner status or become a computer-based examination centre. It also provides a substantial register of mainly online global and local continuing professional development opportunities relevant to the professional interests of its members.

The Caribbean is one of 16 countries in the world in which ACCA has developed Joint Examination Schemes in close partnership with national accountancy bodies. In the Caribbean these are the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Barbados, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Jamaica and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Trinidad and Tobago. The Joint Examination Scheme enables students to satisfy the exam criteria for membership of ACCA and the relevant national accountancy body simultaneously.

The BSc (Hons) Applied Accounting team visited the Caribbean in May 2014 during which it visited ACCA office and met professional bodies, as well as providing workshops for both student and learning providers.

Future plans

Much of the Oxford Brookes-ACCA future planning in respect of the BSc (Hons) Applied Accounting is generic rather than Caribbean-specific. An ongoing challenge for the award is that national professional accountancy bodies in some countries will only grant exemption from parts of their professional qualification to students graduating from awards that they accredit. In such cases, global awards like the BSc (Hons) in Applied Accounting do not meet local recognition criteria. Oxford Brookes and ACCA Head of Education Recognition are working to address recognition and accreditation issues where it is possible to do so, though this is not a concern in the Caribbean.

On the basis of information provided by local and regional employers, ACCA's Caribbean Office believes that there is a demand for qualified accountants who also possess the types of graduate skills promoted by the RAP. A number of employers have told ACCA that some students lack the critical thinking, presentation and communication skills they need to complement accountancy skills, particularly as their careers develop. To address this ACCA will continue to promote the career value of the BSc (Hons) in Applied Accounting with employers and students alike. At the same time Oxford Brookes will continue to seek ways of enhancing the RAP and increasing participation and pass rates through the measures identified above, particularly the strengthening of the mentoring system and the provision of improved online resources for mentors and mentees alike.

Case study 3: Delivering TNE in partnership with a specialist online learning provider

University of Liverpool

Introduction

The TNE provision of the University of Liverpool (the University) has featured in earlier QAA reports including the University's Institutional Audit (2009) and the Review of UK Transnational Education in China (2012).

A small number of UK providers are, because of their global reach, likely to feature repeatedly in QAA's reviews of UK TNE. Therefore, this case study begins with an account of the University's global TNE model which may be referenced by future reviews before moving on to consider its localised implementation in the Caribbean, where some 400 students are currently registered for Liverpool awards via online distance learning.

The University's strategic planning

The University's vision aims for global reach and influence, and for a culture of support and collaboration that will benefit the domestic and overseas communities it serves. In the context of a strategic plan that aspires to be Liverpool-centric but globally connected, the University regards its partnership with Laureate Online Education (Laureate), a specialist online learning provider, as meeting a number of key priorities: positioning itself as a global university, enhancing the student experience and extending widening participation.

The Strategic Plan envisages further growth in online provision, a global network of institutions with additional joint ventures in specific countries, and the proportion of overseas students reaching 25 per cent of overall student numbers by 2014. The student experience is central to the University's globalisation plans which include providing access to under-represented groups from international communities and generally increasing opportunities for student mobility to better equip students for global citizenship.

Liverpool is using two principal TNE models to achieve its strategic goals: in-country partnerships such as its Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University joint venture in China on the one hand, and totally online delivery through its partnership with Laureate on the other.

The scale and nature of the University's TNE provision

The University established a partnership with Laureate in 2002, having worked since the mid-1990s with its predecessor companies. The scale of the University's overseas provision in partnership with Laureate is substantial, with some 10,000 students (4,000 full-time equivalent) registered on 22 postgraduate taught programmes of study in over 150 countries.

The University chose to work with Laureate in preference to developing in-house online distance-learning capabilities because of the actual and anticipated scale of operations and a perceived competitive advantage. It regards the partnership as providing the capability to develop globally relevant programmes that are responsive to local needs and delivered at scale. The partnership decided at an early stage that postgraduate provision was more viable than undergraduate provision in a distance-learning context. Undergraduate level disincentives included the type of pedagogy required, the absence of an on-campus experience which might not appeal to younger learners, and the length of study with its implications for cost and continuing commitment on the part of students. As a result,

the partnership's emergent strategy from the outset involved a focus on the mature and highly motivated working professional seeking a postgraduate qualification for career advancement, and Liverpool became one of the first universities to offer wholly online postgraduate provision. Typically, students are working full-time in areas such as health care and project management, and choose their programmes of study through a combination of personal interest and a desire for professional advancement. They choose to study by online learning due to time constraints and opt for a UK university because of historic links between the UK and the Caribbean in approaches to public health and project management.

Laureate Online Education is a division of Laureate Education, operating as a specialist online provider based in the Netherlands with students in over 150 countries. Laureate recruits students on behalf of the University, markets its programmes of study and delivers them throughout the world, including the Caribbean, using an entirely online platform operated by remotely-based instructors whom it recruits and develops. Most students are working professionals in the 30-40 age group who are seeking to upskill for career purposes.

Laureate has no physical presence in the regions in which its students are based but students are able to localise their learning experience in a number of ways that make it responsive to local needs. The pedagogic model is one of collaborative learning which enables students to use online discussions to bring experience of their local context into the global classroom. This is important in programmes of study such as public health, where practice varies significantly from country to country. As a result programmes are designed to encourage students to compare and share experiences as healthcare professionals working in different systems and cultures of provision. The same principle applies in other culture-specific disciplines such as Human Resource Management where, for example, Doctorate in Business Administration students might use their research to inform revisions to their employers' human resources policies. Students are appreciative of the global classroom experience and confirm that the high level of weekly interaction with the module tutor and with fellow students throughout the world makes them feel part of the University of Liverpool academic community and, through it, of a global academic community, which enriches their learning by promoting informative exchanges with practitioners like themselves working in different national and cultural contexts.

The Liverpool-Laureate partnership promotes the local relevance of its programmes of study and Laureate has either already achieved or is working towards in-country recognition in almost all of the countries in which it has students. This emphasis on local relevance is reinforced by the application process which requires the completion of a motivational statement articulating the expected benefits to the applicant of the award for which the application is being made. In addition the University has obtained accreditation of its awards from professional bodies such as the British Computer Society (BCS), and from relevant professional associations such as the Association to Advance Collegiate School of Business (AACSB), the Project Management Institute (PMI) and the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER). Students are aware of these links and cite them as one of the reasons for choosing Liverpool.

Academic oversight of University programmes: Approval, review and assessment

The partnership between the University and Laureate is set out in a legally binding Institutional Agreement which identifies the rights and obligations of each partner. A review of the business and commercial aspects of the partnership is held four times a year and the operation of the partnership is monitored annually. The partnership agreement includes the expectation that Laureate will be represented on relevant groups and committees including the Online Programmes Operational Group, Boards of Studies and Boards of Examiners.

The operation of online programmes is governed by a Quality Assurance Operational Framework, which was reviewed in 2013 and further elaborated in 2013-14 in collaboration with Laureate and in the light of experience and growing student numbers. The University

undertakes an institutional annual monitoring visit to Laureate's Amsterdam offices in the spring term to ensure that the terms of the Operational Framework are being met. The Framework provides detailed operational guidance to ensure that a single set of policies can be implemented rigorously but with sufficient flexibility to take account of the differences between online distance-learning and on-campus delivery in areas such as assessment, academic integrity and mitigation.

The University is responsible for the quality and standards of the programmes delivered on its behalf by Laureate. The philosophy underlying the partnership is that online programmes follow identical processes and procedures to campus-based provision. Quality assurance and enhancement processes, as well as the delivery model, are the same regardless of programmes of study or the country in which the student is resident while studying. These processes are managed by the University, as are the appointment and induction of external examiners.

Operational academic oversight of online distance learning programmes is provided by University Directors of Studies who liaise closely with Laureate's Director of Online Studies. Managerial oversight of the partnership has been strengthened over the last 18 months by the introduction of a joint strategic planning and policy group, the Online Programmes Business and Strategy Group, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. This is complemented by the Online Programmes Planning and Policy Committee chaired by a Pro Vice-Chancellor and by the joint Online Programmes Operational Group, chaired by the Academic Lead for Online Learning. This ensures that the needs of online learning are visible in the deliberative committee structure and exemplifies the University's commitment to normalising online distance learning as mainstream activity that is part of its regular business and to avoiding 'retro-fitting' online variations to otherwise standard processes.

Laureate is responsible for student recruitment to all online taught programmes using admissions criteria detailed in programme specifications and ensuring that English language requirements are met. Applications requiring academic judgement are referred to Liverpool Directors of Studies who retain oversight of the admissions process by routinely sampling five per cent of applications received and decisions made. Registrations are recorded in Laureate's own management information system. Laureate maintains its student records and provides the University with data required for assessment and graduation purposes, as well as for its Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) return.

The University is responsible for the quality and accuracy of information provided by Laureate through its website and virtual learning environment (VLE) to applicants and to registered students alike.

Programme approval and review

Programme approval is undertaken by the University with the support of Laureate using processes specified in the Quality Assurance Operational Framework, and the new programme must be approved by Academic Quality and Standards Committee on behalf of Senate prior to launch. The relevant Liverpool Director of Studies convenes module and programme 'summits' and identifies a leadership team comprising University academics and Laureate experts in marketing, online learning and other relevant areas. Draft programme and module specifications are produced which make appropriate use of external reference points including the Quality Code, Subject Benchmark Statements and *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), with learning outcomes being oriented towards the needs of international students in general and, specifically, to the needs of students who are already practising professionals in their field. Programme and module drafts are developed into learning and assessment materials by Subject Matter Experts who, if they are Laureate staff, must also be Honorary Recognised Teachers of the University. Prior to use with students, materials must be approved by the Director of Studies and the Chair of the relevant Board of Studies if necessary. Following approval the partners work together to achieve recognition of the award by relevant international agencies in Europe and beyond, where appropriate.

Periodic review events involve subject academics, an external subject expert, a sabbatical officer of the Liverpool Guild of Students and a meeting with students. Their agendas include consideration of both on-campus and online provision. Their minutes evidence awareness both of the University's intention to integrate online programme procedures with those of on-campus degrees and of the need to involve a larger proportion of staff in the development and oversight of online distance learning if it is to become mainstream rather than niche departmental activity.

Annual monitoring of programmes

The University is able to review online classes and student work at any time and each module delivered by Laureate is subject to sample monitoring by a member of staff employed by the University. Concerns are referred to the Laureate Director of Online Studies in the first instance and to the relevant University Board of Studies, or the Online Programme Planning and Policy Committee if there are remaining concerns. Schools are responsible for drawing up a schedule of monitoring which is reviewed and approved annually by the same Committee. Laureate is responsible for providing the relevant Board of Studies with end of module reports encompassing student evaluation and achievement in addition to Online Faculty performance. End of module reports inform the University's annual monitoring process. Annual monitoring reports, like periodic review reports, include separate consideration of on-campus and online provision, and evidence consideration of and responses to external examiner reports and student feedback for both delivery modes. External examiners have access to all online classrooms and student-assessed work, and student evaluations are made available by Laureate to the University in unedited form.

The partnership uses a range of assessment instruments including group projects, short answer discussions, essays and dissertations. Online modules typically have substantially more assessment points than campus delivery and students take the view that this helps retain momentum and focus. Assessments are submitted via Turnitin plagiarism-detection software, marked by Online Faculty academic staff, moderated by Laureate staff and sampled by external examiners. Marks are processed by University Module Review Boards and reported to the Board of Examiners, both of which are attended by external examiners. Where programmes delivered online by Laureate are also delivered on campus, levels of student achievement are broadly comparable but nonetheless, the University monitors differential achievement across the two delivery modes via the annual monitoring process. While the nature of online distance learning creates challenges for tracking progression and completion, the University estimates that 50-55 per cent of online distance learners achieve the award for which they originally registered.

Student voice

In addition to module and programme evaluation, Laureate holds staff-student liaison committees that report to the relevant University Board of Studies. The majority of students are working professionals who are able to articulate their views either directly with Online Faculty staff or via their student representatives who have dedicated VLE space permitting synchronous, as well as asynchronous communication. Students in full-time employment sometimes find it difficult to participate in staff-student committees because of time constraints, but they complete module evaluation and other surveys periodically and feel able to discuss any concerns directly with their tutors.

Online learning support

Under the terms of the Quality Assurance Operational Framework, Laureate is responsible for providing students with appropriate levels of online support. It does this by appointing Online Faculty academic and support staff. The majority of academic staff have postgraduate qualifications and Laureate is aiming for 50 per cent of its staff to have doctoral qualifications. Before they are allowed to teach Online Faculty academic staff must be approved as honorary

members of the University, with Honorary Recognised Teacher status being the minimum level of approval required. Approval is achieved through a formal process involving submission of an application document with accompanying evidence to the relevant Director of Studies at the University who, in signing it off, confirms that the applicant possesses appropriate educational qualifications and the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to contribute effectively to programme delivery. The Director of Studies' recommendations must be endorsed at faculty level. Staff being recruited to teach on programmes accredited by professional bodies may be subject to additional specific expectations.

Laureate is responsible for appointing and inducting all Online Faculty staff. Liverpool advises and oversees the content of a rigorous and extended induction programme which must be completed by all Laureate staff intending to teach or supervise students. Online Faculty staff appointed as dissertation advisers on postgraduate taught programmes or as supervisors on professional doctorate programmes delivered online are required to undertake additional training.

In addition to the appointment and induction of Online Faculty staff Laureate is also responsible for their continuing professional development (CPD). The record of CPD activities is scrutinised by the University as part of the institutional annual monitoring visit. The Quality Assurance Operational Framework encourages a shared approach to CPD by the University and Laureate, and around 100 Online Faculty staff attend an annual CPD conference at Liverpool. The partnership also supports collaborative research and Liverpool Faculty and Online Faculty staff are currently working together on over 20 research projects.

Although Online Faculty academic staff do not currently have the opportunity to join the University's teaching recognition framework (ULTRA) or achieve fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, a structured range of honorary appointments is available to them. New appointees aim initially for Recognised Teacher Status. After a probationary period they are eligible to become Honorary Lecturers of the University and may subsequently become Honorary Senior Lecturers if they are research-active and supervise professional doctorate students. Students rate the quality of their tutors highly and state that contact is so frequent that they are aware of their tutors' individual styles. They rate tutor and peer feedback particularly highly and appreciate the efficient and responsive manner in which programmes operate.

Online Faculty academic staff support student learning by encouraging high levels of dialogue via online classroom activity and one-to-one exchanges as required. Online Faculty makes a range of additional support available to students, including a dedicated E-Learning Librarian who provides training and guidance in information literacy skills and 'front line' IT advisers who provide technical support via a 24-hour helpline. Student Support Managers are available to provide some of the pastoral and academic guidance functions traditionally associated with on-campus personal tutoring. Students are satisfied with the quality of the learning materials provided and the recommended key texts which they purchase separately. Tutors provide a weekly summary of forthcoming learning activities in written and audio format, and can be contacted at any time by email if students have questions. Students feel that tutors are trained to understand student behaviour in the classroom and that this facilitates their learning experience.

A new Online Writing Centre has recently been established with the goal of personalising the learning experience of online learners and providing them with the same opportunities to obtain one-to-one academic writing consultations during the drafting of assessments that on-campus students enjoy. Online students will be able to discuss drafts of work in progress to address linguistic and cultural questions and make corrections before it is submitted for a grade. The Centre is staffed by Academic Study Skills Tutors who are typically English Language specialists able to advise online students, many of whom are non-native speakers of English, on issues such as the conventions of academic writing, the research process, and citation and referencing. Tutor support will combine both asynchronous written feedback across time zones with the more personal touch of a video or audio chat if requested by the student.

While social events are not available to global online learning communities, the Online Faculty makes social exchange possible for students through synchronous classroom activity, online chat rooms and forums.

Liverpool in the Caribbean

The University currently has over 400 students based in the Caribbean. The majority are online distance learners registered on Liverpool-Laureate programmes of study. For historic reasons most students are currently based in Jamaica rather than in Trinidad and Tobago. All programmes delivered in the Caribbean follow exactly the same model as the other online programmes detailed above. Over 80 students are based at the Truman Bodden Law School of the Cayman Islands, which falls outside the scope of this case study.

On behalf of the University, Laureate has obtained recognition of its courses from the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) though as Laureate has no physical in-country presence, students are ineligible for Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) funding.

Future plans

The Liverpool-Laureate partnership has no development plans that are specific to the Caribbean, but is working on a number of global projects in anticipation of continuing expansion of global demand for TNE. These include extending the geographical reach of online distance-learning programmes and the creation of overseas campuses in selected countries.

Case study 4: Refining the TNE model progressively in the light of experience

Heriot-Watt University

Introduction

Heriot-Watt University's (Heriot-Watt) TNE provision has featured in earlier QAA reports, including the Audit of Overseas Provision in Russia (2007), the Audit of Overseas Provision in Malaysia (2010), the Audit of Overseas Provision in Singapore (2011), and the Review of UK Transnational Education in the United Arab Emirates (2014). It also featured in the University's Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (2011) and subsequent follow-up report (2012).

A small number of UK higher education providers, because of their global reach, are likely to feature repeatedly in QAA's reviews of UK TNE. Therefore, this case study begins with an account of Heriot-Watt's global TNE model which may be referenced by future reviews, before moving on to consider its localised implementation as exemplified by its partnerships with the School of Business and Computer Science (SBCS), and the School of Higher Education Ltd (SHEL) in Trinidad and Tobago, and with B&B University College (BBUC) in Jamaica. These providers are all Approved Learning Partners (ALPs) of Heriot-Watt which enables them to provide academic and other types of support for the University's distance learning students in the Caribbean.

Mission, vision and strategy

Heriot-Watt sees itself as an international university with Scottish roots and has for some time seen expansion into overseas markets and increased collaborative activity as key aspects of its strategic planning. Heriot-Watt identifies global recognition and professional relevance as the bedrock of its current Strategic Plan 2013-18 *Global thinking worldwide influence*, which states its intention to be a global university as measured by international presence and the proportion of income from outside the UK. It sees itself as an evolving, global institution which integrates its UK and overseas activities as seamlessly as possible for both strategic and operational purposes. This evolution gathered pace following the opening of the University's second overseas campus in Malaysia in 2013, which instigated a review of its governance arrangements and its management structures, systems and policies. The review resulted in further consolidation of academic structures within schools to make international activity a normal feature of academic life and ensure the maintenance of academic standards in a global context. This normalisation of international activity occurs at every level within the University and the videoconferencing of senior executive and deliberative committees, including Senate with the Malaysian and Dubai campuses, exemplifies the routine integration of UK and offshore activity towards which the University is working.

The normalisation of international activity has led to substantial changes to Heriot-Watt's governance and structures to equip them to manage a global organisation. Changes have been made to the Charter and Statutes, an International Strategy Board has been created, and Academic Councils have been established at the University's Dubai and Malaysia campuses. In the course of 2014-15 a common academic structure will be introduced for all schools across all campuses. The purpose of these structural changes, backed up by the creation of new senior manager posts where necessary, is to integrate management across locations of delivery, to support academic alignment and to support quality assurance and enhancement activities.

The process of normalisation is having an equally significant impact on Heriot-Watt's core academic activities through the integration of its international agenda with teaching and research into one of four organisational enablers charged with delivering the Strategic Plan. This integration enables the University to ensure that its international ambitions are represented in its learning, teaching and research arenas and translated into its deliberative committee structure through joint meetings and integrated agendas. For example, the University's Learning and Teaching Board and Research and Knowledge Exchange Board feed into its International Strategy Board and play a full role in shaping its international strategy.

In addition, Heriot-Watt is developing a distinctive set of global attributes alongside the specialist, creative and professional attributes which collectively identify the graduate attributes of its students and inform course design. Global attributes include global citizenship, appreciation of cross-cultural diversity and the ability to apply knowledge and skills in international and multi-cultural contexts. Heriot-Watt intends to use its learning partnerships and campuses around the world to promote the international mobility of its students and its academic and professional services staff, and to further internationalise its research and knowledge exchange activities.

Scale of global operations

Almost two-thirds (20,774) of Heriot-Watt's total student population are non-UK based in over 150 countries worldwide. Around 14,000 of them are registered on postgraduate taught programmes and 6,000 on undergraduate programmes, with some 250 students taking research degrees. The remainder are enrolled on Approved Learning Partnership and Collaborative Partnership Programmes, or on International Degree Entry Programmes in Dubai and Malaysia. The preponderance of postgraduate students, many of whom are mature, practising professionals, reflects historic demand patterns for postgraduate as opposed to undergraduate programmes, particularly in business. It also reflects the resource differential between postgraduate and undergraduate distance-learning provision.

While a growing proportion of overseas students are registered at Heriot-Watt's Dubai and Malaysia campuses the bulk of non-UK international students are distance learners. Almost 10,000 non-UK distance learners are registered with an Approved Learning Partner (ALP), with a further 6,700 students opting to study as independent distance learners. In recent years there has been a growth in supported distance learning through the ALP network.

Heriot-Watt aims to increase the scale of its international activities substantially during the life of the current 2013-18 Strategic Plan by expanding its overseas campuses, increasing the number of distance-learning students and developing its overseas learning partner network. It intends to develop more active approaches to online learning with tutors providing online lectures and greater support with assessments.

Oversight of standards

Heriot-Watt manages this diverse portfolio through an established risk management procedure, differentiating categories of activity by the level of risk associated with them. High-risk activities require an additional level of approval by senior managers to ensure that they are appropriately managed and that the academic standards of such activities are assured. Heriot-Watt acknowledges that collaborative provision poses greater risks than programmes delivered on-campus and has developed a Management and Oversight of Academic Partners Policy, which is overseen by the Planning and Management Executive and by Senate for business and academic matters respectively. This Policy covers due diligence checks including sustainability, in-country legal approval and local regulations, initial approval and periodic review, and the general operation of the partnership.

The global scale of TNE provision has presented particular challenges in terms of assuring academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.

This has led the University to continuously review its processes and policies, revising them or introducing new ones as necessary. Examples of processes which have been revised include initial approval, annual monitoring, and periodic review.

A single programme approval process covers all locations and modes of delivery. However, the process is flexed according to the perceived level of risk, as a result of which programmes which will be delivered internationally receive additional scrutiny by the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies Committees of the Senate. The approval process references generic external reference points including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), Subject Benchmark Statements and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, as well as specific reference points provided by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). Achieving PSRB accreditation of programmes offered in all locations and modes is a key feature of the Heriot-Watt TNE model.

Annual monitoring processes have been revised to acknowledge the level of risk associated with collaborative provision and include a partner annual monitoring and review process. This feeds into the school annual monitoring and review process and is incorporated into a joint school review and enhancement report, which informs a university-level review received by the Quality and Standards Committee, the Learning and Teaching Board, and the Senate.

Periodic review has also been adapted and strengthened as the University has expanded its global reach, and further reinforced by an Internal Audit process which reviews all high-risk activity including partnerships and independent learning programmes on a three-yearly basis.

Examples of policies which have recently been reviewed include Examinations in Different Time-Zones, Transfer between Campuses and Programme Titles, and Learning Outcomes and Courses (Multi-Mode, Multi-Location Programmes). The latter addresses the need to ensure that the title, intended learning outcomes and core knowledge, skills, and competencies of a programme are identical in all locations and for all modes of delivery, while ensuring that variations are permitted to module content and to forms of assessment for the purpose of local contextualisation. Distance-learning students in the Caribbean take the view that while they feel part of a UK academic community they also have opportunities to apply what they learn to their local context, partly because of shared professional practices in areas such as law and project management between the UK and the Caribbean, and partly because assessment tasks such as project work allow them to incorporate local issues. Students see their programme of study as serving not only to deepen subject knowledge but also to develop the graduate skills characteristic of UK higher education which they find to be significant assets in professional life.

An overarching framework

Heriot-Watt decided that it needed to complement the review of individual policies and processes with a more holistic, robust and institution-wide framework for managing complex global provision. It based this framework on the principle that diversity of learning experiences must be underwritten by identical academic standards and a number of identical programme components. However, the framework also needed to acknowledge experience gained from Heriot-Watt's expanding international student numbers and to cater for challenges such as the need for curriculum contextualisation to meet the needs of students and partners in different geographical areas; the need for different assessments to reflect local contexts; the complexity of operating a 'same exam, same time' approach in different countries; and the communication of a homogeneous approach to the management of academic quality, standards and enhancement to a heterogeneous body of teaching staff based in many different locations around the world.

The resolution of such issues underwrites the University's Multi-Code, an overarching Code of Practice for the management of multi-location, multi-mode programmes which serves to assure the consistency of academic standards across all variants of a given programme. The Multi-Code was introduced in 2013-14 and is currently being embedded within the University.

Considerable thought has been given to how best to communicate information about key University policies and procedures to staff located at overseas campuses and partner institutions. To address this communication need, the University created an Academic Policy Bank in 2013-14. This repository is located on the University's staff home page and provides an alphabetical list of key documents. The latter are complemented by two series of one-page, colour-coded briefing papers, one covering aspects of learning and teaching and the other quality assurance processes, accompanied by videoed briefing sessions on new or revised policies and procedures. The creation of a 'one-stop shop' for key University policies and their communication through incremental, bite-sized briefing papers, and short videos has received positive feedback from staff based at overseas campuses.

Heriot-Watt's distance-learning model

Heriot Watt's approach to internationalisation is risk-aware and aims to increase resilience by not being reliant on a single model of delivery. As well as offering distance learning by independent study, the University's current model provides a diversity of learning opportunities through its two overseas campuses, a range of articulation agreements, validation arrangements, joint collaboration partnerships, and franchise partnerships with ALPs. The key principle underlying all delivery modes is 'identical standards; diversity of learning experiences'.

Support for distance learners

Heriot-Watt's Multi-Code articulates the nature of the support provided for distance learners, including its 6,700 independent distance learners, as sets of expectations and principles accompanied by explanations. These expectations follow the student lifecycle, beginning with the quality of information to applicants, admissions processes and induction. Academic socialisation activities are embedded in all programmes and all students are assigned a named member of academic staff as their mentor. Whether local or remote, the mentor's role is to provide feedback on academic performance and guidance about progression. This is seen as particularly important in programmes with PSRB accreditation which may involve prescription in respect of module selection. Independent distance-learning students are made aware of autonomous, collaborative and supported aspects of learning, and given information about the learning materials and support available to them via paper-based materials or the University's virtual learning environment (VLE), VISION. Students are content with the speed and quality of support received from both Heriot-Watt and ALP academic and administrative staff, and also make extensive use of the student forums the VLE supports. All programmes incorporate a balance between exams and other forms of assessment and provide opportunities for formative assessment. It is a requirement of programme delivery that all students, irrespective of their location or mode of study, receive appropriate and timely feedback on their performance in assessment. Although some concerns have been noted about assessment feedback turnaround times and referred to the Student Learning Experience Committee of the Learning and Teaching Board in 2014-15, students based in the Caribbean appear generally content with the timeliness of feedback received from both Heriot-Watt and ALP tutors.

Schools are responsible for capturing the student voice for programmes delivered by independent learning, but Heriot-Watt acknowledges the challenge this presents because its traditional representative structures are not easily applicable to independent

distance learners. The University and its Students' Union continue to investigate collective representation mechanisms for off-campus students. An online course feedback survey is conducted every semester.

Both independent and ALP-based distance learners are able to access the Careers Service website. While the Careers Service is unable to provide individual careers guidance for distance learners, it maintains a dedicated section of its website 'Working Globally' which provides links to both country-specific careers information and general information on career opportunities around the world. Partner annual monitoring reports evidence local employability support, such as one-to-one careers guidance, careers talks, advice about postgraduate programmes and job vacancy lists. One ALP in the Caribbean, BBUC, also plans to introduce a graduate tracking system in 2014 in response to concerns raised in the 2011-12 partner annual monitoring report regarding the lack of information on employment and career performance of graduates.

The majority of distance learners choose not to study independently but opt instead for supported distance learning by registering with one of the University's ALPs. There are currently almost 10,000 such students registered at 43 ALPs in 35 countries. ALPs are typically local, in-country academic institutions, such as universities or colleges, which deliver Heriot-Watt's programmes in a contractually agreed manner. Heriot-Watt retains responsibility for the quality and standards of such provision, for the curriculum and associated learning materials, for the setting and marking of all summative assessments, and for the admission and progression of students. Though the activities of ALPs vary from contract to contract, their responsibilities may include marketing and recruitment activity, teaching and formative assessment, and local contextualisation in line with the expectations of the University's Strategic Plan. Students confirm the usefulness of the support provided by ALPs in formulating their application to Heriot-Watt and of the orientation programme at the start of their studies. They also value the ongoing support provided by ALP administrative and academic staff.

The ALP approval process consists of a negotiation stage between the relevant School and the potential ALP, which may last up to a year and towards the end of which a quality assurance visit takes place. The purpose of this preliminary visit is to ensure that the proposed ALP is able to deliver high-quality tuition and student support, and to manage its contribution to the partnership effectively. The second stage consists of a formal approval process which involves due diligence checks, an overview of the proposed partnership including the financial case and a risk assessment, as well as consideration of the earlier quality assurance visit. Following approval, contracts are signed for a three-year period with a review and evaluation during the first year of operation and a three-yearly internal audit. The partnership is also evaluated through the annual monitoring and five-yearly periodic review cycles. In some programmes Heriot-Watt staff may also contribute to local teaching.

ALP teaching staff are required to obtain Approved Teacher, Approved Tutor or Approved Marker status and to renew this status periodically. The Academic Registry provides an annual summary for the Learning and Teaching Board and the Senate Business Committee.

Heriot-Watt in the Caribbean

Heriot-Watt is accredited as a recognised awarding body by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago and has some 2,058 distance-learning students in the Caribbean, most of whom are located in Trinidad and Tobago with around 250 located in Jamaica.

The majority of distance learners are registered with a local ALP, with a minority of around 100 students opting to study independently. Students registered with SBCS and SHEL are eligible to apply for Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) funding. Studying with a UK university via distance learning is attractive to students because of the international reputation of UK awards and the flexibility afforded by distance learning. Nonetheless, they engage in substantial market research before selecting potential

providers. Reasons given for choosing Heriot-Watt range from the world-ranking of the Edinburgh Business School to programme flexibility and the availability of a staggered payment option for tuition fees.

The School of Business and Computer Science

SBCS supports distance learners by offering taught study routes for the full range of Edinburgh Business School's postgraduate programmes throughout Trinidad and Tobago and neighbouring territories. Most SBCS students are mature, in employment and have prior qualifications. The School currently teaches over 1,300 students on a range of programmes the largest of which, the Master of Business Administration, has over 1,100 students. SBCS also provides administrative support for students registered for the Doctorate of Business Administration. Over 1,400 students supported by SBCS have successfully graduated, including 37 with a doctoral award.

The School of Higher Education Ltd

SHEL offers a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in partnership with the School of Management and Languages, the School of Life Sciences and the School of the Built Environment.

In management and languages there are currently over 220 students, 80 per cent of whom are registered on business management programmes and the remainder on accountancy and finance programmes. The majority enter with advanced standing via the Association of Business Executives Advanced Diploma programmes. To date 524 students supported by SHEL have graduated successfully, including 19 with distinction, and SHEL reports that many graduates have achieved promotion in their existing workplace.

In Life Sciences, anticipated demand for Psychology programmes has failed to materialise and the BA Management and Psychology is being withdrawn via a three-year teach out phase commencing in 2014. Though numbers remain a concern the SHEL will continue to support the MSc Management and Psychology for the foreseeable future.

In Built Environment, students join the final year of undergraduate programmes having previously achieved a higher national diploma or equivalent qualification. Student numbers have increased in recent years and over 120 students are currently registered. Some 88 of the 323 students registered over the last three years have successfully graduated.

B&B University College

BBUC is based in Jamaica and delivers programmes on behalf of four Schools: the Edinburgh Business School, the School of Management and Languages, the School of Life Sciences and the School of the Built Environment.

In Business there are over 100 students currently registered on a range of taught Master's in Business and Management and, to date, over 30 students have graduated from these programmes, the majority with an MBA. Students tend to be mature, in work and with prior qualifications.

In Management and Languages local accreditation of courses with the University Council of Jamaica has been a drawn-out process which has still to be formally concluded, and student recruitment has been relatively low. The University expects numbers to increase to around 100-150 students in 2014-15.

In Life Sciences, Psychology has experienced the same difficulties at BBUC as at SHEL and the University is taking identical action.

In Built Environment, in contrast, student numbers are growing at both undergraduate and postgraduate taught levels, with around 50 current students at each level. As at SHEL, students join the final year of undergraduate programmes having previously achieved a higher national diploma or equivalent qualification.

Future plans

With the exception of psychology programmes, Heriot-Watt anticipates continuing growth in Caribbean numbers, with increasing student populations at SHEL and BBUC. It expects student numbers to remain at their present high levels at SBCS and plans to introduce a new specialism in Oil and Gas Management with SBCS as a lead partner. More generally, while it feels that many of the challenges associated with assuring the academic standards and enhancing the quality of TNE provision have been addressed, the progressive refining of the TNE model is a continuing activity.

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