

Review of UK Transnational Education
Caribbean 2014



Overview

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



Contents

Introduction	1
Review of UK Transnational Education: Caribbean 2014	1
About QAA	1
TNE review process	1
Changes to QAA's TNE review process	3
Higher education in the Caribbean and Trinidad and Tobago	4
Higher education in the Caribbean	4
Overview of the higher education system in Trinidad and Tobago	5
Government funding of higher education	6
Analysis of UK TNE provision in the Caribbean	6
Key findings	8
Findings of the review	8
Distance-learning models	8
Top-up programmes	10
Setting and maintaining academic standards	11
Student employability	13
Changing approaches to managing TNE	14
Importance of the UK brand	15
Conclusion	16
Annex 1: Statistical analysis	18
Annex 2: Executive summaries of review reports	24
Annex 3: Executive summaries of case studies	30
Annex 4: Partnerships across CARICOM	34
Annex 5: Glossary	35

Introduction

Review of UK Transnational Education: Caribbean 2014

1 During 2014, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) undertook a Review of UK Transnational Education (TNE) in the Caribbean, focusing on Trinidad and Tobago. TNE is defined as the provision of education for students based in a country other than the one in which the awarding institution is located, and in the context of this review refers to the provision of higher education programmes in the Caribbean that lead to the awards of UK universities.¹ According to data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), in 2013–14 there were 21,940 students on UK TNE programmes in the Caribbean (CARICOM countries), of which 12,814 (58 per cent) were located in Trinidad and Tobago.

About QAA

2 QAA recognises the primary role of UK degree-awarding bodies in maintaining academic standards and enhancing the quality of UK TNE, and respects their autonomy. It relies on their cooperation in carrying out its work, and in return provides advice and support.

3 QAA has a remit to safeguard standards and to improve the quality of UK higher education. It aims to protect the interests of everyone working towards a UK higher education award, regardless of how or where they study, in the UK or in any other location worldwide. One of QAA's core activities is to conduct institutional reviews of universities and colleges and to publish the related reports.

4 The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code),² published by QAA, sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet. The Quality Code is used to assure the standards and quality of UK higher education, and is the core reference point used in all our review activity. Of particular relevance to this review is *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*.³

5 Annex 5 contains a glossary to be used as a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer glossary on the QAA website.⁴

TNE review process

6 The review comprised a number of key stages which are outlined in brief below.

Stage 1: Preliminary analysis

7 QAA started this review in December 2013 by analysing data on UK provision and publicly available information on higher education institutions' provision in the Caribbean. Customised briefs on the size and nature of provision were proposed to each of the main providers, inviting them to confirm, and expand on, the information gathered by QAA. Following this initial scoping exercise, 10 institutions were selected for inclusion in the review based on type and size of provision that was representative of the overall UK TNE in the Caribbean.

1 In the absence of a definitive list of islands that comprise the Caribbean, those countries that are members or associate members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are used as the reference point for this review.

2 The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code.

3 *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* of the Quality Code is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b.

4 QAA's glossary of frequently used terms is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary.

Stage 2: Detailed desk-based analysis

8 The 10 institutions selected for review provided standard information sets which formed the basis of desk-based analyses focusing on the operation of institutional procedures for managing overseas provision.

Stage 3: UK visits

9 QAA teams undertook visits to a number of the UK institutions to follow up on points of clarification arising from the desk-based analysis, and to discuss the preparation of case studies.

Stage 4: Overseas visit to Trinidad

10 Several of the selected UK institutions had provision in more than one Caribbean country, but in most cases the majority of students were registered in Trinidad and Tobago and the types of TNE arrangements here are typical of those elsewhere in the region. As the most populous of the Caribbean archipelago in terms of UK TNE students, Trinidad was chosen as the preferred location for the review.

11 The visit to Trinidad took place from 10 to 21 November 2014. This involved meetings with staff and students at a sample of local providers working in partnership with the UK institutions, providing an opportunity to follow up on identified issues and also to look more directly at the student experience.

12 Visits were undertaken by a team of senior staff from UK institutions (that is, by peer review) and by staff from QAA.

Stage 5: Review outputs

13 The findings of the review are published as quality assurance reports on six individual partnerships, case studies on four UK institutions, and an overview report.

14 Several of the UK universities covered by this review have partnerships with the same local institution, but each has been reviewed and reported on separately.⁵

15 The links visited and partnerships reviewed are as follows:

- **Anglia Ruskin University**
School of Accounting and Management Ltd, Trinidad
- **University of Greenwich**
School of Business and Computer Science Ltd, Trinidad
- **University of Hertfordshire**
CTS College of Business and Computer Science, Trinidad
- **University of Leicester**
School of Business and Computer Science Ltd, Trinidad
- **London Metropolitan University**
School of Accounting and Management Ltd, Trinidad
- **University of Sunderland**
School of Business and Computer Science Ltd, Trinidad

16 QAA has also compiled a set of case studies exploring the different approaches taken by four UK institutions to developing and managing large-scale TNE, delivered by distance learning. These institutions have what might be considered a global TNE model where a particular type of arrangement is replicated throughout the world. Each case study provides an account of the institution's general TNE model as well as Caribbean-specific provision. Case studies are based on information sets provided by the universities concerned, discussions with staff at UK universities and, as relevant, discussions with partner staff and students in Trinidad, including independent distance learners studying wholly online.

⁵ Individual review reports available at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/TNE-Caribbean-2014.aspx

The case studies are as follows:

- **Managing large-scale independent and locally supported distance learning**
University of London International Programmes
- **Delivering TNE in partnership with a professional body**
Oxford Brookes University
- **Delivering TNE in partnership with a specialist online learning provider**
University of Liverpool
- **Refining the TNE model progressively in the light of experience**
Heriot-Watt University

17 Over the period of the review QAA liaised with its counterpart agency in Trinidad, the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT). ACTT provided a useful briefing on the higher education landscape and regulation of foreign higher education in preparation for the review. Staff from ACTT also observed several of the review visits. QAA would like to thank ACTT for its cooperation and operational support during the review.

Changes to QAA's TNE review process

18 The review took place against a backdrop of proposed changes to QAA's future arrangements for quality assuring TNE. In 2013-14 QAA held a joint consultation with the UK Higher Education International Unit on strengthening the quality assurance of UK transnational education.⁶ A report of the outcomes of the consultation was published in May 2014 and an Implementation Group has since been established to take forward the proposals for a new methodology. Preparations for the Caribbean review were already underway at the time and the present review has not sought to anticipate or otherwise incorporate these new proposals. However, the outputs from this review are intended to go some way towards building closer links between TNE and domestic review processes – a recurring theme in the consultation. Four of the 10 UK institutions covered by this review were looked at as case studies in recognition of the fact that their model, which is largely generic as opposed to Caribbean-specific, has been the subject of a previous review. Six of the UK institutions have a UK review scheduled in either the current (2014-15) or next (2015-16) academic year.⁷ Review teams involved in domestic review processes will be expected to follow up on the positive features and recommendations identified in this review.

6 QAA (2014) *Strengthening the Quality Assurance of Transnational Education* – Consultation Report, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=2739.

7 The six institutions are Heriot-Watt University, University of Greenwich, University of Hertfordshire, University of Leicester, University of Liverpool and University of Sunderland.

Higher education in the Caribbean and Trinidad and Tobago

19 Each of the Caribbean countries has separate arrangements for regulating higher education. This section starts by providing a brief overview of the regional landscape before moving on to focus more specifically on Trinidad and Tobago.

Higher education in the Caribbean

20 Over the past 25 years there has been rapid growth in higher education in the English-speaking Caribbean, in large part attributed to government strategies targeted towards developing a more knowledge-intensive economy. Growing demand for higher education has been catered for through diversification of the sector which includes the expansion of existing universities, the growth of private non-degree awarding institutions, collaborative partnerships with foreign institutions, and distance-learning provision.

21 While each country has its own arrangements for developing and managing higher education there has been a high level of cooperation between countries in the region. Fifteen of mainly the English-speaking Caribbean islands, including Trinidad and Tobago, are members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Established in 1973, this union is designed to promote coordinated and sustained economic development through cooperation in national policy in areas including education. Strategies intended to encourage borderless education include Caribbean-wide secondary education qualifications, and reciprocal arrangements for the recognition of higher education awards.

22 The majority of CARICOM countries maintain many of the hallmarks of the British education system, from primary school through to higher education. Most students in CARICOM member states enter higher education having completed two years of post-compulsory secondary education culminating in Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE) awarded by the Caribbean Examination's Council. Although CAPE examinations have replaced the previously delivered English A-Levels they are similar in format and equivalent to the latter.

23 Students with a minimum of six CAPE units can pursue a bachelor's degree, which typically involves three or four years of study. Alternatively, secondary school leavers can go on to study at tertiary-level institutions, typically colleges, to pursue vocational qualifications, diplomas or associate degrees. The latter are considered equivalent to foundation degrees by many UK universities. In addition to UK TNE, there is also a range of other British qualifications on offer in the Caribbean, including Pearson Higher National awards and professional diplomas, which on completion allow students to gain advanced standing on to a pre-determined entry point of a bachelor's degree (top-up programme).

24 The growth in higher education, particularly of that which is delivered through foreign institutions, has resulted in a greater awareness by CARICOM of the need to monitor more closely the quality of incoming TNE. This role is undertaken by independent quality assurance agencies which have now been established in nine of the 15 CARICOM member states, including Trinidad and Tobago.

Overview of the higher education system in Trinidad and Tobago

25 The higher education sector in Trinidad and Tobago currently comprises one private university, two public universities, and approximately 60 non-degree awarding (tertiary-level) institutions, most of them privately funded. While private tertiary-level institutions are not in direct receipt of government funding, students studying at these providers are eligible for their tuition fees to be covered by one of the government's applicable funding schemes. According to data available at the time of the review some 69,000 students were studying towards a tertiary education qualification in Trinidad and Tobago.⁸ Two-thirds of these students are enrolled at one of the publicly-funded institutions, and the remainder at private tertiary-level institutions.

26 Trinidad and Tobago, in line with other CARICOM countries, has prioritised higher education as an area for growth and development over the last 15 years. The underlying rationale for this is to develop an improved and diversified economy which is not reliant on traditional industries such as oil and gas. During the early years of growth in higher education the emphasis was on increasing access, ensuring equality of opportunity and enhancing the quality of provision. This has been achieved through government funding of tertiary education and through the establishment of a national quality assurance agency (Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago). The scale of expansion is evidenced by the increase in tertiary education participation rates from seven per cent in 2001 to 65 per cent in 2014. With many of the government's early goals now being realised, and participation rates above the 60 per cent target, the focus has shifted towards ensuring the long-term sustainability of the higher education sector.

27 The Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training is the branch of government responsible for implementing specific policy measures to address the national agenda for higher education. The Ministry oversees the operation of student funding schemes, and has separate divisions for the management of higher education, distance learning, and technical and vocational training. Distance learning is one of the current areas of priority, seen as a flexible and resourceful means by which local academic capacity can be increased. The Distance Learning Secretariat (a division of the Ministry) has a specific remit to broaden, increase, and enhance the quality of this type of provision.

28 The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT), established by an Act of Parliament in 2004, is the independent agency charged with regulating the tertiary education sector. ACTT's remit includes the quality assurance of both locally developed and foreign higher education. All local institutions undergo a mandatory registration process, and those wishing to make awards in their own name apply for accredited status. At the time of the review there were 57 institutions registered with ACTT and a further 11 accredited institutions.

29 There are separate requirements for the recognition of foreign higher education delivered in collaboration with an ACTT-registered institution. Foreign institutions gain recognition of their awards in one of two ways: institutional-level recognition by direct application to ACTT; or recognition of individual programmes, a process managed by the local partner institution. The advantage of the former approach is that once a foreign institution is recognised, all programmes identified for delivery at the time of recognition are approved. This is convenient for those institutions wanting to offer a large number of programmes and/or working with more than one partner in Trinidad and Tobago. Under this arrangement, separate approval for subsequent programmes is only required for 'specialised' qualifications, where completion of the programme is a requirement for those wishing to practise in a particular profession, for example healthcare or engineering. ACTT expects these programmes to be accredited by an appropriate professional body, prior to it granting recognition. Recognised status by ACTT, for either institutions or programmes, is renewable every five years.

⁸ Information provided by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, based on data from the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training.

30 Current ACTT priorities, of particular relevance to this review, are to ensure that local institutions are only permitted to collaborate with bona fide foreign degree-awarding bodies and awarding organisations, and that the awards are of an acceptable quality. The quality assurance of wholly online learning provision is not currently within ACTT's remit.

Government funding of higher education

31 There are two main government initiatives for the funding of tertiary education in Trinidad and Tobago. The first and most substantive of these initiatives is Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE), which was introduced in 2004 at the same time as ACTT was created. Under this scheme, Trinidadian nationals resident in the country for a minimum of three years are eligible for their tuition fees to be covered in full for undergraduate study and up to half for a postgraduate qualification. Any non-tuition related expenses, such as examination fees, must still be paid for by the student.

32 The second initiative is the Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP), intended to supplement GATE funding by providing students with further financial assistance to cover living costs associated with tertiary education. This is essentially a low interest loan facility designed to assist students with expenses such as accommodation and learning resources.

33 These funding schemes are available to students studying at both public and private institutions, including those enrolled on a foreign higher education qualification. The designation of individual programmes for GATE funding is managed by a specific division of the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training. One of the prerequisites is appropriate recognition by ACTT, though this does not guarantee funding status. Definitive criteria for obtaining GATE funding are not currently published and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. Given the significant benefits offered by the scheme, there are challenges in recruiting students to non-funded programmes.

34 The government's financial support for higher education has been successful in achieving its stated aim of increasing the number of students entering tertiary education. Simultaneously, it has resulted in an ever larger pool of graduates in certain subject areas, and particularly through private institutions collaborating with foreign tertiary education institutions (the majority of which are based in the UK). Consequently, the Trinidadian government is reviewing the GATE funding scheme and refining its long-term priorities for higher education. It is likely that it will become increasingly more important for foreign institutions to be able to demonstrate continuing local demand for and relevance of their programmes in the context of a changing environment.

Analysis of UK TNE provision in the Caribbean

35 In 2012-13 there were 22,555 students studying for a UK higher education award in the 15 member and five associate member states that make up CARICOM.⁹ Of that number, over half were studying in Trinidad and Tobago, with the remainder largely studying in countries with historical links to the UK. There were 66 UK institutions with some form of TNE in the region. This provision was split between those reported to HESA as studying through a distance, flexible and distributed learning arrangement, and those studying on a programme delivered through a partnership between a UK and local institution. Of the latter, over two-thirds were recorded to HESA as studying on the one programme delivered by Oxford Brookes through their partnership with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). With the exception of Oxford Brookes University, partnership arrangements took the form of either distance-learning programmes with support provided by a local centre or taught programmes delivered by a partner. The majority of students in the region were studying through some form of distance learning, either as supported students enrolled at a local centre or as independent learners studying online. Outside of Trinidad and Tobago, provision in the region was delivered almost entirely to students through distance learning without the support of a local centre.

⁹ Data in this section is taken from the HESA Aggregate Offshore record 2012-13, and the QAA survey of provision in 2013-14. For more information see Annex 1.

36 Trinidad and Tobago was selected as the destination for the review due to both the number of students studying there and the number of partnerships with local institutions relative to the rest of the region. In Trinidad and Tobago the 10 UK institutions that were part of the review, plus the University of Reading whose partnership is coming to a close, were involved in 14 partnerships with local institutions in 2013-14. The majority of these UK universities had just one partnership in the country. The University of London and Heriot-Watt University had more than one partnership, and the University of Liverpool and Oxford Brookes University delivered their programmes without the support of a local partner. These four universities were looked at as case studies. Two of the local institutions in Trinidad and Tobago partner with more than one UK institution, with the School of Business and Computer Science working with five UK universities.

37 In Trinidad and Tobago, a large proportion of students study for a UK qualification in the subject area of Business and Administrative Studies. Of those students not studying in this subject area, over half were studying a Law programme in 2013-14, almost exclusively through the University of London International Programmes. Computer Sciences was the only other subject area that attracted a significant number of students. Almost all students studying for a UK higher education award did so at bachelor's or master's degree level. Of those studying for a bachelor's degree, almost half were studying for the Oxford Brookes University's programme. Of the remainder, about a third were studying for a top-up qualification, with the remaining two-thirds studying for a full bachelor's qualification from a UK university.

38 Part-time learning is the preferred option for students studying for a UK higher education award in Trinidad and Tobago, with over three-quarters of students studying part-time in 2013-14. The majority of full-time students were registered on programmes delivered by Anglia Ruskin University through their partnership with the School of Accounting and Management. Over half of the students studying on a UK higher education programme in Trinidad and Tobago had access to GATE funding. The UK programmes that were not eligible for this funding were almost entirely provided through independent distance learning by UK institutions without a local partner.

39 A more detailed statistical analysis of UK TNE provision in CARICOM, and Trinidad and Tobago specifically, can be found in Annex 1. Included in the Annex are details of how the data was collected.

Key findings

Findings of the review

40 This section deals with the main themes arising from the review as a whole. Executive summaries of review reports on individual partnerships, and case studies, are included in Annexes 2 and 3 respectively.

Distance-learning models

41 While this review encountered a number of different types of TNE arrangements, distance learning is by far the most prevalent, accounting for the large majority of all students registered in Trinidad and Tobago as studying for an award of a UK university.

42 Seven of the 10 UK institutions included in this review are engaged in some form of distance learning as a major part of their provision in Trinidad and Tobago.¹⁰ Furthermore, four of these institutions (University of London International Programmes, University of Liverpool, Oxford Brookes University, and Heriot-Watt University), which are the subject of separate case studies, deliver their awards by distance learning to an even larger global population. This is most notably demonstrated by the University of London International Programmes whose entire student body of some 54,000 is studying as distance learners in over 180 countries, with approximately 3,000 students in the Caribbean.

43 The review came across varied approaches to distance learning, but these can broadly be aligned to one of two types. The first is independent distance learning whereby students study for an award at a distance using either online or paper-based learning material, supplemented by academic support provided by remotely based instructors. This is the only way in which University of Liverpool delivers its distance-learning programmes, doing so in partnership with the specialist distance-learning provider Laureate Online. Through this collaboration programmes are delivered wholly online through virtual interactions in a 'classroom', and supported by a network of Laureate tutors and support staff, who together provide the necessary administrative, technical and academic support students need to succeed in their learning.

44 The second category is what might be considered 'blended' or supported distance learning, where online learning material is supplemented by local assistance provided by an in-country partner approved by the UK institution. The roles undertaken by partner support centres in Trinidad vary from one partnership to another, but in the main include marketing and recruitment activities, the provision of physical resources, and academic support to students in contextualising learning material and preparing for assessment. Supported distance learning is the more common type of arrangement in Trinidad and Tobago, perhaps to a large extent because only those foreign programmes that are delivered through an in-country partner are eligible for Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) funding.

45 In practice the division between supported and independent learning is not that distinct. Most distance-learning providers covered by this review are simultaneously engaged in both delivery models, and students can move back and forth between the two modes over the period of their study. For example, some students access local assistance through the Trinidad partner for the first 12 months or so of study, and after acquiring the confidence and requisite study skills move on to complete the award independently.

46 All but one of the UK institutions offering supported distance learning design their programmes with the independent learner in mind, with any support accessed through a local partner considered an optional extra. The exception is the University of Hertfordshire,

¹⁰ The seven universities are: Heriot-Watt University; Oxford Brookes University; University of Greenwich; University of Hertfordshire; University of Leicester; University of Liverpool; and University of London International Programmes.

which requires students to attend organised tutorials at its approved partner in Trinidad (CTS College), seeing this as an essential component of programme delivery. Heriot-Watt University and the University of London International Programmes, the two largest providers of distance learning in this review (in terms of active enrolments), give students the flexibility to access support from local centres, as required, and this is a defining feature of their approach to distance learning.

47 This is not to say that one model is necessarily better than the other, but rather that each caters to the needs of a different type of learner. However, the flexibility with which distance learning is delivered by some of the UK institutions has presented challenges in tracking student retention, progression and achievement. This is further complicated by the fact that students may intermit during their studies and by the extended period of registration for some awards.

48 In all cases the partnerships for delivering supported distance learning, and in fact for all other provision in this review, are with private non-degree awarding institutions that work with a number of awarding bodies and organisations to deliver tertiary qualifications. There is a degree of overlap in that several UK universities have partnered with the same institution in Trinidad to deliver different, but complementary, programmes. For example, the University of Greenwich's Bachelor of Media and Communications, delivered as a taught programme at the School of Business and Computer Science (SBCS), acts as a progression route to several of the University of Leicester's online postgraduate programmes in the same subject area. This multi-partnership approach by some of the Trinidadian institutions does not appear to have been problematic for UK universities, in that each portfolio of provision is managed separately and overlap of subjects at the same level is avoided through careful operational planning.

49 Overall, the students who met the review team as part of this review were positive about the assistance they received through Trinidadian partners, particularly in preparing for assessment. What is less clear, however, is how the UK institutions measure the real value added by support centres in quantitative terms, particularly where local support is optional rather than compulsory. One institution that does appear to be succeeding in this is the University of Leicester, which makes good use of data in its annual monitoring processes and has consequently been able to confirm that students are more likely to complete their degree if they study through its partner in Trinidad (SBCS) than as independent learners. Others seem less able to clearly evidence student completion and achievement rates, or draw quantitative comparisons between supported and independent distance learning, or even more generally between distance learning and traditional modes of delivery for the same programme. As stated earlier, this is in part due to the difficulties in collecting this information in the first place. However, given the motivational and commitment issues inherent in distance learning, if support centres do have a demonstrable impact on completion and achievement then making this information available to prospective students could be beneficial.

50 Regardless of whether a learner studies independently or is supported through a partner centre in Trinidad, core material is made available online with support services provided by UK university staff. The distance-learning providers in this review displayed good attention to detail in considering the specific needs of distance learning in the design of the curriculum, the pedagogical approaches to learning, and the use of an online platform. There are, however, different approaches taken to achieve this. The University of Liverpool, for example, outsources most activities associated with the delivery of learning material to its specialist partner, Laureate Online. Other providers do this in-house, and have staff with particular expertise in distance learning, and technology specialists leading on the visual design of programmes. While the academic management of distance learning is integrated within the equivalent on-campus provision, the large-scale providers have additional structures for the collective oversight of distance learning, and separate departments for managing the high volume of administrative and technical queries received from distance learners.

51 The effective use of an online platform appears to be essential in delivering a successful distance-learning experience. This review came across a number of examples demonstrating the skilful use of technology in facilitating learning through faculty-student and student-student interaction. Online inductions and demonstrations are used across all the distance-learning models to develop digital literacy skills. Further assistance is then provided on a responsive one-to-one basis; in the case of the University of Liverpool there is a 24-hour technical helpline. Perhaps the simplest and most effective method of interaction is the use of discussion boards and forums, which successfully promote social learning, and more importantly, make students feel part of a global community of learners. This adds an international and not just UK-specific perspective to learning. The importance of this to students in this review cannot be overstated, the positive impact of international contexts and the sense of belonging to a global academic community were mentioned in nearly every encounter with distance-learning students.

52 Student engagement has been more challenging to achieve for the distance-learning providers covered by this review. In most cases mechanisms are in place but uptake can be low, perhaps because most students are in full-time work and give less priority to this part of the learning experience. At the minimum, an online survey is used to collect module and programme level feedback, though it can be difficult to engage distance learners in such surveys. More creative approaches include the use of online meetings to which students or student representatives (if studying through a Trinidad partner) are invited. Under the Liverpool-Laureate model student representatives have dedicated virtual learning environment (VLE) space permitting synchronous, as well as non-synchronous, communication.

53 Virtual interactions with academic staff also take a number of different forms across the different distance-learning models. Under the University of Liverpool's arrangement, Laureate's Online Faculty encourage high levels of dialogue via web-based classroom activity and one-to-one exchanges with students as required. Heriot-Watt University assigns each student a named member of staff to act as a mentor, whose role it is to provide feedback on academic performance and advice on progression. In contrast the University of London International Programmes provides a central advice team staffed by administrators who field academic queries and forward them to the relevant programme team if necessary before responding to students. The University of Greenwich's support package for distance learning includes physical face-to-face interaction with UK academics, perhaps because the relatively small size of provision makes this viable. UK staff from the University deliver week-long intensive study schools twice a year under a 'fly-in fly-out' model.

54 A common theme that emerged across many of the large-scale distance-learning providers is the high-level commitment to distance learning embodied within the global aspirations of their strategic plans. TNE expansion is high on the list of priorities for many of these institutions and is partly being realised through the expansion of distance-learning provision. To take one example, the University of Hertfordshire has been effective in translating its strategic planning into well resourced organisational, pedagogic and partnership models to support distance learning. There is also evidence that institutions take a considered and deliberate approach to the type of programmes to be offered at a distance. For example, the University of Liverpool only offers postgraduate awards because of their relative structural simplicity, financial viability and the suitability for committed postgraduate learners aiming to up-skill for career advancement.

Top-up programmes

55 A number of programmes offered by the institutions in this review are delivered as the final year (Level 6) of a bachelor's degree to 'top-up' previous study considered equivalent by the UK institution to the first two years (Levels 4 and 5). These UK institutions have progression arrangements to formally recognise qualifications that cover the learning outcomes for a defined part of their programme, allowing students entry onto a later stage

of the university degree through advanced standing. Although top-up programmes do not account for a large number of UK TNE students in Trinidad and Tobago several UK universities offer these programmes, in part due to the prevalence of other UK qualifications which provide well established routes to Level 6 study.

56 In all cases, progression agreements in this review relate to qualifications that have been awarded by another awarding organisation or degree-awarding body, rather than developed by the partner institution. In most cases these qualifications are nationally recognised in the UK including, for example, Higher National Diplomas and professional qualifications regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual). These are qualifications that are commonly accepted for entry to Level 6 by other universities in the UK.

57 Institutions offering top-ups had in place processes for setting up progression agreements supported by appropriate evidence of curriculum mapping for the specific arrangements in Trinidad. The processes for reviewing and updating these arrangements seem to be more variable. For example, in one instance an agreement was not reviewed until 10 years after the original agreement was signed. Given that programmes are subject to change through annual and periodic review processes it is important to keep progression arrangements under regular review to ensure their ongoing validity.

58 The student experience of those entering directly into the final year of a bachelor's degree was also explored as part of this review. Given that most students study the UK degree at the same local institution as the previous qualification from which they are progressing, induction is orientated towards preparing students for Level 6 study. This seems to work well, providing a smooth transition to the top-up year, which is seen by many students as successfully building on and complementing their previous study. This translates into achievement rates that are broadly equivalent to students studying the same programme on-campus.

Setting and maintaining academic standards

59 In all but one case, awards covered by this review had been previously developed and approved by the UK University. For distance-learning programmes, UK institutions take full responsibility for curriculum design, approval, delivery and review. Partner support centres are therefore more likely to have an impact on the quality of learning opportunities than the academic standards of the award. Anglia Ruskin University and the University of Sunderland deliver their TNE in Trinidad through franchise arrangements, that is, partners teach programmes that are identical to programmes delivered in the UK. The exception is London Metropolitan University's programme delivered in partnership with the School of Accounting and Management (SAM), although even in this case the programme was originally developed by the University and only moved from a franchised to a validated arrangement when changes were made to its home programme that were not adopted by SAM. Therefore in general, arrangements in Trinidad represent what might be considered low-risk TNE models, at least to the setting of academic standards.

60 The UK universities included in this review had sound processes for selecting and approving partners. In the case of the University of Greenwich, the University of Hertfordshire, and the University of Sunderland the comprehensive documentation governing the partnership was recognised as an area of good practice, particularly because of the way in which the responsibilities of both parties were made absolutely clear. Examples include the use of detailed operations manuals with named points of contact, a checklist of responsibilities, and agreements which make explicit the expectations for each aspect of programme delivery.

61 UK institutions also had processes for approving partners to deliver individual programmes. In most cases these were separate to and followed a successful partner approval event, though, for practical reasons, institutions often undertook these two

processes within the same visit to overseas partners, taking care to ensure separation between the two. Approval of a partner to deliver previously developed (franchised) awards is focused on the viability of the business case for the programme, and the partner's academic capability in maintaining academic standards on the UK university's behalf. In most cases this process explored areas such as academic track record, resources and staff expertise. Most institutions took into consideration the privately funded status of partner institutions in Trinidad in their risk calculations.

62 There are two particular examples worth mentioning where programme approval or re-approval appears to have been challenging. In one case, the university's partner had difficulties in securing GATE funding for two of its programmes, which were later withdrawn following a two-year period of non-recruitment. In the same case, two Engineering programmes were also withdrawn after realising that accreditation by the relevant UK professional body would be required prior to seeking recognition from ACTT. This highlights the need for UK institutions to fully apprise themselves of local in-country requirements, and not rely entirely on the information made available by partners. The need to keep abreast of development in the partner country's regulatory environment is a point that was also made in the China 2012 TNE review.

63 The second example is the re-approval of a programme which moved from a franchised to a validated model of delivery, but where the formal agreement governing the partnership was not updated until several months after the change took effect. Although the partner was continuing to deliver a programme that was originally designed by the UK university, under a validated delivery model it had greater responsibility for assessment design and review of the curriculum. It was unclear to the review team how this change was considered, approved and documented. In practice, the risk was mitigated by maintaining the same quality assurance checks as before the change took effect, but the case still highlights the need for changes to partnerships to be subject to due process and formally recorded.

64 Assessment is important in ensuring students have demonstrated the required level of achievement for an award. In all but two cases, assessment was managed almost entirely by the UK university with the partner's responsibility limited to the administration of assessment. The two exceptions are Anglia Ruskin University and London Metropolitan University, where staff have greater involvement in assessment design and the marking of student work. In all cases processes are well managed with standard procedures for internal and external moderation.

65 Particularly notable in this review is the way in which assessment instruments are designed by UK institutions to demonstrate the achievement of generic learning outcomes while permitting local contextualisation. At the most basic level this occurs through assessment tasks which enable students to use a local case study to demonstrate particular learning outcomes. An interesting case is the University of Liverpool's approach to contextualisation through collaborative learning - students use online discussions to bring experience of their local context into the global classroom. Such sharing is particularly important for vocational programmes where practice varies significantly from country to country, and provides a useful approach to the inter-relatedness of local and global issues that works particularly well for distance-learning programmes which have a large international student body.

66 Annual monitoring of programmes (and partnerships) is used by UK institutions to check partners are fulfilling their responsibilities for maintaining academic standards and to bring about improvements in the quality of learning opportunities. For taught programmes where partners have considerably more responsibility for quality than distance learning, this process does not always work as well as it could, with reports sometimes lacking the evaluative commentary needed for the process to be meaningful. In the main, quality assurance processes delegated to partners, including the completion of annual monitoring reports, are undertaken by administrative staff. While this in itself is not a problem, it can result in teaching staff at the partner, many of whom are part-time, being less involved in highlighting and addressing academic issues pertinent to programme delivery.

67 The most common area for recommendations in the individual reviews relates to raising awareness of the role of external examiners and making their reports available to students and staff at partners. This appears to be a recurring theme, with a similar observation made in the UAE TNE review in 2014. While most of the UK institutions publish their external examiner reports, few had gone to any lengths to raise awareness of them among staff and students in the TNE context. This was compounded in the case of some institutions, by confusion among staff and students in partner colleges about the difference between external examiners at programme level and faculty appointed 'Chief Examiners' at module level, whose role it is to comment on the performance of a cohort in individual exam papers.

68 For those partnerships where academic staff are involved in teaching and assessment setting, staff have a role in maintaining academic standards. Across all partnerships there was good evidence of sound processes for appointing appropriately qualified staff and for supporting them in continuing professional development. Anglia Ruskin University has shown considerable commitment to its partner in Trinidad by subsidising the cost of formal qualifications for both academic and administrative staff. Most institutions make good use of visits by UK staff to the partner, using this as an opportunity to provide more customised staff-development activities, for example around understanding assessment criteria. The University of Liverpool, in conjunction with its partner Laureate Online, sets high standards for the recruitment of staff and all new Online Faculty members are required to complete a rigorous and extended induction programme before being allowed to teach or supervise students.

Student employability

69 Trinidad and Tobago's rationale for increasing engagement in higher education has been to promote economic growth through the development of a knowledge-based economy. Student employability is therefore an expected outcome of higher education. This is reflected both in the approach taken by UK institutions and, in most cases explicitly, in the strategic mission of partner institutions in Trinidad. Specific to this review are the needs of part-time distance learners already in employment who are using their degree for career advancement rather than to gain their first job. This review came across two main ways in which employability is encouraged: through the embedding of transferable skills and employer engagement in the curriculum and through the provision of direct careers advice, which is often delegated to the partner.

70 Most programmes covered by this review include opportunities for students to undertake a project in the local workplace, providing useful exposure to real-life work situations. London Metropolitan University has permitted computing students at SAM to use local variants of software and encourages students to engage with local employers through workplace-orientated assessment tasks. Oxford Brookes University's research and analysis project supports the development of critical thinking, presentation and communication skills that ACCA students may otherwise lack, while the University of London International Programmes includes a skills portfolio in the final year of its LLB enabling students to develop transferable skills relevant to the local context.

71 The provision of individualised careers advice and support is delegated to partners, including those acting as support centres for distance learning, and monitored by the UK institution through annual monitoring processes. Services provided by partners include work placements, one-to-one career consultations, guidance handbooks and job vacancy lists. Heriot-Watt University also has a section of its website, 'Working Globally', dedicated to careers guidance which provides links to country-specific information.

72 Overall, there was limited evidence of UK institutions monitoring the impact of their efforts on the destination of graduates. Currently, students studying overseas for an award of a UK institution are not required to take part in the national Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, which acts as a measure of employability. Partners in

Trinidad have undertaken their own graduate tracer studies, partly due to encouragement by ACTT, to produce better data in this area. Evidence from these studies suggests that graduates are successful in entering employment, and gaining promotion within existing jobs. However, given the importance of employability to the government of Trinidad and Tobago, it is likely to be in the interest of UK institutions to consolidate the work of their partners in gathering management information about the employability of their graduates.

73 Most of the UK universities were going to considerable lengths to get their overseas provision accredited by the relevant UK professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), where this is available. The reports generated by PSRBs act as a useful source of evidence for other quality reviews, including those undertaken by QAA, although it is important to note that the approach taken by PSRBs is varied and often concerned with programme-level quality assurance rather than institution-wide processes. Several institutions have obtained accreditation from PSRBs for a number of their awards. Students were aware of these affiliations and in some cases cited them as one of the reasons for choosing to study a particular university's programme.

Changing approaches to managing TNE

74 Although not specific to Trinidad and Tobago, a common theme that emerged from this review is institutions' changing approaches to managing TNE. Although the trends emerging from this review are only based on the practices of the 10 UK institutions, they provide useful insight that may reflect trends in the wider sector.

75 Although none of the collaborations in Trinidad and Tobago have been affected, a number of the universities had recently undertaken a major strategic review of their TNE provision resulting in a reduction in the overall number of partners and concentration on fewer, larger, multi-faculty partnerships. Growth in TNE is still featured in the strategic plans of many of the universities but with an increased emphasis on quality as well as quantity.

76 In Trinidad and Tobago, most partners are of longstanding and were approved under different processes to those currently in place at the UK institutions. As processes have evolved UK universities have become more formal and thorough in their approach to approving new partners, with oversight from the most senior level. Most institutions require final approval from a Deputy Vice-Chancellor before proceeding with a new partnership, ensuring institutional-level oversight of all new collaborations. Many have also moved towards risk-based models. For example, the University of Sunderland uses risk not only to determine whether a new partnership should be approved but also to determine the model of collaboration that a partner will be approved to deliver. There was also good evidence of mapping quality assurance processes for collaborative provision, in a number of cases explicitly, to *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* of the Quality Code.

77 Working with partners and students that are located at a distance can present challenges in managing certain aspects of provision, particularly assessment and the provision of timely feedback. UK institutions in this review are increasingly using technology to overcome some of these hurdles in making previously laborious processes more efficient. Both Oxford Brookes University and the University of Sunderland are introducing online submission to speed up the marking process by removing the need to move large numbers of paper scripts between locations. London Metropolitan University is making effective use of online software to make the moderation of assessment more efficient and the tracking process more robust ensuring all assessments undergo the relevant quality assurance checks.

78 This review included UK institutions whose TNE, including that delivered by distance learning, comprises a significant proportion of the total provision. To varying degrees these institutions have integrated the management of their TNE within mainstream on-campus provision in a deliberate effort to 'normalise' off-campus activities. This seems logical, particularly for those TNE programmes that are a close variant of, or identical to,

programmes already being delivered on-campus, and has reduced the historic separateness of TNE where off-campus delivery may have been managed as an adjunct to existing activities. For example, several institutions consult with partners in the lead up to the periodic review of programmes ensuring that any changes are appropriately informed by the experience of the full student population and not just those studying on-campus.

79 The most striking example is Heriot-Watt University, which has more students (approximately two-thirds of its total provision) studying overseas than it does at its own campus in Scotland. It has been particularly successful in integrating its UK and overseas activities as seamlessly as possible for both strategic and operational purposes, and at every level within the University.

80 The way in which institutions' processes for managing TNE have evolved suggest that they have become more sophisticated in their approach to TNE, having learnt from previous experiences, both positive and negative.

Importance of the UK brand

81 Trinidad and Tobago's rationale for importing foreign higher education, like that of many other Caribbean countries, is quite simple: to meet the increase in demand for higher education. Local universities in Trinidad and Tobago have a good reputation; in fact the University of the West Indies was born out of collaboration with the University of London. At present, however, it appears that the local university sector does not have the capacity to fully meet the demand created by government initiatives for increasing participation in higher education.

82 The UK is the biggest provider of foreign education in Trinidad and Tobago and this seems to be as a result of the deliberate and strategic approach taken by local private institutions. The shared historical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds make collaborating with UK awarding institutions an obvious choice, especially given that secondary education systems are very closely aligned.

83 Students, both those studying through a partner and as independent distance learners, who met the review team as part of this review also commented on the synergies between British and Trinidadian systems. This has greater importance at programme level where subject matter, which may be considered UK-centric, is still relevant to Trinidad because of similarities in governance structures, for example, a legal system based on British law.

84 The most commonly cited reason for wanting to study a UK degree was the portability offered by a globally recognised qualification and the international reputation of UK higher education. A number of students were also able to cite specific reasons for choosing to study for the award of a particular university having explored programme content and the different approaches taken to assessment.

85 A large majority of UK TNE in Trinidad is delivered by supported distance learning providing a flexible route to gaining a higher education degree. Many of the private Trinidadian institutions collaborating with UK awarding institutions offer part-time and evening modes of study catering to the needs of the working professional. A number of students chose to study a UK degree for this very reason, as part-time provision is relatively underdeveloped by local publicly funded universities, though this is now beginning to change.

Conclusion

86 QAA's analysis of UK TNE in the Caribbean found that 66 UK higher education institutions had some form of TNE activity in the region in 2012-13. This activity involved approximately 22,500 students of which some 13,000 (58 per cent) were located in Trinidad and Tobago.

87 The majority of UK TNE students in the Caribbean are studying for a UK award by some form of distance learning. In Trinidad and Tobago a significant proportion of these students seek local assistance through support centres approved by the UK institution. The remaining TNE activity in Trinidad and Tobago is accounted for by other types of collaborative partnerships between UK universities and non-degree awarding private institutions.

88 Over recent years Trinidad and Tobago has implemented a number of government-led initiatives to increase participation in higher education in an effort to move towards a more knowledge-based economy. UK TNE has helped to meet the subsequent increase in demand. The shared historical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds make collaborating with the UK an obvious choice. Supported distance learning has been the main form of UK TNE activity because of the flexibility it offers to part-time working professionals.

89 Foreign higher education delivered in Trinidad and Tobago through in-country partnerships is regulated by ACTT - the government authority charged with responsibility for approving and reviewing both local and foreign tertiary education. Foreign qualifications are also eligible for Trinidadian government funding provided they meet the requisite criteria. This has been an influencing factor in the success of UK TNE, with those programmes approved for funding recruiting much more successfully than those that are not. Now that Trinidad and Tobago has reached its target of 60 per cent for the national participatory rate in tertiary education, it is beginning to consider long-term plans for funding and the needs of the local market. Any changes to regulation and funding are likely to have an impact on UK TNE.

90 This overview report is based on analysis of HESA and QAA survey data, and draws on themes arising from the review as a whole, including both case studies and reviews of individual partnerships. The latter were conducted with reference to the Quality Code, which applies to all educational provision delivered by UK degree-awarding bodies, including TNE.

91 The following conclusions can be drawn from QAA's review of UK TNE in the Caribbean, which focused on Trinidad and Tobago.

- Better systems for acquiring and managing distance-learning data could support institutions in demonstrating the impact of partner support centres on student achievement, progression and retention, and in demonstrating the relative academic achievement of on-campus and overseas students.
- UK awarding institutions should stay abreast of changes and trends in the regulation and funding of UK TNE in Trinidad and Tobago, retaining appropriate oversight of any processes delegated to partners.
- All parts of the Quality Code, and not just *Chapter B10*, should be used as a reference point in the delivery of TNE. Arrangements for sharing external examiner reports should be the same for all students, regardless of location of study.
- Progression agreements should be kept under regular review to accommodate changes to programmes on either side of the agreement.
- The use by UK institutions of comprehensive agreements that identify clearly the responsibilities of their partners and themselves facilitate the effective operation of collaborative partnerships.

- The development of staff at partners is seen as a priority by many UK institutions and the range of activities on offer supports the professional development of individual staff while enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.
- Changes to partnerships need to be carefully managed and documented in order to minimise the potential risk to academic standards.
- The involvement of academic staff at partner institutions in quality assurance processes, such as annual monitoring, makes an important contribution to addressing academic health issues and to encouraging a culture of enhancement.
- Contextualisation can provide a useful means by which globally orientated programmes can deal with the country-specific learning needs of students.
- The ability to demonstrate that programmes have a tangible impact on graduate prospects is important and might require the better collection and use of graduate destination data. This could become increasingly important in the Trinidadian context in the likely event of reforms to public funding of foreign higher education.
- A number of universities are engaged in developing a single set of quality assurance and enhancement processes which, when calibrated according to risk, can encompass both TNE and onsite provision.

92 Several of the individual reviews showed that these points were being handled well, with some highlighted as positive features. However, in other cases, the points were mentioned in the context of recommendations for improvements. QAA will follow up UK institutions' responses to recommendations arising from this review through the domestic institutional review process.

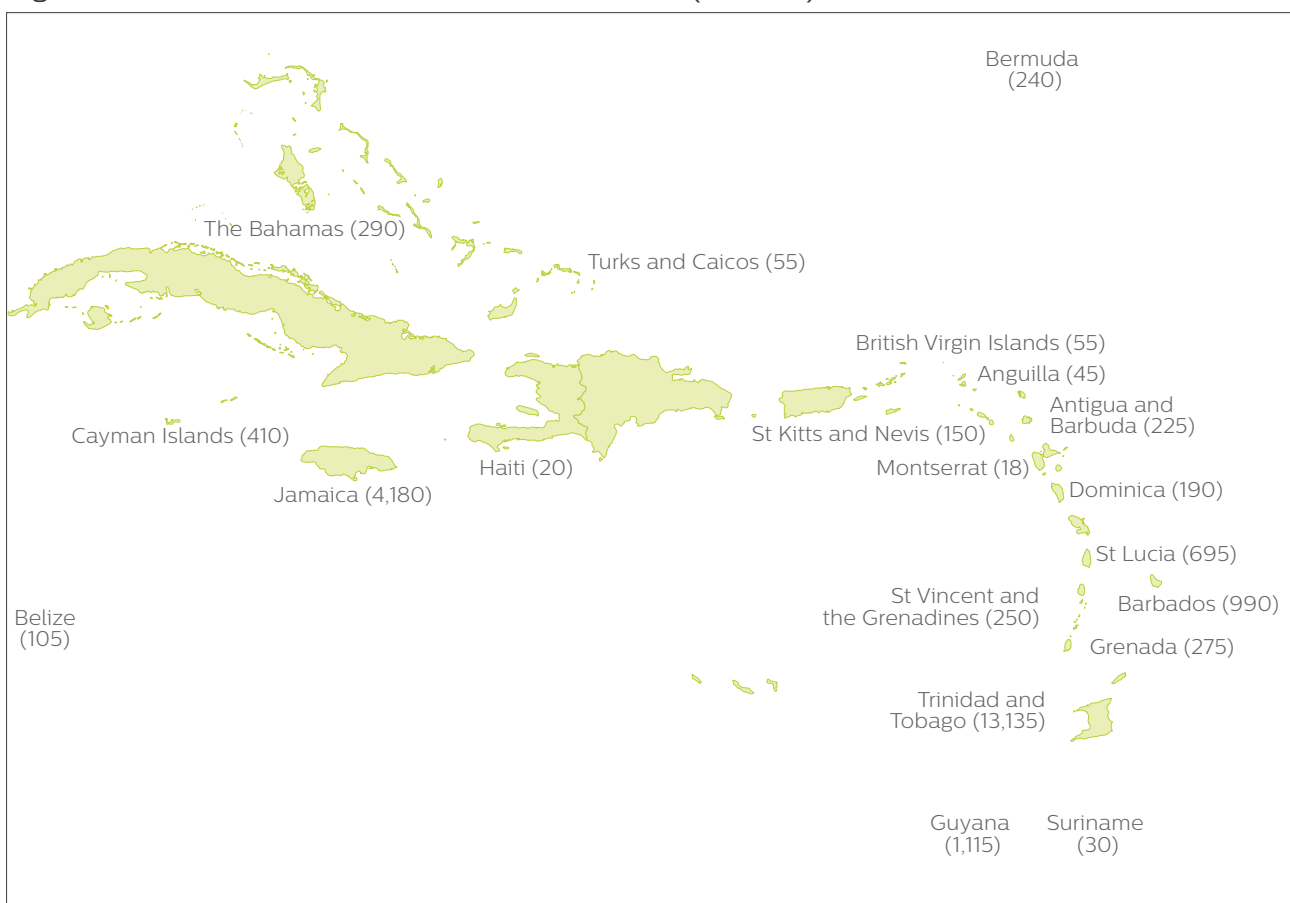
93 This review has been particularly useful in providing an insight into distance learning delivered overseas, which has not been explored at any great depth by previous review activity. Given that the distance-learning models in Trinidad and Tobago are representative of similar arrangements by the UK awarding institutions covered by this review in other countries, the findings could helpfully inform, and reduce the burden of, future TNE activity where this type of provision is in scope.

Annex 1: Statistical analysis

The data used in the following statistical analysis comes from two sources. The initial data used was taken from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Aggregate Offshore record for 2012-13 and considers UK higher education provision across the CARICOM countries (members and associate member states). A subsequent survey was undertaken by QAA of the 10 institutions included in the review and the University of Reading. This survey collected data on the number of supported and independent students across the region in 2012-13, and then focused in more detail on data in relation to their provision of UK higher education in Trinidad and Tobago in 2013-14. This subsequent analysis, developed by QAA, seeks to identify key trends from the data.

There were 22,555 students studying for a UK higher education qualification in CARICOM. Of that number, 13,135 (58 per cent) studied in Trinidad and Tobago.

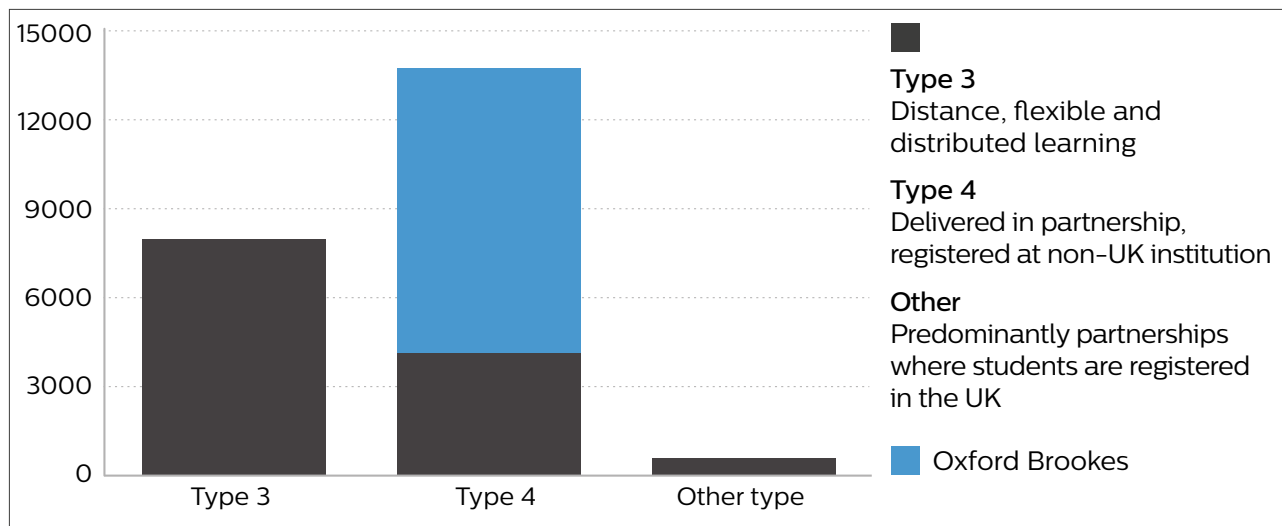
Figure 1: Student numbers in CARICOM countries (2012-13)



Reference: HESA Aggregate Offshore record

Almost 98 per cent of UK higher education provision delivered in the region was provided either through distance, flexible and distributed learning (Type 3), or through partnerships where the students were registered at the local institutions (Type 4). Of those students registered at a local institution through a partnership, 70 per cent were registered on a single programme from Oxford Brookes University delivered in collaboration with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).¹¹

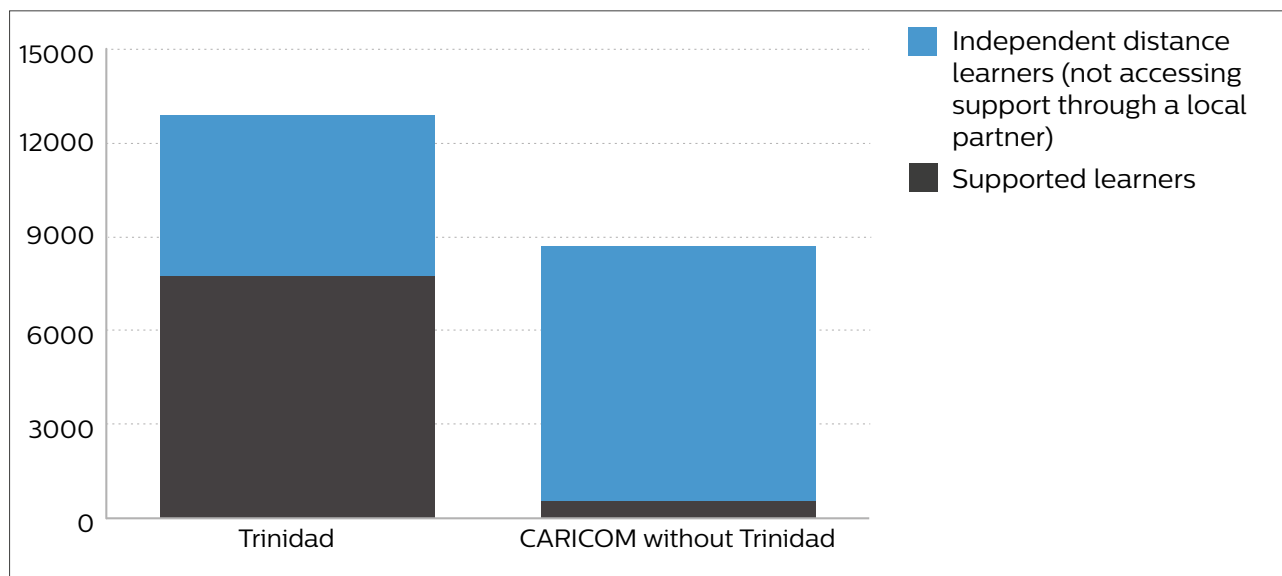
Figure 2: Student numbers in CARICOM countries by type of provision (2012-13)



Reference: HESA Aggregate Offshore record

Of the 22,555 students recorded as studying in the region, 96 per cent of students were studying for an award of one of the 10 UK institutions that formed part of this review and the University of Reading.¹² While in Trinidad and Tobago 60 per cent studied at a partner institution or support centre, this number is reduced to six per cent in the remaining CARICOM countries.

Figure 3: Student numbers in CARICOM by supported and independent learners (2012-13)



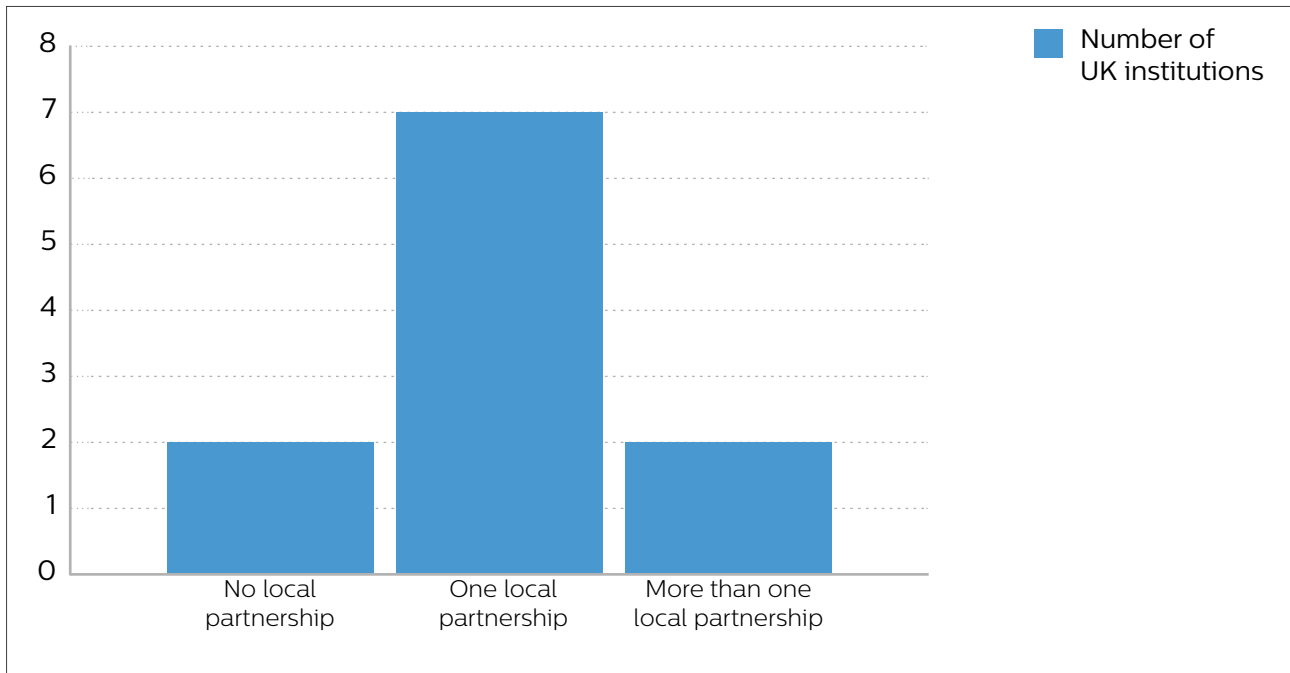
Reference: QAA survey

11 This is based on the number of students registered on the ACCA programme and reported to HESA. The number of students studying for the award, that is active enrolments, is estimated to be lower. Further information on this provision can be found in the Oxford Brookes case study.

12 The University of Reading's partnership with the School of Accounting and Management Ltd was included in the preliminary analysis stage, but was not selected for inclusion in the review because it was in the process of being withdrawn at the time. QAA confirmed with the University that appropriate arrangements have been put in place to support current students in completing the awards for which they are enrolled on.

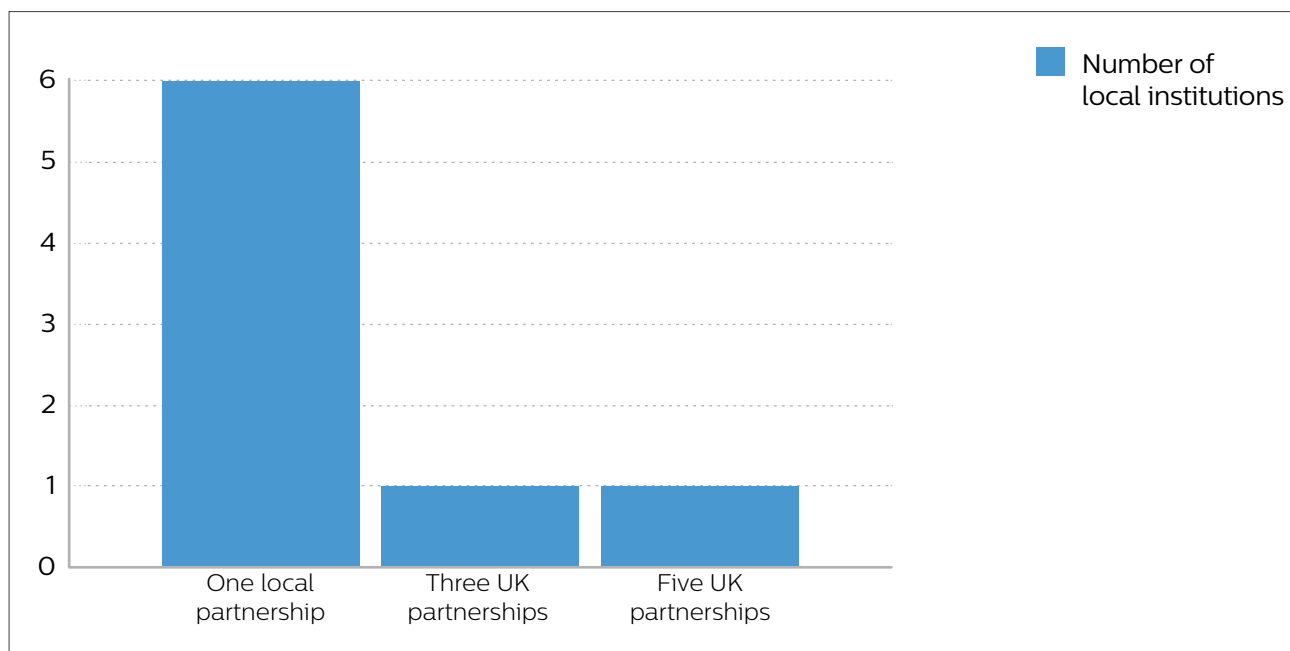
Of the 18 academic partnerships that were set up between the 11 UK universities and local institutions in the region, 14 were based in Trinidad and Tobago.¹³ All 11 UK universities have over 75 students registered through these partnerships. While the majority work with one single academic partner, two institutions worked with a number of partners, and another two delivered as part of their global model of provision without a local academic partner. The local institutions in Trinidad and Tobago generally worked with only one UK university. However, two local institutions worked with more than one UK university, with one working with five universities from the UK.

Figure 4a: Number of partners in Trinidad and Tobago by UK institution (2013-14)



Reference: QAA survey

Figure 4b: Number of UK partnerships by local institution (2013-14)

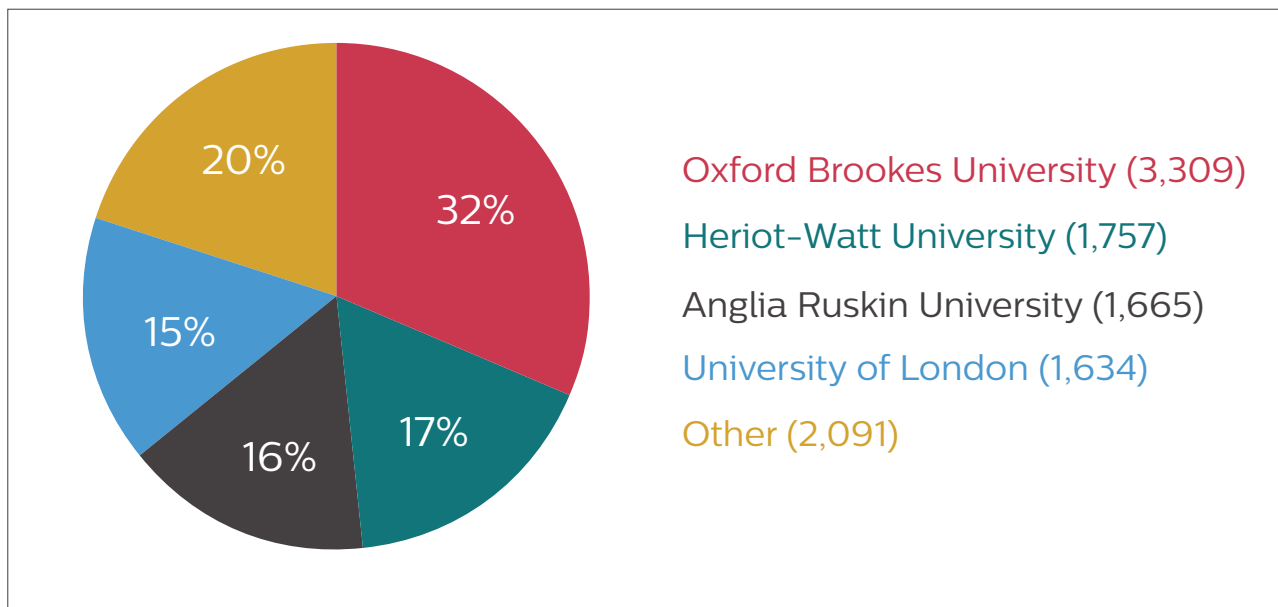


Reference: QAA survey

¹³ Of the remaining four, two are based in Jamaica, one in the Cayman Islands and one in Guyana. See Annex 4 for more detail.

Breaking down the student numbers by UK institution indicates that the majority of students were studying for programmes from the large global providers of UK TNE that were looked at as case studies. Anglia Ruskin University also had a large number of students registered to its programmes in Trinidad and Tobago.

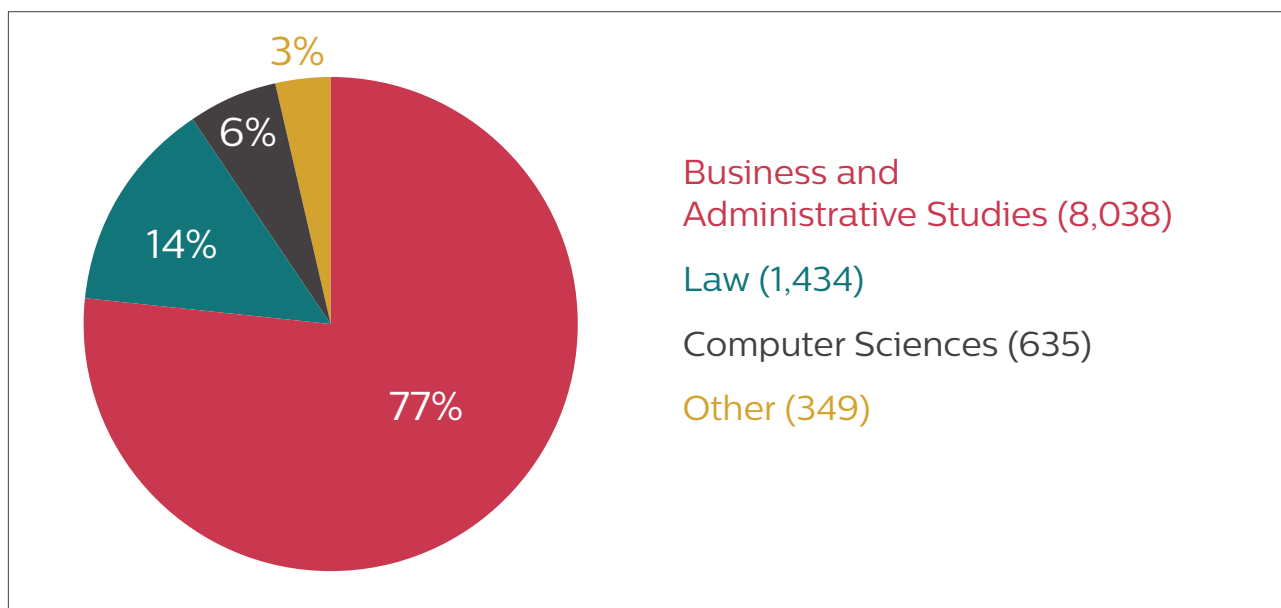
Figure 5: Student numbers in Trinidad and Tobago by UK institution



Reference: QAA survey

Over 75 per cent of students were studying Business and Administrative Studies programmes. Of the remaining 23 per cent, over half were studying a Law programme, with Computer Sciences being the only other subject area that attracted a significant number of students.

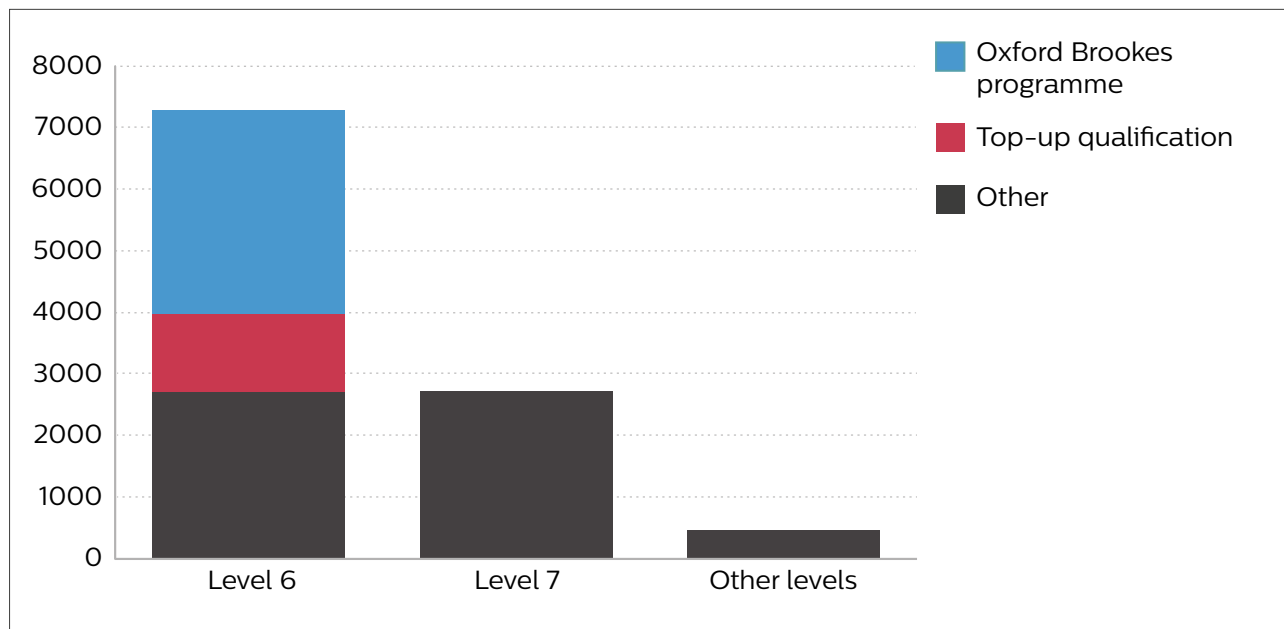
Figure 6: Student numbers in Trinidad and Tobago by subject area (2013-14)



Reference: QAA survey

Almost all students studying for a UK higher education award in Trinidad and Tobago did so at bachelor's or master's degree level. Of those studying for a bachelor's degree (Level 6), 45 per cent were studying for the Oxford Brookes programme. A further 18 per cent were studying for a top-up qualification, with the remainder studying for a full bachelor's qualification from a UK institution.

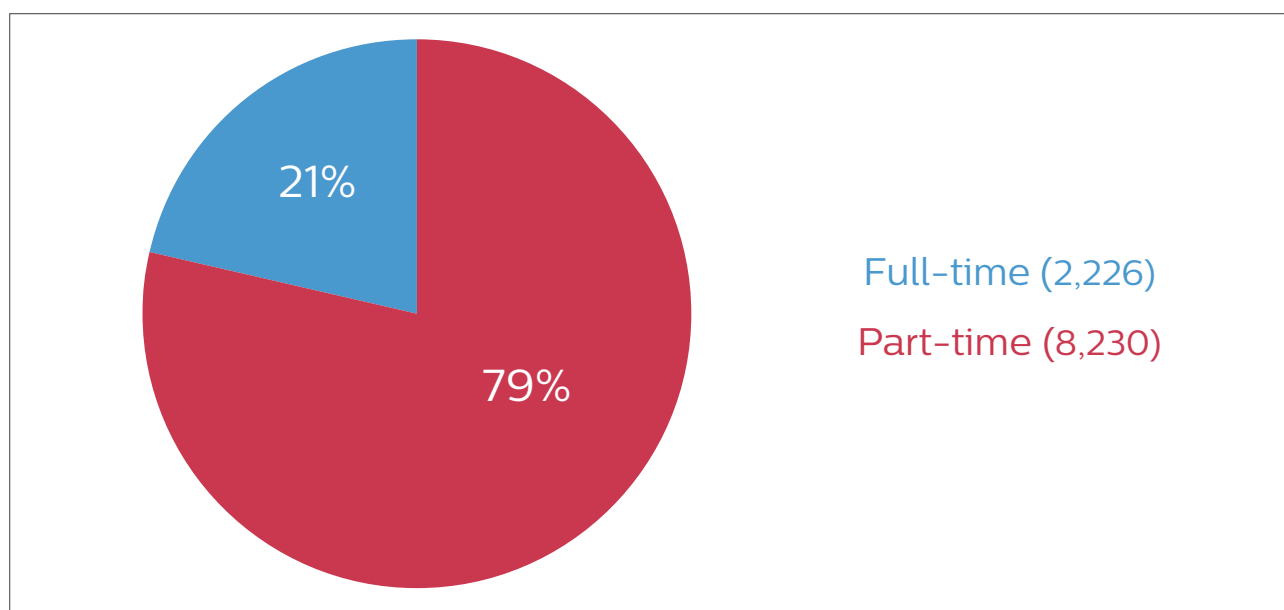
Figure 7: Student numbers in Trinidad and Tobago by level (2013-14)



Reference: QAA survey

Seventy-nine per cent of students were studying part-time.¹⁴ Of those studying full-time, the majority were students studying on programmes delivered by one partnership between Anglia Ruskin University and the School of Accounting and Management.

Figure 8: Student numbers in Trinidad and Tobago by full and part-time (2013-14)

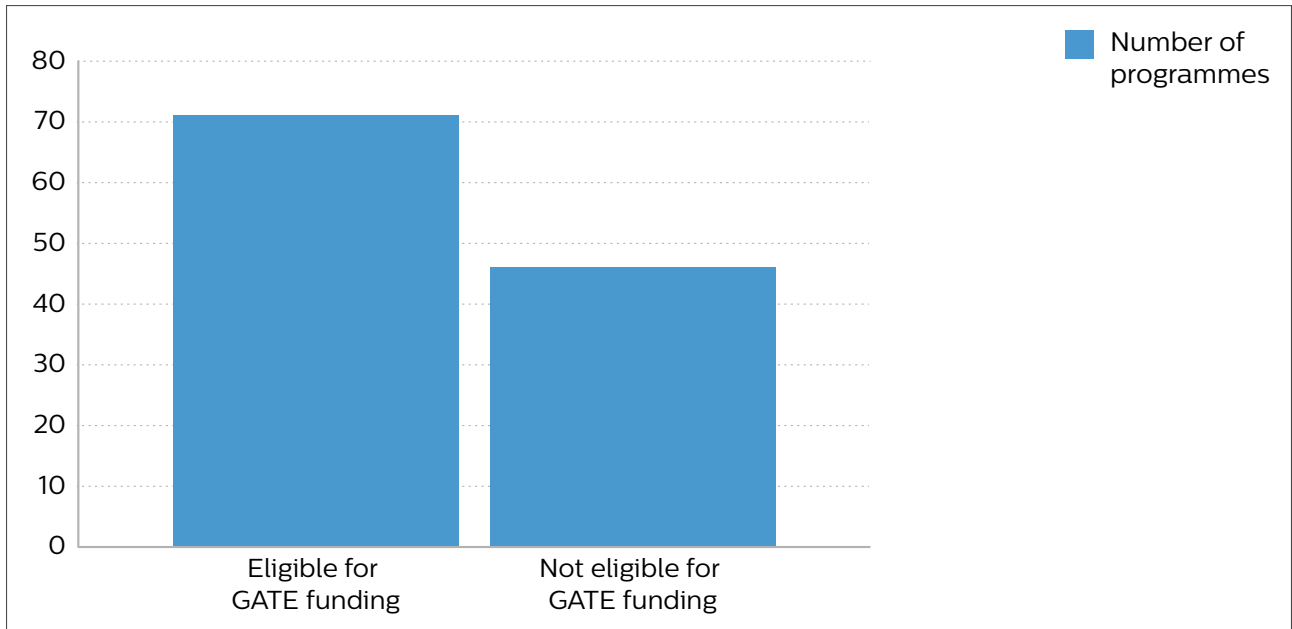


Reference: QAA survey

¹⁴ This is an estimated number taking account of the different approaches universities take to recording full and part-time student data.

Of the UK higher education programmes being delivered in Trinidad and Tobago by the 11 universities, 61 per cent were eligible for Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) funding. Only six students were registered full-time on a programme not eligible for GATE funding, and only 365 students were registered to programmes not eligible for GATE funding delivered by UK universities who worked with local partners.

Figure 9: Number of UK programmes eligible for GATE funding (2013-14)



Reference: QAA survey

Annex 2: Executive summaries of review reports

Anglia Ruskin University and the School of Accounting and Management Ltd

Anglia Ruskin University (Anglia Ruskin) established a partnership with the School of Accounting and Management Ltd (SAM) in Trinidad in 2001. SAM is one of several associate colleges operating under a franchised arrangement to deliver awards of the University and is the only partnership in the Caribbean. Courses delivered through SAM range from bachelor's to doctorate degrees in the subject areas of business and information technology. At the time of the review some 1,400 students were studying for Anglia Ruskin awards through SAM, the University's largest international collaborative partner.

The Associate College model is Anglia Ruskin's most common type of partnership arrangement for which it has established processes in place that are applied fairly generically across partners of a similar type. In 2012 Anglia Ruskin underwent an Institutional Review by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and this resulted in a series of recommendations in regards to its collaborative provision. Consequently a number of mechanisms have since been put in place to strengthen the University's oversight of its UK and overseas associate colleges.

The partnership with SAM is a longstanding one with significant numbers of students studying towards Anglia Ruskin awards each year. This does not, however, mean that the collaboration has been without its challenges. There has been a concern over recent years relating to the lower than expected student achievement at SAM and the limited engagement by some local staff with University quality assurance processes to the expected standard. However, through Anglia Ruskin's annual monitoring processes these concerns have been identified and, at the time of the review, a detailed action plan was underway to address the issues. It is clear that the University is taking these matters seriously with oversight from its most senior academic body, the Senate.

Most aspects of course delivery and quality assurance processes at SAM are managed by a core team of full-time course managers and overseen by academic members of the senior management team. This has resulted in some teaching staff not being fully aware of course-related performance issues, suggesting they could benefit from greater involvement in key quality assurance processes, such as annual monitoring. Other identified areas for improvement include sharing more detailed performance data with associate colleges to facilitate benchmarking against the UK and other partners, and monitoring the effectiveness of recently introduced measures to reduce the number of late mitigation cases at SAM.

In recognition of the fact that SAM is a significant partner, Anglia Ruskin has invested considerable staff time in supporting and developing the partnership. The frequency of visits by a range of University staff has allowed for a high level of operational support during the most challenging times of the partnership. There is also considerable commitment in developing both academic and administrative staff at SAM through the joint subsidisation of formal qualifications.

The University's current efforts are being directed towards raising student achievement at SAM to a level comparable with students studying at its own campuses. Long-term plans are to increase student numbers on the postgraduate IT courses.

London Metropolitan University and the School of Accounting and Management Ltd

London Metropolitan University (London Met) works in partnership with the School of Accounting and Management Ltd (SAM) to deliver a BSc (Hons) Business Computing award. The partnership was formally established in 2008, although London Met's acquaintance with SAM dates back to 2003. The course is delivered as a top-up to certain National Computing Centre Education (NCC Education) Level 4 and 5 diplomas which, through an articulation agreement, are recognised by London Met as appropriate entry qualifications to Level 6 of its award.

At its inception in 2008, the BSc course was a franchised delivery of London Met's on-campus provision, with identical learning, teaching and assessment materials to those at the University. In 2011 London Met revised its undergraduate credit framework and moved from 15 to 30-credit modules. SAM was permitted to continue with the existing 15-credit, but given that the course was no longer identical to its on-campus counterpart the partnership model changed, in September 2012, from a franchised to a validated arrangement. This change took effect without formal consideration of the potential implications on quality and did not result in an update to the agreement with SAM until the next periodic review in June 2013. In practice, however, the move to validated delivery does not appear to have impacted on the academic standards of the award, as London Met continues to operate the same quality assurance checks as before.

Overall the course is well managed with an effective liaison system in place with dedicated contacts on both sides of the partnership. There are established mechanisms in place for monitoring the academic health of the course and although records of these confirm that students are satisfied with the delivery and achieving well, more could be done to proactively engage staff and students in quality assurance and enhancement initiatives.

Through its flexible patterns of delivery, the course has enabled students in employment, who may not have otherwise had the opportunity, to achieve a degree. Students are supported in further developing transferable skills through the integration of employer-based learning and assessment tasks into the curriculum.

London Met has recently engaged in a review of its partnerships with a view to consolidate its collaborative provision through fewer, larger high quality partnerships. Although the arrangement with SAM is for a single course which recruits a relatively small number of students each year, London Met considers this to be a strong partnership which it intends to maintain in the long-term.

University of Greenwich and the School of Business and Computer Science Ltd

The University of Greenwich (the University) and the School of Business and Computer Science Ltd (SBCS) first established a link in 1999 when SBCS became an approved learner support centre. SBCS now delivers eight University programmes at three of its four campuses. The partnership covers two types of delivery: a franchised delivery with SBCS providing teaching, educational resources and student support; and a franchised distance-learning delivery where SBCS provides tutoring and administrative services in support of the materials, and University staff deliver week-long intensive study schools twice a year.

The link has developed into a multi-faculty partnership, in part as a response to the University's Collaborative Strategy (2010) that identified the institutional aim of building on current successful networks and partnerships. Three of the University's four faculties (previously schools) now work with SBCS which has a clear focus on working with local industries and employers to provide graduates that address their needs.

The University is recognised as a Foreign Awarding Institution by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT). The application of the University's quality assurance procedures is generally sound in its partnership with SBCS. The procedures and their implementation meet the Expectation of *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code).

The review team noted the usefulness of the comprehensive guide to the respective responsibilities of the two institutions provided by the 2013 Memorandum of Agreement between the University and SBCS. The team also noted the contribution of University academic staff, particularly link tutors, in inducting, teaching and networking with students based at SBCS, and the commitment to continuing staff development on the part of SBCS and the University.

University of Hertfordshire and CTS College of Business and Computer Science Ltd

The partnership between the University of Hertfordshire (the University) and the CTS College of Business and Computer Science Ltd (the College) was established in 2006. The partnership enrolls students on to three top-up programmes leading to an undergraduate degree: BSc (Hons) Computer Science, BSc (Hons) Information Technology and BA (Hons) Business Administration. The programme is delivered and assessed online by the University, with support teaching provided by the College alongside regular University visits.

All students enrol on to the final year of each of the programmes through advanced standing. The programmes are mapped against Level 6 of *The Framework of Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and are delivered and assessed in English by the University.

All assessments undertaken by students at the College are submitted online through the University's virtual learning environment (VLE), StudyNet.

The College was established in 1999 and was legally established in 2002 under the Companies Act of Trinidad and Tobago. The College is based on two sites in Chaguanas, Trinidad, and is registered with the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) to offer higher education level programmes.

The College operates as an academic support partner whose role is to provide tutorial, pastoral, IT and specialist library support to augment the delivery of an otherwise online range of programmes.

The College is approved by ACTT to support all three programmes until 2017. Around 70 per cent of students qualify to receive Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) funding.

There are evident strengths in the comprehensive and clear academic support agreement underpinned by the University's centre for online distance learning, UH Online, which provides online distance-learning support via StudyNet and is supported by e-learning technologists. Other positive features include the effective communication between the University staff and College tutors at the College.

The University's quality assurance procedures and their implementation in its partnership with the College meet the Expectation of *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code).

University of Leicester and the School of Business and Computer Science Ltd

Over a quarter of the University of Leicester's (the University) current students are studying on distance-learning programmes, the majority of which are offered at postgraduate level. The Department of Media and Communication has an agreement with the School of Business and Computer Science Ltd (SBCS) in Trinidad and Tobago, which provides for SBCS to offer tutorial support for students registered on five of its programmes: MA Mass Communication; MA Communications, Media and Public Relations; MA New Media and Society; MA New Media, Governance and Democracy; and MA Communications, Media and Advertising. In total, between 30 and 50 students are recruited through SBCS every year onto these programmes.

The initiative for the agreement came from SBCS which approached the University with an offer to provide local support for students taking some of its distance-learning programmes. This would allow students to apply for Government Assisted Tuition Expenses (GATE) funding. The resulting formal agreement details the responsibilities of each partner. SBCS is responsible for marketing the programmes and recruiting students, for provision of facilities, and for providing administrative and student support, while the University retains responsibility for the overall programme content, assessment and quality assurance.

The current agreement with SBCS expires in December 2014, but a 12-month extension has been agreed, while the Collaborative Partnership Management Group negotiates a new agreement. The programmes have been approved by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT).

The Department of Media and Communication is responsible for the annual monitoring of the partnership with SBCS and is required to review and report on the operation of all its partnerships through its annual developmental review reports. Departments and the programmes they deliver are subject to periodic review. The most recent periodic review of the Department of Media and Communication took place in 2011.

Programmes supported by SBCS have assessments in the form of assignments, a dissertation and end of year examinations. All assessments are set and marked by the University. SBCS tutors help students to prepare for the assessments and are able to help interpret the feedback given to students if asked to do so.

Completion rates for the distance-learning postgraduate programmes reveal that students studying with SBCS have consistently lower withdrawal rates and higher completion rates students who study independently.

University of Sunderland and the School of Business and Computer Science Ltd

The partnership between the University of Sunderland (the University) and the School of Business and Computer Science Ltd (SBCS) was established in 1999. At the time of the review only one of the approved programmes, the BA (Hons) Business Management top-up, was operational with some 300 students studying towards the Level 6 award. There are also students in the Caribbean studying remotely on distance learning programmes, but these were out of scope for this review.

The University has in place progression arrangements to recognise a number of nationally accredited UK qualifications permitting students to gain direct entry to the final year of the Business Management programme. All students enrolling at SBCS would have previously completed one of these recognised qualifications before progressing on to the University's top-up award.

The model of collaboration is described by the University as 'tutor-supported delivery' (now known as 'full franchise'). Under this arrangement programmes and the associated learning material are designed and assessed by the University. SBCS provides resources, teaching, and academic and pastoral support; playing an important role in facilitating the contextualisation of learning material and providing support for assessment.

Since the inception of the partnership a number of new programmes have been approved for delivery through SBCS but failed to recruit sufficient numbers, and have since been terminated due to the lack of student support funding. While both the University and SBCS recognise the challenges in gaining relevant in-country approval more could be done to ensure the market viability of new proposals.

The University makes explicit in its agreement the responsibilities of each partner across the full range of areas for the effective operation of the partnership and programme. Partners and students are provided with comprehensive information about the University and the arrangements for the partnership. Together these ensure that the model of operation is well understood by staff and that students have a sense of identity as part of the wider University community, making a positive contribution to the partnership.

Operational aspects of the partnership are managed through regular communication between a dedicated Centre Leader from the University's Faculty of Business and Law and a programme coordinator at SBCS, with appropriate oversight by through annual monitoring processes. Identified areas for improvement include raising the awareness of the role of the external examiner and adhering to the stated turnaround time for assessment feedback.

The University has recently reduced the number of collaborative partners with which it works but SBCS has been ear marked as a long-term partner with the potential for further growth.

Annex 3: Executive summaries of case studies

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

University of London International Programmes

The University of London International Programmes (International Programmes) 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'.

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 in-country partner institutions.

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 over 70 independent teaching institutions known as recognised centres and the case study examines the Teaching Institutions Recognition Framework in some detail. Recognised centres 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 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.

Around 80 per cent of the 3000 International Programmes students in the Caribbean are registered on its Undergraduate Laws Programme. In Trinidad and Tobago 70 per cent of them 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, with another provider having started the process of formal recognition. All five recognised centres in Trinidad are registered with the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago. The University of London LLB is a qualifying law degree recognised for entry into the legal profession in most Caribbean countries, along with England, Wales and other jurisdictions, provided certain course requirements are met.

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

Oxford Brookes University and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants

This case study looks at the design and delivery model for the BSc (Hons) in Applied Accounting developed by Oxford Brookes University and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). The partnership is based on complementary strategic aims. 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. ACCA is committed to supporting accountancy students around the world and to developing the accountancy profession.

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. 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. Over 2,500 students graduated from the programme worldwide in 2013-14 and over 20,000 students have graduated since the degree was first awarded in 2000.

The BSc (Hons) in Applied Accounting 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. ACCA has a global network of 91 offices and support centres, including an office in Champs Fleurs, Trinidad, through which it establishes and maintains relationships with employers, development agencies and professional bodies in the Caribbean. It has developed Joint Examination Schemes in partnership with 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.

Once they have passed their ACCA examinations 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. The RAP was designed 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). The case study illustrates how the model uses the RAP as one of the ways of bridging the academic professional divide.

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

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, with over 400 students based in the Caribbean. For historic reasons most students are based in Jamaica rather than in Trinidad and Tobago. The University's courses are recognised by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago.

Laureate Online Education is a division of Laureate Education based in the Netherlands. 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.

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. Laureate has either already achieved or is working towards in-country recognition in almost all the countries in which it has students.

The partnership decided at an early stage that postgraduate provision was more viable than undergraduate provision in a distance-learning context. From the outset its strategy involved a focus on the mature and highly motivated working professional seeking a postgraduate qualification. 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 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. Students are appreciative of this experience which 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.

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

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.

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. While a growing proportion of overseas students are registered at the University's Dubai and Malaysia campuses the majority are distance learners.

Almost 10,000 non-UK distance learners are enrolled with an Approved Learning Partner (ALP) which provides local support, with a further 6,700 students opting to study as independent distance learners.

Heriot-Watt regards 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. 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

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. The purpose of these structural changes is to integrate management across locations of delivery, to support academic alignment and to support quality assurance and enhancement activities.

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.

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.

Annex 4: Partnerships across CARICOM

The table below lists the 12 UK institutions with TNE provision in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) delivered through a partnership arrangement. Partnerships highlighted in bold were visited as part of the overseas visit.

Bermuda	
University of Kent	+ Bermuda College
British Virgin Islands	
Manchester Metropolitan University	+ H. Lavity Stoutt Community College
Cayman Islands	
University of Liverpool ¹⁵	+ Truman Bodden Law School
University of London International Programmes	+ Nations University
Jamaica	
Heriot-Watt University	+ B&B University College
University of London International Programmes	+ University College of the Caribbean
Trinidad and Tobago	
Anglia Ruskin University	+ SAM Caribbean Ltd
University of Greenwich	+ School of Business and Computer Science Ltd
Heriot-Watt University	+ School of Business and Computer Science Ltd School of Higher Education Ltd
University of Hertfordshire	+ CTS College of Business and Computer Science Ltd
University of Leicester	+ School of Business and Computer Science Ltd Academy of Tertiary Studies Ltd College of Legal Studies Ltd
University of London International Programmes	+ Institute of Law and Academic Studies K. Beckles and Associates Law Tutors Ltd School of Business and Computer Science Ltd
London Metropolitan University	+ SAM Caribbean Ltd
University of Reading	+ SAM Caribbean Ltd
University of Sunderland	+ School of Business and Computer Science Ltd

Note: In addition to the above list, there were a further 54 UK institutions with TNE provision in the CARICOM region. All of these deliver their awards by distance learning without the presence of an in-country partner and 53 of the 54 institutions had registered less than 125 students. Oxford Brookes University accounts for the remaining institution that does not have a partner in the Caribbean, but its provision was included in this review.

¹⁵ This partnership was not within scope for this review but the University of Liverpool's distance-learning provision delivered without the presence of an in-country partner was included.

Annex 5: Glossary

Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago A statutory body established in 2005 as the organisation responsible for the quality assurance of post secondary and tertiary level institutions, programmes and awards in Trinidad and Tobago. Its functions include: conferment of institutional title; registration and accreditation of higher education institutions; and recognition of foreign qualifications and awarding bodies.

Articulation/progression arrangement A process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advanced standing to a subsequent part or year of a programme of a degree-awarding body. Arrangements, which are subject to formal agreements between the parties, normally involve credit accumulation and transfer schemes. Read more in the glossary of *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* of the Quality Code.

Associate degree An undergraduate qualification commonly delivered by post-secondary colleges in Trinidad and Tobago. It typically takes two years to complete full-time and is considered equivalent to a foundation degree in the UK.

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) An organisation of 15 Caribbean countries established in 1973 with the purpose of enhancing coordination and cooperation in key policy areas including education.

Due diligence Enquiries relating to the governance, ethos, status, capacity, reputation and general suitability of a potential delivery organisation or support provider to satisfy the requirements of a degree-awarding body for an arrangement to deliver learning opportunities.

Higher Education Statistics Agency The agency responsible for collecting UK-wide data from higher education providers in receipt of government funding. Annual data is provided to UK governments and higher education funding bodies to support their work in regulating and funding higher education providers. Information derived from the data is also published as official statistics for use by other organisations.

Professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) A general term used to describe organisations that set the standards for, and regulate the standards of entry into, particular professions. They are a diverse group of organisations in terms of their status, authority and their roles in higher education to approve, recognise or accredit higher education programmes.

Specialised programme This is the term used by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago to denote those programmes that are a requirement for securing a licence to practice in a particular field. These programmes are expected to align to the requirements of the appropriate professional body, and therefore, specialised accreditation is recognised as providing a basic assurance of the scope, and quality of professional or occupational preparation.

Top-up programme This typically refers to the delivery of the final year (Level 6) of an undergraduate degree to students that have previously completed lower level study considered equivalent to the first two years of the degree (Levels 4 and 5), thereby allowing students to 'top-up' their previous study. Most higher education institutions have articulation or progression agreements with the awarding body delivering the programme from which students are transferring to the top-up award.

Quality Code Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet.

Contact us



qaa.ac.uk



enquiries@qaa.ac.uk



+44 (0) 1452 557000

QAA 1134 - Mar 2015

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2015
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester, GL1 1UB

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786