

Review of UK Transnational Education in the Caribbean: London Metropolitan University and School of Accounting and Management Ltd

November 2014

Executive summary

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.

Introduction

1 London Metropolitan University (London Met) was formed in 2002 through the merger of London Guildhall University and the University of North London, though its predecessor institutions can trace their origins back to the early nineteenth century. London Met has approximately 18,000 students, around a fifth of who are studying overseas for an award of the University.

2 The School of Accounting and Management Ltd (SAM) was founded in 1984 as the first private provider of higher education in Trinidad. It established its first campus in the north of the island and, following a fairly rapid expansion, opened a second campus in the south. SAM works in partnership with several awarding organisations and three UK universities (London Metropolitan University; Anglia Ruskin University; and the University of Reading). Its provision comprises a range of vocational and professional qualifications, undergraduate degrees in business, computing and marketing, and postgraduate degrees in computing and network security. In total, SAM has over 1,500 students of which a notable proportion are from neighbouring islands in the Caribbean.

3 The partnership between London Met and SAM, to deliver the final year (Level 6) of the BSc (Hons) Business Computing award, was established in 2008. The course, which at the time of this review had some 80 students studying through SAM, is delivered as a top-up to the National Computing Centre Education (NCC Education) Level 4 and 5 diplomas in Computing, and Business Information Technology. As an accredited centre of NCC Education, SAM delivers these diplomas in-house and to date, this has acted as the exclusive route of entry to the BSc. SAM is a registered institution of the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) and the London Met course has the appropriate recognition required for transnational qualifications delivered in Trinidad. Students enrolling on the course are also eligible for financial assistance through Government Assisted Tuition Expenses (GATE) funding, which covers the full cost of tuition fees, provided students commit to a period of national service.

4 London Met has a long-standing progression agreement in place with NCC Education, which recognises a number of diplomas for entry to various stages of certain bachelor's degrees. Prior to establishing the partnership directly with SAM, London Met validated a BSc (Hons) Computing and Information Systems top-up with NCC Education for delivery through accredited centres. In 2008, however, London Met took the decision to end this arrangement with NCC Education (while keeping in place the progression agreement) and instead partner directly with a few select accredited centres, of which SAM was one, to offer the current BSc (Hons) Business Computing top-up award.

5 At its inception, the course was a franchised delivery of Level 6 of London Met's on-campus provision, with identical teaching and learning materials, assessment instruments and marking schemes to those at the University. In 2011, however, the University revised its undergraduate credit framework and moved from 15 to 30-credit modules. SAM wished to continue with the existing 15-credit structure considering this to be more appropriate for the local market, allowing students to study a greater breadth of subjects. London Met agreed to this, 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, but wasn't formally acknowledged until June 2013 (see paragraph 13).

6 London Met has a long history of collaborating with partners, both in the UK and overseas, to deliver its higher education awards. In 2012, the University commissioned a review of all partnerships culminating in a series of recommendations to strengthen the quality assurance arrangements for new and existing partners. The outcomes of the review

are reflected in the revised Strategic Plan (2013-15) which, though continues to identify 'partnerships' as one of London Met's key values, places greater emphasis on building quality rather than quantity. This has resulted in a more intensive focus on consolidating provision through fewer larger partnerships that provide a 'focused, high-quality and profitable engagement'.

7 London Met considers SAM to be a high-quality partner with a successful track record in the delivery of the BSc course. It reflected on the partnership with SAM in the light of its strategic review of collaborative provision and came to the conclusion that, despite the fairly modest size of provision, the relationship should continue in the long-term.

Developing, agreeing and managing arrangements for setting up and operating the link

8 The present process for approving new partners is akin to that in place at the time the partnership with SAM was established, although it has been somewhat refined to provide a more coordinated approach with senior-level oversight. The current process is clearly articulated in London Met's Quality Manual which, although a work-in-progress at the time of the review, is intended to act as the definitive document for all quality assurance processes.

9 The procedure for approval is the same, regardless of the intended type of collaboration. Initial proposals can be instigated through a number of different channels but all requests must be handled centrally by the Quality Enhancement Unit, which acts as the main conduit for establishing links with potential partners. The initial due diligence process requires the prospective partner to complete an Institutional Approval Form to outline the rationale for the partnership and provide evidence of its academic and financial standing. If the proposal is to be taken forward, the concerned faculty prepares a business case using a prescribed University template. This, along with a risk assessment form completed by the Quality Enhancement Unit which outlines the potential benefits and pitfalls of the partnership along with suggested actions that should be taken to mitigate the risk, is submitted to the Dean's Forum (chaired by the Vice-Chancellor) for consideration. Provided approval is granted by the Forum, an approval panel which includes external representation convenes to review the proposal and provide a final decision on whether the partnership is to be approved, along with any conditions that must be met. This approval event usually takes place at the partner institution and is expected to explore matters such as mutuality of interest and benefit, arrangements for course management, staff expertise, and resources. The approval event incorporates both partner and course approval, and is evidenced by a report.

10 The proposal to collaborate with SAM was initiated by the Faculty of Life Sciences and Computing in response to a strategic decision to work directly with some of the more 'prestigious' NCC Education accredited centres, following the termination of London Met's partnership with NCC Education for another top-up award. At the time, the initial due diligence process comprised a standard outline approval form, submitted by the proposing faculty, addressing issues such as course and market rationale, financial considerations, and resource implications. This was accompanied by a risk analysis of the proposed collaboration undertaken by the Academic Partnerships and Audit Office (now replaced by the Quality Enhancement Unit). London Met's familiarity with SAM, and its reputation in delivering courses with other UK universities balanced against its status as a privately-funded organisation, resulted in the proposal being deemed as 'low to medium' risk. Upon receipt of this information, initial approval to take the business case forward was granted by the Portfolio Development Group. A two-day approval event was convened at SAM, and this resulted in both institutional and course-level approval. Although the report of the approval event provides limited detail on the agenda pursued during the visit, it confirms

that London Met satisfied itself of the suitability and readiness of SAM as a franchised partner.

11 All partnerships are governed by an Institutional Memorandum of Agreement outlining the high-level details of the contract and covers matters relating to academic standards, quality assurance and the safeguards to be put in place in the event of termination. This must be accompanied by a Course Level Agreement, which specifies the more precise details of the partnership including the nature of cooperation and the responsibilities of both parties in the effective running of the course(s). Both of these agreements conform to standard London Met templates and together provide a fairly comprehensive framework for the management of the partnership.

12 The initial institutional and course level agreements between London Met and SAM covered the five-year period from 2008 to 2013 for the franchised delivery of the BSc Business Computing top-up course. In line with London Met's stipulated regulations approvals are granted for an unlimited time, but are subject to a periodic review every five years. Therefore, a periodic review of SAM, which incorporated course re-approval took place in 2013 and resulted in updated agreements (2013-18). The current process now requires new partners to be reviewed after three years in the first instance before moving to a five-yearly periodic review cycle.

13 From September 2012, SAM was delivering the course under a validated arrangement as the equivalent on-campus provision had now moved to a 30-credit structure with a new award title, BSc (Hons) Business Computer Systems. Although the course delivered by SAM was originally developed by London Met it could no longer be considered a franchise of its on-campus counterpart. The change from franchised to validated delivery took effect from the academic year 2012-13 but was not formally acknowledged in any written agreement until the periodic review of the partnership with SAM in June 2013, which resulted in an updated Course Level Agreement. Therefore, for the period between September 2012 and June 2013, the course was, in effect, operating as a validated arrangement under a franchise agreement. In practice this change does not appear to have impacted on the academic standards of the programme, as the same quality assurance checks continue to remain in place (see paragraph 25).

14 While London Met continues to exercise the same level of control over quality and standards, under the new arrangement SAM is responsible for designing assessment and will inevitably play a more active role in the updating and re-approval of the curriculum, given that the course is no longer run at the University. It is unclear how London Met considered the potential implications of the change or satisfied itself of SAM's academic capacity and expertise in being able to fulfil the revised responsibilities. The review team **recommends** that the University ensures that significant changes to partnerships are clearly documented and, where appropriate, reflected in the formal paperwork governing the partnership.

15 London Met's Quality Manual outlines the operational arrangements for managing partnerships and from the academic year 2014-15 this is intended to be further supplemented by a Partnership Operational Manual. Within faculties, an Academic Liaison Tutor is assigned to act as the main point of contact for all course-related matters and is expected to have oversight of the course through annual monitoring processes. An assigned member of staff from the Quality Enhancement Unit acts as the Institutional Liaison Officer, whose role it is to provide advice on, and ensure adherence to, London Met's quality management processes. The partner is expected to appoint a Course Leader to act as the main point of contact at course-level. These three roles are in place for the partnership with SAM and have worked well in ensuring effective communication. Outside of these formal roles there is also regular contact between teaching staff at SAM and module leaders at

London Met, as well as regular dialogue at a more strategic level between senior members of staff from both partners.

16 Although there is no prescribed frequency for visits to a partner, there is an expectation on the Academic Liaison Tutor to attend the bi-annual course committees that partners are required to hold. Where possible, at least one of the visits is planned to coincide with the start of a new cohort so that during induction students have an opportunity to meet with London Met staff. There is evidence of frequent and constructive contact between London Met and SAM that is valued on both sides of the partnership and seen as instrumental in the successful delivery of the course.

Quality assurance

Academic standards and the quality of programmes

17 As explained in paragraph 9, course approval for a collaborative partner is incorporated in the process for institutional-level approval. Similarly, the five-yearly periodic review of the partner, which is a close variant of the initial approval process, addresses course re-approval.

18 The process for periodic review commences with the preparation of a self-evaluation document by the partner, addressing matters including course performance, the rationale for any changes to the course, and the efficacy of student feedback and quality assurance systems. A University panel including external advisers then convenes at the partner to consider the documentary evidence presented for the review and to meet with staff, students and other stakeholders. A report of the event is published with a recommendation made to the University's Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committee, which oversees the outcomes of all partner approval and review events, as to whether or not the partner (and course) should be reapproved.

19 For the partnership with SAM, initial approval was set in the context of approving the franchised delivery of an existing London Met course. The course documentation presented at the approval event, which included course and module specifications, had previously been approved with reference to *The Framework of Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and the Subject Benchmark Statement for Computing; providing the necessary assurance that academic standards had been set at the appropriate level. Therefore, the approval panel's primary concern was to satisfy itself of SAM's ability to deliver the course rather than confirm the academic standards of the award.

20 At the time of the periodic review in 2013, however, the course at London Met was now on a divergent path to the one being delivered at SAM (see paragraph 13). The re-approval of the BSc (Hons) Business Computing top-up course was therefore being considered as a validated arrangement, under which it had already been operating for the previous academic year. In contrast to the approval event in 2008, the role of the 2013 periodic review panel was to satisfy itself of both the continuing validity and relevance of the academic standards of the award and SAM's academic capacity to maintain these standards under a validated arrangement.

21 The periodic review panel for the partnership with SAM included two external subject experts and was chaired by a London Met staff member from another faculty. The evidence available at the time of the 2013 periodic review, which includes a self-evaluation document prepared by SAM, suggests that the BSc course was operating successfully and that students were performing well. There are, however, a number of issues that the review

team would have expected both the course team and the periodic review panel to address, but of which there is no record in the report of the event. These include the declining recruitment to the course (from 226 students in 2009 to 82 students in 2012) and, more importantly, the impact of the change from a franchised to a validated model of delivery.

22 Furthermore, while the updated course specification confirms the level of the qualification, there is little supporting evidence of how the course team critically appraised the currency of the curriculum and its continuing alignment to academic reference points. Given that the periodic review also incorporated the re-approval of a course that was no longer being delivered at London Met, more detailed scrutiny of the academic standards of the award would be expected. According to London Met's Quality Manual, the above are all matters which should be considered as part of a partner's periodic review. The review team **recommends** that the University ensures that the periodic review addresses the full scope of its intended purpose and that this is reflected in the record of the event.

23 The partnership between London Met and SAM is for the validation of the final year of the BSc (Hons) Business Computing. Students are admitted with advanced standing to Level 6 of the course, having previously completed a Level 5 NCC Education diploma that is formally recognised by London Met as equivalent to the first two years (Levels 4 and 5) of the award; an arrangement governed by a formal agreement between London Met and NCC Education. In accordance with its stated process for articulation, London Met has undertaken a curriculum mapping exercise, to satisfy itself that the qualifications recognised in this agreement articulate to the requisite level of its awards. There does not, however, appear to have been a clearly defined process in place for the review of this agreement. The London Met Quality Manual acknowledges that there is a risk in articulating prior student achievement to the correct level, and that this is in part mitigated by 'articulation agreements being subject to regular review'. The agreement between London Met and NCC Education was first signed in 2003 but not reviewed by the University until 10 years later, in 2013, only after being prompted by NCC Education. The review team **recommends** that the University strengthens its arrangements for the review of articulation agreements.

24 All London Met courses delivered through collaborative partners are subject to annual monitoring processes which, although not identical, are in consonance with those for on-campus provision. Partners are expected to maintain module and course 'logs' that conform to prescribed London Met templates. These are an adapted version of those used for home provision and prompt partners to reflect on areas such as student achievement, student feedback and external examiner reports. Module and Course Logs are scrutinised and commented on by relevant faculty staff including the Academic Liaison Tutor. They are also discussed at course committee meetings to review the action arising from the previous year's Logs, and at Performance Enhancement Meetings to analyse module and course-level performance. In addition, partners produce an annual report evaluating the partnership at a strategic level which includes all courses delivered through London Met.

25 Module and Course Logs feed into faculty-level summaries, while annual partner reports inform an overview document of all collaborative provision at London Met. This creates a tiered system whereby issues are fed up for attention and back down again for appropriate action, if necessary. Institutional level oversight of the monitoring process is through the University's Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committee, which receives faculty-level reports, an annual report for each partnership, as well as the overview of all collaborative provision.

26 Annual monitoring records for the partnership with SAM confirm the smooth running of the BSc (Hons) Business Computing top-up course and its continued relevance to local employer demands. The annual monitoring process provides an opportunity for partners to evaluate student achievement at module and course level, and to benchmark against

on-campus provision. Although Course Logs include student achievement data for SAM, there is little evidence in these reports of comparisons being drawn against London Met's home provision. Reports confirm that scheduled course committee meetings take place, student feedback is regularly collected and that staff development has been delivered. There is, however, little detail on the issues raised through student feedback and how these are responded to, the nature of the staff development that has taken place, or any other matters relating to the learning, teaching and assessment of the course. Staff at SAM emphasised the importance of dealing with issues as and when they arise rather than letting these accumulate until the completion of a formal Module or Course Log. Although this is important to ensure emerging issues are dealt with promptly there is also a need to record and evaluate these issues for the purpose of quality assurance and enhancement. The review team **recommends** that the University provides SAM with the information and support necessary to produce appropriately detailed and evaluative annual monitoring documentation.

Assessment

27 As stipulated in the Institutional Memorandum of Agreement with SAM the BSc (Hons) Business Computing top-up course is governed by London Met's Academic Regulations. During the period (2008-12) in which the course was run simultaneously at London Met, all assessment instruments and marking schemes at SAM matched those used on-campus. Assessments and marking schemes were developed by London Met staff, with appropriate input from colleagues at SAM, and approved by the appointed external examiner. Assessments were first and second marked by SAM and then a sample moderated by London Met and the external examiner.

28 Since the transition to a validated arrangement in 2012, all assessment components and weightings for modules continue to remain the same. The main difference, however, is that SAM is now responsible for developing assessment tasks and marking criteria, but these must be approved by faculty staff at London Met and the external examiner before their first use. The arrangements for marking and moderation remain unchanged. Therefore, although the move from a franchised to a validated arrangement may not have at the time been properly considered or documented by London Met, the subsequent risk to academic standards has in part been mitigated by the comprehensive oversight of assessment processes. The most recently designed assessment instruments have been returned to SAM without requiring any amendment, confirming staff competence in assessment setting.

29 The Faculty at London Met make use of an online system to record the moderation, external verification and approval of assessment tasks ensuring all checks have been completed before an assessment is released for use. This provides a detailed audit trail of the moderation process, on which external examiners have also commented positively. The use of an online system to comprehensively track the moderation process for assessment components is a **positive feature**.

30 London Met retains responsibility for the appointment of external examiners for all its collaborative courses. The external examiners for the course at SAM, due to the small numbers registered on the award, are the same as that for a small cluster of other similar courses offered at London Met. Although external examiner reports confirm that academic standards are at the appropriate level, templates used for the reports do not easily facilitate the disaggregation of comments that might be specific to a partner or even to a course for a report that deals with more than one. At least two external examiner reports, for which the BSc (Hons) Business Computing top-up course is in scope, do not acknowledge the course as being delivered through a partner. There is also one example of where the external examiner commented on problems with projects and due to the generic nature of the

feedback London Met had to later clarify with the examiner which provision this was in reference to. The review team **recommends** that London Met considers ways in which external examiners can be encouraged to provide partner-specific feedback.

31 London Met expects external examiner reports to be reflected on in annual monitoring processes and to be discussed at course committees. A review of module and course logs, and minutes of course committee meetings, for the partnership with SAM revealed that external examiner reports are not explicitly considered through these channels. London Met confirmed that reports may not always be available at the time course committee meetings are held but faculty staff would raise any issues relevant to SAM through informal discussions with the course team. During the course of the review visit it became apparent that neither staff nor students at SAM are fully aware of the role of the external examiner or the reports they produce. The review team **recommends** that the University takes steps to raise awareness of the role of the external examiner and to share external examiner reports with staff and students.

32 All modules at SAM fall under the Subject Standards Board for Applied Computing held at London Met; this is where student achievement at module level is confirmed in the presence of external examiners. Progression at course level is determined in accordance with an established process involving an algorithm. Following each Subject Standards Board a Performance Enhancement Meeting is convened, which provides a discursive forum for evaluating module and course-level performance for the purpose of enhancement. The meetings draw on data which includes pass rates for individual modules, allowing comparisons to be made across modules within the same course, and between equivalent modules across different courses. In the absence of information on mean marks for individual modules, however, there is less opportunity to compare the actual level of achievement. External examiners are invited to, but do not always attend Performance Enhancement Meetings. Achievement of an award of London Met is confirmed by the Awards Boards.

Quality of learning opportunities

33 London Met delegates responsibility to SAM for most aspects of the student learning experience; synonymous with arrangements for its other models of collaboration. This is subject to oversight by the University through its quality assurance processes which include site visits, course committee meetings, and annual and periodic review processes.

34 The administrative processes at SAM are managed through a central quality assurance team which includes a dedicated programme manager for the London Met course. In accordance with its partnership agreements, SAM deals with all course enquiries, consideration of standard applications and registration of students for the BSc (Hons) Business Computing top-up course. Applicants with non-standard entry qualifications are referred to the Academic Liaison Tutor (London Met) for approval. In practice this has not occurred as all students studying for the top-up have previously completed a recognised NCC Education diploma at SAM. Students who met the team commented positively on their pre-enrolment experience and the individualised advice and guidance provided by SAM.

35 Students are supported in the achievement of their award through a variety of mechanisms, commencing with induction. Given that all students enrolling on the London Met course have previously studied at SAM the orientation process is focused on preparing for study at Level 6. Academic staff brief students on the structure and content of modules and the time demands of the course. The Academic Liaison Tutor, wherever possible, attends student induction and provides an introduction to London Met. Students confirmed the usefulness of the information received at the start of their study and the smooth transition

to the level 6 top-up course. In particular, students who met the review team commented on how the curriculum of the London Met course complemented and expanded on the learning achieved through the NCC Education diploma.

36 Through its approval process London Met assures itself of the suitability of the partner's arrangements for student support. These are then kept under review informally through dialogue with the Academic Liaison Tutor, and more formally through annual and periodic review. Records relating to the review of the partnership with SAM suggest that students are well supported in their learning and have access to appropriate resources. This was confirmed by students who met with the review team during the course of the visit. The Course Leader at SAM is the first point of contact for personal academic advice, and pastoral care is provided by the administrative team, which includes a dedicated person for the London Met course.

37 Careers advice is available through academics at SAM; many of whom, through their own employment, have good links with the industry. The embedding of transferable skills into the curriculum is seen as essential to the employability of graduates. London Met has supported SAM in achieving this by permitting the use of locally employed software and through the contextualisation of assessment tasks which allow students to work with local employers to address real-life problems. Although London Met does not formally monitor the destination of students graduating through partners, SAM has taken the initiative to conduct a tracer study; confirming that a number of students have progressed into better jobs or pursued postgraduate study. The use of contextualisation and engagement with local employers to embed transferable skills into the curriculum is a **positive feature**.

38 London Met expects its partners to take responsibility for the delivery of learning and teaching with close reference to course and module specifications. SAM hosts face-to-face lectures, supported by seminars, tutorials and workshops as appropriate to the needs of each module. This is supplemented by optional presentations and seminars delivered by industry practitioners who are external to SAM. Course materials, including a course handbook, are produced by SAM and made available online via London Met's virtual learning environment (VLE); this is monitored by faculty staff back at the University who maintain the dedicated online learning space ensuring all relevant materials are made available.

39 The majority of students enrolled on the BSc (Hons) Business Computing top-up course are full-time students, and many who met the team were also in employment with a clear intention to use the award for career consolidation and progression purposes. One of the key features of the London Met course delivered through SAM is the flexibility built in to the mode of delivery, which has widened access to higher education for those that would otherwise find it challenging. A number of teaching patterns and study options are available to students, including evening and weekend sessions.

40 The core teaching team at SAM has been in place since the first delivery of the London Met course in 2008, enabling consistency in the quality of the learning experience. The Course Level Agreement places an expectation on the SAM Course Leader and London Met Academic Liaison Tutor to promote and encourage access to staff development opportunities. Bi-annual staff visits by London Met are the main forum through which staff development is delivered and this has included areas such as project supervision, the allocation of supervisors and assessment design. As the partnership has matured there has been a more tailored approach with staff development activities being tailored to the particular needs of teaching staff.

41 Partner staff are provided with access to staff development training, available through London Met's central education development unit, including material available

online. Staff at SAM who met the review team were relatively unaware of these opportunities and none had accessed e-learning material. Some staff members involved in the delivery of the London Met course are being supported locally to achieve higher level formal qualifications through one of its other partners (Anglia Ruskin University).

42 London Met expects all partners to gather and respond to feedback from students on courses that lead to its awards. The minimum requirement stated in the Course Level Agreement is to establish a course committee, attended by student academic representatives (STARS), to meet once per semester. Course committee meetings at SAM are attended by academic and administrative staff, student representatives, and chaired by the identified faculty liaison from London Met. The general order of proceedings is a module-by-module evaluation of the course inviting feedback from students at appropriate points, followed by course-level feedback on the management and delivery of the course. A review of minutes of several course committee meetings suggest that there are very rarely any discussions around course-level learning, teaching and assessment issues, which could contribute to enhancement.

43 SAM also administers a module evaluation survey and although Course Logs acknowledge this happening, there is little evidence of the analysis of the results at either course committee meetings or in the Course Logs themselves (see paragraph 25). London Met and SAM attribute this to the high levels of student satisfaction, the lack of issues raised in surveys, and to effectiveness of informal channels of feedback preferred by students. While the review team acknowledges this, more could be done to actively prompt and engage students in feedback mechanisms to make improvements at course-level. The review team **recommends** that the University facilitates the active engagement of students in course-level enhancement initiatives.

Information on higher education provision

44 Partner responsibilities for managing information are clearly defined in Course Level Agreements. The management of course marketing and publicity is the responsibility of the partner, but all new publicity material must be approved by London Met prior to its first use. Following which, subsequent approval is only required if significant amendments are made to the content of existing publications. There is also a requirement for all publicity material to clearly state that the London Met is the awarding body for the course.

45 The administrative staff at SAM are familiar with the above process and produce material including leaflets, adverts in newspapers and a prospectus for submission to the Faculty for approval by the University's marketing department. Although London Met does not have a prescribed process for checking the ongoing accuracy of published information, ad hoc spot checks are performed and partners notified of any potentially misleading information requiring amendment. Students who met the review team confirmed that the information available to them as prospective applicants enabled them to make an informed choice.

46 Course handbooks were first drafted by staff at SAM and submitted as part of the approval process. Updated versions of the handbook are provided to faculty staff at the start of each semester to be made available through the dedicated University VLE space maintained by University. Students confirmed that they receive a hard copy of the handbook at the start of their course. A review of the latest version of the handbook confirms that students are provided with the necessary information about their course including the resources available to them, student engagement mechanisms, assessment, how to complain, and links to essential information held on the London Met website.

47 The University confirms in the Course Level Agreement that it is solely responsible for the conferment of awards and issuance of certificates and transcripts. These are forwarded to SAM for distribution to award holders. Certificates clearly indicate that the award is 'taught in collaboration with' SAM in Trinidad and Tobago. The associated transcript is based on information held on London Met's student records system and confirms the name and location of the teaching institution, the language of instruction, and the credits achieved on the course. Although not of relevance to the English-speaking Caribbean, transcripts are also required to confirm the language of assessment where this was not English.

Conclusion

Positive features

The following positive features are identified:

- the use of an online system to comprehensively track the moderation process for assessment components (paragraph 29)
- the use of contextualisation and engagement with local employers to embed transferable skills into the curriculum (paragraph 37).

Recommendations

London Metropolitan University is recommended to take the following action:

- ensure that significant changes to partnerships are clearly documented and, where appropriate, reflected in the formal paperwork governing the partnership (paragraph 14)
- ensure that periodic review addresses the full scope of its intended purpose and that this is reflected in the record of the event (paragraph 22)
- strengthen its arrangements for the review of articulation agreements (paragraph 23)
- provide SAM with the information and support necessary to produce appropriately detailed and evaluative annual monitoring documentation (paragraph 26)
- consider ways in which external examiners can be encouraged to provide partner-specific feedback (paragraph 30)
- take steps to raise awareness of the role of the external examiner and to share external examiner reports with staff and students (paragraph 31)
- facilitate the active engagement of students in course-level enhancement initiatives (paragraph 43).

London Metropolitan University's response to the review report

The University welcomes the review team's recognition of good practice and will continue to develop in these areas.

We are largely happy with the recommendations, most of which have already been identified through our own internal processes and actions have been taken, or are in process, to this effect.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557 000
Email enquiries@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

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