



Review of UK Transnational Education in the United Arab Emirates: Middlesex University and SAE Institute, Dubai

February 2014

Executive summary

Middlesex University's (the University's) mission is to 'produce a global community of staff, students and partners, who make vital contributions to the economic, cultural and social well-being of the societies in which they live and work'. SAE Institute (SAE) was established in Australia in 1976 and is a global provider of academic provision focused on creative media technologies, with 56 centres located in 26 countries. SAE has been an academic partner of the University since 1997. The University's validated degrees are offered in 28 of SAE's centres.

SAE Dubai was approved to offer University programmes in 2006. The campus is located in the Dubai Knowledge Village. Three University undergraduate top-up awards are currently offered: BA (Hons) Interactive Animation; BA (Hons) Web Development; and BSc (Hons) Games Programming. These constitute a combined programme of studies with the SAE Diploma and are delivered face-to-face as an accelerated programme over two calendar years. The University validates the second year of the programme, including one Level 5 module and two Level 6 modules.

SAE Dubai was acquired by TwoFour54 in 2011, who provide support arrangements including finance, HR and legal management. In 2010 SAE was approved by the University as an accredited partner with devolved responsibilities for validation, monitoring and review. The University's Academic Board has agreed that the University will no longer offer accredited relationships with new partners and has reviewed the situation with existing partners, including SAE. The University had agreed with SAE that, from September 2014, the partnership would revert to a more direct relationship, no longer devolving responsibilities as previously set out. However, SAE has recently signalled its intent to cease offering Middlesex University awards at SAE Dubai. Details of the exit strategy are yet to be determined.

Positive features identified include facilities that reflect industry standards; the engagement with industry to provide a 'real-world' experience for students, ensuring that they are prepared for the world of work; and the cross-disciplinary student projects that support interdisciplinary working in line with creative media industry practice. Several recommended actions for the University were identified, including the need to ensure independent due diligence where legal ownership of a partnership is changed and to ensure that appropriate exit arrangements are in place for the cessation of the relationship with SAE Dubai.

Report

Introduction

1 Middlesex University (the University) is one of the largest universities in the UK, with 43,155 students; 23,959 students are based in Hendon, North London; 3,670 at the University's overseas campuses; and 15,526 students are enrolled on University programmes delivered by partners (based on 2012-13 figures). The University's origin dates back to 1878; Middlesex Polytechnic was established in 1973, and Middlesex University in 1992.

2 The University's strategic plan sets out the University's mission to 'produce a global community of staff, students and partners, who make vital contributions to the economic, cultural and social well-being of the societies in which they live and work'. The international ambition of the University is described in the University's aim to develop 'new overseas campuses that make it possible for students around the globe to study and gain a Middlesex degree wherever they live'.

3 SAE Institute (SAE) was established in Australia in 1976 and has 56 centres located in 26 countries. SAE is a global provider of academic provision focused on creative media technologies and is owned by Navitas, a publicly traded Australian company for educational services worldwide. Whole ownership of SAE by Navitas was recorded at the University-SAE joint steering meeting in 2012 and reference was made to Navitas' commitment to strengthening the SAE partnership with the University. However, the review team found no other formal reporting or oversight by the University on the change of ownership of its partner.

4 In 2011, SAE agreed to the acquisition of SAE Dubai by TwoFour54, who provide support arrangements including finance, HR and legal management. SAE Institute PTY Ltd operating as SAE Institute provides the higher education provision and SAE Arabia FZ LLC provides the academic infrastructure to ensure compliance with the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) regulations. The academic governance of SAE Dubai remains the responsibility of SAE Australia, SAE UK and their affiliates.

5 The University was not formally a part of the establishment of the new arrangements with TwoFour54. In early 2011, SAE discussed the proposed arrangements with the University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor International (DVC International), who at the time was responsible for approving all new partners or significant changes in the arrangements concerning existing international partners. A meeting was then held at the University for a more detailed discussion and review of the relevant documentation, including the proposed agreement. The acquisition was mentioned at the University-SAE joint steering meeting in July 2011 and the DVC International expressed an interest in meeting representatives of TwoFour54. In January 2012 the agreement between Navitas, SAE and TwoFour54, which explained SAE's relationship with TwoFour54, was retained by the University for record-keeping purposes. No visit by the University to TwoFour54 had occurred at that point, but was proposed for October 2012. No independent due diligence was undertaken by the University and no amendments were made to the agreement to recognise the new ownership. The University is **recommended** to ensure that, where legal ownership of a partner is changed, appropriate independent due diligence processes are conducted.

6 SAE was first established as an academic partner of the University in 1997, and subsequently in 2010 was approved as an accredited partner to validate, monitor and review named programmes of study leading to undergraduate taught awards. The University has since recognised SAE UK as a Special Associate College of the University, although in

July 2012 it was noted that there were problematic areas of the agreement and a decision would be taken with respect to its continuing status. The University-validated degrees are offered in 28 SAE campuses or degree centres. SAE Dubai was approved to offer Middlesex programmes in 2006. The campus is located in the Dubai Knowledge Village Free Zone.

7 Three University top-up awards are currently offered: BA (Hons) Interactive Animation; BA (Hons) Web Development; and BSc (Hons) Games Programming. These constitute a combined programme of studies with the SAE Diploma and are delivered face-to-face as an accelerated programme over two calendar years. The University validates the second year of the programme, including one Level 5 module and two Level 6 modules. The programmes have a common structure and some shared teaching, facilitating cross-disciplinary project work completed by interdisciplinary student teams. The awards are licensed by the KHDA.

8 During the review visit, SAE made the review team aware of the intention to withdraw from the arrangements with the University for the validation of their programmes at the SAE centre in Dubai. This had not, at the time, been formally notified and the team was assured by SAE and University representatives that exit arrangements will be agreed following confirmation. Students on existing programmes will be enabled to complete their studies on a Middlesex University Award. The University is **recommended** to put in place exit arrangements as soon as possible, ensuring that all existing students are able to complete their studies with the University.

Set-up and operation

Establishing the link

9 SAE currently operates as one of two accredited partners of the University in recognition of the confidence the University has in their capacity to act with a greater degree of independence to deliver and quality-assure the programmes leading to the University's awards. Accredited partners can follow, to a substantial extent, their own procedures and regulations (agreed by the University) and, according to the University's procedures, 'can validate and review programmes which lead to qualifications of the University without further reference to the University, for a period specified by the University'. However, overall responsibility for quality and standards remains with the University and it has retained some involvement with programme validation and review at SAE. The decision to consider institutional accreditation rests exclusively with the DVC Finance, who has a remit for international partnerships, advised by the Academic Partnerships Manager.

10 Institutional accreditation is managed by the University's Academic Partnerships Manager who convenes an initial accreditation approval event to reach a judgement on the rigour of the academic quality processes of the partner, and the level of confidence that can be placed in the partner to approve, review and monitor degree programmes. A recommendation is then made to the Assurance Committee (previously the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC)) for a decision on final approval or rejection of institutional accreditation.

11 The accreditation of SAE was undertaken through a University team visit to SAE in 2009, incorporating a formal accreditation event, including meetings with relevant staff and students. The panel referred the accreditation proposal, which required additional work, back to SAE to be presented in revised form to the panel at a later date. A further event was conducted in 2010 and a report was submitted to ASQC recommending accredited status subject to a number of conditions and recommendations.

12 In March 2013, in response to the publication of a number of new sections of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), a paper was presented to the University's Academic Board to propose that the University should no longer offer accredited relationships with any new partners and should review the situation with existing partners. As SAE operates in different countries and languages overseas, and is a multi-campus site operating with a high number of students, the University classified SAE at a higher risk level. The University concluded, therefore, that the relationship with SAE should be moved to a more direct relationship as soon as possible. At Academic Board in July 2013, it was reported that accredited status had been withdrawn from accredited partners and procedures have been updated and partners notified. However, this should have read that partners had been notified that accredited status was to be withdrawn.

13 SAE is still working under the arrangements for accredited partners but has been notified that this status will end on 31 July 2014. These changes will affect SAE Dubai as it runs out the Middlesex programmes.

Making the link work

14 SAE Dubai has various lines of reporting and collaboration across locations. SAE Dubai is headed by a Campus Manager and supported by an Assistant Campus Manager and a Campus Academic Coordinator. It also employs 27 further staff comprising 15 academic staff and 12 administrative and support staff.

15 For operational or strategic matters the link is between the Campus Manager, SAE Dubai and the Managing Director of SAE UK; and for academic matters the link is between Campus Academic Coordinator, SAE Dubai and the National Academic Quality Coordinator of SAE UK. In addition, the Senior Academic Coordinator of SAE Europe, who is also the SAE link tutor to the University, provides support and advice in relation to University-specific regulations and procedures.

16 The International Standards and Quality Committee (ISQC) is the most senior committee within SAE that monitors academic quality for transnational programmes. In addition, the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) for SAE UK provides advice in relation to academic quality assurance and curriculum development matters for the UK provision, which may also then apply to provision in Dubai. There is a line of reporting between AAC and ISQC to ensure consistency and transparency in monitoring and quality enhancement across SAE. The University's accreditation tutor (with responsibility for the partnership with SAE) is a member of ISQC and AAC, and the SAE link tutor is a member of AAC.

17 A University and SAE Operations Group oversees University programmes and the implementation of processes and procedures across all SAE campuses. The meetings are held three to four times a year.

18 From the University, each accredited partnership is assigned an accreditation tutor, based in the Academic Quality Service in the University, who acts as the first point of contact for quality-based issues. A school-based, subject-specialist link tutor provides support for subject-specific matters. SAE appoints a link tutor who liaises both with the accreditation tutor and the specialist link tutors, and is the main point of contact for academic staff. However, since gaining accreditation status, SAE works most closely with the accreditation tutor who provides guidance and retains oversight on quality assurance issues, such as the implementation of University quality procedures and regulations relevant to the accredited link, the Quality Code and the development and enhancement of the institution's own quality procedures and systems.

19 Ultimate responsibility for quality and standards rests with the University and the accreditation tutor has responsibility for oversight of the partnership, receiving revised SAE

procedures and regulations, programme and marketing materials and the SAE annual monitoring report.

20 Programme coordinators are appointed for each discipline and have responsibility for delivery and assessment, and enhancement of teaching and learning materials for their respective programme. Materials are shared centrally across the SAE campuses through their virtual learning environment, Source, and liaison takes place to manage synchronisation of delivery. Staff can further develop materials and provide links to relevant resources and articles and these are uploaded weekly. In future the Academic Programme Leader will have increasing importance in the development and review of curriculum and teaching materials. Teaching staff at SAE Dubai are not involved in the development of programmes and modules. They are designed by SAE UK and shared with the University link tutor. SAE Dubai staff do not visit the UK for staff development purposes.

21 Core modules are shared across programmes to promote interdisciplinary practice reflecting the nature of the industry. Group projects across programmes are completed by students, with clear guidance in terms of roles and responsibilities. They are supported by academic staff during the process. The cross-disciplinary activities and projects supporting interdisciplinary working in line with industry practice are **positive features**.

22 SAE has multiple course commencement dates each year. The University can accommodate this and has a calendar of requirements, such as checking marketing materials. However, SAE managers told the review team that this does mean that if students do not take up the option to graduate in the UK, some students could graduate up to a year after they have completed their award as there is only one graduation event in Dubai annually.

23 Admissions processes are managed by SAE Dubai, although liaison does take place with the University's Registry in Hendon. The Academic Coordinator makes the admissions decisions. All students are registered with the University. However, there have been difficulties with managing the accuracy of the University's records, particularly related to SAE's multiple registration points.

24 Student induction is provided by SAE staff, including introduction to facilities, assessment processes, key staff and receipt of a study pack. A student induction checklist sets out requirements for staff and students and as each task is completed it is signed by the staff member and student. Students told the review team that they found the transition from the SAE Diploma to the University programme seamless.

25 The language of study on the courses is predominantly English. The student handbook does state that major projects are permitted in a language other than English, but where this is allowed, a substantial abstract/summary in English (1,000 words) must then be provided. There is also reference to classes at some campuses employing other languages. Localising the information in the handbook would help to alleviate any potential for students to misunderstand the requirements.

26 English language support is provided to students before and during their studies, including an externally provided eight-week course to achieve an International English Language Testing System score of 6, if required. Academic support including academic writing is offered through weekly workshops. Non-academic support, such as counselling and careers advice, is offered by a full-time dedicated member of staff. Students receive help with visa applications and finding accommodation. Course coordinators support students in preparing CVs and preparation for interviews.

27 Learning resources are based on industry norms. The resources are high specification and very specialist, providing students with top-end technologies matching the

best in the media industry. The specialist facilities reflecting industry standards are a **positive feature**. Accessibility and support is excellent, and industry specialists frequently attend to provide specialist workshops. Students are supported with discounts when purchasing laptops with all the required specialist software. All course information is provided on the student portal.

28 Teaching is practically based with students designing and making media products early in their programmes and closely related to industry. The review team was told that the localisation of study materials is not an issue as the standards for media are worldwide. The staff provide real industry insight and students can pay a discounted rate to attend specialist, short courses delivered by industry specialists. Internships are available to students to prepare them for work. Work placements are undertaken but it is students' responsibility to find their own placements. For many students this leads to permanent positions on graduation. Students also provide workshops for other students in their specialist areas, for example a hip-hop workshop. Personal development and preparation for the workplace is supported through personal and professional development planning.

29 The library is specific to SAE and maintained locally, but monthly contact is in place with SAE UK's library, and less frequently with other SAE centres. The library collection is growing but evidence suggests there is room for improvement. Students also have access to the SAE global network, which is providing access to increasing online resources. Students described a huge range of digitised books and journals to which they had access. The majority of electronic resources can be accessed on and off-campus. All licences, specialist software and computing facilities are maintained and supported locally. Students do not have access to the University's resources.

30 All staff are required to complete a probationary period and the Campus Manager and Campus Academic Coordinator manage their appraisals. The University link tutor has retrospective oversight of appointments through receipt of CVs submitted to the University as part of the annual monitoring process.

31 Potential lecturers are invited to give a guest lecture and based on student and staff feedback, they may be offered a teaching appointment. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across programmes and differences between the numbers of guest lecturers have been identified as issues and targeted by SAE as areas for improvement.

32 All lecturers are mentored and supported by more senior staff on appointment. A staff portal is available to staff across campuses, including policies, procedures and guidelines and support provided by the course coordinator. Additional induction information, including materials related to HR services and lecturing, is also provided. Staff new to marking are supported in the process by the course coordinator who co-marks several pieces of work. An induction manual is provided for the Campus Academic Coordinator setting out campus operation details; programme structures; registration of students with the University; assessment details; Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) information; quality assurance of staff arrangements; staff development; quality assurance of the student experience; annual monitoring; and marketing and public information.

33 Staff performance review is conducted annually and development needs are documented. SAE Dubai retains a register of staff development, including continuous improvement, industry practice, professional development and scholarly, creative and industry development.

34 Peer observation is conducted at least once a year and where possible once per intake of students. Outcomes are documented and sent to SAE UK. This process is used to help identify staff development needs and share good practice, and it informs performance

review of teaching staff. This is conducted annually by the Campus Manager or the Campus Academic Coordinator. Feedback from student processes and surveys informs this activity.

35 A formal process is in place for staff to apply for staff development, which can include assistance with fees for undertaking higher degrees, attendance at conferences, seminars and training sessions. Decisions about allocations of support involve both management and academic colleagues at senior levels, and a staff development register is maintained by the campus with outcomes reported in the annual monitoring report. Staff professional development workshops are provided weekly and these are compulsory for full-time staff.

36 Two SAE staff are studying for the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) at Middlesex University Dubai Campus. Continuous professional development sessions are provided every week coordinated by the Campus Academic Coordinator.

37 Academic staff continue to work in industry and undertake ongoing professional development to ensure their specialist expertise. They also liaise closely with industry in the design and delivery of curricula and industry experts contribute to teaching. The engagement with industry of the staff and students providing 'real-world' experience and preparation for employment is a **positive feature**.

Quality assurance

Academic standards and quality of programmes

38 A major review and revalidation of the undergraduate programmes took place in 2009 with the new Memorandum of Cooperation signed in September of that year. The validation event was chaired by a principal lecturer from the University and the panel included University and SAE representatives, and three external assessors. Meetings took place with staff and students from SAE Dubai.

39 Formal reviews are conducted every six years, but minor changes can be made between reviews. A minor review was conducted at SAE UK last year looking at the trimester system. Programme coordinators in the UK emailed counterparts in Dubai for comments and feedback, which fed into the process. The Senior Academic Coordinator shared the updated documentation with the University.

40 There are two parts to the annual monitoring process. SAE Dubai submit a campus annual monitoring report (AMR) to the SAE link tutor, who submits the SAE AMR to the University Quality Assurance Committee. The Campus Academic Coordinator, who completes the AMR, also forwards the report to the National Group Academic Coordinator, who submits a group AMR to the Senior Academic Coordinator, who subsequently provides an overview of the AMRs to the University.

41 The AMRs provide demographic data, progression and award data, the number of placements offered, the number of guest lecturers and new staff appointments. The data on the first destinations of students following graduation is very sparse or absent. The commentary is brief and summarises the data. There is no reference to student feedback or external examiner reports. Minutes of the Board of Studies are appended. There was a recommendation for 2011-12 that SAE revise their AMR template, and in the annual accreditation report for 2011-12, there is reference to the strengthening of the system for AMRs, which was the introduction of an additional level of report for groups of degree centres in addition to the individual centre reports, but no record of an amended template. The accreditation tutor completes an annual report for the link with SAE more broadly, but this is generic and does not significantly add to the AMR process.

42 Academic staff, including the course coordinator, feed into the AMR process but do not see the completed report. The review team saw no evidence that the reports have been shared at the Board of Studies. SAE staff told the team that the AMRs are available to staff on the intranet. The University's accreditation tutor reports on developments in SAE to the University's Quality Assurance Committee. The group has had some difficulties with establishing a standardised and uniform data set for its global operation, and the Chief External Examiner commented on the difficulty for assessment panels to make any meaningful comparisons of data both across campuses and from one year to the next. SAE Dubai's management is confident that they now have sufficient and robust data, although there was no evidence of any comparative data in AMRs or assessment boards. The University is **recommended** to strengthen annual monitoring arrangements and sharing of reports with staff and students.

43 Student feedback is received through a variety of formal and informal channels. As the campus is small and class sizes are small, there is an 'open-door' policy and ongoing informal meetings with students and staff dealing with problems.

44 Class representatives are selected by the students and they are invited to regular meetings with the Campus Academic Coordinator and the programme coordinator, and the representatives report outcomes to their peers. Students also receive information about changes made as a result of feedback through emails.

45 A Student Council is elected that primarily organises events and provides a communication channel between students and staff. They elect one member from every intake to attend the Board of Studies. There have been difficulties in promoting interest among students in standing for election of the Council. A Student Support Adviser oversees this activity and students are prepared for the role in the Board of Studies by the Campus Academic Coordinator.

46 The Board of Studies, which meets at least twice a year, provides an opportunity for formal discussions between staff and students on all aspects of the operation of all programmes, including curriculum, facilities and equipment, and should share external examiners' reports and annual monitoring reports, although this was not evidenced beyond staff being informed of the content of reports. Attendance of students at the Board of Studies appears to be variable and low at times, generally one or two representatives, and one with no presence recorded. Since achieving accredited status these Boards no longer include a representative from the University. Minutes of the Boards are appended to the AMRs. There is reference to the need to improve smooth and timely preparation and administration procedures for the Boards and this has been responded to by provision of templates for participation, agenda and minutes.

47 Student Council meetings are held for discussion of more general matters.

48 An electronic module evaluation is normally completed after each module and the summary of the feedback and actions taken is reported back to the class by the responsible staff. Feedback on programmes is collected at the end of each trimester and a campus survey is conducted to identify issues of a more general nature. However, student response to questionnaires is poor with few completing them, therefore it has been difficult for SAE to glean representative feedback through this method. This issue has been attributed to students not accessing their email accounts regularly.

Assessment and certification of awards

49 Assessment methods and practices follow the precepts of the SAE Quality of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy and are overseen by the Campus Academic Coordinator in consultation with programme coordinators and lecturers. This is then

approved by the National Academic Quality Coordinator. All assessments are in-course assignments and there are no examinations.

50 Assessments are designed and set by SAE. The Senior Academic Coordinator has oversight and the external examiner retrospectively comments on the suitability of the assessment tasks.

51 Assessment regulations are in line with those of the University and the same grading scale is in use. However, the classification is not the same as the University's and is based on both level 5 and 6 credits, and a weighting is put on the major project. Under accreditation SAE are able to change the classification system without a full validation/revalidation event.

52 Assessments may be submitted by students electronically or physically. All major projects and failed work are double-marked together with 10 per cent of other assessments. Staff told the review team that they believed the assessment criteria are provided by the University.

53 During induction and within their modules, students are provided with advice on how to avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism-detection software and search engines are used routinely to check originality and students receive training in using the software. The student handbook describes the formal process for managing plagiarism offences.

54 Internal moderation is conducted by the course coordinator or Campus Academic Coordinator. Assignments are moderated across four SAE campuses, but not by the University; 10 per cent of work is moderated. The Chief External Examiner expressed a concern about a lack of evidence of moderation. However, it was recorded in 2012-13 that moderator comments had been provided for the first time.

55 Concern has been expressed by the external examiner about dubious mark allocations and not agreeing with the standards of marking, with marks predominantly being too high. Significant difference to marks was identified as greater than 15 marks' difference and adjustments were made to these marks within the Assessment Panel, but those with 15 or fewer marks' difference remained the same. The response to the feedback was that teachers have been informed of the need for full feedback and that care will be taken to provide the most justification possible, but there is no reference to action taken with respect to standards and over-marking. However, in 2012-13 the external examiner report recognised improvement in the standard of marking and feedback to students.

56 Policy requires that students receive written feedback on their assignments within one month, although students reported often receiving it within two weeks. Staff enter marks and a minimum number of words of written feedback into the system. However, the external examiner refers to brief feedback, with insufficient detail on how to improve performance and poor readability. Students receive formative feedback right up to submission of assessments.

57 The University appoints external examiners for the provision at the SAE campus and a Chief External Examiner who oversees standards across all SAE campuses offering University programmes. Annual reports are submitted by the external examiners to the University and SAE. However, only one external examiner report for Dubai was available to the review team and only one Chief External Examiner report. The current newly appointed external examiner is both the local examiner and the Chief External Examiner. The Chief External Examiner report for the last academic year has not yet been received and there had been difficulties in the past in receiving these reports on time. The University has recently replaced the Chief External Examiner.

58 The SAE Academic Coordinator submits responses to the University on the external examiner and Chief External Examiner reports, and the University issues the response to the external examiner. All external examiner reports are digested into an overview report for consideration within the University but this is not shared with SAE.

59 External examiner reports are shared with the course coordinator if relevant. Staff were informed about the contents of the report at the Board of Study in 2013, but they did not see the report. In the information provided they were merely informed that the external examiner had reviewed the work and feedback to ensure that the marking is consistent with expected standards. There was no evidence from previous meetings that external examiner reports had been considered

60 Assessment boards are held in two stages. The first-tier Assessment Panel is chaired by the Campus Academic Coordinator and attended by all relevant academic staff and the external examiner. However, the minutes provided show only the Campus Academic Coordinator, the external examiner and one head of subject present, and on occasions only the Campus Academic Coordinator and the external examiner. One Assessment Panel demonstrated fuller representation from staff. The subject link tutor from the UK sees the minutes from the Board and may also attend the Assessment Board, either physically or by video conference.

61 The SAE Assessment Board is then convened in London and the Chair should be a senior member of the Institute's staff, but is currently a former Professor of Middlesex University, who was also the link tutor to SAE and is currently working part-time with the SAE Institute in the UK. The Assessment Board is attended either physically or by telephone by the Academic Director, the Senior Academic Coordinator, the Registry Officer, some Campus Academic Coordinators and the Chief External Examiner. The Board receive Assessment Panel module grades and recommendations, SAE conferment lists and confirmation forms from external examiners. The University is **recommended** to ensure that appropriate processes are put in place to ensure systematic oversight of students' assessments, including marking and moderation, conduct of assessment boards and external examiner arrangements.

62 The conferment list is confirmed by SAE's Assessment Board and the SAE Registry Officer is responsible for passing the decisions of the Assessment Board to the Centre for Academic Partnerships of the University for the issuing of certificates. The report of the Board is received by the University for confirmation of awards.

63 The SAE Programme Assessment Board overseeing the work of the centres has a range of work made available, approximately 10 per cent or up to 30 per cent for smaller courses. It was noted in the Chief External Examiner report for 2011-12 that work from Dubai was not available to review on-site as it was in non-portable configurations and layouts and that the Assessment Board had noted that technical advice would be sought on this matter. Each panel agrees a sample which includes at least one piece of work from each grade band. There was a recommendation from the Chief External Examiner that the number of scripts moderated and evidence of double marking should be provided.

64 SAE abide by their own regulations for handling student appeals and academic misconduct, including academic honesty. When procedures are exhausted locally, the University's regulations apply.

65 Suspected cases of plagiarism are considered by the course coordinator and then the cases are looked at by a panel of the Campus Academic Coordinator and other members. Students can appeal against marks after the Assessment Board but marks in the past have not generally been changed. Mitigating circumstances can be considered by the

Board which could lead to the adjustment of marks for failed candidates, but the highest the student can be awarded is 16.

66 The Registry Administrator, SAE Europe, provides support for student registration procedures, Assessment Board outcomes, the processing of Diploma supplements and liaises with the University concerning the issuing of certificates. The certificate is issued by the University and only makes reference to the University. SAE issues the Diploma supplement, which includes the name of the Institution administering studies and the awarding body. Previously the Diploma supplement was not overseen by the University, but there is agreement that a sample of all supplements provided by SAE to University students across their campuses will be provided to the University annually.

Information on higher education provision

67 The accreditation tutor receives SAE's marketing materials annually for oversight purposes. All information provided to students, marketing materials and information on the website is overseen. The University sets out requirements which are used to inform the development of materials by SAE.

68 A generic core-programme handbook is prepared by SAE UK and provided in September for March implementation. There is a statement in the handbook that the materials identified are indicative and will be replaced or supplemented for degree centres outside of the UK, but no modifications have been made to localise for Dubai students. This was raised as an issue in the 2009 review and staff said that the template was customised locally. Contacts provided in the handbook are senior UK SAE contacts. Broad information is provided on the academic calendar, the University regulations, communications, attendance, employability, learning, teaching and assessment, student representatives and feedback, academic appeals and misconduct, support arrangements and external examiners.

69 More detailed supplementary handbooks incorporate information for the SAE Diploma and the University honours degree, described as a seamless programme but identifying the exit award after Year 1 of the SAE Diploma. These handbooks contain module narratives and a programme specification, including a curriculum map of learning outcomes, assessments and broad grading criteria. There is a statement that the publication can be made available in alternative formats for students with disabilities. Students find the handbooks informative, providing information about the practicalities of studying at SAE.

Conclusion

Positive features

The following positive features are identified:

- the cross-disciplinary activities and projects supporting interdisciplinary working in line with industry practice (paragraph 21)
- the specialist facilities reflecting industry standards (paragraph 27)
- the engagement with industry of the staff and students providing 'real-world' experience and preparation for employment (paragraph 37).

Recommendations

Middlesex University is recommended to take the following actions:

- ensure that where legal ownership of a partner is changed, appropriate independent due diligence processes are conducted (paragraph 5)
- put in place a plan for exit arrangements as soon as possible ensuring the ability of existing students to complete their studies with the University (paragraph 8)
- strengthen annual monitoring arrangements and sharing of reports with staff and students (paragraph 42)
- ensure that appropriate processes are put in place to ensure systematic oversight of students' assessments, including marking and moderation, conduct of assessment boards and external examiner arrangements (paragraph 61).

Middlesex University's response to the review report

Middlesex University would like to thank the audit team for the courteous and professional way in which the audit was conducted and welcoming manner in which the audit team conducted its meetings. The University welcomes the report, which acknowledges the planned changes in the relationship with SAE and the intention of SAE Dubai to cease offering Middlesex University awards. We are pleased with the positive features highlighted in the report, and we will continue to work with SAE to further enhance our relationship and practice in the areas in which we received recommendations.

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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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