



Audit of overseas provision

**Northumbria University and the Marketing Institute of Singapore
Training Centre, Singapore**

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Introduction

1 This report considers the collaborative arrangement between Northumbria University and the Marketing Institute of Singapore Training Centre, Singapore.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

2 The primary responsibility for academic standards and quality in UK higher education rests with individual universities and colleges. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) checks how well they meet their responsibilities, identifying good practice and making recommendations for improvement. QAA also publishes guidelines to help institutions develop effective systems to ensure students have high-quality experiences.

3 Many universities and colleges in the UK offer their higher education programmes to students wishing to study outside the UK. This is a significant and growing area of activity: data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency indicates that over 408,000 students were studying for UK higher education awards entirely outside the UK in the 2009-10 academic year, either at overseas campuses directly run by UK institutions or through collaborative arrangements that UK institutions have made with foreign partners. QAA reviews both collaborative arrangements and programmes delivered on overseas campuses through a process called Audit of overseas provision. Audits are conducted country by country, and in 2010-11 we conducted an Audit of overseas provision in Singapore. The purpose of the audit was to provide information on the way in which a group of UK universities and colleges were maintaining academic standards and the quality of education in their provision in Singapore. The reports on the individual audits will be used in the preparation of an overview report.

The audit process for overseas collaborative links

4 In November 2009 QAA invited all UK higher education institutions to provide information about their provision in Singapore. On the basis of the information returned, QAA selected for audit visits 10 UK institutions with provision in that country. These institutions produced briefing papers describing the way in which their provision (or subsets of their provision) in Singapore operated and commenting on the effectiveness of the means by which they assured quality and standards. In addition, each institution was asked to make reference to the extent to which the provision was representative of its procedures and practice in all its overseas activity. Institutions were also invited to make reference to the ways in which their arrangements met the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, particularly *Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, originally published by QAA in 2004. An 'amplified' version of Section 2 was published by QAA in October 2010.

5 Audit teams visited each of the 10 UK institutions between September and November 2010 to discuss their provision in Singapore. The same teams visited Singapore in January 2011 to meet some of the staff responsible for managing and delivering the provision, and to meet students. The audit of Northumbria University was coordinated for QAA by Mr M Cott, Assistant Director, Reviews Group. The audit team comprised Mrs M Drowley and Professor D Timms (auditors), with Mr M Cott acting as audit secretary. QAA is particularly grateful to the UK institutions and their partners in Singapore for the willing cooperation that they provided to the team.

The context of collaborative provision with partners in Singapore

6 In Singapore, responsibility for higher education resides with the Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education. The Higher Education Division oversees the provision of tertiary and technical education as well as registration of private schools, including foreign providers. The Singapore higher education landscape currently comprises four publicly-funded autonomous universities, a private institution offering publicly-subsidised part-time degree programmes, five polytechnics, an institute of technical education, an institute of technology, two arts institutions, several foreign universities' branch campuses, and a number of private education institutions.

7 In September 2009 the Singapore parliament passed the Private Education Act to strengthen the regulatory framework for the private education sector. Under this Act, the Ministry of Education has established an independent statutory board, the Council for Private Education, with the legislative power to implement and enforce the new regulatory framework. The new regulatory regime overseen by the Council for Private Education includes a strengthened registration framework called the Enhanced Registration Framework, and a quality certification scheme called EduTrust.

8 The Enhanced Registration Framework spells out the strengthened legal requirements in the areas of corporate governance, provision of quality services, student protection and information transparency that all private education institutions operating in or from Singapore must meet. While private education institutions were previously required to obtain one-time registration with the Ministry of Education and could be de-registered only under extreme circumstances, the Private Education Act has introduced a renewable validity period for registration with the Council for Private Education, which can range from one year up to six years, and has provided the Council with powers to impose a range of graduated penalties on errant private education institutions, including suspension, nonrenewal or revocation of registration or EduTrust certification.

9 EduTrust is a voluntary certification scheme which provides a trust mark of quality. It replaces the previous CaseTrust for Education scheme, which was mainly focused on protection of fees paid by students, adding a number of student welfare and academic standards for all students, whether local or overseas, as well as soundness of finances and school administration requirements. As with CaseTrust, EduTrust is mandatory for private education institutions wishing to enrol overseas students. EduTrust certification is one of the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority's prerequisites for the issue of a Student's Pass. Further information on higher education in Singapore is contained in the overview report.

Section 1: The background to the collaborative link

Nature of the link

10 The link is between Northumbria University (the University; Northumbria) and the Marketing Institute Singapore Training Centre (MISTC). MISTC deals specifically with the University's Newcastle Business School (NBS). The partnership was first approved for the delivery of NBS programmes in 2002, and in the same year MISTC was approved to deliver programmes leading to the award of an MSc Marketing, BA (Hons) Marketing Management, and BA (Hons) Business Management. Subsequently, an MBA and three other BA (Hons) awards have been approved. The programmes approved to run and student numbers in 2009-10 were as follows:

Programme	Students 2009-10
MSc Marketing	20
BA (Hons) Marketing Management	86
BA (Hons) Business Management	53
MBA	20
BA (Hons) International Hospitality and Tourism Management	0
BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance	0
BA (Hons) International Business Management	0
Total	179

11 All programmes are franchised (meaning that NBS provides equivalent programmes in the UK). Teaching and assessment of the programmes is in English. None of the programmes have been submitted for professional, statutory or regulatory body recognition or accreditation.

12 MISTC is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Marketing Institute of Singapore (MIS). MIS is a not-for-profit national body for sales and marketing professionals; education and training being one aspect of its work. The MIS Executive Council, the governing body of MISTC, appoints a small Academic Committee of two to act as liaison with the MISTC Academic Board and its Examination Board. However, the Academic Board and the Examination Board are independent bodies, with powers specified by law under the provisions of the Singapore Private Education Act, by virtue of MISTC's status of Enhanced Registration with the Singapore Council for Private Education (CPE). CPE is the regulatory body established by the Act. CPE enforces the scheme of registration, and without registration private providers may not operate. The Act is relatively new (September 2009), and most of those registered have short-term provisional registration only. At the time of the audit team's visit to Singapore, MISTC was one of 17 from some 1,000 providers with four-year EduTrust registration, following a demanding registration procedure. Enhanced registration with CPE therefore answers a business requirement for legal operation beyond the short term, and goes some way towards providing the framework for a guarantee of academic standards. The team learned that NBS was helpful to MISTC in providing documentation in support of the registration process. The Vice-Chancellor of the University wrote to CPE to explain the status of the programme and the fit of the partnership with CPE requirements. In this, as in many other aspects of the partnership, MISTC considered that the University had been both responsive and supportive.

13 The collaboration with MISTC is one of a substantial portfolio of Northumbria collaborations, the majority of which are overseas. The University has partnerships with 24 partners in nine countries, with some 4,500 students. The majority of these students are in China and Malaysia; 213 are in Singapore, most of them at MISTC. The University considers its collaboration with MISTC is to be representative of its normal procedures and processes for overseas collaborations.

The UK institution's approach to overseas collaborative provision

14 The University is responsible for the quality and standards of all its academic awards. In the case of MISTC all programmes are franchised, to all intents and purposes identical to programmes also delivered in the UK and elsewhere. All assessment on the MISTC courses is managed within the regulations that apply also to the home programmes. MISTC is responsible for admitting students, within guidelines set by NBS. MISTC is responsible for appointing its own staff; however, they must be approved by NBS before they teach on an NBS programme.

15 MISTC is responsible for academic support, administrative support, guidance, study skills, peer support, and learning resource support. MISTC deals with such matters as discipline and complaints. The University stresses, nonetheless, that collaborative activity at Northumbria is operated in the 'spirit of partnership' and that great efforts are taken to involve all parties at all stages.

16 The University has an International Strategy (2007-2010) and NBS has a school academic plan, which operates within this strategy.

17 The University produces a wide range of procedural documentation. In addition to those regulations that govern all programmes, such as the Assessment Regulations for Northumbria Awards, there is a Collaborative Procedures Handbook, describing quality assurance requirements for all stages and aspects of collaborations. This handbook is supported by a range of templates which guide the requirements for reporting outcomes of these procedures. For each link there is a specific Operations Manual, compiled to a template. For each programme, a Programme Specification Delivery Supplement is appended to the programme specification. The audit team confirmed that these arrangements apply for MISTC and all NBS programmes delivered there.

18 On behalf of the Academic Board, the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULT) and its Learning and Teaching Programme Approval Subcommittee (LTPAS) have overarching responsibility for monitoring the quality assurance of programmes, including collaborative programmes. The Academic Board's International Committee is responsible for strategy. At school level, NBS has a School Learning and Teaching Committee (SLT), whose role largely mirrors ULT's, and also a Collaborative Operations Group (COG), which is a subcommittee of SLT and has a range of functions related specifically to collaboration, such as approving new MISTC members of staff. The audit team found that COG plays an important role in monitoring, which it was discharging with great effectiveness.

19 Executive management responsibility for overseas collaboration is with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) through the Director of Academic Services and the deans of the University's schools. Deans have overall responsibility for the effective operation of quality assurance. Deans are assisted by associate deans for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Each programme has a programme director. In respect of MISTC delivery, there is an NBS Singapore Partnership Leader, who plays a key operational role. Module leaders liaise with their counterparts at MISTC about the modules for which they are responsible. At MISTC, a Director of Continuing Education has a role analogous to

that of the NBS Dean; there is a Registrar for Continuing Education, with a similar function to the University's, and MISTC has a Northumbria coordinator.

Section 2: Arrangements for establishing the link

Selecting and approving the partner organisation

20 The University separates partner approval from programme approval. This principle operated in 2002 as in 2009, although some of the mechanisms for investigating and reporting the outcomes of proposals for approval have become more streamlined over the years. Prior to the partner approval visit, responsible staff from the University completed a due diligence form, which included judgements by the University's legal adviser on the partner's competence to contract, and by the University's finance staff on MISTC's financial stability, based on three years' audited accounts.

21 Following these due diligence inquiries, MISTC was visited by academics outside NBS, from a register of staff with experience of collaborative activities, established and maintained by the ULT. The report of the partner approval visit considered congruence of missions; organisation and management at MISTC; arrangements for quality assurance and academic standards; learning infrastructure; staffing and staff development; and student support. The report concluded with a recommendation to ULT that the partner be approved, and that there were sufficient grounds to warrant a programme approval event. Guidance was offered to the prospective programme approval panel on matters to be followed up, in particular the impact of MISTC's reliance on part-time staff, and the adequacy of learning resources.

22 The audit team noted that the University had properly used professional advice in assessing due diligence matters, and academic advice on matters within academic competence. Reports were thorough and made good use of advice external to NBS. The University's arrangements for partner approval were thorough and effective.

Programme approval

23 For the programme approval event, ULT appointed a new panel with an external member with subject expertise and also experience of collaborative activity. The programme approval report covered similar ground to the partner approval report, and the audit team noted that both resources and staffing and staff development were extensively considered, as recommended at partner approval. The report considered matters relating to programme content and delivery and admissions requirements, and explicitly confirmed the capacity of MISTC to follow Northumbria quality assurance requirements. The report concluded with a recommendation for approval, with some conditions related to learning resources, staff development, and staffing. Since these MISTC programmes are franchises, the panel had programme specifications from the UK delivery. However, Northumbria's arrangements also required a Programme Specification Delivery Supplement intended to highlight any differences from UK delivery, and also to cover any learning-related matters such as aspects of curriculum design, personal development plans, placements, fieldwork, and practical projects specific to the partner.

24 Panels recommend directly to ULT. Approval of the MISTC partnership (approved by ULT and Academic Board) was for six years and programmes were approved for three years. Initial approval was in 2002 for a 2003 start, with reapproval in 2006 and 2009. Partnership renewal took place in 2009 with the programme reapproval.

25 The audit team examined approval reports, reapproval reports, and also reports between these fixed points relating to delivery of extra programmes. From LTPAS and ULT minutes the team was able to track follow-up and confirmation that conditions were met. All approvals were carried out in conformance with the University's procedures and intentions. The team considered the thoroughness of these procedures and their execution exemplary.

Written agreements with the partner organisation

26 The University has both a legal agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding in relation to its link with MISTC. The Memorandum recognises the intentions of both parties to establish a relationship of cooperation on a range of matters of mutual benefit and to the benefit of students. This document appears to deal with the spirit of the partnership, rather than the letter of the law, and explicitly declares that it does not in itself establish a legal relationship between the two parties. The legal agreement covers the respective obligations of the University and MISTC as regards such matters as provision of teaching space and responsibility for fees. The agreement also covers financial arrangements, outlines quality assurance requirements, duration and termination, including arrangements for residual rights of students in the event of either party's withdrawal, and the range of standard conventions about releasing a partner from contractual obligations, confidentiality, resolution of disputes, and so forth. Formal letters or extensions to the contract cover subsequent variations.

27 The agreements align with the precepts and guidelines on agreements in QAA's *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*.

Section 3: Academic standards and the quality of programmes

Day-to-day management

28 The Operations Manual for the MISTC link identifies the Northumbria Dean of School as the manager responsible for the link at senior level, although the Dean typically delegates managerial matters to the NBS associate deans for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The Operations Manual explains the duties of the NBS Singapore Partnership Leader, who is identified as the primary academic contact for MISTC at Northumbria. MISTC staff and students confirmed the commitment of University staff and especially the partnership leader to the link.

29 Detailed administrative matters are managed by NBS programme administrators and their MISTC equivalents.

30 MISTC is responsible for admitting students to the programmes in accordance with programme entry requirements detailed in Programme Specification Delivery Supplements. Data on admissions are passed to Northumbria, and student details recorded in the University's student records systems. Marks for assessment and related data on progression and achievement are also recorded in Northumbria systems. Data accuracy and integrity is the responsibility of the Northumbria Singapore Partnership Leader. MISTC staff confirmed that they used the partnership leader regularly as a reference point for admissions queries.

31 Although MISTC students are registered for awards but are not enrolled students of the University, the audit team found that in practical terms a student would be unlikely to tell the difference between the enrolled and registered status. Students confirmed that the

University provided considerable library support, for instance, and they put a high value on the University's virtual learning environment facilities. All knew the University Partnership Leader and had had sessions with other members of University staff.

32 MISTC holds a Programme Committee Meeting each semester, with attendance from student representatives and Northumbria staff. Actions taken as a result of the meeting are fed back to students by MISTC programme tutors. NBS provides feedback on actions at University level via action lists, which are also communicated to students. The Programme Committee has a role in contributing to annual monitoring and in meeting the University's information needs. It also works effectively to consider and put forward to NBS the small differences (in such matters as case study material) in which the franchised programmes were adapted to local needs.

33 Day-to-day management of the link worked well. The practice of tailoring documentation for the circumstances of each programme's delivery and each partner facilitated consistency of approach between UK and Singapore delivery. The documentation was in daily use by MISTC, who referred to it as their 'Bible'. Establishing discrete operations manuals for every link was identified as a feature of good practice in the 2006 QAA collaborative provision audit of the University, and the present audit team confirms its comprehensiveness and usefulness in the management of programmes. Meetings with University and MISTC staff underlined the contribution of the Northumbria Singapore Partnership Leader, whose qualities and commitment to the link were material to its success and highly valued by the Singapore partner. The team found that the University was conforming to the letter of its own law, and that MISTC students and staff authenticated the University's claim to be working in 'the spirit of partnership'.

Arrangements for monitoring and review

Annual monitoring

34 Procedures for programme monitoring and review are described in the Northumbria University Review Handbook, which details the Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) process. One APM report covers delivery of a particular programme at all centres.

35 The APM report is the responsibility of the NBS programme leader; however, completion of the APM is a joint exercise between programme leader and partner. The report is written against a template, which requires consideration of a range of information including student feedback, course committee minutes, external examiners' reports and module tutor reports. There are arrangements for the MISTC staff to contribute directly to the electronic version of the report as it is produced, especially in relation to recruitment, staff development, student performance, student feedback, and partnership management, and staff development is given to MISTC on their contribution.

36 APM reports are used as input to a summary report prepared by the Programme Director on the portfolio, which includes the MISTC programmes. The NBS Programme Director for Collaborative Ventures (Assurance and Review) produces a summary report that focuses on issues particular to the programmes, partners and NBS collaborative ventures as a whole. An Academic Adviser from the Academic Registry considers all of the University's collaborative APM reports and presents an annual report, or 'review of reviews', to ULT and the Academic Board. This report identifies good practice, and makes recommendations on actions for individual schools.

37 At school level, the NBS Collaborative Operations Group, which is a subcommittee of SLT, monitors a number of themes in relation to all partners, such as 'Induction' and

'Feedback and review', etc, which are common to all partners and which change year on year, prompted by the APM process. NBS comparative statistics are presented and considered for UK and partner programme performance at the collaborative venture progression and award boards.

38 The audit team confirmed that these arrangements enable MISTC to make an effective contribution to annual monitoring, and that COG, which scrutinises reports at NBS level, is able to form an accurate and detailed view of the progress of the partnership through the year. MISTC staff showed little awareness of the overview reports, but the NBS Partnership Leader was able to ensure that actions identified by COG were followed through at MISTC.

Periodic reapproval

39 Periodic review takes place every six years, and is in practical terms a re-run of the approval process. The latest review of the MISTC partnership took place in October 2009 (close to three years after the previous reapproval), and involved a visit from a Northumbria team comprising Northumbria staff external to NBS and a member external to the University. The composition of the team was approved by LTPAS. The report was written to a template that included University matters (such as the continuing validity of the rationale for the partnership), and matters specific to delivery of the programmes by MISTC (such as progression rates, classifications, resources, and so on). The report concluded with a recommendation for reapproval and a number of conditions and recommendations.

40 The audit team was able to confirm that LTPAS has considered all reports from reapproval events, and effectively monitored the meeting of conditions. The reports were comprehensive, providing reliable assurance to the University that the MISTC programme was operating as intended.

Staffing and staff development

41 At the beginning of the partnership, MISTC staff had to be approved by the NBS Partnership Leader on the basis of a collaborative venture staff approval form before they were permitted to teach on a Northumbria programme. Recently this procedure has been strengthened, and MISTC staff must now be approved by the NBS Collaborative Operations Group.

42 A record of staffing details is maintained by the Northumbria coordinator at MISTC. NBS also updates a spreadsheet record each semester, which enables the University to assure itself that MISTC staff teach to their expertise.

43 NBS staff remain in contact with MISTC staff by all the usual means, but also visit regularly for induction, staff development and moderation. During 2009-10 11 Northumbria staff visits were made to MISTC (by five academic staff and one library specialist).

44 MISTC has its own arrangements for staff development, which are checked during approval, APM and reapproval. NBS also provides staff development sessions at MISTC. Reapproval reports seen by the audit team included detail of each form of staff development.

45 In respect of the MBA programme, NBS directly teaches 30 credits over the programme. Different credits are taught every year on a two-year rolling programme to facilitate staff development.

46 No staff exchanges have taken place between NBS and MISTC, although the University states that it is 'committed to the development of opportunities', and there have been instances of exchange staff from other partners teaching at NBS.

47 The audit team was able to confirm that NBS staff in general, and particularly the Partnership Leader, had played an active and effective role in staff development at MISTC. MISTC staff regarded NBS as a valuable resource, used in ways outside the bounds of simple compliance with NBS regulations. For example, staff at MISTC and NBS are working to establish a joint research journal, and NBS is giving strong encouragement to MISTC staff to enrol on NBS MBA programmes.

Student admissions

48 Although records of the MISTC students registered for Northumbria awards are kept at Northumbria, the Briefing Paper stressed that 'registration does not signify enrolment as a student of Northumbria'. Admissions requirements are clearly specified in the Programme Specification Delivery Supplement, which complements the Programme Specification. Specific entry requirements are identified; non-standard qualifications require explicit approval by the NBS Partnership Leader. Neither the Briefing Paper nor the Delivery Supplements contain any explicit reference to arrangements for the accreditation of prior learning or the assessment of prior experiential learning, although any student without the entry requirements specified in the Delivery Supplement must be referred to the NBS Partnership Leader. The Delivery Supplement specifies English language requirements in terms of IELTS.

49 The audit team was able to confirm that these arrangements work as planned: admissions staff at MISTC were confident about referring applications queries to NBS, and confirmed that they received clear and prompt responses to inquiries.

Assessment requirements

50 The assessment framework for the MISTC courses is exactly the same as for the Northumbria version of the programme. All assessment is in English.

51 All assignments are set by Northumbria, although some minor variations are introduced in consultation with MISTC staff by way of contextualisation and local reference. The University states that it provided staff development to MISTC tutors to familiarise them with Northumbria's standards. All examinations and assessments are conducted under Northumbria regulations, as given in the University's Handbook for Examination Procedures April 2010. The regulations are summarised in the MISTC Programme Operations Manual. In its present version, the assessment diet includes no unseen examinations, although when such examinations have been held in the past MISTC has provided an invigilator, and the examination has been managed in accordance with Northumbria's guidance. MISTC staff mark and internally moderate assessments, whether course work or unseen examinations. A standard sample is further moderated at Northumbria. The audit team was able to confirm that this arrangement is understood and works well at MISTC. MISTC is sent cover sheets recording the comments of the moderators by module, which helps in reinforcing mutual understanding of marking standards.

52 The University states that feedback to students on assessment varies with the type of assignment. For assessments in written form, students receive unconfirmed marks and written feedback from MISTC tutors within four weeks of submission.

53 Formally, the same board at Northumbria considers all students for a programme, wherever delivered. The board has two tiers: consideration of module results is separate from consideration of awards and progression. Practically, the time needed for the different moderation requirements of overseas collaborative provision means that the award board meets to consider UK and collaborative partner cohorts separately.

54 A firm foundation of staff contact and development has enabled increasing trust on the part of NBS, so that, for instance, it has been possible to relax an assessment regime that was initially biased towards unseen examinations, and to permit more flexible modes for assignments.

External examining

55 External examiners are appointed by module; they examine all students for the module, wherever delivered. They receive a standard briefing, which is summarised in an Examiners' Handbook, and a specific briefing in relation to the programme and 'their' modules, which includes module descriptors and information on whether any modules are delivered in collaboration with a partner.

56 External examiners report against a template requesting responses on a comprehensive range of matters relating to standards, module content, learning and assessment methods, and so on. Examiners are asked specifically to comment on 'any significant differences in student performance for collaborative partner/s, if applicable.' The examples of reports seen by the audit team were thoroughly and conscientiously completed. Most external examiners comment that standards appear comparable between UK and partner delivery, although one or two suggest that, while this is true overall, the outcomes for students are better in some partners than in others. However, at least one external examiner explicitly praised 'the analysis of the performance of the students at the partner institutions', and stated that 'if [staff] identified any under or over performance by partner cohorts they sought to investigate the reasons and instigate appropriate actions'.

57 The Briefing Paper stated that 'relevant issues' raised by external examiners are actioned with the partner via the Partnership Leader. This was clearly true in relation to individual modules. The moderation sheets described above often included helpful comments from external examiners at module level, at a level of detail that is rare in examining arrangements in similar partnerships. However, MISTC showed no awareness of the external examiners' overview reports, which cover delivery of the modules in all locations. In fairness, the audit team noted that MISTC was mentioned only twice and in passing in all external examiners' reports for two complete sessions (in both cases positively). Nonetheless, it appeared that knowledge of performance in the programme across the world would be informative and helpful to MISTC. At present MISTC sees no other data on their performance comparative to others, but such data would assist them, if only to reinforce the good work they are already doing. The team formed the view that it would be beneficial for the University to share external examiners' overview reports with its partners.

Certificates and transcripts

58 All certificates, transcripts and diploma supplements are produced by Northumbria and sent to MISTC for distribution to students. The academic transcripts include the academic performance of the student and also the location of the programme delivery for students on franchised collaborative programmes.

59 Certificates include the name of the University, the student name, the level and title of the award and the date, and are signed by the University Vice-Chancellor and the Director of the Academic Registry. There is no differentiation in parchments for home or collaborative students on franchised programmes, and it is a requirement of the Singapore Council for Private Education (CPE) that certificates awarded following study in Singapore do not bear the name of place of delivery, where it is different from the awarding institution. The transcript includes the name and location of the partner. The team recognises this local requirement and acknowledges that it reflects precept A24 of the *Code of practice, Section 2*, which states that 'subject to any overriding statutory or other legal provision in any relevant jurisdiction, the certificate and/or the transcript should record the name and location of any partner organisation....'

Section 4: Information

Student information

60 The main source of information about the programme for prospective students in partner institutions is the prospectus. The University states that MISTC staff counsel prospective students about the course, and there are brochures and pamphlets describing course structure, delivery and entry requirements.

61 All students are required to attend an induction session delivered by MISTC staff, but to a common format devised by Northumbria, which includes information about the academic content and management of the programme, and also about the role of the University.

62 The partnership has a programme handbook, based on the UK version but specifically adapted for MISTC delivery. This document is comprehensive and gives information on both local resources and those available from Northumbria. The Handbook includes information on student representation, feedback, arrangements for late submission of assessed work, and extenuating circumstances that might affect performance in examinations.

63 Student discipline is the concern of MISTC alone. The University states that complaints by MISTC students on matters relating to University responsibilities, such as standards of teaching, would be made via MISTC programme committees, although none have been made.

64 Appeals procedures are the same for MISTC and UK students. MISTC students who met the audit team were aware of the arrangements.

65 NBS staff meet MISTC students informally when they visit and formally at programme committee meetings. As already noted (see paragraph 42), visits from NBS staff are frequent. In addition, NBS is making some innovative attempts to put students in academic contact: for instance, some postgraduate MISTC and UK students uploaded their projects to the Northumbria virtual learning environment for comment by their counterparts.

66 The Student Handbook mentions academic misconduct in a section of half a dozen lines on 'Referencing and Plagiarism', which deals with referencing only, and points the reader to student guides on the University's webpages. These include some useful resources, including on plagiarism, but the Handbook itself appears of limited use in a notoriously problematic area. Although the Handbook deals well with arrangements for late submission of assessed work and 'personal extenuating circumstances' that might affect

performance in examinations, there is no mention of grounds or procedures for complaints. These matters need to be made more visible in the Handbook.

Publicity and marketing

67 The contract between the University and MISTC includes a requirement that MISTC obtain approval in writing for all publicity material before publication. NBS is responsible, usually via the Partnership Leader, for monitoring such material and granting any approvals necessary. Student handbooks are checked at programme approval and reapproval.

Section 5: Student progression to the UK

68 The link does not include a formal arrangement for students to undertake part of their studies in the UK.

Conclusion

69 In considering the partnership, the audit team identified the following positive features:

- the quality and quantity of engagement by the University with the partner, and particularly the contribution of the Northumbria Singapore Partnership Leader (paragraphs 12, 28, 29, 33, 47, 49).
- the thoroughness of the approvals process at both partner and programme levels (paragraphs 22, 23)
- the practice of providing individual Programme Specification Delivery Supplements to accompany programme specifications for each partner (paragraphs 23, 29)
- the quality of procedural documentation and supporting guidance (paragraph 33)

70 The audit team also identified the following points for consideration by the University as it develops its partnership arrangements:

- provide comparative data to partners about achievement in other centres (paragraph 57)
- share external examiners' overview reports with partners (paragraph 57)
- improve the information on academic misconduct and complaints in programme handbooks (paragraph 66).

71 The audit found that the University's management of its link with MISCT is in accordance with the *Code of practice*.

72 The University's Briefing Paper was focused more on collaborative provision generically than on the MISTC link specifically. This inhibited opportunities to refer to the many examples of good practice exhibited in the operation of the link. However, these examples, especially in the context of the University's relatively recent and very positive collaborative provision audit report, suggested that the University's management of overseas collaborative arrangements in general is very effective.

Appendix A

Student numbers 2010-11

BA (Hons) Marketing Management	92
BA (Hons) Business Management	81
BA (Hons) International Business Management	12
BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance Management	0
MBA	5
MSc Marketing	7
Total Number	197

RG 757 07/11

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