



Review of UK Transnational Education in Malaysia: Anglia Ruskin University and MAHSA University Malaysia

October 2019

Executive summary

The Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) and MAHSA University Malaysia (MAHSA) partnership delivering dual awards began in 2013 and has developed over the years to a point where the partnership is benefiting each institution individually, whether through MAHSA adopting approaches to learning initiated by ARU or through ARU looking to MAHSA as it develops new programmes.

A particular positive feature of the partnership includes the strength of student representation and the fact that ARU ensures that it hears the student voice. However, given the length and depth of the partnership, opportunities such as developing staff and student exchanges have yet to emerge.

The quality assurance elements of the partnership are broadly strong, especially in the highly robust assessment and moderation arrangements, which include ARU moderators and external examiners making multiple visits per year to the MAHSA campus. However, oversight of the main partnership agreement requires urgent attention and the immediate implementation of an inter-institution agreement is a necessity with the current agreement having expired in late 2018.

Students spoke positively about their learning experiences and support provided, positively identifying as ARU students.

Staff spoke positively of the collaborative nature of the partnership and the two-way institutional learning that takes place as part of the partnership.

The ARU and MAHSA dual award model of partnership is evidently attractive to students who can articulate why they chose this particular partnership model to study under.

Introduction

1 Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) has its origins in the Cambridge School of Art in 1858. It became a university in 1992 and was renamed Anglia Ruskin University in 2005.

2 MAHSA University (MAHSA) is a private university located in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia that was established in 2005 specialising in Medical, Dental, Pharmacy, Nursing and Allied Health Sciences studies from foundation level up to master's level. In 2008 MAHSA College was upgraded to University College status by the Ministry of Higher Education and obtained full University status in 2013, further expanding provision into areas such as Engineering and Science. MAHSA is owned and managed by the Malaysian Allied Health Sciences Academy company and in 2017 moved to a new purpose-built campus in Bandar Saujana Putra, outside of Kuala Lumpur.

3 The collaboration with ARU and MAHSA began in 2011 with an initial plan to focus on developing franchised allied health programmes. However, the nature of the partnership altered prior to this being established and instead, in 2013, ARU and MAHSA established a model for delivering dual award degrees.

4 ARU and MAHSA currently have students registered on six degree programmes with around 775 students enrolled between them:

- BSc (Hons) Biomedical Sciences
- BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy
- BEng (Hons) Electrical and Electronics Engineering
- BEng (Hons) Medical Electronics Engineering
- BEng (Hons) Mechatronics Engineering
- BEng (Hons) Electronics and Communication Engineering.

5 While ARU has other Malaysian partners, ARU's Corporate Strategy 'Designing our Future 2017-2026' states that ARU 'will identify and nurture a small number of substantial relationships with overseas universities whose values and research expertise complement ours'. ARU recognises that MAHSA has complementary research and disciplinary strengths and that the partnership has developed into a two-way exchange, including ARU launching medicine in 2018, and using lessons learned from MAHSA as a more mature medical institution. It is understood that discussions are being held with MAHSA about extending the existing collaboration into other academic areas, as well as research collaborations and possible staff and student exchange.

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

6 ARU has policies and procedures in place for the approval of partnership arrangements outlined in its Senate Code of Practice (SCoP) on Collaborative Provision. The original partnership approval was granted by Senate in February 2012 after a two-stage process. As part of the partnership approval mechanism, an academic agreement is signed that clearly outlines the responsibilities of each party within the partnership, including academic and administrative tasks, data protection, publicity and termination arrangements. The Academic Agreement between ARU and MAHSA was signed in October 2013 for a five-year duration.

7 As the nature of the collaboration changed (from that of focusing on franchised programmes, to that of offering dual degree awards), ARU Senate through its Quality Enhancement and Standards Committee approved the award of dual degrees in May 2013.

8 Risk assessment and due diligence occur in the first stage of partnership development/approval covering financial and legal risks. Only once this is completed and when signed off by the deputy Vice-Chancellor are the academic and quality assurance side of the partnership considered. A common risk matrix exists by which all partners are monitored.

9 The SCoP on Collaborative Provision requires that ARU is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name at all delivery points, and that the academic standards of all awards involving collaborative provision are equivalent to those of comparable awards delivered at ARU.

10 ARU has policies and procedures for the management and review of partnerships. The partnership with MAHSA was most recently reviewed in March 2017. The purpose of the partnership review is to enable the Senate to determine whether the partnership has developed and whether both partners remain in a position to collaborate further. The review held in 2017 considered six programmes offered through a dual award route with an outcome leading to a conditional reapproval of the partnership by Senate. The conditions for reapproval of the partnership included:

- a new Academic Agreement to be put in place with a deadline of July 2017
- use of Turnitin (plagiarism-detection software) on all ARU courses delivered at MAHSA
- construction of a comprehensive assessment policy to cover ARU programmes delivered at MAHSA.

11 It was noted that there was no mention of monitoring against these conditions in the 2017-18 Annual Monitoring Review, and the review team learnt during the visit that there was no revised academic agreement put in place following the 2017 reapproval exercise, despite this being a core condition. The review team identified that the existing academic agreement had expired at the end of 2018 and as such the partnership was existing without a formal legal partnership agreement and the associated safeguards that such a document provides. ARU is **recommended**, with utmost urgency, to work with MAHSA to put in place a revised academic agreement to ensure that students and other stakeholders are appropriately protected. In addition, the review team **recommends** that ARU ensures that appropriate safeguards are in place in future to ensure that conditions of partnership reapprovals are monitored and reported upon.

12 The other conditions of reapproval (that is, use of Turnitin and application of an assessment policy) did appear to have been implemented.

Quality assurance

Academic standards

13 The SCoPs are one of a series of mechanisms, along with ARU's Academic Regulations through which academic standards and the quality of education at ARU are set, maintained, assured and enhanced.

14 Each course delivered by MAHSA has an ARU link tutor allocated to it, and these named academic staff act as a first port of call for MAHSA course staff. The link tutor feeds back into department reporting mechanisms.

15 Annual monitoring report data on MAHSA delivery feeds into each individual School at ARU which will include them into ARU School reports. MAHSA also produces an

individual annual monitoring report. Once finalised these reports all go to a subcommittee of ARU's Education Committee chaired by the deputy Vice-Chancellor. Following this, an overall summary report on annual monitoring is submitted to ARU's Education Committee where any issues are fed upwards to Senate. A similar process for escalation exists within MAHSA.

16 ARU has a process for the approval of dual award degrees offered by ARU and a partner institution. ARU's Senate Code of Practice (SCoP) on Collaborative Provision defines this type of activity as follows:

'A Dual Award Type B is created where the student studies a single course at one institution (either Anglia Ruskin or an approved Associate College, such as MAHSA) which leads to awards of both Anglia Ruskin and the Associate College. Type B Dual Awards are only applicable in partnership with an Associate College operating under different statutory requirements in a different jurisdiction.'

17 ARU has a SCoP on Curriculum Approval and Review, which outlines the procedures for approval as well as review and monitoring of programmes. The programme approval process includes a visit to the partner institution by ARU academic staff and external advisors. Courses at collaborative partners are both reviewed within the context of the ARU School which has operational responsibility for the course, and separately through consideration of a report compiled by the partner institution.

18 ARU School review also includes a requirement to comment on collaborative provision provided within the ARU School. Evidence provided indicates that collaborative provision is effectively monitored within this School review process.

19 At MAHSA the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (academic affairs) collects the input from departments offering the dual award. Skype or face-to-face sessions take place to discuss the annual monitoring report which includes input data from student numbers, student success rates, external examiner reports, student satisfaction surveys and end-of-module valuations. The formal response from the monitoring exercise is provided to MAHSA. The ARU Deputy Vice-Chancellor will receive monitoring reports from all partners, and discuss common issues across the institution. The outcome of the ARU discussion will be shared with each partner.

20 Evidence was provided that there is a robust process for obtaining and responding to external examiner feedback.

21 A system of elected student representatives is in place at MAHSA with representation occurring on committees at faculty and institutional levels. Processes are in place to ensure that ARU hears the student voice where appropriate, including via meetings with ARU link tutors when they visit MAHSA and through student surveys.

22 Minor academic matters would initially be raised in an informal way with the module lecturers or head of department. Class representatives hold periodic faculty-based meetings, usually meeting with the Head of Department or Dean although students reported that sometimes no minutes were taken. Students from each faculty are elected to the Student Representative Council who will convey the students' voice at an institutional level. Evidence was provided of feedback considered at institutional level, for example, changes to MAHSA's library opening hours. ARU staff meet with students during visits to MAHSA to talk about the programme and any issues. Students felt that ARU responds to any issues raised.

23 Students complete MAHSA surveys with feedback from these reaching ARU via the link tutor. ARU also has its own online module evaluations; while the MAHSA survey

primarily evaluates the lecturer, the ARU survey evaluates the module as a whole. Data from all surveys feeds into the annual monitoring report.

24 ARU and MAHSA's processes for clearly hearing the student voice through the use of student representative systems and student surveys are a **positive feature**.

Assessment

25 ARU has a SCoP on Assessment of Students applying to ARU and collaborative provision and evidently pays attention to assessment within partnership arrangements. The 2017 Partnership Review highlighted assessment as a point of focus and implemented an assessment strategy as an outcome. The review team heard how that partnership's focus on assessment led to institutional developments at MAHSA, where all MAHSA courses now use Turnitin, the trigger being the requirement set by ARU. The review panel noted the manner in which institutional changes, including policy implementation, had occurred in MAHSA as a direct result of the partnership with ARU.

26 Students reported that guidance on assessment marking criteria was provided and that every assignment had a marking scheme. Students reported these as being useful and that grading and feedback on coursework was usually provided within three weeks which was also useful. Remedial classes were provided if needed in addition to feedback.

27 In terms of assessment marking, first marking is undertaken by the module leader at MAHSA and then internally moderated by another MAHSA academic staff member. The module leader will produce module moderation packs containing moderated samples as per ARU guidelines (10% of scripts or eight whichever is larger). The next step is that ARU staff will undertake moderation, usually with moderators visiting MAHSA twice a year and carrying out internal moderation on site (with the external examiners physically present). Any request for changes to marks by the internal ARU moderator passes back to the module leader and when changes are agreed decisions are passed through the external examiner.

28 As the curriculum delivered by MAHSA is different to that delivered by ARU, separate external examiners are appointed to scrutinise MAHSA's modules. The nomination and appointment of external examiners is covered in the SCoP on External Examiners for Taught Courses and follows the standard ARU procedure. The team of external examiners and internal moderators visit MAHSA as part of the assessment panel visit, carrying out moderation on campus over a period of a week. The assessment panel itself is chaired by ARU's PVC Partnership following the same process as in ARU. External examiner reports feed into the MAHSA annual monitoring report mechanism, and information provided within the external examiner's report is condensed and fed back to students.

29 Students were aware of the external examiner system and their role in assuring the quality of assessments. A number of practical assessments (for example, in physiotherapy) are videoed for external examiner viewing and students spoke of encountering external examiners visiting MAHSA, although none claimed to have seen an external examiner's report. The University is encouraged to explore ways in which students can be aware of the outcomes of external examiner reports.

30 The operation of the first tier of the assessment process (assessment panels) is undertaken jointly by MAHSA and ARU through a moderation visit conducted by senior ARU staff and external examiners. This culminates in joint ARU/MAHSA assessment panels which, since October 2015, have taken place at the MAHSA campus, chaired by a senior member of ARU staff. It includes representatives from the academic areas of each institution as well as the relevant external examiners. The joint assessment panels then report to the designated award board at each institution. The nature of the dual award arrangement

means that both institutions must satisfy themselves that a student has achieved the learning outcomes for a course before any award is conferred. A student must achieve both awards and neither institution can confer an award independently. Common assessment panels allow comparison of student outcomes at MAHSA and ARU as module assessment panels are held at MAHSA with external examiners present.

31 A **positive feature** of the partnership is the rigorous assessment processes including the extensive visits to MAHSA for moderation events with the external examiners physically present.

Quality of learning opportunities

32 Students indicated that they had chosen the dual degree programmes because of the potential for enhanced employability and international recognition for further study. The information provided to students prior to admissions met expectation.

33 The admission process is primarily the responsibility of MAHSA with all applications being sent to MAHSA's Prospective Student Office which will then send these to faculties for a decision. They are then sent back to the prospective student office/admissions office for communication with the applicant. Once all students are registered with MAHSA, the students will be bulk registered with ARU. Students then complete an ARU student declaration. Students wishing to join a programme with advance standing must be approved by ARU.

34 New students attend an orientation event which can be three days or longer depending upon the programme. All include a general orientation at institutional level, a specific orientation for the course and any ARU-specific information (such as log-in details). Students did not get to meet any ARU staff at orientation.

35 Students received a Student Handbook which they perceived as useful, outlining regulations for the course and access to ARU's VLE (virtual learning environment) and portal (e:Vision).

36 Student support is primarily provided by MAHSA and students reported that the local support was usually sufficient, with no need to go back to ARU. This included careers support, international office support, and other support. Students are provided with an academic mentor (personal tutor) who is also a source of support providing information and advice to students. A mentor will take care of between 25 to 30 students from orientation to graduation and mentor meetings are compulsory for students at academic risk. Any student issues can be escalated beyond the mentor should the need arise.

37 Students indicated to the review team that MAHSA held a well-stocked library and provided adequate study and discussion rooms. Electronic resources are made available by ARU, which are the 'first port of call' for students despite MAHSA also having access to e-resources. IT facilities available to students at MAHSA are considered sufficient as are other learning resources. ARU staff noted that moderation visits include a review of available and new resources, and that they use those visits to gather student feedback on resources.

38 Students access course and lecture notes and course-specific learning resources via the MAHSA VLE (LMS) system and use the ARU student portal to access results, regulations and help, but not lecture materials.

39 Staff are appointed as MAHSA staff without reference to ARU, but ARU approves MAHSA staff for teaching on the dual award programme. ARU will ratify staff members

through analysis of their CV via the Faculty Education Committee and ARU's Registry will maintain a list of teaching staff at partner institutions.

40 Staff undergo a comprehensive period of induction and training, including being provided with examples of assessment, external examiner reports and being briefed by module leaders. New appointments would not be module leaders but will start as module tutor. In some programmes such as Engineering, a senior MAHSA lecturer will be allocated as mentor to new staff. During moderation visits, ARU moderators will give feedback to MAHSA teaching staff, including in the way that staff interact with the students.

41 Staff indicated that they had a reasonable amount of academic autonomy with the ability to apply a level of personalisation equivalent to that of lecturer at ARU, within the framework of the stated module learning outcomes and indicative content. This extends to revising the curriculum, where any curriculum revision is considered in each respective faculty education committee. When module leaders at MAHSA wish to suggest changes to a module or a course, there are specific ARU forms to be completed which will be reviewed by the relevant Faculty Education Committee. Each amendment is scrutinised, and it is either approved, or returned with comments for further consideration. The nature of the change will determine whether review by the external examiners is required.

42 ARU's Quality Enhancement and Standards Committee paper on Dual Award Provision states that 'The College's delivery of the curriculum will be overseen by relevant academics in ARU Faculties and academic Departments, coordinated by the relevant Link Tutor(s)'. ARU link tutors were described as the first port of call for MAHSA staff and a link to core functions at ARU. In their quality assurance role, they confirm assessments, allocate moderators, and communicate comments (for example, from external examiners) to the course leader at MAHSA. The link tutor coordinates the moderation visit of the external examiners, internal ARU moderators and others to MAHSA and is in frequent electronic communication with programme leaders and staff at MAHSA.

43 The link tutor also meets with students and provides staff development workshops (for example, on assessment) as well as observation of teaching. Examples of outcomes of these visits were provided, including development of more critical types of assessment as a consequence of link tutor training. The MAHSA Biomedical Sciences staff had won an internal MAHSA teaching award as a result of practice initiated through the ARU partnership, and was described as becoming a flagship department within MAHSA in relation to certain aspects of teaching. ARU is to be commended in this type of activity and encouraged to consider during the next level of partnership development how to use link tutors and others more effectively in pedagogy development at MAHSA.

44 Students did not seem aware of the formal role of a link tutor but were able to name individual link tutors and were aware of ARU visitors meeting them during moderation visits and other on-site visits. The University is encouraged to ensure that information available to students is clear on the title and role of the link tutor given the pivotal role that they provide. Students reported that MAHSA lecturers are accessible and that module leaders are usually the first point of contact for academic issues. No ARU staff provide academic lectures as part of the programme delivery.

45 Despite the duration of the partnership between ARU and MAHSA, there have been relatively few visits by MAHSA staff to ARU in recent years (with the most significant recent visit quoted as October 2013). ARU and MAHSA are **recommended** to explore opportunities around staff exchange (particularly from MAHSA to ARU) given their good relationship and further possibilities to develop it. In addition, when questioned, students indicated that they would value the opportunity to study at ARU in the UK through some form of mobility opportunity and would value the interaction with ARU students. As such, ARU and MAHSA

are **recommended** to explore opportunities around student exchange (particularly opportunities for students from MAHSA to study in ARU UK).

46 Students commented that should they need to lodge an academic appeal or make a formal complaint then they would approach their mentor or programme coordinator about the appropriate procedures. However, most students were unaware of their rights in terms of complaints and appeals. Senior managers indicated that the ARU regulations would apply, but the process would start at MAHSA first but were unsure of how (or whether) the process is formalised. The University is **recommended** to ensure that information available to students is clear on their rights and the appropriate pathways for lodging formal appeals and complaints.

Information on higher education provision

47 Information provided to students at the time of application and enrolment, including student handbooks, was appropriate and deemed as useful, including information regarding the status of relevant professional body accreditations.

48 ARU routinely checks all publicly available information about the dual award, including periodic monitoring of website information by link tutors.

49 Both the degree certificate and the transcript from ARU indicate the dual nature of the award with MAHSA and the location of study. ARU and MAHSA confirmed that a student cannot get one award from one institution without the other.

Conclusion

The ARU and MAHSA partnership has clearly developed over time to a point where the partnership is benefiting each institution individually. The evolution of the partnership has yielded clear positive features including the strength of student representation although it has yet to develop some 'easy win' opportunities such as developing staff and student exchanges.

The quality assurance elements of the partnership are broadly strong, especially in the robust assessment and moderation arrangements. However, oversight of the main partnership agreement requires urgent attention and the immediate implementation of an inter-institution agreement is a necessity.

Students spoke positively about their laboratory/practical experience elements to their programmes and the particular opportunities for exposure to industry and attendance at exhibitions and conferences. Staff spoke positively of the collaborative nature of the partnership and the two-way learning that takes place as a result. However, they were also realistic about the challenges that had been faced and, in many cases, overcome.

Positive features

The following positive features are identified:

- ARU and MAHSA are clearly hearing the student voice through the use of student representative systems and student surveys (paragraph 24).
- The rigorous assessment processes including the extensive visits to MAHSA for moderation events with the external examiners physically present (paragraph 31).

Recommendations

Anglia Ruskin University is recommended to take the following action:

- ARU is strongly recommended, with utmost urgency, to work with MAHSA to put in place a revised academic agreement to ensure that students and other stakeholders are appropriately protected. In addition, the University would be advised to assure itself that appropriate safeguards are in place to ensure that conditions of partnership reapprovals are monitored and reported upon in future (paragraph 11).
- ARU and MAHSA should explore opportunities around staff exchange (particularly from MAHSA to ARU) given their good relationship and further possibilities to develop it. In addition, the opportunities for student exchange should be explored further (paragraph 45).
- To ensure that information available to students is clear on their rights and the appropriate pathways for lodging formal appeals and complaints (paragraph 46.)

Anglia Ruskin University's response to the review report

We were delighted to note the panel's conclusions that our partnership has developed over time to a point where it is now benefiting each institution individually. It was pleasing to see the panel's endorsement of the positive features of the partnership, particularly the strength of student representation and that our quality assurance elements are broadly strong. We welcome the recommendation to explore opportunities around staff and student exchange and have already agreed action with MAHSA on the recommendation to ensure that information to students on their rights (including appeals and complaints) is made more visible to our students. The final recommendation concerned the need to ensure that a revised academic agreement was in place and we can confirm that both institutions have now agreed the contents of a revised agreement which covers all students recruited in the interim period since the previous one expired as well as future recruitment.

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