



# **Review of UK Transnational Education in Malaysia: University of Greenwich and SEGi University and Colleges**

**October 2019**

## **Executive summary**

The University of Greenwich (UoG) has partnered with SEGi University and Colleges for the delivery of 29 franchised programmes to around 2,000 students across five campuses in Malaysia.

The partnership has developed over 20 years and is one of the largest partnerships of UoG. The large scale of the partnership and the multiple programmes offered are the model that UoG would like to develop with other institutions over the coming years.

The arrangement is a franchise where the partner (SEGi) delivers a programme that is already being offered at UoG. UoG provides the programme structure and teaching materials, approves teaching staff and moderates assessed work. UoG is the awarding body and has full responsibility for quality assurance and has processes for initial approval and ongoing monitoring of the partnership at both an operational and strategic level.

SEGi provides the teaching staff and facilities and is responsible for marketing and general student support. Each college provides its own support to students.

The UoG has link tutors and a full-time member of staff based in Malaysia. Together these form an effective link between the University of Greenwich and SEGi Colleges. The UoG programmes are offered at five different college campuses and each has different facilities. In some cases, different colleges have different practices even when offering the same programme, which can lead to a different experience for students. Although there is a formal student representation structure, this is not an effective process for listening to or responding to the student voice and is an area for development.

## Introduction

1 The University of Greenwich (UoG) is a London-based university with roots that go back over 100 years. It became a University in 1992 with academic provision divided into four faculties: Liberal Arts and Science; Business; Education and Health; and Engineering and Science. The UoG has 34,400 students of which 17,000 are UK campus based and 15,600 who study with overseas partners. The University has a large proportion of students from low socio-economic groups (54%), minority ethnic backgrounds (51%) and mature students (65%).

2 The UoG has 43 collaborative partners around the world of which 29 operate on a franchise basis. The University considers these partnerships to be strategically important and aims to move towards a smaller number of multi-programme partnerships similar to SEGi College.

3 SEGi University and Colleges is the educational arm of SEGi International Group and is one of the largest private higher education providers in Malaysia. It has campuses in Kota Damansara, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Subang Jaya and Sarawak, each having different areas of specialisation. The UoG has partnered with SEGi College since 1998 and has expanded from a single programme to 29 programmes across five campuses.

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Student population by campus 2018-19</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Student population by faculty 2018-19</b>
Kota Damansara	192	Liberal Arts and Science	285
Kuala Lumpur	1,244	Business	1263
Penang	294	Education and Health	425
Subang Jaya	411	Engineering and Science	192
Sarawak	24		

4 The University considers that the SEGi partnership, with its large scale and multiple programmes, is a good example of the type of partnership it would like to develop in the future. It has identified two key success indicators for this strategic development. The first is that degree outcomes at a partner should be close to those for its on-campus students and secondly the partnership should operate at a financial surplus.

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

5 The UoG has a standard process for approving new partners. All partners must complete a process of due diligence. Prospective partners are asked to submit a wide range of documents for analysis by the University – these documents include constitutional documents, strategic plans, financial information (including financial forecasts) and various policies. There are separate sections for legal issues, financial issues, regulatory issues and the operating environment. These items are collected via the Collaborative Partner Due Diligence Report. On completion of the due diligence report, a summary of the report is written by an International Partnerships Manager and the Deputy Director of Finance. The entire report and the summary are submitted to the Partnership Scrutiny Panel, along with a Partner Context Document, a New Partner/Site Visit Report and a New Partner Support and Risk Management Form, for discussion and approval.

6 Renewed due diligence is undertaken prior to the periodic review of the partner (normally on a five-year cycle) and is included in the deliberations of the periodic review

panel during the reapproval process. At the time of SEGi's last reapproval, reviewed due diligence was not a formal part of the processes. Instead, the process was for the lead Faculty to complete a risk assessment, which was then reviewed by the Partnership Scrutiny Panel.

7 Following due diligence and academic approval, a Memorandum of Agreement between the UoG and the overseas partner is established. This is a comprehensive document setting out clearly the obligations on each party. The proposal is then considered by the Academic Planning Committee (APC) and finally the Academic Council. Individual programmes are then approved at an approval event as set out in the next section.

8 There are a number of processes in place to monitor and review the partnership ranging from the strategic to the operational. The partnership itself is reviewed every five years in a process that is similar to the original approval but with the addition of a review of the previous five years of operation and reports on meetings with students and former students.

9 Risks associated with partnerships are considered during the initial approval stage and are formally reviewed every five years during the periodic review process. Each year, partners rated as high risk according to the International Office risk matrix, are required to complete an Annual Institutional Review (AIR) which analyses the performance of the partnership over the previous 12 months and any threats to the partnership which may be foreseeable.

10 The UoG has appointed a number of link tutors whose primary role is to facilitate regular two-way communication between the programme-level staff teams within the collaborative partner and key staff in the University/Faculty. The link tutors also play a key role in fostering and maintaining the relationship between the student and the University. They are required to visit SEGi at least once per academic year and will carry out a range of activities including meetings with senior managers, staff and students, resource checks, and the scrutiny of marketing materials. Throughout the year, link tutors and other members of staff, such as module leaders, maintain close contact with SEGi by means of videoconferencing, email and telephone.

11 In order to enhance the effectiveness of the link tutor role, the UoG has for the past five years seconded a member of academic staff to Malaysia to act as its International Collaborations Representative (SE Asia). The main purpose of the role is to ensure closer engagement with partners and students by acting as a day-to-day liaison point with designated partners in the region, and specifically by acting as the link tutor for those partners with respect to academic programmes provided by the post-holder's Department (Foundation Programme). This post, based at SEGi KL Campus, is an important part of the University's arrangements for partner and student liaison and support; it strengthens the University's engagement with SEGi, significantly enhancing its arrangements for quality assurance and partner support. This arrangement is consistent with the strategic commitment to develop a smaller number of larger, high quality, multi-faculty partnerships, and its success has provided a precedent for the creation of similar posts in other regions in which the University operates.

12 The International Collaborations Representative and the link tutors are active in engaging with staff and students and this is a **positive feature** of the partnership.

## Quality assurance

13 There are three key stages that must be followed when approving a proposal for a new programme to be delivered at a partner site: (i) approve at Department level; (ii) undertake market research demonstrating demand for the new programme; and (iii) secure Faculty endorsement of the proposal. Once Faculty agreement has been secured, the proposal can be presented to the University's APC for authorisation. Once authorisation is received by APC, programmes can then undergo detailed development and be placed on a schedule of approval by the Academic Quality Unit.

14 Arrangements for the establishment of entry levels (including top-up programmes) are included within programme specifications and are generic requirements using UK criteria, for example, A Levels. The approval of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is undertaken by the UoG at Faculty level (typically the Director of Learning and Teaching within the Faculty). No SEGi staff are permitted to take decisions on behalf of the University on matters of RPL. The University recognises both prior certificated (RPCL) and prior experiential learning (RPEL) at levels 4, 5, 6 and 7, for whole modules only, and to a maximum five-year period before the student starts at UoG. Faculties may identify modules against which exemption cannot be claimed (for example, a project or dissertation, or practice placements) and Professional Statutory Regulatory Body requirements may also dictate that exemptions may be restricted. The University places restrictions on the amount of credit that can be awarded in relation to RPL, which varies according to the award within the FHEQ, to ensure that awards conferred reflect a sufficient amount of study within the institution.

15 Programme Leaders complete Programme Monitoring Reports (PMRs) for all programmes delivered collaboratively and these provide programme teams with the opportunity to review and reflect on data and feedback from students, link tutors, external examiners and so on. Completed reports are reviewed in discussion with link tutors and submitted to Faculties for oversight and comment. PMRs are usually scrutinised by Heads of Departments and Faculty Committees along with on-campus monitoring reports in order to identify any common issues that need to be addressed.

16 The University has recently (2019-20 academic year) changed its curriculum review processes. There are rolling annual reviews for all programmes (grouped by the Teaching Excellence Framework category) including collaborative programmes. The rolling nature refers to the focus on a particular theme each year over a six-year cycle. Performance of students on partner programmes will also be considered annually through the University's Partnership Strategy Group.

17 Periodic review of partnerships takes the form of a reapproval process, with the addition of a critical appraisal of its operation since first approval or last review. The review panel must hold a meeting with a representative body of students (and, wherever possible, alumni) from the programmes across the partnership as well as meetings with partner management and with partner academic staff. Partnership review takes place at least every six years and always held at the partner's home site (the next SEGi partnership review is due in the 2020-21 academic year).

18 The University appoints external examiners drawn from higher education, industry, and relevant professions. External examiners have oversight of all students including those at partners.

19 Student feedback is gathered by a variety of different means, both by SEGi and the UoG. Students complete an online lecturer evaluation every semester provided by SEGi and

a module evaluation survey also undertaken by SEGi. Students noted that this process was variable across subjects and colleges and it was sometimes unclear when feedback was anonymous and when it was being summarised before forwarding to UoG.

20 The main UoG mechanism for gathering feedback is the University Student Survey. The University Student Survey (USS – recently renamed as the Greenwich Student Survey) is an annual survey of University of Greenwich students carried out in May-June. It is designed to be similar in content to the National Student Survey (NSS) but includes students not included in the NSS and Postgraduate Taught Experience Surveys.

21 The University has in place policies and documentation for the management of student assessment including the Assessment and Feedback Policy together with Programme and Module Specification documents. The Policy identifies the principles underpinning the practice of assessment and feedback; defines what the University judges to be effective practice; stipulates requirements for the setting of assessments and judgment of their quality; provides guidance to ensure that assessment is fair, reliable, valid and inclusive, and specifies how to allocate marks. The Specification documents set out what assessment is to take place.

22 Exam papers and other assessment activities are prepared by UoG staff. Students overseas also take the same assessment as students at the UK UoG campus with rare exceptions where there is clearly a need for local contextualisation, such as Taxation and Business Law modules on the Accounting and Finance degree. In these cases, the locally contextualised assignments and examination papers are subjected to the normal processes to ensure consistency of standards. As SEGi has multiple intakes and the UK campus has one per year, this requires UoG staff to prepare multiple exam papers for each module.

23 Student work is first marked by SEGi staff and then moderated by UoG staff. Students submit assignments online through Moodle. Academic staff then mark the work, provide feedback and enter a grade. Academic staff at SEGi enter online comments on the script highlighting good and weak aspects that require improvement. In addition, an overall comment is required using the approved template of the 'feedback sandwich' to ensure students receive commentary on the good aspects, weak aspects and how to improve. Each assignment is marked using this template and the final grade is aligned to the marking criteria available in the module handbook. Once marking is completed SEGi will provide samples of marking to the UK module leader for moderation, or the nominated UK moderator will access the work directly.

24 The UK module leader checks that the marking is 'fair and consistent' and that the award of marks for the cohort is in line with the standards for that course both in the UK and across other international partners. Therefore, the moderation process can result in the marks being increased or decreased. If the UK moderator is not satisfied with the marking (deviation of grades is in excess of +10/-10), the UK module leader will return the module for remarking. The UK module leader also checks that the feedback meets University expectations. External examiners are also required to review the marks/feedback from both the partner and UK moderator to ensure that marking and appropriate standards are being met.

25 The link tutor and the International Collaborations Representative provide training to all academic staff at SEGi on the expectations for online marking, providing feedback and how to justify the award of the final mark.

26 In order to assure standards of marking and the consistency of student progression and degree classification, the University operates a two-tier examination board system managed by its Faculties: Subject Assessment Panels, and Progression and Award Boards.

This two-tier system is overseen by appointed external examiners who provide the University with an annual independent view of the standards of University assessments, student work and the resulting awards conferred on individuals. Subject Assessment Panels are convened to review and address cohort standards, assessment practice and marking standards for all modules under its remit. Progression and Award Boards meet in order to make decisions on student progression and degree classification according to the academic regulations of the University.

## **Quality of learning opportunities**

27 Recruitment, selection and admission of students is governed by the Admission Policy and Procedures of the University and is undertaken collaboratively between staff based in professional services, academic and professional staff in the Faculties, and staff at partner colleges. Applications are sent from SEGi to UoG for decisions on admission. Students who do not meet the English language requirements are offered an English language programme at SEGi.

28 The UoG uses its Electronic Admissions System (EAS) as the primary tool for students at partner colleges to apply to the University. Guidance is provided to inform prospective students of what they need to do at each stage of the process. Staff in the International Office also provide information on programmes available at SEGi, as well as regularly attending recruitment events jointly with staff from SEGi.

29 Once students are registered they receive access to the virtual learning platform (Moodle) and e-library for e-text books/e-journals. At the commencement of students' study, the link tutor and the International Collaborations Representative provide orientation for students. The orientation will cover the key information about academic procedures, such as extenuating circumstances, plagiarism, interruption/withdrawal and appeals. In addition, students receive training on how to access teaching materials and submit online assignments through Moodle. Students are provided with examples of good/bad practice for how to interpret Turnitin (plagiarism-detection software) reports and the University expectations/penalties for assessment offences. Through Moodle, students are provided with their handbook for each module of study. The handbook is the same document students receive at the main university campus but with local information.

30 The programme handbook includes details on extenuating circumstances, transferring programmes or modes of study, withdrawals, interruptions, and complaints and appeals. Students who wish to complain about University services or staff can do this through the Student Complaints Procedure, although students are reminded that informal resolution should be sought prior to a formal complaint being made. For any other complaints, students are encouraged to contact their programme leader.

31 The UoG has appointed link tutors to facilitate regular two-way communication between the programme-level staff teams within SEGi and key staff in the University/Faculty. The link tutors make regular visits to the campus (to coincide with the orientations of new intakes) and meet students and staff. Students are encouraged to resolve problems locally with their teaching faculty and/or programme officer. For any problems that remain unresolved, the link tutor would intervene and provide options and solutions. The link tutor also checks on progress and any matters that need attention. The link tutor visit also includes meetings with academic staff, administrative staff and the senior management team. In the Early Years programme, students are allocated a personal tutor, but in other programmes students go to their normal lecturer for advice and support. The presence of the International Collaborations Representative (SE Asia) ensures that SEGi students (KL in particular, but periodically at other SEGi sites) have the opportunity to communicate any concerns directly to University staff.

32 There are class representatives who are either nominated, elected or who volunteer. These class reps receive no training and do not attend any meetings to present the student view. Students considered the role to be closer to a teaching assistant to help the lecturer with the dissemination of information rather than to represent the students in a way that would be familiar to the UoG.

33 Formal feedback is also gathered by UoG through the University Student Survey, which is completed biennially by students studying overseas. In addition, SEGi have a Climate Survey completed by students twice per year to capture student feedback on campus resources, facilities and overall experience. There is also a SEGI Lecturer Evaluation for evaluating teaching and lecturers, which is administered at the end of each module.

34 Students noted that they were generally unclear about who was collecting feedback, who was analysing the results and whether or not action was being taken. The UoG and SEGi are **recommended** to strengthen the processes for responding to student module and programme feedback by making the processes more transparent to students and to develop a properly supported student representation structure that will allow matters to be raised by and discussed with students.

35 All staff appointed to teach on Greenwich programmes delivered overseas must be approved in advance by the UoG. Approval is via the provision of a CV and supporting information by the partner institution. Approval is granted by the link tutor for the programme, with the oversight of the Faculty Director of Partnerships and Internationalisation. CVs of current or proposed staff are also reviewed during the periodic review of programmes. Some staff development is provided by link tutors and the International Collaborations Representative staff, but this is usually limited to processes such as marking student work to the correct standard, preparing assessments and the use of the virtual learning environment (VLE), rather than about teaching in the UK style.

36 Students access their teaching materials and learning resources directly through Moodle. The SEGi Moodle modules are an exact copy of the UK variant of the same course. UK module leaders are required to ensure that their modules are normally ready for copy by 31 July in any academic year. Students overseas receive the same teaching resources (for example, PowerPoint slides, case studies, module guides, practice exam papers) as on-campus students. Students are encouraged to use these materials in class, and academic staff will teach the module according to the resources provided. Staff are, however, encouraged to contextualise and incorporate additional materials as necessary for the local context.

37 Although Moodle is the official UoG VLE, some resources are provided by SEGi through Blackboard (the VLE) or are emailed directly to students. The practice is variable across campuses and disciplines. Students were confident they knew where to get the information they required but the existence of parallel information systems makes oversight by UoG difficult. One reason given for the duplicate systems was that SEGi staff appeared to be unable or unwilling to add materials to Moodle, so additional materials are provided through a separate system.

38 The UoG and SEGi are **recommended** to review how learning materials and support for students are provided across programmes and Colleges to reduce unnecessary variation and provide greater consistency for students and oversight from UoG.

39 Each college has a separate library and facilities vary between colleges. Academic related support such as careers advice, and counselling is provided at college level and varies depending on the college.

40 Students wishing to transfer to the UK to complete their degree pathway apply through the UoG Electronic Admissions Service (EAS). Students who wish to transfer are dealt with in the same way as other international students in terms of admission and UK Visas and Immigration service processes. A small number of students transfer each year. For example, in 2016/17 six students transferred to on-campus provision in the Early Years degree programme. This increased to seven students in 2017-18.

## **Information on higher education provision**

41 The Academic Partner (SEGi) is responsible for the marketing and publicity information provided to students. The University provides each partner with a copy of the University Branding Guidelines. As set out in the Memorandum of Agreement, SEGi is responsible for the accuracy of the information provided to prospective and current students. Compliance with branding guidelines and the use of the University name or logo is jointly monitored by the International Office and by Faculty link tutors. It is a specific role of the link tutor to check publicity and branding during their regular link tutor visits.

42 Students are provided with a handbook for each module of study. The handbook is the same document students receive at the main university campus but with local information.

43 Degree certificates are issued by the UoG and are the same as for other UoG students. The University also issues a full transcript that includes the location of the students' study.

## **Conclusion**

The partnership between the University of Greenwich and SEGi University and Colleges is well established with around 2,000 students across five campuses studying for a range of degrees. As would be expected from a relationship of 20 years, there is good communication between the two partners, which allows matters to be discussed and resolved quickly and effectively. This is therefore a model that UoG would like to replicate in the future with a small number of large multi-programme partnerships.

## **Positive features**

The following positive feature is identified:

- The International Collaborations Representative from the University who is based full time in Malaysia (at the KL campus) and the link tutors have provided effective communication between the University of Greenwich and SEGi College (paragraph 12).

## **Recommendations**

The University of Greenwich is recommended to take the following action:

- To strengthen the processes for responding to student module and programme feedback by making the processes more transparent to students and to develop a



properly supported student representation structure that will allow matters to be raised by and discussed with students (paragraph 34).

- To review how learning materials and support for students are provided across programmes and Colleges to reduce unnecessary variation and provide greater consistency for students and oversight from UoG (paragraph 38).

### **The University of Greenwich's response to the review report**

The University thanks the QAA review team for their thorough evaluation of the University partnership with SEGi and for offering this opportunity for the University to reflect on the operation of the partnership. The University acknowledges the need to ensure that SEGi (indeed all partnership) students are aware of the opportunity for conveying anonymous feedback to the University. It also acknowledges the need identified by the panel to ensure greater consistency across the University in the provision of learning materials and support to students. It is also pleased to note the positive conclusion in respect of the roles played by the International Collaborations Representative and the link tutors.

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