



# **Review of UK Transnational Education in Malaysia: Newcastle University and Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia (NUMed Malaysia)**

**October 2019**

## **Executive summary**

NUMed Malaysia was formally established in 2009 as a full foreign university branch campus of Newcastle University UK. The campus buildings in EduCity, Johor, Malaysia were constructed in 2011 and now house around 750 students studying medicine and health-related programmes.

NUMed Malaysia's governance arrangements most closely align it to the Faculty of Medical Sciences in Newcastle University UK, although inter-campus connections exist at many levels including the Provost/CEO interacting with senior Newcastle University staff. A positive feature is the embedded nature of the staff and students across campuses, including student representation on UK-based committees and connections between staff and students across campuses. NUMed Malaysia students clearly feel that their voice is heard, feel adequately supported and resourced and feel an integral part of the wider University community.

Arrangements for periodic review and annual monitoring, along with quality assurance and assessment arrangements broadly follow the global Newcastle University arrangements and ensure the quality and standards at NUMed Malaysia.

Staffing provision, induction and training aims to provide a UK-ethos to the style of teaching provided to students, and evidence of teaching and learning development and research is a positive feature of an institution that is only 10 years old.

## Introduction

1 Newcastle University UK can trace its history back to the School of Medicine and Surgery in 1834, evolving over the years to become the University of Newcastle upon Tyne in 1963 (Newcastle University). Newcastle University, with over 28,000 enrolled students in 2017-18, has a global presence in four campuses (Newcastle UK, London UK, Singapore (NUS) and Malaysia (NUMed Malaysia) hosting students from more than 120 different countries and staff from more than 80 countries.

2 Its Global Strategy 2016-21 focuses on the following three strategic objectives: global presence and impact; a global experience; and shared understanding. Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia (NUMed Malaysia) and Newcastle University's Singapore campus (NUS) feature heavily in the University's main Strategic Vision document - *From Newcastle for the World* - launched in October 2018.

3 In 2008 Dato' Mustapha bin Mohamed, then Minister of Higher Education (MoHE), invited Newcastle University to contribute to the development plan for Iskandar Malaysia through the establishment of an international branch campus in Johor, Malaysia. Specifically, the campus was intended to contribute to the medical and biomedical sciences component of EduCity in Iskandar Puteri, Johor. NUMed Malaysia was formally registered as an academic institution in Malaysia by MoHE Malaysia in 2009 and the campus opened in 2011.

4 NUMed Malaysia provides undergraduate degrees in Medicine (MBBS) and Biomedical Sciences (BSc), as well as opportunities for foundation and postgraduate study (PGCert/PGDip). The MBBS programme at NUMed Malaysia is a medical qualification recognised by both the UK's General Medical Council (GMC) and the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) and as such was out of scope for this QAA TNE review. The postgraduate programmes are currently primarily provided for staff development purposes with registration and award taking place at Newcastle. The Biomedical Sciences (BSc) programme is offered as a '2+1' programme with students completing year 3 in Newcastle University, UK. NUMed also offers a one-year foundation programme as a feeder route into its undergraduate programmes.

5 NUMed Malaysia currently has just over 750 students, with approximately 60 students registered for foundation, 70 in years 1 and 2 of the BSc Biomedical Sciences in Malaysia, 30 in year 3 in the UK and around 620 on the MBBS programme.

6 The academic concept underpinning NUMed Malaysia is to deliver, in Malaysia, a range of programmes of comparable standard to those of Newcastle University's UK-based provision but contextualised to Malaysian circumstance and taking into account cultural and regulatory differences where appropriate.

7 NUMed Malaysia's vision for growth and expansion focuses on increasing uptake on existing programmes rather than on major developments of new course offerings in the near future, although future developments could include new cross-faculty programme developments.

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

8 NUMed Malaysia was established in 2009 as a campus of the Faculty of Medical Sciences, Newcastle University and is wholly owned by Newcastle University. All programmes delivered at NUMed Malaysia lead to awards of Newcastle University.

9 NUMed Malaysia operates as a company incorporated in Malaysia limited by shares and wholly owned by Newcastle University, named as Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia Sdn Bhd (792091-W). This company is a subsidiary company of Newcastle University located in Malaysia.

10 Newcastle University's Council is the executive governing body of Newcastle University charged with the management and control of its finances and property. The Board of Directors of Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia Sdn Bhd, reporting to its shareholder represented by Newcastle University's Council, is responsible for discharging Council's responsibilities in respect of NUMed Malaysia. The Council has oversight of the NUMed Malaysia Risk Register.

11 As an international branch campus of Newcastle University, governance arrangements at NUMed Malaysia reflect closely those that operate at the parent institution. The review team found that the governance structures in place currently mostly reflect interaction at a Faculty level (notwithstanding the presence of senior Newcastle University staff on the Board of Directors) and replication of committees were of a Faculty nature (rather than at Institutional level). However, there was evidence of embedding of NUMed Malaysia representation on institutional-level committees (for example, the Education Committee where the Provost/CEO was a member and made periodic reports). While this governance structure currently works for a single-faculty branch campus with a small number of programmes, the University is encouraged to ensure the governance arrangements remain appropriate should cross-faculty programmes be developed in the future.

12 Newcastle University's Senate is, by statute, the governing body in all academic affairs and is empowered to safeguard the standards of all Newcastle degrees including all the programmes offered at NUMed Malaysia. The Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor is NUMed Malaysia's representative in the Senate, with any issues pertinent to NUMed Malaysia fed through that individual. No NUMed Malaysia staff member is currently a Senate member but could be elected on to Senate.

13 The Provost/Chief Executive Officer at NUMed Malaysia acts as the counterpart to Newcastle University's Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Medical Sciences and chairs the NUMed Malaysia Executive Board which undertakes the day-to-day management of NUMed Malaysia. The Provost/CEO reports four times a year to the NUMed Malaysia Sdn Bhd Board of Directors, monthly to the Faculty of Medical Sciences Executive Board and twice a year to the University Education Committee. The Provost/CEO also reports twice a year to the University Executive Board through the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Medical Sciences.

## **Quality assurance**

14 All academic provision provided in Malaysia must comply with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) regulations and requirements. NUMed Malaysia's undergraduate and foundation programmes are listed on the Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR). NUMed Malaysia's main programme, the MBBS programme is approved by UK's GMC and Malaysia's MMC (in partnership

with MQA) and is subject to their monitoring requirements. Other non-Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body programmes require local accreditation by MQA and approval by the MoE. Programme approval mechanisms for programmes offered at NUMed Malaysia also follow the University mechanism through the appropriate Faculty Education Committee and the University Education Committee (UEC) operating under delegated authority of the University Senate.

15 The review team learnt that the 'one institution' approach of having the governance arrangements at NUMed Malaysia reflect closely those that operate at the parent institution had not led to any instances where local interpretation (or contextualisation) of regulations had been required. The team felt that this was in part due to the nature of the small number of the courses on offer. The review team heard of examples of necessary variation and contextualisation such as the incorporation of the compulsory general studies subjects (MPUs) required by the MoE, and an example where new modules were introduced in Newcastle UK which were then delivered in NUMed Malaysia the following year for strategic and operational reasons.

16 The University has in place mechanisms for monitoring and review of academic programmes. Boards of Studies are required to review annually all taught programmes for which they are responsible. Annual monitoring and review reports are then considered by the appropriate Faculty Education Committee, which in turn presents a summary report to the Taught Programmes Sub-Committee acting on delegated authority from the University Education Committee.

17 The Annual Monitoring and Review (AMR) Policy sets out the procedures for annual monitoring of Newcastle University programmes, but is not explicit on the management of overseas campus provision. It does, however, specify that 'partnership' arrangements must include the partner in the completion of the reporting, and it was evident that, while institutionally NUMed Malaysia was not considered as a 'partnership', NUMed Malaysia did nonetheless in fact complete this section of the AMR.

18 The review team noted that a single Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) of all the programmes offered by the School of Biomedical Sciences in the UK and at NUMed Malaysia is submitted to the Faculty of Medical Sciences Education Committee for review. In addition, the team noted that NUMed Malaysia actively seeks to engage in the process by completing a detailed analysis of provision within the 'Partnership' section of the report. However, the University is **recommended** to add clarity to its AMR Policy in order to clarify how a branch campus should actually engage with the AMR process.

19 Whilst the Institution-wide AMR for BSc Biomedical Sciences (2+1) covers more than 10 programmes in its annual analysis, the detail provided and the addition of the 'partnership' response ensure that sufficient scrutiny is applied to the NUMed Malaysia provision for this programme. NUMed Malaysia staff can inform and respond to the AMR. Action plans resulting from AMRs are periodically reviewed by the UK-based Programme Director and updates on progress reported at faculty-level meetings.

20 Newcastle University has policies and procedures for appointing and responding to external examiners. Evidence exists that this is in operation at NUMed Malaysia and that the Annual Report Forms from external examiners in NUMed Malaysia are progressed through University committees.

21 All programmes offered by Newcastle, UK and NUMed Malaysia are reviewed internally on a six-year cycle called the Learning and Teaching Review (LTR). Evidence was provided that NUMed Malaysia programmes are included in this and the Biomedical Sciences offerings were last reviewed in 2016 as part of the LTR mechanism. A Review of

Partnerships and International Campus Provision (RPICP) in 2015 also provided the institution with additional oversight of its branch campus provision.

22 The LTR in 2016 noted, among other things, that elements of good practice included that NUMed Malaysia staff and students were well integrated into all of the curriculum development and quality management processes, and that the level of support given to students at the NUMed Malaysia campus resulted in their obtaining a positive experience.

23 The NUMed Malaysia campus follows the same policies and feedback mechanisms as the Newcastle UK campus, namely the Newcastle University Student Opinion Policy and Student Engagement Policy. An equivalent student survey to the UK's National Student Survey is also run for final year undergraduate students. Postgraduate students are invited to complete the Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research surveys.

24 The NUMed Malaysia Student Association is the representative body for the student community at NUMed Malaysia. Each programme offered at NUMed Malaysia has a Student Staff Committee (SSC) with elected student representatives. The SSC is student-led (with a student chair and student secretary) and reports to, and considers information received from, the Board of Studies. Student representation is covered on the NUMed Malaysia Board of Studies and the UK Board of Studies.

25 A NUMed Malaysia student representative is appointed as a representative of all NUMed Malaysia students. As well as having periodic meetings with the NUMed Malaysia Provost/CEO, they also sit on the Faculty of Medical Sciences Education Committee alongside NUMed Malaysia staff. They receive training from Newcastle University UK's Student Union to prepare them for that role. In advance of the committee meeting, the NUMed Malaysia student representative will have a pre-meeting with their UK student representative counterparts to discuss any specific issues prior to the committee meeting. The review team felt that this level of UK-embedded student engagement ensures that Newcastle UK heard the NUMed Malaysia student voice and that the institution should be commended on this.

26 All modules delivered at NUMed Malaysia are evaluated using either the University's module evaluation system EvaSys or else using a paper system based on the EvaSys questionnaire. Results from these questionnaires are reviewed by the course team and discussed at the relevant SSC and Board of Studies, where students indicated that they obtained feedback on progress/outcomes as well as 'You Said, We Did' feedback from the institution.

27 The review team noted a **positive feature** in how the students they spoke to could articulate how they felt that their student voice is clearly heard, particularly through ensuring that students have a seat on a UK committee. The institution clearly demonstrated an embedded institutional attitude that enabled students to share their voices across international campuses.

28 Students at NUMed Malaysia indicated to the review team that they were provided with appropriate marking guidelines, essay rubrics and learning outcomes to enable them to be clear about what is expected of them in relation to assessment and how to achieve certain grades. In addition, assessment details are provided in their Module Study Guide and general information is provided in the Student Handbook.

29 The School of Biomedical Sciences Board of Studies applies a policy of ensuring that assessments are the same on the UK and Malaysia campuses. To ensure security of the examinations process, examinations are timetabled for the morning in the UK, and

afternoon in Malaysia. Students from Malaysia and the UK confirmed that this was not an issue.

30 In order to facilitate a single examination paper across multiple campuses, staff from both campuses are encouraged to submit questions for all first and second year examination papers. Draft examination papers are reviewed by module leaders on both campuses before the papers are finalised and/or submitted to external examiners before final School approval. However, the AMR report for 2018-19 for Biomedical Sciences indicated that there was no standard operating procedure in place for examination setting and that this would be resolved in 2019-20.

31 The School of Biomedical Sciences appoints four external examiners to ensure the quality of the undergraduate programmes offered in Newcastle University UK and at NUMed Malaysia. One of this team of external examiners is assigned the NUMed Malaysia BSc Biomedical Sciences programme and they are expected to visit the Malaysia campus at least once every two years. This external examiner reports annually on the performance of the NUMed Malaysia students and on the quality standards of the programme. In addition, the external examiner will comment on resources and facilities after they visit the Malaysia campus. Students met by the team were aware of the external examining system at Newcastle University.

32 NUMed Malaysia has appointed, according to internal procedure, two external examiners to monitor the quality standards of the Foundation programme and to guide and advise on how the programme may develop over time. These examiners have experience of delivering A Levels and International Baccalaureate (IB) in the region in order to benchmark the Foundation programme against A Levels/IB (as these are usual entry routes to the undergraduate programmes).

33 External examiner reports are made available to NUMed Malaysia students via the Blackboard VLE (virtual learning environment) system.

34 Evidence of moderation across campuses occurs for in-course assessment marking, but not for examination marking, where only in-campus moderation takes place.

35 All taught programmes offered by Newcastle University are overseen by Boards of Studies and operate to a standard set of terms of reference across the University. The programmes offered at NUMed Malaysia are all overseen by Boards of Studies in the Faculty of Medical Sciences.

36 Anonymised module results for stage 1 and 2 students in Malaysia are firstly considered at a local moderation board in Malaysia. NUMed Malaysia module marks and statistics are also considered at the full School of Biomedical Sciences stage 1 and stage 2 module moderation boards, attended by staff from NUMed Malaysia, to ensure consistency between campuses. Results from stage 1 and stage 2 students from NUMed Malaysia are then considered at the UK stage 1 and stage 2 examination boards. Module marks for the final year students, and the final award made, are considered at the Stage 3 Board of Examiners meeting which is held in the UK. Academic staff from NUMed Malaysia, including the Dean of Biomedical Sciences, usually attend Newcastle UK examination boards via videoconference.

37 Students at NUMed Malaysia indicated that feedback obtained on assessments was perceived as being useful, informative and timely. Examination feedback was available in both a general (cohort) and individual format. Students indicated that they used Turnitin (plagiarism-detection software) to submit assignments.

38 NUMed Malaysia had undertaken comparisons between the UK and Malaysia cohorts' performance and provided evidence of how the information obtained from analysis of multiple cohorts had been used to modify practice, in particular in ensuring that students on the BSc Biomedical Sciences (2+1) were prepared for transition to the UK campus in year 3. This use of data, reflection on practice and ultimate enhancement of student learning experience is a **positive feature** of the institution.

## Quality of learning opportunities

39 NUMed Malaysia manages the admissions for both the undergraduate programmes offered at the Malaysia campus and the Foundation programme. The UK School of Medical Education manages the admissions onto both the Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma in Medical Education for staff development. International students on the BSc Biomedical Sciences (2+1) will apply to NUMed Malaysia for a visa application for entry to Malaysia and will have their application scrutinised for any potential issues associated with UK transfer.

40 Students at NUMed Malaysia are supported at the start of their studies with an induction programme which includes 'starter lectures', an introduction to campus and to University teaching and learning, as well as social events. Additional induction events are held for international students. The students commented that the induction programme was helpful in allowing them to adjust to University life.

41 Alumni of the BSc Biomedical Sciences (2+1) programme commented that the UK campus induction at the start of year 3 (and pre-departure preparation in year 2) was effective. Transitioning students are assigned a peer mentor in the UK and an experienced UK personal tutor prior to completing their second year studies. A talk on living and studying in the UK by a Malaysian member of staff who has worked in the UK has also been introduced in the 2018/19 academic year.

42 The University showed evidence of having used appropriate monitoring of student transition and outcomes following transition (for the 2+1 programme where transition occurred between NUMed Malaysia and Newcastle University UK) to positively improve the student experience and learning opportunities.

43 NUMed Malaysia cooperates with other local agencies and institutions in Malaysia to enhance the student experience. Examples of this include Iskandar Investment Berhad (IIB, developers of EduCity) and the other UK foreign university branch campuses located in Johor ('the UK3') and within Malaysia more generally ('the UK5'). Recent issues discussed by the UK3 and EduCity include the proposed development by IIB/EduCity to develop an EduCity Student Association and how that would work given the individual institution's governance arrangements.

44 Appropriate and effective resources are in place to support student learning, including physical library provision, electronic learning resources and VLE provision (Blackboard). Students access the same e-resources from NUMed Malaysia as are available in Newcastle University UK. The SSC and other feedback mechanisms are the main routes for students to identify any resourcing issues to the senior management of NUMed Malaysia. Students have access to the ReCap system of lecture capture for much of their lecture materials at NUMed Malaysia and spoke positively of the mobile app linkages of this system.

45 Staff at NUMed Malaysia undergo a process of induction involving Human Resources staff and the academic line managers. Junior academic staff are frequently shadowed by a senior colleague under a mentorship arrangement. Most staff are undertaking the in-house (Newcastle University UK) PG Certificate in Medical Education although this programme is currently only advisory and not compulsory. Despite the 'medical'

nature of the programme, it was made clear to the review team that the core learning elements of the programme were applicable to all areas of higher education teaching and NUMed Malaysia was exploring a new programme of staff development that would be more focused on the non-medical teaching staff (for example, foundation level).

46 A number of NUMed Malaysia staff travelled to the UK to meet colleagues at Newcastle University UK and elements of that visit would include induction/training and inculcation in the Newcastle 'style' of teaching. The aim is for staff to adopt a UK-style of teaching that encourages a questioning and self-directed learning approach in the NUMed Malaysia students.

47 Staff at NUMed Malaysia indicated to the review team that they felt they had sufficient autonomy to contextualise the learning materials that were made available from Newcastle University UK, provided that they continued to meet the relevant learning outcomes. This included their role in proposing and discussing potential curriculum changes and their cross-campus collaboration on setting joint assessments. The NUMed Malaysia staff communicate with staff at Newcastle University UK as peers within the same institution.

48 NUMed staff spoke positively about working together as a small cohesive group of staff and indicated areas where they were beginning to embed pedagogical research into NUMed Malaysia research and teaching activity. Evidence was provided of where NUMed Malaysia staff had engaged with Newcastle University's annual Learning and Teaching Conference and where this engagement was being proactively encouraged by the institution. This approach to developing and encouraging a UK ethos in teaching staff and providing appropriate training opportunities (for example, PGCert and Learning and Teaching Conference attendance) are **positive features** of the institution along with the collegiate approach to communication between campuses at all levels within the institution.

49 Students spoke positively of NUMed Malaysia lecturers being accessible but commented that they do not see UK staff for teaching, although they did provide lectures on their research or other topics when they visited NUMed Malaysia.

50 All NUMed Malaysia students are provided with personal tutors with whom they will have a compulsory meeting in year 1 and then visit as necessary. Additional support services are also provided, for example English language support or the support of an external counsellor.

51 Careers support for the NUMed Malaysia's Biomedical Sciences students is currently provided by a dedicated lecturer within the department who evidently provides a positive and proactive service. The University is encouraged to consider whether, if the institution were to expand, a separate careers service provision would be more appropriate.

52 NUMed Malaysia staff and students spoke positively about the engagement with alumni, including a Biomedical Sciences Alumni group and use of alumni as research fellows at NUMed Malaysia.

53 NUMed Malaysia students benefit from access to the University's 'ncl+' programme as a way of them demonstrating the skills that they have learnt and developed in extra-curricular activities. They also benefit from access to opportunities provided by joint events with other institutions within EduCity (for example EduCity Student Senate and shared teaching on MPU subjects).

54 NUMed Malaysia students could articulate where to look for information in relation to the Complaints and Appeals procedures and understood that these would eventually progress back to the School of Biomedical Sciences in the UK.



## Information on higher education provision

55 Marketing information provided to students prior to admissions was perceived as accurate by students and their experience was reported as exceeding initial expectations.

56 Students reported that the Student Handbook was accurate and useful and contained all the information required. This was echoed by students who had transitioned to the UK and received further information pertaining to the UK campus in year 3.

57 The degree certificate received by NUMed Malaysia students is a University of Newcastle scroll, identical to that obtained by a Newcastle University UK student. The transcript obtained by a NUMed Malaysia student indicates the location of study in Malaysia for the relevant components studied there.

## Conclusion

NUMed Malaysia has evidently developed over its relatively short 10 years of establishment and the relationship with Newcastle University UK continues to evolve. The embedded ethos of the institution in the staff of NUMed Malaysia impacts on the student experience and whilst staff spoke of having sufficient academic autonomy, elements of control (such as unified cross-campus exam papers) could be reflected upon as the institution matures further. The students clearly feel that their voice is heard, feel adequately supported and resourced and feel an integral part of the community (referring to themselves as 'NUMedians' to the review team).

## Positive features

The following positive features are identified:

- The NUMed Malaysia student voice is clearly heard at many levels throughout the institution with particular good practice being to ensure that students have a seat on relevant UK committees, indicating an institutional attitude towards embedding the student voice and providing opportunities to students to share their voices across campuses (paragraph 27).
- There is clear and effective support available for NUMed Malaysia students, including personal tutoring and support during the Malaysia-to-UK transfer process for BSc Biomedical Science students. In addition, the University ensures that effective use of data, and reflection on practice, enables the institution to recognise and address issues that enhance the student learning experience (paragraph 38).
- The institution takes a positive and proactive approach to developing and encouraging a UK ethos in teaching staff and providing appropriate training opportunities (for example, PGCert and Learning and Teaching Conference attendance) (paragraph 48).
- The University demonstrates a collegiate approach to communication between campuses at all levels within the institution from senior management through to academic staff which leads to an effective student experience (paragraph 48).

## Recommendations

Newcastle University is recommended to take the following action:

- The University should add clarity to its Annual Monitoring and Review Policy in order to clarify explicitly how a branch campus should properly engage with the AMR process to remove ambiguity and ensure that the current good practice of providing a full report from the branch campus continues (paragraph 18).

### **Newcastle University's response to the review report**

Newcastle University is committed to the enhancement of the quality of its provision and welcomes the report regarding the review visit to Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia (NUMed Malaysia) and thanks the review team for the recognition of the positive features of practice in relation to student voice and support, staff development and communication. The University notes the recommendations and will consider fully those areas identified for further consideration in relation to the future growth of NUMed.

**QAA2510 – Feb 202**

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2020  
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB  
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557 000  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)