

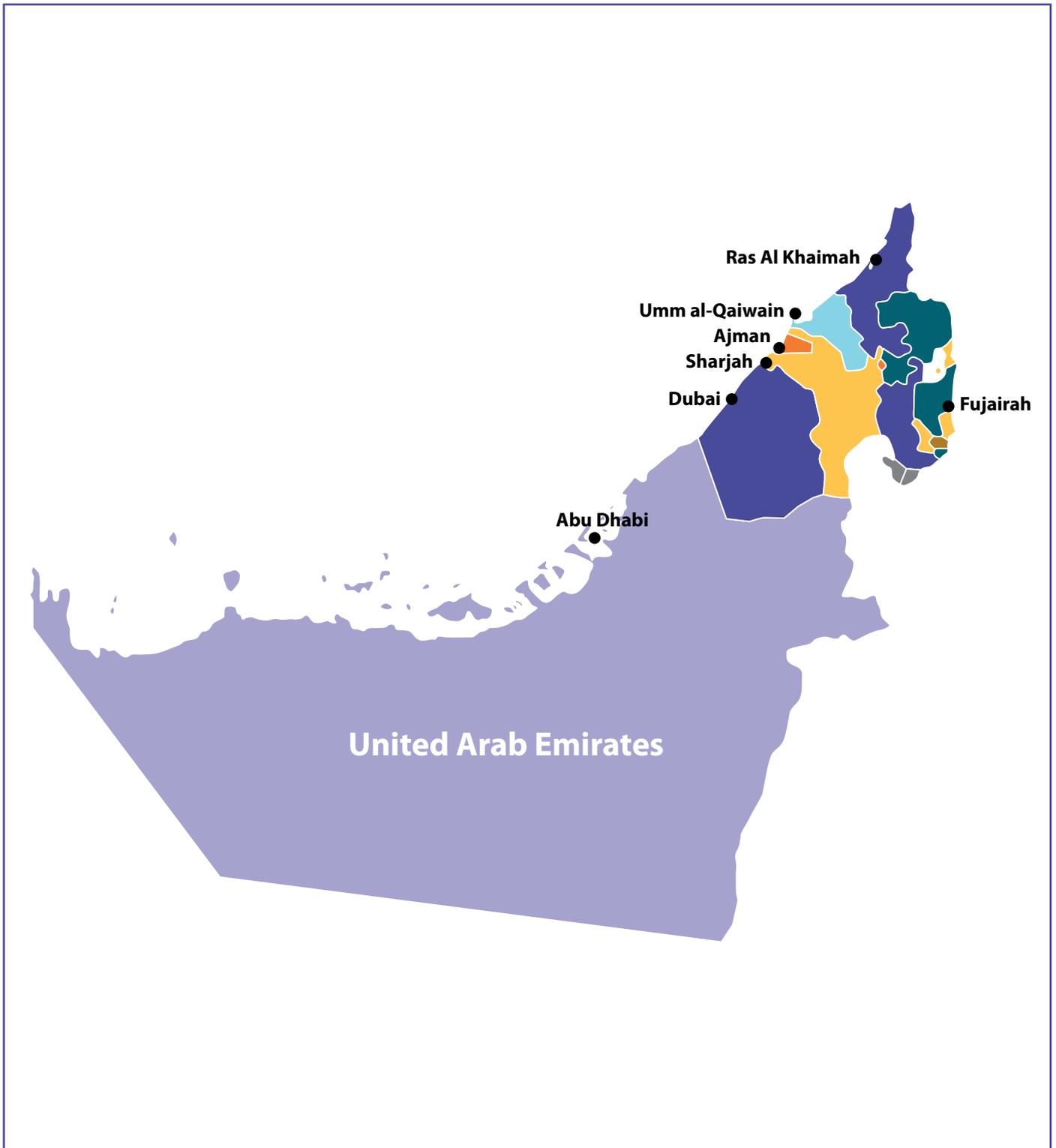


QAA

Review of UK Transnational Education in United Arab Emirates: Overview

June 2014





This overview report considers UK Transnational Education in the United Arab Emirates. Review visits were made in the Emirates of Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah.

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Introduction

UK TNE review: United Arab Emirates 2013-14

1 During 2013-14, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) carried out a review of UK Transnational Education (TNE) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). TNE is defined as the provision of education by one country in another country, and in the present context it refers to the provision of higher education programmes in the UAE that lead to the awards of UK universities or colleges. Data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) shows that in 2012-13 there were more than 15,000 students studying through UK TNE in the UAE.

About QAA

2 QAA has a remit to safeguard standards and to improve the quality of UK higher education, which it carries out within an increasingly diverse UK and international context. It aims to protect the interests of everyone working towards a UK higher education award, regardless of how or where they study, within the UK or overseas. One of QAA's core activities is to conduct institutional reviews of universities and colleges, and to publish the related reports. QAA has also conducted overseas reviews for a number of years, with each one focusing on a particular country.

3 QAA recognises the primary role of UK universities and colleges in maintaining academic standards and quality, and respects their autonomy. It relies on their cooperation in carrying out its work, and in return provides advice and support. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), published by QAA, contains definitive national reference points and practical guidance for higher education providers on maintaining academic standards and improving quality. Of relevance to this review is *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others*.

4 In May 2013 QAA signed a memorandum of agreement with Dubai's Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), pledging to work together for the benefit of university students in the UK and Dubai. QAA and KHDA liaised closely in the preparations for and the conduct of the TNE review visit. KHDA was involved in the briefing of the review team and observed a number of review visits. KHDA's remit is described in paragraphs 14-15.

TNE review process

5 QAA started this review by analysing the data on UK provision in the UAE. This was followed by desk-based analysis of those institutions with significant TNE in UAE, based on standard information sets provided by each institution. These studies focused on the operation of institutional procedures for managing TNE provision, and the aim was to uncover any issues concerned with academic standards and quality in the context of TNE. The studies were supplemented by visits to institutions in UAE, giving an opportunity to follow up on identified issues and also to look more directly at the student experience. Visits were undertaken by a team of senior staff from UK universities (that is, by peer review) and by staff from QAA. The visits in UAE involved meetings with staff based in the UK, in the UAE and with students. The institutions to be visited were chosen so as to reflect the variety of UK TNE in UAE.

6 To summarise, the TNE UAE review comprised four key stages:

- analysis of TNE in UAE, based on data from HESA
- desk-based analyses, utilising information sets provided by universities
- UAE visit between 1 February to 12 February 2014
- review findings published as individual reports, together with an overview report.

7 The following institutions were visited in UAE, and a separate review report has been published on each one. These are available at:

www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/overseas/Pages/TNE-United-Arab-Emirates-2014.aspx

- City University London, Cass Business School
- Coventry University and Emirates Aviation College, Dubai
- Heriot-Watt University, Dubai
- London Business School
- Middlesex University, Dubai
- Middlesex University and SAE Institute, Dubai
- University of Bolton and Western International College, Ras Al Khaimah
- University of Bradford
- University of Exeter
- University of Manchester
- University of Strathclyde.

8 UK institutions' links with the British University in Dubai (BUiD) were also looked at by QAA, through desk-based analysis only. BUiD is licensed by the UAE Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, and it is not itself a UK university nor does it deliver programmes leading to a UK award. Annex 1 provides an overview of UK universities' arrangements with BUiD.

Higher education in UAE

Overview of the higher education system

9 The higher education landscape in the UAE has developed along with the fast economic growth that the country has witnessed over the past 20 years. Its key features reflect the diverse efforts of the federal government and individual emirates to diversify their economy from oil production to other sectors such as finance, retail, tourism and services. They also reflect the necessity to cater for the education needs of a fast growing population which has doubled over the past 10 years reaching over eight million, and which includes a large expatriate community accounting for about 85 per cent of the whole population.¹ This growing higher education demand, driven both by population growth and a shift towards a diversified and knowledge-based economy, has been largely met by increasing the number of non-federal institutions, including branch campuses of foreign institutions.

10 The UAE higher education sector currently comprises just over 100 institutions² enrolling over 120,000 students.³ Three of these institutions (Higher Colleges of Technology, the UAE University and Zayed University) are sponsored by the federal government, and operate at the national-level through branches in different emirates. They account for about 34 per cent of total student enrolment (about 40,000 students) and provide access to higher education primarily to Emirati citizens, which make up more than 90 per cent of the federal student body. The other higher education institutions are non-federal institutions, also referred to as private institutions although some may benefit from emirate funding, and include branch campuses of foreign providers. There are 37 international branch campuses from 11 different countries, which cater primarily to the expatriate community, and increasingly to international students from the neighbouring regions, contributing to making the UAE a successful higher education hub and the country hosting the largest number of international branch campuses in the world. The UK is the highest sending country with nine branch campuses, followed by India with eight, and the USA with six.⁴

11 International branch campuses are mainly concentrated in the two free zones established by the emirate of Dubai to attract foreign education providers. These are the Dubai Knowledge Village, a purpose-built zone dedicated to human resources management which hosts nine international branch campuses, and Dubai International Academic City, designated exclusively for higher education institutions, hosting 11 international branch campuses. Other free zones in Dubai, such as the Dubai International Finance Centre and the Dubai Healthcare City, also host international branch campuses, but fewer in numbers and providing education only in the focus area of that particular industry zone. The emirate of Ras Al Khaimah has created free zones to promote business and local growth too.

¹ UAE National Bureau of Statistics (2011) *Population Estimates 2006-2010*, available at: www.uaestatistics.gov.ae/EnglishHome/LatestReportsDetailEnglish/tabid/106/Default.aspx?Itemid=1914.

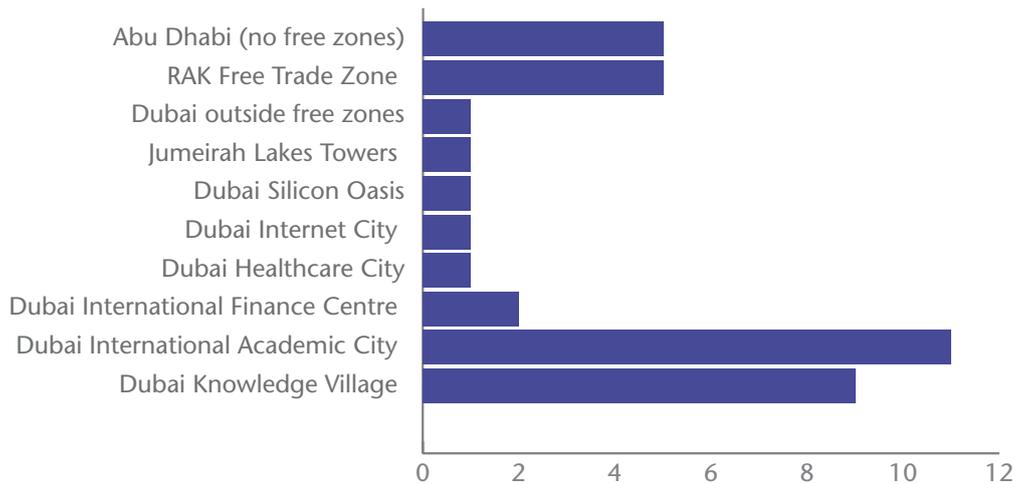
² Center for Higher Education Data and Statistics (2012) *2012 Overview of UAE Higher Education Institutions*, available at www.cheds.ae/Reports.aspx; updated with latest numbers for CAA licensed institutions (www.caa.ae) and non-CAA accredited institutions in Dubai (www.khda.gov.ae).

³ UAE National Bureau of Statistics (2013) *Higher Education 2012-2013*, available at: www.uaestatistics.gov.ae/EnglishHome/ReportDetailsEnglish/tabid/121/Default.aspx?Itemid=2230&PTID=104&MenuId=1.

⁴ The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (2012) *International branch campuses: data and developments*, available at: www.obhe.ac.uk/documents/view_details?id=894 and Knowledge and Human Development Authority for Dubai (www.khda.gov.ae).

Its main free zone, the Ras Al Khaimah Free Trade Zone, comprises a number of thematic business parks, including one exclusively dedicated to education, and hosts five international branch campuses. The emirate of Abu Dhabi also hosts five branch campuses, although it has adopted a different route to branch-campus development from Dubai and Ras Al Khaimah, inviting and supporting the establishment of branch campuses of foreign institutions without creating free trade zones.⁵ Figure 1 provides an overview of the geographical distribution of international branch campuses in the UAE.

Figure 1: distribution of branch campuses in the UAE



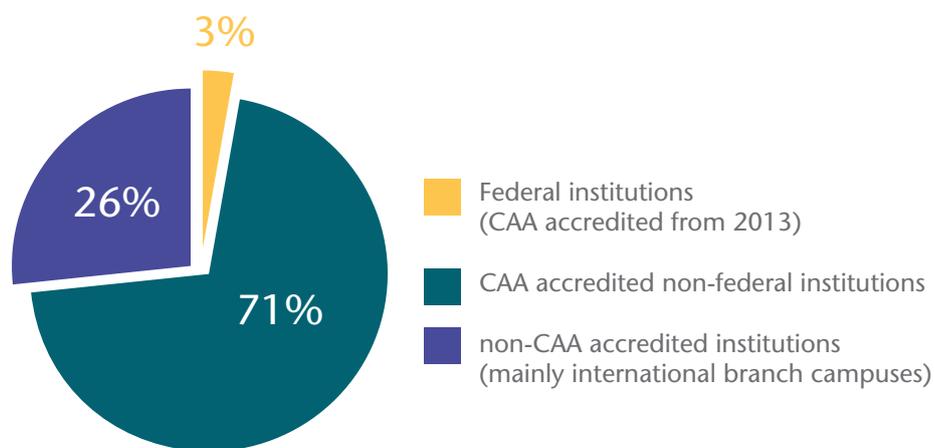
12 Free zones are typically designed around one business industry category, and offer a number of incentives to attract international investment and prompt commercial activity, such as purpose-built facilities; 100 per cent ownership; tax exemption; no restriction on profit or capital repatriation; and a friendlier regulatory environment. Significantly foreign education providers operating within free zones are exempt from the federal regulations that the UAE government has put in place to regulate and oversee the quality of the fast growing non-federal higher education sector.

13 In 2000 the federal government established, within the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR), the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) as the federal quality assurance agency charged with licensing non-federal institutions and accrediting their programmes. All non-federal institutions providing a higher education programme of one academic year or longer must be licensed and have its programmes accredited by CAA in order to be legally recognised by the MOHESR. CAA currently oversees 75 licensed non-federal institutions enrolling over 75,000 students, 55 per cent of which are non-Emiratis. The three federal institutions have traditionally been regarded as self-regulating and subject to their own quality assurance mechanisms. However, starting from the 2013-14 academic year, in the attempt to bring consistency across the sector, the MOHESR has mandated that they also be regulated by CAA.⁶ The only providers currently exempt from federal licensure and accreditation requirements are foreign institutions operating within free zones. These institutions are subject exclusively to the local emirate authority, although they can voluntarily apply to be reviewed and accredited by CAA as some have chosen to do. Currently there are 23 non-CAA accredited institutions in Dubai's free zones, and five in Ras Al Khaimah. Figure 2 provides an overview of the number and types of higher education institutions in the UAE.

⁵ Fox, W.H and Al Shamisi, S (2014) United Arab Emirates' Education Hub: A Decade of Development, *International Education Hubs: Student, Talent, Knowledge-Innovation Models*, edited by J. Knight (Springer 2014).

⁶ The National (2013) Federal universities in UAE to get same regulator as private universities, available at: www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/federal-universities-in-uae-to-get-same-regulator-as-private-universities.

Figure 2: percentage of institutions by type



14 Each emirate is responsible for developing its own quality assurance system for universities operating in free zones. While there currently is no emirate-based restriction or requirement for international branch campuses to operate in Ras Al Khaimah, Dubai has developed its own quality assurance system to regulate foreign providers establishing a presence within its free zones. In 2011 the Dubai Executive Council issued a resolution establishing that all higher education institutions wishing to operate in the free zones of Dubai must receive an Academic Authorisation from the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA). KHDA is the Dubai government's authority established in 2006 to ensure that the emirate develop the required human resources to meet its economic and social needs, including through monitoring the quality of programmes provided in the free zones. All higher education programs offered in the Dubai free zones must also be approved and registered by KHDA.

15 KHDA grants and annually renews institutional permits and academic programme registration either on approval by its internal quality assurance body, the University and Quality Assurance International Board (UQAIB), or on institutional licensure and programme accreditation by CAA. UQAIB is an independent advisory board composed of international experts. It was established in 2008 to assist KHDA with oversight of the quality of higher education offered by foreign providers operating in the Dubai free zones. To assure the quality of international branch campuses, UQAIB devised what it refers to as an 'Equivalency Validation Model' aimed at assessing the demonstrated quality equivalence of provision in Dubai in relation to the home higher education provider. This model places particular reliance on the quality assurance and accreditation from the home country, with UQAIB taking account of existing reports on the quality of provision of foreign providers produced by their home country's quality assurance or accreditation bodies.

16 This is regarded by UQAIB as the most efficient way to ensure that the intended learning outcomes and quality of a programme offered at a provider's branch are 'approximately the same' as those of that same programme offered at the provider's home campus, while avoiding burdening providers unduly through the duplication of quality assurance processes to which they have already been subjected at home. UQAIB reserves the right to undertake quality assurance reviews of its own in cases where existing external quality assurance reports do not provide clear or current indication of quality provision, or in special circumstances warranting an extraordinary audit.⁷

⁷ KHDA (2013) *UQAIB Quality Assurance Manual Version 2.0*, available at: www.khda.gov.ae/En/Reports/Publications.aspx.

17 The 2011 Dubai Council Resolution further establishes that qualifications granted by KHDA approved institutions and certified by KHDA will be recognised by the public and private sector in Dubai for all purposes, such as employment and further study. However, lack of CAA accreditation means that there is no federal recognition of free zones degrees, with implications for graduates of non CAA-licensed free zones universities seeking to work in federal public organisations in the rest of the UAE or to enrol into CAA-licensed institutions for further study. This has motivated a number of foreign institutions operating in Dubai's free zones to voluntarily seek CAA licensure and accreditation. However, for institutions catering primarily to expatriate or international students, this lack of federal recognition does not currently seem to represent a pressing concern.

The higher education landscape in Dubai

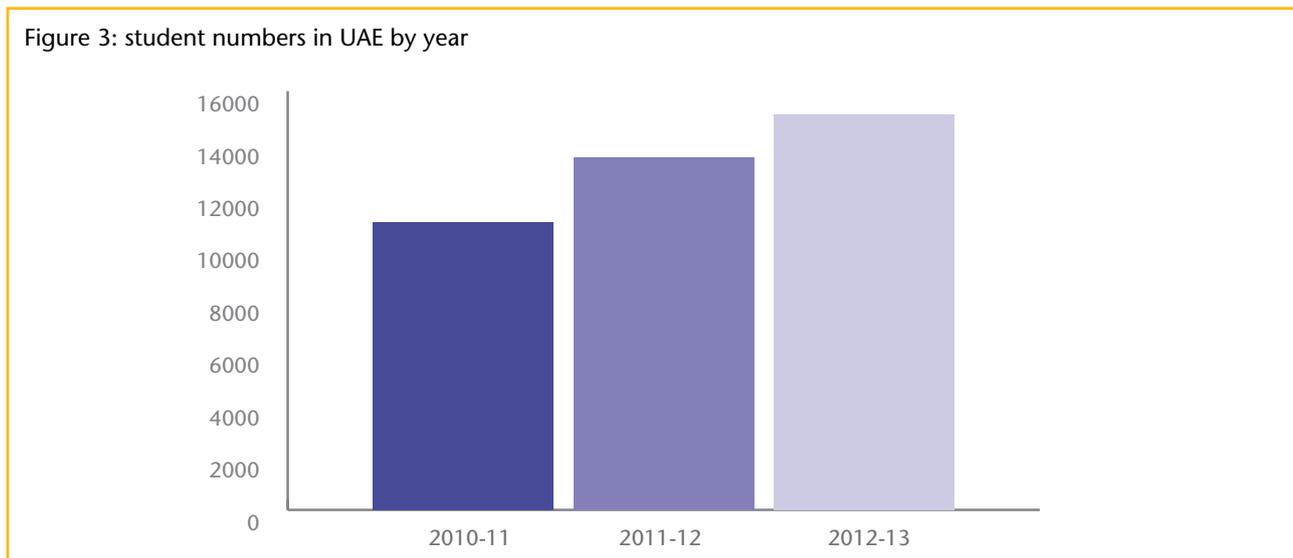
18 With over 70 per cent of all foreign branch campuses in the UAE, Dubai is the emirate that has contributed the most to the significant changes in the country's higher education sector over the past decade. According to KHDA's latest overview of the higher education landscape in Dubai, the emirate has 54 higher education institutions, with an estimated total of about 48,000 students, registered in 468 academic programmes. In addition to three federal institutions, enrolling just over 8,500, there are 24 non-federal local institutions and 27 international branch campuses from 10 different countries (Australia, UK, USA, India, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, Ireland, France and Lebanon) which have been attracted by the favourable conditions offered by the purpose-built free zones in the emirate and the potential of Dubai. The free zones host a total of 33 institutions (including CAA-accredited institutions) collectively enrolling about 22,000 students.

19 The majority of all students (69 per cent) are enrolled in bachelor's programmes (accounting for 52 per cent of all programmes), 19 per cent of students are enrolled in master's degree (33 per cent of all programmes), and eight per cent in foundation programmes (representing eight per cent of all programmes). International branch campuses offer 237 programmes, many of which (43 per cent) are at the master's degree level. The majority of programmes (37 per cent) are within the field of business. Indeed, with more than 160 business programmes on offer, Dubai has become a niche destination for international business students. However, in the recent years the emirate has been able to diversify the range of programmes available, extending to areas such as media, humanities, law and natural and physical sciences, due, in particular, to international branch campuses offering a wider range of programmes than the local non-federal institutions. Students studying in Dubai are from a wide range of nationalities. Emirati students make up the largest group (43 per cent), followed by Asian students (21 per cent), and other Arab students (13 per cent), with a recent substantial increase in the number of African students.⁸

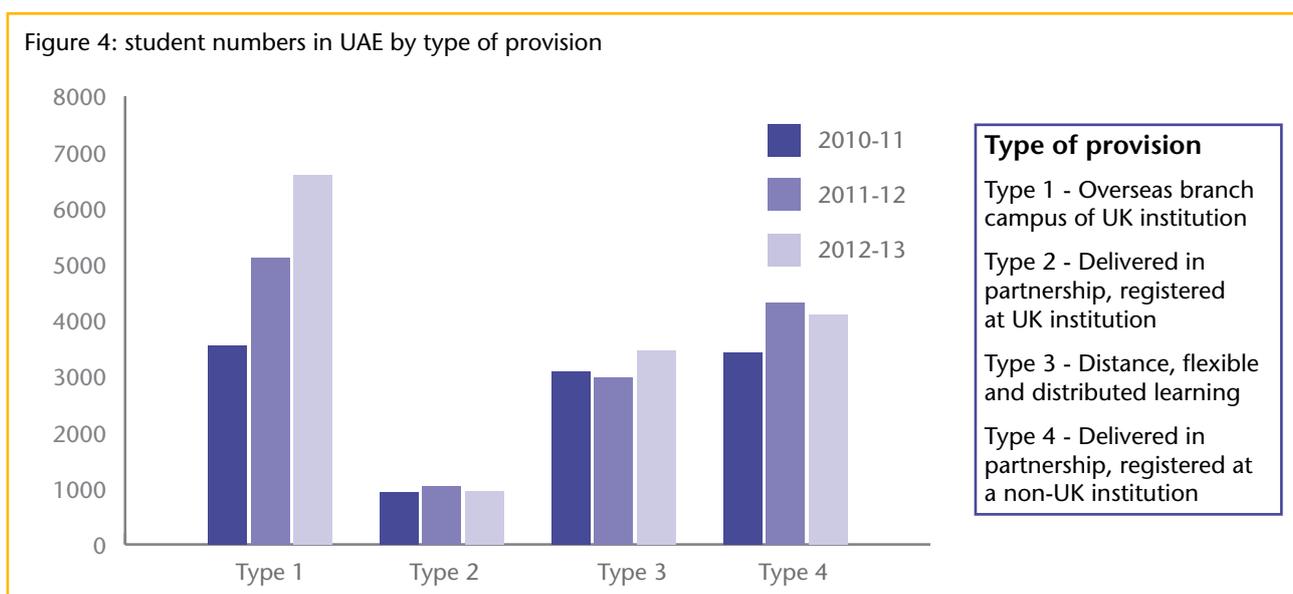
⁸ KHDA (2013) *The Higher Education Landscape in Dubai 2012*, available at: www.khda.gov.ae/En/Reports/Publications.aspx.

Statistical analysis of UK TNE in UAE

20 The number of students studying for a UK TNE award in the UAE has seen an increase over recent years. This includes a 37 per cent increase in student numbers during the past two years. The numbers of students studying for a UK award in UAE is now over 15,000.⁹



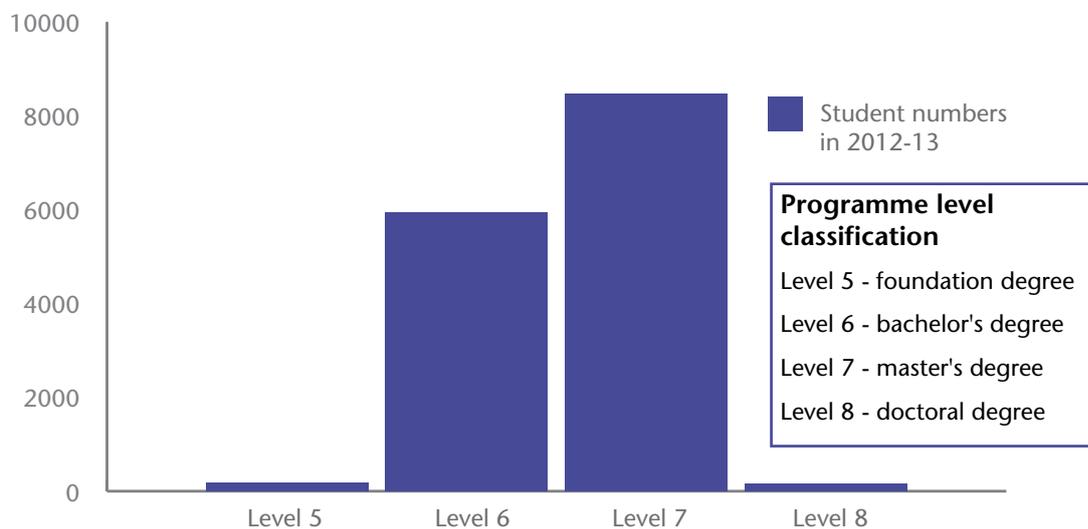
21 This increase is most noticeable in the number of students in the UAE studying in an overseas branch campus of a UK institution, as defined by HESA aggregate offshore record. This number has almost doubled in the past two years. In 2012-13 the proportion of students studying in a branch campus was 44 per cent of all UK TNE delivered in UAE, up from 32 per cent in 2010-11. Note that the majority of provision in Type 4 (see classification in figure 4) is made up of provision delivered by Oxford Brookes University to students studying for an Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) award.



⁹ Data of figures 3-6 taken from HESA Aggregate Offshore Record.

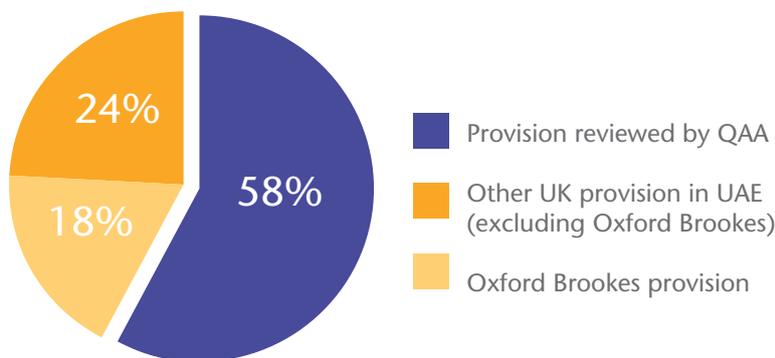
22 UK TNE provision in the UAE focuses almost entirely on taught master's and bachelor's degrees, making up 95 per cent of the provision. This reflects the continued demand for these qualifications from students studying in UAE.

Figure 5: student numbers in UAE by programme level (2012-13)



23 The review team looked at the provision of 10 UK institutions during their visit to the UAE. Figure 6 breaks down the student numbers between those receiving a UK award at institutions that were reviewed by QAA and those at other UK institutions in UAE. It shows that the QAA review covered the majority of TNE students studying for UK awards in the UAE. A brief overview of UK provision in UAE not included in the TNE review is provided in Annex 2.

Figure 6: breakdown of student numbers in UAE (2012-13)



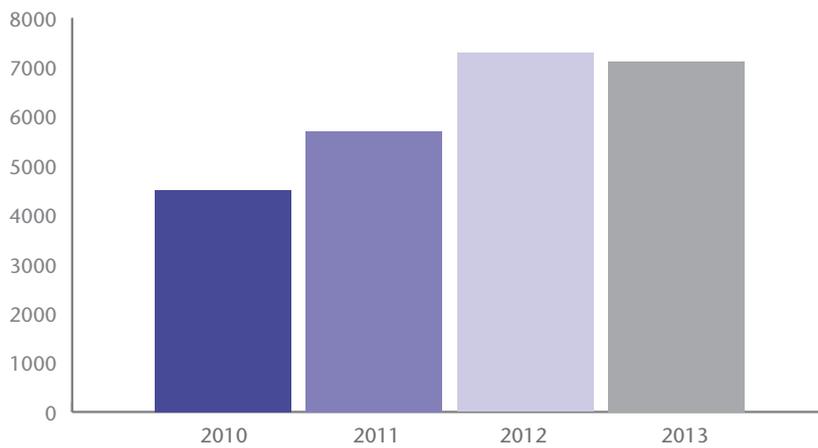
¹⁰ Data from figures 7-13 taken from KHDA: October 2013.

UK TNE provision in Dubai free zones

24 All higher education programmes offered in the Dubai free zones are approved and registered by KHDA's higher education department. UK institutions providing TNE provision in these free zones are required to submit data at programme level to KHDA. Through the information sharing agreement between QAA and KHDA, we have analysed the information from Heriot-Watt University; Middlesex University; Manchester University Business School (MBS); City University London, Cass Business School; University of Bradford; London Business School (LBS); Middlesex University and SAE Institute; and University of Exeter. These institutions provided the majority of the provision that was reviewed by QAA, and provide almost all the UK provision in the Dubai free zones. The following analysis reports on the key trends and findings.¹⁰

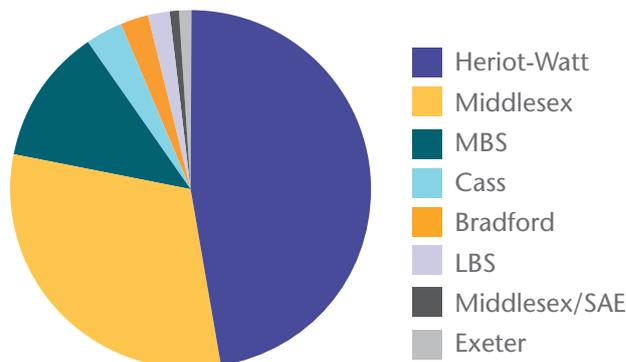
25 The Dubai free zones have seen a large increase in the provision of UK TNE over the past three years. Between 2010 and 2012 there was a 58 per cent increase in the number of students in the Dubai free zones studying for a UK award. Student numbers in 2013 have remained broadly similar to 2012.

Figure 7: student numbers in Dubai free zones by year



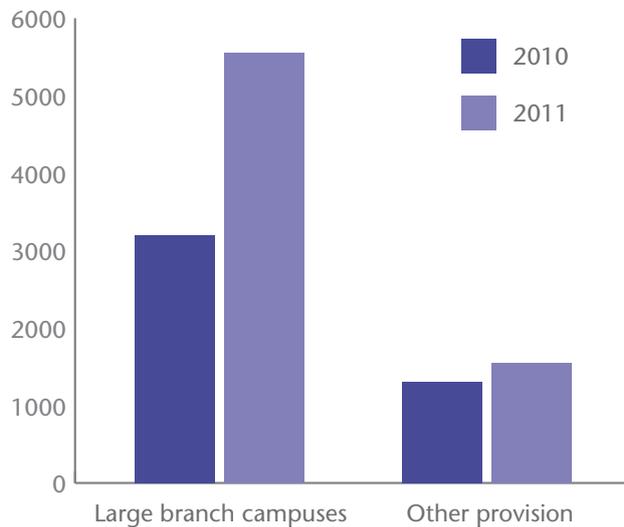
26 UK provision in the Dubai free zones is dominated in terms of student numbers by the two 'large branch campuses' of Heriot-Watt University and Middlesex University. The two 'large branch campuses' account for 78 per cent of the students working towards a UK award in the Dubai free zones.

Figure 8: student numbers in Dubai free zones by UK institution (2012-13)



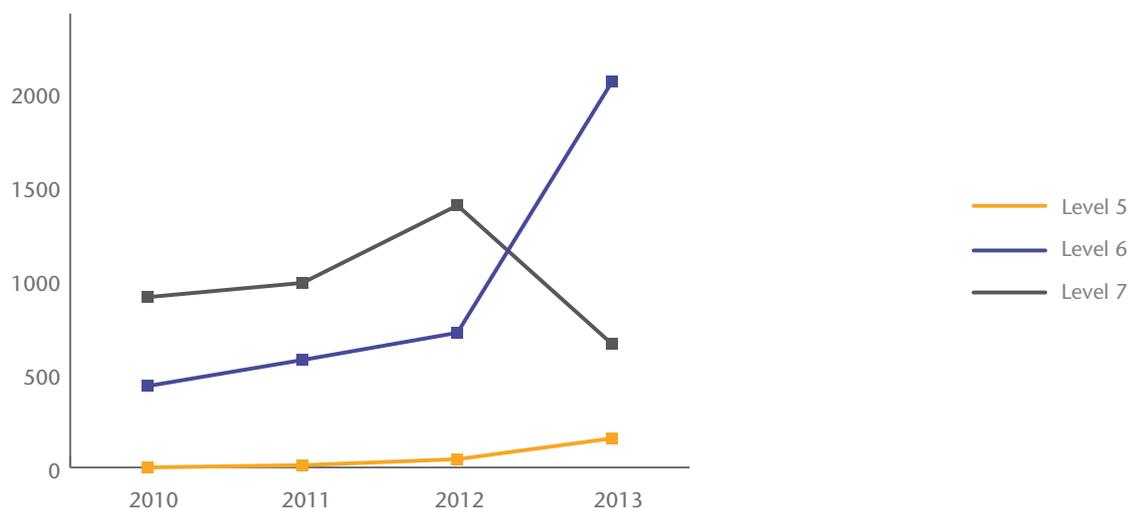
27 Heriot-Watt and Middlesex University have seen the main increase in student numbers since 2010 in the Dubai free zones, with a combined increase in student numbers of 74 per cent over the past three years.

Figure 9: student numbers in Dubai free zones at 'large branch campuses'



28 The growth in provision at these campuses has been through the number of students taking bachelor's level programmes. It is noticeable that the number of students taking master's level programmes at these institutions is now less than it was in 2010.

Figure 10: student numbers at large branch campuses in Dubai free zones by programme level

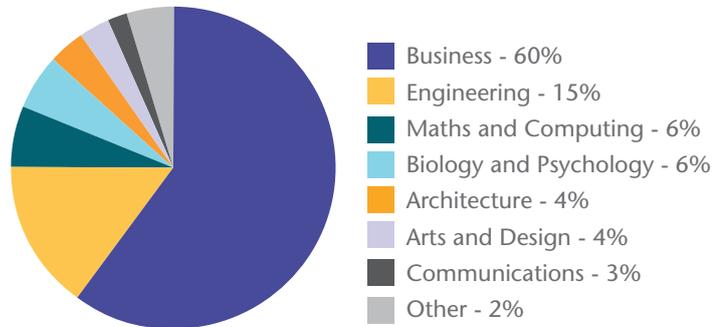


29 This is reflected in UK provision across the Dubai free zones, which has seen an increase of over 100 per cent in bachelor's award level programmes leading to a UK award. While in 2010 over 50 per cent of students were studying towards a master's award, in 2013 bachelor's awards made up over half the provision.

¹¹ The Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) used by HESA for subject coding of provision across higher education in the UK is here adopted when referring to subject areas. Business programmes refer to those programmes categorised N under the JACS.

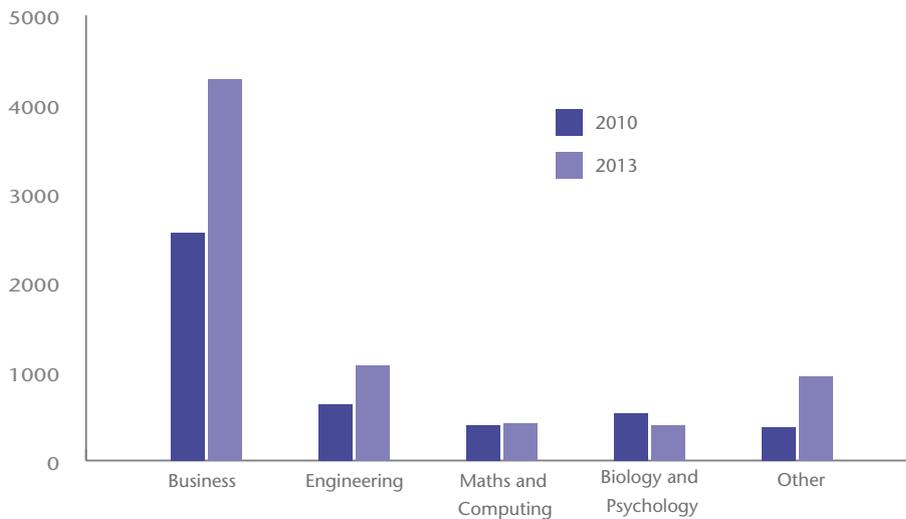
30 Dubai has become a niche destination for business students, many of them international. This is reflected by the fact that business programmes continue to be the most popular with students in the Dubai free zones studying for a UK award.¹¹ In 2013 over 50 per cent of students studying for a UK award were taking a business programme.

Figure 11: percentage of students in Dubai free zones by subject area (2012-13)



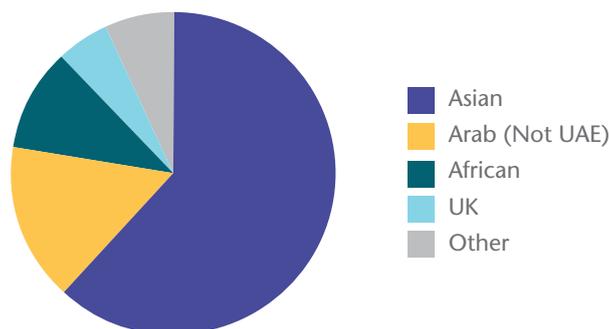
31 Since 2010, it is the only programme area that has seen a significant increase in student numbers with 67 per cent over the past three years; although engineering has seen a comparable 69 per cent increase over that same period, albeit with a much smaller number of students.

Figure 12: student numbers in Dubai free zones by subject area (2010-13)



32 Like all institutions in Dubai, UK institutions providing TNE are serving students from a wide range of nationalities. The largest group come from Asia (as defined by KHDA), making up over 50 per cent of the student population studying for a UK award in the Dubai free zones, followed by those from Arab countries outside of UAE and then Africa.

Figure 13: student numbers in Dubai free zones by nationality (2012-13)



Findings of the review

Introduction

33 This section provides a thematic analysis of the findings from the 11 individual review reports. Executive summaries of those reviews are included in Annex 3.

34 The most recent overview report of a QAA review of UK TNE was for mainland China in 2012.¹² The 2013-14 TNE review was of UK provision in the UAE, and particularly in Dubai, where the bulk of UK TNE in the UAE is based. Of the TNE links directly under review, only one had no base in Dubai: the University of Bolton and Western International College (WINC) in Ras Al Khaimah. Strathclyde University's operations in Dubai and Abu Dhabi were reviewed, but only the Dubai campus was subject to a visit.

35 China sees TNE primarily as a way to build academic capacity, and so favours the collaborative partnership model. By contrast the UAE perceives TNE as a way to develop the skilled workforce required for developing a service and knowledge-based economy, to increase international student recruitment and eventually national revenues.¹³ Since the UAE's focus is on importing quality, non-mediated foreign education, TNE in the UAE is subject to few of the key problems identified in the China overview report. UAE provision is, on first sight, more uniform and differences of perception between collaborating partners are therefore less likely. The UAE regulating authorities, of which KHDA is the most developed as far as foreign-sourced education is concerned, wish to see academic offerings as close as possible to UK originals. Partners are typically commercial rather than academic, so 'double degrees'¹⁴ rarely arise. The UAE, with its relatively small native population (less than 15 per cent of the eight million residents are UAE nationals) and large immigrant population, does not try to 'retain essential characteristics of its own educational culture and system',¹⁵ as in China, and except for some mild constraints on behaviour in public places, does not impose cultural demands on higher education curricula, staffing or students. In a comprehensively multi-racial and multi-cultural environment, especially one where there is such a focus on business and trade, the common spoken language is English, and UK providers can typically assume a high level of English language ability in both students and local staff.

36 However, the UK TNE under review was by no means uniform, though some instances share key characteristics. The UK universities considered perform the implementation of global missions with different degrees of success in different aspects. Important problems of staffing, setting and maintaining standards, and meeting student needs, though they differ from those most prominent in the review of China, are by no means eliminated by the UAE educational environment.

¹² QAA (2013) *Review of UK transnational education in China 2012: Overview*, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/TNE-China-Overview.aspx.

¹³ British Council (2013) *The shape of things to come: The evolution of transnational education: data, definitions, opportunities and impacts analysis*, p 26, available at: www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe/knowledge-centre/policy-thought-leadership/report-shape-of-things-to-come-1.

¹⁴ The term used in the China overview.

¹⁵ QAA (2013) p 11.

Branch and other campuses

37 The best-known model of partnership in the UAE is the 'international branch campus', defined by the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) as:

A higher education institution that is located in another country from the institution which either originated it or operates it, with some physical presence in the host country, and which awards at least one degree in the host country that is accredited in the country of the originating institution.¹⁶

38 UAE hosts the greatest number of such campuses at 37; the nearest rival is Singapore with less than half this number. The latest OBHE report on international branch campuses (2012) lists 6 of the 11 institutions in the present review (Heriot-Watt University, London Business School, Manchester Business School, Middlesex University, Bolton University and Cass Business School). The report mentions a seventh, Exeter University, which had been listed in the previous OBHE report (2009) but was ruled out of this one due to a revision in the definition:

Though the University maintains office space and a small library, it rents teaching rooms, and limited 'physical infrastructure' means that 'it is not a campus by any definition'.¹⁷

39 It may be that Bradford was not included in OBHE's list of branch campuses for similar reasons, though in practice, its Middle Eastern Regional Office (MERO) resembles other business school operations which are in the list. Strathclyde has no physical facilities of its own and uses the physical facilities of another higher education institution (HEI), and is also omitted from the OBHE list. At an operational level, however, the OBHE definition and the list it reflects somewhat simplify the kinds of TNE reviewed by QAA in 2013-14.

40 Only two providers, Heriot-Watt and Middlesex, are readily recognisable as branch campuses in including the range of facilities a student would expect of a campus in the UK, even if, in some areas, such facilities are provided at a lower level. Both maintain significant physical infrastructures, in Dubai International Academic City and Dubai Knowledge Village respectively, and they offer the biggest provision under review; Heriot-Watt with some 3,500 students and Middlesex with about 2,600. Both are multi-disciplinary. All kinds of provision have been promoted by the free zones, where governance and regulatory arrangements that apply in the UAE at large are reduced, and a commercial partner takes much of the initial financial risk: the free zone model pioneered by Dubai has proved very effective in creating an environment in which foreign higher education operations, large to small and specialised to generalist, have been able to flourish. However, the long-term strategic demands of the branch campus in Dubai free zones are more demanding and more complex than in the other kinds of TNE arrangements. The solutions implemented by institutions to address these complex quality problems differ in their effectiveness.

41 A second clearly recognisable group are what might be called administrative campuses. Most of the other HEIs in the OBHE table are in this group: Cass Business School, London Business School, and Manchester Business School. This group also includes Exeter, Bradford and Strathclyde, which are not in the OBHE list. All maintain some level of physical presence, in the form of an administrative office and establishment, though there are no permanent local academic staff (as opposed to local adjunct tutors, who often feature in this kind of TNE). In the case of Strathclyde, physical resources are provided by the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), the largest federal higher education institute in the UAE. This is the only link where the partner is another HEI, rather than a commercial organisation. Most administrative campuses are relatively small with an average of about 200 students registered. Exeter is the smallest, with 69 students;

¹⁶ The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (2012) *International Branch Campuses: Data and Developments*, available at: www.obhe.ac.uk/documents/view_details?id=894.

¹⁷ The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (2012) p 8.

Manchester is the largest with 860. All but Bradford, which has health as well as business and management, are focused on single disciplines. There are few full-time students: the great majority are pursuing studies directly related to their employment, and some are directly supported by their employers. The core teaching in all cases is by flying faculty. The programmes on offer are explicitly multi-national: in some cases, the programmes could be pursued in other parts of the world; in some, the programmes themselves are peripatetic and deliberately bring students into contact with others pursuing the same programmes in other national contexts. Except for the requirements of local regulators, there is, in principle and in practice, little difference between the provision of this group in the UAE and in the several other locations around the world where the constituent HEIs operate, including in the UK itself. Administrative campus TNE carries fewer risks than other kinds, though it is important to note that its simplicity is fundamental: the introduction of greater complexity changes the quality and standards demands.

42 The third group: University of Bolton and Western International College, Coventry University and Emirates Aviation College, and Middlesex and SAE Institute (Bolton/WINC, Coventry/EAC, and Middlesex/SAE) is more varied, but more recognisable as collaborative provision. This is not to say that the offerings of the two other groups do not involve working with others, but provision in the third group is dependent on academic input by the partners in a way that it is not in the other two. Though the Bolton presence in Ras Al Khaimah is listed by OBHE as a branch campus, the fact that, excluding material available electronically, all academic resources, critically including academic staffing, are provided by the partner organisation makes this structurally more of a partnership than a branch of the home campus. The Middlesex/SAE and Coventry/EAC partnerships are immediately recognisable as collaborative: UK university awards attaching to programmes of another organisation, delivered in another location, by another organisation's staff, using the other organisation's resources. Quality and standards in TNE of this kind are much more liable than the others to be affected by changes in the circumstances of a partner which is essentially independent of the relationship with the UK institution, such as a new owner or the acquisition of degree awarding powers.

43 This is taxonomy, not a hierarchy. However, the reviewers considered that awareness of the parameters of the provider was critical to the extent to which the aims and strategies for provision of UK higher education in the UAE could be articulated and effectively implemented. Bradford, for instance, is planning to increase numbers and add awards: essentially changing from an administrative to a branch campus. The Bolton provision in Ras Al Khaimah started as a branch campus, and in giving greater autonomy to the partner has become collaborative. Where the Cass operation has had limited offerings in one subject only, plans to expand numbers and awards, and thus to become a branch campus rather than an administrative one, introduce new institutional and strategic dimensions, which are matters for the University as well as the Business School. It appeared to the review team that in all cases, such changes required careful consideration of structure and staffing levels, and also of student study and support facilities. The most effective branch campuses realise that if the UAE centre is a campus in the full sense, then it must run like one with the full range of supports including pastoral, careers and social facilities.

Going global

44 All the institutions considered in the TNE review of UAE had global aspirations. In many cases, the word global appears in their mission statements or the strap-lines on their websites. Heriot-Watt's is the most concise expression: the phrase 'Distinctly Global' appears above the University's website address on the cover of the latest strategic plan, which is entitled 'Global thinking, worldwide influence'. However, the word global appears in the titles of units, policies or strategies in most of the universities included in the review. Bradford has a Global Business Strategy and a Global Campus Department; Manchester has a Global MBA Programme; London Business

School (LBS) prominently promises 'Global perspectives' on its website, and has an EMBA-Global programme. The global aims of the others are less explicit but clearly related: Middlesex wishes to 'produce a global community of staff, students and partners'; Coventry calls itself a 'Business facing university in a globalised world'; and Cass commits itself to 'recruit and support the most able students from around the world' and to provide 'international mobility opportunities'. However similar their vocabularies, different universities implement their intentions in different and more or less comprehensive ways.

45 Minimally, global means that the university offers programmes at widely spaced locations around the world. More meaningfully, all the administrative campuses offer global programmes with some common characteristics. The most basic is that the same programme, with same learning outcomes, credit value and volume, is available in centres in a number of locations, and it is possible and practical for students registered in Dubai to take modules in Singapore, Hong Kong, Manila, and Perugia (in the case of Bradford), or USA, South Africa, China (in the case of Cass), to take two instances. The reviewers found that the Bradford programme was explicitly redesigned to facilitate study of the same programme at any of its centres. More comprehensive still, the Manchester Global Executive MBA has been explicitly designed not merely to facilitate the opportunity to study elsewhere, but to build in such study as an integral part of the programme. The new programme will involve groups travelling every semester to attend workshops at one of the worldwide centres, and will provide what the University calls 'a truly global learning and networking experience for students'. The LBS programme has been working on a similar principle for some time. The LBS programme starts with a London-based residential orientation week with a London and a Dubai stream, and concludes again with two London-based residential core modules. The reviewers found that LBS understood 'global reach as a differentiator' and aims to equip students with the ability to 'lead global teams'.

46 In all these instances, globalism is a feature of the programmes on offer, rather than the organisation itself (though the 86 per cent of non-UK faculty at LBS makes it global in another sense). Heriot-Watt has almost twice as many students studying at off-campus locations compared to those at its home campus in Scotland. The University has understood globalism to be a structural feature of organisation as a whole, and has devised a common academic structure for governance and management of all its schools in all locations. The impact for the Dubai campus is that the head of campus is a member of the Heriot-Watt executive, and the University has developed a strategy for the integration of policies, structures and staff responsibilities across the whole organisation. The University, in short, had reflected not just on what home arrangements meant for remote locations, but what global scope meant for management of the whole organisation, of which the home campus is merely the largest and longest established, and made changes accordingly. The change is not complete. For instance, more academic leadership at programme level from the non-UK campuses is planned, but the University has recognised the need.

47 The various individual reports show that the universities under review have had differential levels of success in making organisation fit aspiration. The reviewers saw some good examples of ways in which management was organised. Manchester was noticeably successful in maintaining contacts and coordination between its various centres and the home campus, and LBS at laying a solid foundation of a strategic approach to internationalisation on which to base its programme planning. Strathclyde's standard templates for all written agreements with partners appeared both economical and effective.

48 On the other hand, there was some evidence that institutions had not fully considered the organisational consequences of the global offering. In some cases heads of the UAE centres were physically located at the UK campus, even where the UAE operation was developing beyond the scale of an administrative campus. One of the branch campuses, otherwise highly successful in organisational terms, had only an indirect line into the governance and management of the university at large.

49 Perhaps more importantly, it appeared that no institution had matched all aspects of the relationship between the global orientations of programmes with UK expectations, whether in the specific Quality Code sense, or the simple dictionary sense. Only one of the institutions reviewed followed the Quality Code in relation to making external examiner reports available in full to students. Though Heriot-Watt has thought through the structural implications of global operation, the principle implies at least equivalence in the students' experience wherever they may be geographically, and the University acknowledges that some aspects, such as student services and staffing on branch campuses, do not yet fulfil the logic of its position. The LBS approach to assessment is strongly influenced by higher education practice in the USA, such as the use of class participation in assessment and grading relative to others on the programme. Though these practices are not contrary to the Quality Code, they do not sit entirely easily with typical UK practice, unless complemented by quality assurance mechanisms further to those typically used in the USA.

50 The availability of effective virtual learning environments (VLEs) has the potential to play a major part in the realisation of global intentions on the part of universities. In some cases, the reviewers found this potential realised. Manchester's use of e-tutors, who moderate discussion forums, was very effective. Exeter made very good use of its VLE for postgraduate students, MyPGR, to record supervisory meetings and monitor research student activity, including tracking annual progress reports by students and staff. The Middlesex 'MyLearning' system was used not just as an information source, but as a means of interaction between students and staff, and other students; Dubai staff and students were able to communicate with peers in Hendon; Hendon staff and students contributed to discussion sessions and even facilitated joint working on projects.

51 On the other hand, the potential was not being fulfilled in all cases. There appeared to be lack of awareness of the opportunities offered by electronic delivery in making electives available in multi-campus programmes. In some cases IT support was based in the UK only, and not enough account was taken of the different working week and time zone for the UAE. In one case, inadequate local infrastructure led to insufficient internet speed and connectivity for effective use. In some cases the VLE was only a repository for information, with limited interactive use; students and counsellors did not make use of the facilities consistently; and lack of functionality in one instance led a local tutor-counsellor to establish his own arrangements on a third party platform.

Staffing

52 With the exception of making external examiner reports available to students, the most common topic for recommendations in the UAE reviews relates to staffing.

53 Seemingly, staffing seems straightforward for the administrative campuses, where core teaching (and in some cases all teaching) is by flying faculty. The problem of finding difficulty in consistently staffing such programmes, which has been observed in China,¹⁸ is less evident in the UAE. Most use only faculty who are full members, as core staff, of the home organisation (though in some cases they are not in fact located in the UK). Most administrative campuses, however, also use local staff in some capacity. The evidence from several campuses is that the contribution of staff from the UK at any level is highly valued and regarded. Student experience of the adjunct staff is less consistent.

¹⁸ Gow, I 'Removing the Rose-Tinted Spectacles' in Fazakerley, A and Worthington, P (2007) *British Universities in China: The Reality Beyond the Rhetoric: an Agora Discussion Paper*, p 7, available at: academiccouncil.duke.edu/duke-in-china.

54 Both Strathclyde and Manchester, for instance, use UK staff for workshops and staff appointed locally to support learning and run tutorial sessions. Strathclyde clearly takes caution to recruit effective counsellors; there are well defined policies for selection and development, and performance monitoring. Counsellors are required to attend intensive seminars to become familiar with the style and content of UK teaching. Nonetheless, students reported significant variability in quality of counsellors: they had no complaints about subject knowledge, but in some cases teaching skills were less evident and/or they perceived a lack of coordination between the counsellors' tutorial sessions and staff workshops. Students of the Manchester programme, on the other hand, had a very positive experience of their e-tutors. The reviewers noted that the e-tutors were approved by a school appointments committee before being permitted to teach, and new members of staff were required to shadow permanent staff. The reviewers took the view that this kind of active management of locally appointed staff paid dividends in student satisfaction.

55 In the branch campuses all teaching is by staff resident in the UAE, with the exception of one or two programmes of a highly specialised nature, where local expertise is not available and flying faculty are once more employed. Here too, both permanent and part-time, fixed-term staff are used. Students reported different levels of satisfaction with permanent and fixed-term staff, and in relation to the latter, staffing management practices appeared to have a material effect on whether their contribution was valued or not.

56 At Heriot-Watt permanent staff are appointed by procedure equivalent to the one used in the UK, and interviews include panel members from the UK campus. For all such staff, the full range of staff support is available: staff are encouraged to take a teaching qualification, and induction, mentoring and development review are all practiced. Students value the contribution of full-time staff. The University also uses fixed-term, part-time staff, who are not as highly rated by students. The reviewers noted that these staff are recruited less formally, and are not supported by the standard measures typical of full-time staff listed above. In one school of the campus, however, the students' distinction between the abilities for full-time and part-time staff was not evident, but the reviewers noted that the school management in this case had introduced informally a range of support comparable to the standard, formal ones; for example, there was peer observation and team teaching, and the encouragement to undertake teaching qualifications extended to these part-time staff had been successful.

57 It was notable that students at the Middlesex branch campus put high value on the teaching of full-time permanent and part-time, fixed-term staff alike. There appeared to be no distinction between recruitment processes: both categories had been recruited through formal procedures. All staff were required to do a Post Graduate Certificate of Higher Education qualification, and all staff met by the review team had done so. There was encouragement for the improvement of teaching skills, with a dedicated teaching and learning coordinator and a formal staff development programme, including a programme of research seminars. There was a reward scheme for teaching, and peer observation was universal. Middlesex had published standards for such matters as tutor availability, and established systems such as online booking for meetings.

58 The collaborative links had features that would be evident in any such links. There were arrangements in all cases for university approval of new partner staff, though they are not always effective, either because they were not understood, or were retrospective only. Inevitably, the UK partner had limited control over such matters as staff development, or indeed any matter related to conditions of employment. Inevitably, differences of jurisdiction and culture, and remote location, make these difficulties more problematic than when both partners are located in the UK, but they are not UAE-specific.

59 In the cases of the branch campuses and the collaborative partnerships, there were fundamental differences in the extent to which efforts had been made to introduce a UK academic culture to the remote campuses. One aspect of this culture has been outlined above: the support

structures for academic staffing, such as probation and mentoring. In addition, however, the review team noted differential approaches to academic self-governance, which is integral to UK academic culture. This overview has already mentioned that, in the case of the branch campuses, the extent to which the branch was integrated into university management and governance was variable. In both branch and collaborative arrangements, however, there was a tendency to stress that aspect of quality assurance that relates to oversight, and to neglect that aspect that relates to critical self-evaluation. Even in campuses where they appeared generally effective, staff had little engagement in programme change and development: none had been involved as a panel member in a programme approval or review, for instance. The involvement of some branch staff in moderation was very limited, and they tended not to see assessments from other campuses.

60 In the collaborations this feature was more marked. At SAE, the review team found that very few staff attended examination boards, which are therefore reduced to a bureaucratic exercise. At EAC, procedures such as annual monitoring appeared to fulfil university oversight requirements only, and its role in improvement at programme level remained unexploited.

61 Perhaps the most striking difference in academic culture between the UK and the UAE branch and collaborative campuses was the extent to which academic inquiry, if not research, was promoted (self-evidently not a matter that affects the administrative campuses). It is a truth that in UK higher education there is an expectation of, and encouragement to, scholarship that distinguishes higher from other sorts of tertiary education, even where the institution is not research-led. Bolton had clearly recognised the need for academic leadership at the outset of the partnership, and had employed an Academic Director from its home staff to fulfil the role. However, the postholder had left and had not been replaced. In his absence there was no other encouragement to scholarly activity among staff. In the other two collaborations, subject scholarly links seemed attenuated, despite the fact that in each case, collaborative scholarship and research might have been expected, given the outstanding facilities in both UAE partners.

62 Middlesex's success in this area, on the other hand, was striking. Staff appraisal covers all staff and includes targets for research, as well as other academic activities. The campus has a research committee, and weekly research seminars, attended by staff and students, are delivered by local staff and visiting staff. Staff are supported to attend conferences and encouraged to attend at least one a year. An international conference is hosted at the campus. The reviewers considered that the Middlesex branch campus resembled a UK university campus most fully in this regard.

Setting and maintaining standards

63 In the administrative and branch campuses, since programmes are the same as those in the UK in all important respects, standards setting is seemingly not problematic. Overall, the reviewers found some good examples of arrangements for institutional and programme approval, such as those at Coventry and Bradford, and none that fell seriously short of UK expectations. There was general use of the FHEQ and subject benchmark statements. Although in some cases annual monitoring was a somewhat bureaucratic exercise, it was generally effective as to oversight. In one or two cases, some innovations seemed very positive, such as the use of Faculty Advisers to report, troubleshoot and spread good practice.

64 Assessment also appeared well managed, with thought through strategies for moderation and second marking. Some organisations had developed good tools or practices to support assessment, such as the guidance on design, monitoring and review of assessment strategies in Bradford's Academic Quality Handbook, or LBS's use of teaching assistants to observe and document class performance, where it is assessed. Coventry had developed effective procedures for the moderation of examination questions, where the UK programme is not identical, whereby a Link Tutor circulates related home staff with assessment tasks and collates a response before

the paper is finalised. Heriot-Watt had developed a standard procedure for moderation of scripts including checks by home campus. Middlesex had clear guidelines for moderation, which included comparisons made between marks at different sites, though as indicated above, the University had not yet engaged the branch campus staff in moderation activities of marks at other campuses to the extent they might.

65 There were examples of gradual transfer of responsibility to local staff on the basis of demonstrated capacity. Strathclyde's local counsellors do first marking, and the system for second marking (Quality Assessment of Marking Levels) gradually reduces the monitoring requirements on demonstration of adherence to standards. This is backed up by the analysis of student performance by subject and centre with a Class Statistics Report. Bolton provided a good example of an effective strategy for gradual build-up of trust: its Off-Campus Division (OfCD) conducts annual health checks on moderation, external examining and course monitoring. The University began to hold module level assessment boards at the Ras Al Kaimah campus in January 2014.

66 The only area where standards problems emerged was in the management of external examiner arrangements. There is a fundamental question: should the remote campus use the same external examiners as the home campus, or dedicated ones? Using the same external examiners for all instances of the programme wherever offered gives the obvious assurance of a common view. Some universities (like Heriot-Watt) explicitly request external examiners to compare groups at different campuses, and supply them with statistical analyses to support their commentaries. By no means do all invite these comparisons, however, even though it seems such obviously good practice.

67 The biggest drawback of having the same external examiner for all locations is that the activity can effectively be paper-based only, except at the home campus. In some cases, especially where the work is project-based or not inherently portable, this led to complaints by external examiners that they were unable to do full justice to the assessments. Manchester has recognised this problem, and is currently engaged in a review of external examiner arrangements and actively seeking ways to facilitate opportunities for external examiners to meet students either in workshops or remotely.

68 Where the remote campus has dedicated external examiners, they can meet students and see practical work first-hand. However, finding external examiners who can devote the additional time required for overseas visits is not always easy, and the reviewers found instances of the appointment of external examiners who did not fit the person specification of the Quality Code or the home campus' usual requirements. There were other instances of dedicated external examiners not submitting reports or submitting them late.

69 Bolton's answer was to have some external examiners at subject level, but also to appoint centre external examiners with non-subject roles. This seemed a creative solution.

70 There was almost universal failure to share external examiner reports with students, and in many cases with staff. Most simply did not do it, though there is no obvious reason why students in remote campuses should not be treated in the same way as students in the UK, for whom this has been a requirement, at least in England, since the Higher Education Funding Council for England's Review of the Quality Assurance Framework of 2006.¹⁹ Heriot-Watt has decided not to share reports as a matter of policy; this has been the subject of recommendations in ELIR reports. Several institutions have intentions to share the reports, for example, Coventry states that it is going to share the reports with effect from 2013-14. It appears external examiner reports at Bolton and Middlesex are available to students, though the Bolton students were not aware of them and in the case of Middlesex, where the reports are available online, they are not drawn to students' or staff attention.

¹⁹ HEFCE Circular 2006/45 (2006), available at: admin.exeter.ac.uk/ppr_old/consultations%202006.shtml.

Careers

71 Careers prospects, and arrangements to support them, have become increasingly important as a differentiator in UK higher education over recent years. However, the trend is even more strongly marked in the UAE than in the UK. Among other indicators, the KHDA recommends a Dubai School of Government Policy Brief on Making Higher Education Choices in Dubai, which lists career counsellors first under 'Sources of Information for University Applicants in Dubai';²⁰ 44 per cent of students study business courses (four times the next highest choice of media and design); and UQAIB states that its objective is 'accelerating the development of high level human resources in the UAE'.²¹ This was reflected in the findings of the review teams.

72 Some providers were more aware than others of this feature of the UAE higher education climate, and recognised that engagement between teaching staff, students and the local business community help to raise the status of the degrees on offer.

73 For most providers, careers had a demonstrable impact on the curriculum. Many include topics like leadership development explicitly and embed employability in the curriculum. Some, like Bolton, included industry visits as integral parts of their programmes. Some, but not all, include personal development planning (PDP). Bolton integrates PDP with a personal tutor scheme and links PDP with mock interviews, public speaking, and recording academic progress. Not all manage the integration of careers support with the curriculum in the optimum way: in some cases, students felt final projects could be better connected with the local business environment.

74 Most providers put effort into developing industry and employer links. Bradford has cultivated strong links with the Dubai Health Authority and is developing more programmes in nursing studies. Middlesex encourages placements and internships, and employers frequently visit the campus to give guest lectures; programmes have targets for this kind of activity. Bolton encourages summer internships, using a network of 45 local companies, a considerable number in the context of a higher education student population of only 220: 50 per cent of students take advantage of this opportunity. The University intends also to establish Industry Advisory Boards for its programmes.

75 Strathclyde runs Strathclyde Dialogue, a conference with senior level panel discussions, guest speakers, workshops; an entrepreneurial network and a business fellow network, three times annually. In general, the Strathclyde programme is moving from written case studies to more use of real clients. The University's growing engagement with the local business community was identified as a positive feature. Exeter's EdD is a special case as it is training students for its own industry. Here students are encouraged to publish even before submission, the University provides modest funding to help students present at conferences, and publishes student papers on its website. This too, was a positive feature.

76 For many programmes, particularly those focused on business, the network of alumni that derived from participation in the programmes was a vital selling point and recognised by providers as such. LBS has an explicit strategy to make Dubai campus a hub for alumni activities as well as programmes, and mounts major alumni events, including a student led conference. LBS students were very positive about links with their London counterparts and recognised the alumni network as an important factor in choosing School.

77 There was some variability in the provision of direct careers support. Of the branch campuses, the careers service at Heriot-Watt is relatively undeveloped, with a single member of staff for the 3,500 students (though the member of staff is much valued by the students).

²⁰ Al Fardan, H and Belrehif, F (2012) 'Making Higher Education Choices in Dubai', Dubai School of Government Policy Brief No. 31, available at: <http://www.dsg.ae/en/Publication/Description.aspx?PubID=298&PrimenuID=0&mnu=Pri>.

²¹ KHDA (2013) *UQAIB Quality Assurance Manual Version 2.0*. pp 15, available at: www.khda.gov.ae/En/Reports/Publications.aspx.

The University intends to expand and improve this provision. The Middlesex Careers service, on the other hand, was a real driver and centre of activity, establishing and managing mentoring schemes, careers days, handbooks and newsletters, fieldwork modules, trips, and work placements. The Middlesex Careers Service and its productive engagement with employers was a feature of good practice.

78 Of the administrative campuses, LBS offers a Dubai-based career coach, an online portal where employers can post job opportunities, and careers events. However, presentation of careers information on internal LBS systems appeared somewhat London-centric, and Dubai students believed they were not getting same level of support as in UK. Strathclyde was 'seeking to improve' its careers advice (though in the context of strong industry engagement). Cass stated that financial constraints at University level limited their ability to provide an improved career advice, and recognised that more could be done to enable students to exploit the alumni network.

The UK brand in the UAE

79 Students in all the UAE TNE sites under review believed that the UK degree had international value that made it an attractive option. Even in the biggest of the campuses, Heriot-Watt, students believed themselves to be students of the global University, not just of the local campus. Students in several campuses echoed the explicit view of those of the Cass Business School that the staff profile and reputation of UK staff were very important factors in their choice of postgraduate provider. Inevitably, staff profile was of particular significance for students paying the highest fees. The opportunity to take some part of their programme in the UK was important for many students (even undergraduates), even though take-up was limited. Students of all kinds therefore clearly saw the UK origin of their degrees as attractive and important.

80 The reviewers noted that, to date, UK providers overall have been less than fully aware of the opportunities to UK students offered by the UAE. The reviewers met a single student who had transferred to the UAE for academic reasons: a second-year undergraduate student of Civil Engineering from Bolton, who had decided that UAE experience would make her degree more marketable. The strong industry links of the programme obviously supported this view. But common sense suggests that for a Civil Engineering student, the wider opportunities offered by a country with the building programme of the UAE are extensive. Similar opportunities seemed to beckon, for instance, in the aviation industry: the Emirates Airline is by some measures the largest in the world and Dubai International is about to take over from Heathrow as the busiest airport. However, it appeared that a long-established link between a UK university and the training arm of the airline had stimulated a relatively limited, one-way traffic to date.

81 UAE federal regulation means that a UK degree earned in one of the free zones is recognised in all countries of the world, except for the UAE itself. Of the offerings under review, Strathclyde's avoids this problem, since it is recognised by the UAE federal authority, the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR). Most of the Coventry awards at EAC are also recognised by MOHESR. For all except Bolton, the KHDA, which licences foreign university offerings in Dubai, plays an invaluable role in certifying UK degrees for recognition in the emirate. However, there is no equivalent of KHDA in Ras Al Khaimah, and students voiced concerns about government recognition of their awards, which must be done on an individual basis.

Conclusion

82 The latest data from the HESA's Aggregate Offshore Record reveals that of all UK higher education institutions, 70 of them (over 40 per cent) were engaged in some form of TNE activity in the UAE in 2012-13. This activity involves just over 15,000 students, representing an increase of 37 per cent during the past two years. This increase has been most noticeable in the number of students studying in the two large branch campuses of Heriot-Watt University and Middlesex University, which account for 78 per cent of the students working towards a UK award in the Dubai free zones.

83 Imported TNE has played a key role in the development of the UAE higher education landscape over the past 10 years. Education provision from foreign institutions is seen by federal government and individual emirates, in particular the emirate of Dubai, as key to diversify their economy from oil production and develop the skilled workforce required for developing a service and knowledge-based economy. The focus is on importing quality, non-mediated foreign programmes which are as close as possible to the original programmes delivered at the institutions' home campus. This also explains why the dominant model of TNE provision in the UAE is the branch campus.

84 Indeed the UAE is the country hosting the largest number of international branch campuses in the world, currently hosting 37 from 11 different countries, with the UK being the highest sending country. These branch campuses cater primarily to the large expatriate community, and increasingly to international students from the neighbouring regions, contributing to making the UAE a successful higher education hub. The vast majority of these international branch campuses (70 per cent) are based in the free trade zones that the emirate of Dubai has established to attract foreign investment and stimulate commercial activity, and in particular the Dubai Knowledge Village and Dubai International Academic City, which were specifically created to attract foreign education providers.

85 Although TNE provided in the country's free trade zones are exempt from federal regulation, foreign providers wishing to operate in the Dubai free zones must receive authorisation and have their programme approved by KHDA, the Dubai's government authority regulating the education and training sector in the emirate. In overseeing the quality of international branch campuses operating in the Dubai's free zones, KHDA, through its internal quality assurance body UQAIB, places particular reliance on the quality assurance and accreditation from the home country.

86 Most of the UK TNE that QAA reviewed in the UAE was based in the Dubai free zones, and QAA worked closely with KHDA throughout the review process. KHDA provided country briefing to the review team, shared data from the university census it conducts annually, and observed the review visits to the nine providers operating within the Dubai free trade zones.

87 This overview report is based on an analysis of HESA and KHDA data, and on the individual reviews, which focused on the management of provision by the reviewed institutions. The latter were conducted with reference to the Quality Code, which applies not only to educational provision in the UK, but also to TNE. The individual review reports identify positive features as well as recommendations for UK institutions. QAA will follow up UK institutions' responses to recommendations arising from the TNE review through the institutional review process.

88 This overview report presents six themes arising from the 11 individual reports: branch and other campuses; going global; staffing; setting and maintaining standards; careers; and the UK brand in the UAE.

- 89 The following observations from QAA's review of UK TNE in the UAE review can be made.
- Awareness of the changing parameters of the operation is a critical factor determining the extent to which the aims and strategies for provision of UK HE in the UAE are articulated and effectively implemented.
 - The most effective branch campuses realise that if the UAE centre is a campus in the full sense, then it must run like one with the full range of supports including pastoral, careers and social facilities. Institutions should consider the expectations they are raising in promising a global campus experience.
 - For the administrative campus, simplicity is fundamental: the introduction of greater complexity changes the demands on the management of academic quality and standards.
 - On branch campuses, institutions can do more to introduce a UK academic culture. This means engaging branch campus staff in academic governance and quality assurance, and encouraging a culture of scholarly enquiry.
 - Locally recruited part-time and fixed-contract staffing need similar kinds of support to what is routinely offered to full-time, permanent staff (appointment practices, probation, staff development and so on).
 - There should be better management of external examiner arrangements. In particular external examiner reports should be shared with students.
 - Arrangements to support careers development, including the content of the curriculum, industry links, alumni networks, and careers services are particularly important in the UAE.
 - VLEs are not used as comprehensively as they could be in supporting UK TNE.
 - The UK brand is a valuable selling point in the UAE. Not all providers have realised the full potential of their links for students in the UK.

Annex 1: UK institutions' links with the British University in Dubai

The British University in Dubai (BUID) is licensed by the UAE Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. BUID is not itself a UK university however a number of UK universities have bilateral agreements with BUID. These include Cardiff University, the University of Edinburgh, and the University of Manchester. Similar agreements with the University of Birmingham and Kings College London have recently reached full-term and are in the process of run-out.

The agreements, which relate to specified programmes, are based mainly on a fees-for-services model and cover provision of programme materials, advice on the appointment of staff and external examiners, and, in some cases, access to e-resources. There is no direct involvement by the UK universities in teaching or assessment, but there are stipulations relating to monitoring quality assurance arrangements at BUID, which provide for an annual visit and attendance at academic committees at BUID. The agreements also permit BUID to use the UK university's logo on its degree certificates for programmes within the scope of the agreement and for the certificates to mention the arrangement with the UK university concerned.

Such arrangements do not fit the definition of TNE that QAA normally uses, which covers higher education provision of a UK degree-awarding body that is delivered in a country outside the UK. None of the UK universities act as a degree-awarding body for BUID, so none has ultimate responsibility for the academic standards or the quality of programmes of study at BUID. As a consequence, QAA does not have a remit to undertake a review of quality and standards at BUID: this is a matter between BUID and the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA); therefore, QAA did not include BUID in its programme of review visits in UAE.

However, QAA does have a legitimate interest in aspects of the UK universities' arrangements with BUID insofar as these may affect the reputation of UK provision in the UAE on a collective basis. The particular interest is that the public should clearly understand the nature and standing of the programmes offered under the arrangements with BUID. In this context, QAA is of the view that the certificates issued by BUID could give the impression that UK universities have an involvement in the assessment and award of degrees, which they do not, and has advised that this point should be given due consideration by the UK universities when their agreements with BUID come to be reviewed.

Annex 2: UK institutions with TNE provision not reviewed during the visit

The table below lists the UK institutions with TNE provision (of more than 75 students) in the UAE that were not reviewed during the visit.

Institution	Details of the provision
Oxford Brookes University	Studying for an ACCA award.
University of Liverpool	Distance learning postgraduate programmes delivered with Laureate Online Education.
University of Leicester	University's distance learning programmes.
University of London	Business and finance programmes at Western International College, RAK and distance learning programmes.
University of Bedfordshire	Business Management, Fashion Design, IT and Interior Design programmes at Preston University, Ajman.
Heriot-Watt University	University's distance learning programmes.
Robert Gordon University	University's distance learning programmes.
University of Northampton	University's supported distance learning MBA programme with Stafford Associates.
Sheffield Hallam University	Quantity Surveying and Construction Management programme with ICBT and distance learning programmes.
University of Nottingham	PGCE(i) programme and distance learning programmes

Note: a further 51 UK institutions have registered TNE students in UAE on the HESA aggregate record. All of these have registered less than 75 students, with 43 institutions registering less than 20 students.

Annex 3: Review reports executive summaries

City University London, Cass Business School

The Cass Business School (the School) at City University London (the University) has been delivering its Executive Master's in Business Administration (EMBA) in Dubai since 2007, when the University opened a representative office in the Dubai International Finance Centre.

In 2009 new offices for the Cass and City's Dubai Centre were launched under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Ruler of Dubai. The Dubai Centre provides administrative and logistics support for the delivery of the School's EMBA and other University programmes. The offices also function as an administrative hub for profile raising, brand building, marketing, business development, corporate links, alumni relations, recruitment of students and expanding activities in the region.

The EMBA programme delivered at the Dubai Centre is offered on a two-year part-time basis, taught by staff from the School in a block-teaching weekend format and supported by online learning. The format has been designed to make the programme accessible to business executives in the region regardless of their location and full-time job commitments.

There were 190 students registered on the programme in 2013, with 60 new enrolments. The majority of students are nationals of other Arab countries in the region and from Central Asia, and are primarily resident in the UAE or nearby countries in the Gulf. Less than 10 per cent of students are UAE nationals.

The day-to-day management of the Dubai Centre is undertaken by the Head of the Dubai Centre, who is also Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa, supported by three full-time Dubai-based staff. The academic management of the EMBA programme is overseen by the Programme Director, based in London, who has overall responsibility for the effective delivery of the programme in Dubai. The Dubai Centre also has an Advisory Board which has members from Cass, City University, and a number of senior executives based in the UAE who are active in regional affairs.

It is less clear who has overall oversight of the Dubai Centre at strategic University-level, and whether ultimate oversight resides with the School or a central University function. Students perceived a lack of engagement from the University in the appropriate branding and support of the School provision in Dubai and the region, in particular in relation to other providers; though students did comment very positively on their engagement with academic staff from the School, appreciating the quality of teaching, the academic calibre and reputation of the teaching staff and their business experience and the academic support given by the School staff.

In addition to the EMBA programme, the Dubai Centre offers short executive courses, and component modules of the modular master's programmes in Air Transport Management, Air Safety Management, and Aircraft Maintenance Management run by the School of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences. Modules of these programmes can be taken in different locations around the world including Dubai, Bahrain, Frankfurt and London. In 2013 there were over 400 students worldwide on these master's courses, of whom approximately 80 students were taking modules in Dubai.

The University has no intention to develop the School's Dubai Centre into a branch campus with locally based teaching staff. However, it plans to expand the range of programmes offered in Dubai.

Coventry University and Emirates Aviation College

The partnership between Coventry University (the University) and Emirates Aviation College (the College) was established in May 2006. The partnership offers a suite of taught postgraduate awards and top-up programmes leading to undergraduate degrees related to the aerospace industry. Apart from the postgraduate taught Human Resource Management programmes, which are taught entirely by University 'flying faculty', all teaching is by the College. All programmes are delivered and assessed in English. Two main delivery models are used: more or less conventional, semesterised and modularised full-time teaching, and block delivery, usually over five days, followed by a period for completion of assignments by supported self-study. All postgraduate and some undergraduate courses are taught in block mode. The University is the sole awarding body for the top-up awards; the postgraduate awards are dual awards of both the College and the University. There are two annual intakes with a total of 220 students admitted each year.

The review identified several positive features, including the rigorous institutional approval procedures and the quality of learning resources available at the College. The University's application of its quality assurance requirements was generally thorough in its partnership with the College. The procedures and their implementation meet the Expectations of *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), and flaws were in matters of detail only. Though the University's approach is generally effective, it appeared that it was more effective in terms of University oversight than enhancement at the College. Enhancement requires some degree of ownership by the partner, but as yet it seems that the University has not taken steps to encourage the College to engage with the wider purposes of quality assurance procedures. Moreover, academic links between staff at the University and the College, beyond the demands of quality assurance oversight, are relatively undeveloped. Though the University's strategy is for 'deep' partnerships, and it wishes explicitly to foster applied research projects with multinational companies, little such activity is in evidence at the College, though the University is strong in aviation studies and the Emirates Group offers the potential of what is, by some measures, the largest passenger airline in the world.

Heriot-Watt University, Dubai Campus

Heriot-Watt University (the University) opened its Dubai campus in 2005. Since then the number of students has grown from 120 to 3,500. The University's portfolio of 58 programmes matches the demands of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) employment market, and includes foundation, undergraduate and master's courses. Students come from 80 nationalities, the largest groups being from India and Pakistan, who respectively make up about a third and about a sixth of the student population. In 2013, the University completed the second phase of a two-phase expansion into a new, purpose-built facility.

The University's accommodation in Dubai and most of the infrastructure is provided by Eikon International Holdings, a company registered in Dubai. Eikon also provides staffing for a number of functions and services including, for example, IT, student services, transport, accommodation and visas. The University has total responsibility for academic provision and staff, as well as the quality of the student experience; it sets and monitors the standards of the outsourced services. The University employs the teaching staff at the Dubai campus. All Dubai-based staff are full members of academic schools.

The University follows a strategy of alignment for all its transnational education: students may have diverse learning experiences, but standards are identical wherever Heriot-Watt programmes are offered. The University has worked closely with the Dubai authorities to ensure that it meets all UAE and Dubai regulatory requirements. All awards are made by the University and the qualifications are licensed by the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) on an annual, programme-by-programme basis.

The review identified positive features, including the imaginative and concerted way the University manages student representation and the extent to which it has succeeded in incorporating Dubai students into an institution-wide student body. The review found that the University's integration of policies, structures and staff responsibilities across the whole organisation flowed from the carefully thought-through implications of its International Strategy, and was reflected in its arrangements for governance and management, not just of the branch, but of the whole organisation. The review identified some actions for the University, including improving training and support for fixed-term, part-time lecturers, progressing its intention to align student services capacity more closely with what is provided at its UK campuses, and keeping assessment feedback and turnaround times under review.

London Business School

London Business School (the School) has offered its Executive MBA (EMBA) in Dubai since 2006. The establishment of the Dubai Centre was informed by the School's international strategy and was well planned. Enrolment is around 120 students a year and the programme is one of two pathways for the School's EMBA provision with the same curriculum, academic standards and award. The main difference is that teaching is in week-long blocks rather than at weekends, mostly in Dubai but with three core blocks, as well as electives in London. The links between the Dubai and London-based pathways enrich the educational experience of students.

The programme is delivered and assessed by London-based faculty, while student support is provided locally. Risk is monitored as an integral part of the School's processes. Students are generally very satisfied with the quality of their learning experience and the resources made available, though they did feel that more use could be made of their experience in some areas of learning and assessment. Students have very high expectations of the programme, as well as careers support and the alumni network. They do not always perceive that these expectations have been met despite the substantial resources provided. In part, this perception results from the presentation of information on internal systems which is London-centric rather than based on a distributed student body, such as in the case of available electives.

The faculty is very international and many members have limited experience of UK quality requirements prior to joining the School. Significant attention has been paid to aligning the School's practice with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), though some exceptions remain. An innovative approach to annual monitoring is through a Faculty Adviser, which is in effect a peer review system that is both proactive and reflective. The School has currently no intention to develop the Dubai Centre into an academic branch campus. However, it is keen to extend its functions from an administrative basis supporting the delivery of the EMBA programme in Dubai to a hub facilitating the School's full engagement with the region.

Middlesex University Dubai Campus

Middlesex University (the University) aims to make it possible for students around the globe to study and gain Middlesex University degrees wherever they live. The campus in Dubai opened in Dubai Knowledge Village in 2005 and now teaches more than 2,653 students drawn mainly from the Middle East and South Asia regions. The University offers 15 postgraduate programmes and 23 undergraduate programmes in Dubai, spanning business-related programmes, media, education and psychology. The campus is a Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA)-registered higher education provider and all programmes have the University Quality Assurance International Board approval.

All Middlesex campuses are integrated into mainstream processes and procedures and as such operate as one organisation. In Dubai, the Pro Vice-Chancellor/Director fulfils a similar role as a Dean of School. Regular communication occurs between academic and administrative staff on the main campus in Hendon and Dubai-based staff. Students are able to move between all Middlesex campuses to undertake their studies and there is growing interaction between students across campuses during their studies.

The pastoral and academic support provided to students was a particular strength noted in the review and this has been further enhanced through the provision of student learning advisers. Students have a range of opportunities for engaging with employers during their studies with employability embedded within the curriculum and extracurricular activities provided. There is a growing research culture which is acknowledged and welcomed by both staff and students. Other positive features include the quality of information provided to students through a range of handbooks.

With the branch being well established and staff at the Dubai campus very familiar with University processes and systems, there is opportunity for greater engagement of staff in Dubai with operational matters, such as assessment, programme validation and review, and decision-making processes through involvement in the University's deliberative structures.

Middlesex University and SAE Institute, Dubai

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

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

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

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

University of Bolton and Western International College, Ras Al Khaimah

The University of Bolton (the University) established the collaborative partnership in the emirate of Ras Al Khaimah (RAK) in 2008 in association with the infrastructure provider Western International College (the College). The site where the College is located is shared with the American University of RAK. The purpose of this initiative was to provide high quality UK higher education programmes to the expatriate community working in the UAE. The College attracts significant numbers of local students and believes that its strength is best value UK higher education in the UAE, providing a service for RAK-based schools.

The College provides all of the facilities, resources and staffing (approved by the University). The University provides courses, quality assurance processes and academic support. The courses are offered under a franchise relationship between the University and the College. The College offers undergraduate programmes in accountancy, business management, computing, civil engineering and mechanical engineering; and postgraduate programmes in business administration and information technology. There are currently 178 full-time undergraduate students and 40 part-time postgraduates.

The ethos of the College is to produce professional, academically qualified practitioners and the University sees this as contributing to its mission 'to unlock the potential within individuals and organisations through the excellence and responsiveness of our teaching, research and student support'. The academic and pastoral student support provided to students within the curriculum and through extracurricular activities is identified as a positive feature of the provision. Also of note, are the opportunities for students to develop their employability skills within the curriculum and through work-based activities with industry. The partnership with the College has matured and positive actions have been taken by the University to devolve greater responsibility and oversight of the campus to the College, supported through the introduction of annual health checks by the University.

In light of the growing responsibilities devolved to the College, the locus of academic leadership at the campus now needs to be reviewed and attention needs to be directed towards the development of research activity and staff development, with appropriate financial support for implementation. With the development of greater autonomy for the campus, staff at the College would benefit from being more effectively engaged in annual monitoring and programme review and approval. Processes for assessment and feedback also require strengthening. Student recruitment remains a challenge in some areas, leading to low student cohorts, and this has the potential to impact on the learning experience of students. The IT infrastructure within the College requires strengthening.

University of Bradford in Dubai

The University of Bradford's (the University's) School of Management has been delivering an Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) programme in Dubai for 16 years. Originally a closed executive programme for the Emirates Airline, it became an open programme to applicants in 2009 following the establishment of the University's Middle East Regional Office (MERO). MERO is based in the free zone of the Dubai Knowledge Village (DKV) and serves as a hub of the University International Office with responsibility for student recruitment in the region and administrative support for staff delivering University courses in Dubai. Oversight of MERO operations resides with the Head of MERO, who is based in Bradford and reports to the Director of International Development.

The University currently offers two programmes in Dubai: the EMBA, delivered by the School of Management, and a Master's (MSc) in International Health Management, delivered since 2012 by the School of Health Studies. Both courses are delivered in weekend block teaching for three days every four to six weeks. Both courses are taught by University staff and supported by online tutorials. There were 162 students registered on the EMBA course and 12 registered on the MSc in International Health Management in 2013.

Although the University has a cap on EMBA numbers in Dubai to ensure the quality of the student experience, it intends to increase the number of students on the MSc in International Health Management to up to 30 students per annum, recruiting from a wider range of Health Service employers. The University is also planning to deliver an MSc Nursing Studies (International) and a BSc (Hons) Nursing Studies (International), and has been working closely with regional agencies and health providers in the region to facilitate this future development. The University stated that submission for the required Institutional Licensure and Program Accreditation from the Commission for Academic Administration (CAA), the federal quality assurance agency charged with licensing institutions and accrediting their programmes, is being considered for spring 2014. In the meantime, the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) has already approved the MSc Nursing Studies (International) for delivery from September 2014 and at the time of the review visit, the BSc (Hons) Nursing Studies (International) was also under review for delivery in September 2014.

Students appreciate the block-teaching fly-in/fly-out delivery model as they value being taught by staff from the University and it allows them to accommodate study with full-time employment. Students also appreciate being able to liaise with the staff located at MERO, who are perceived as responsive to their needs. However, students, particularly those registered on the EMBA programme, have expressed a view that MERO could be enhanced and extended from an administrative centre into more of a campus for students to study and access online resources. This is less of an issue for students on the MSc in International Health Management because they have access to the physical and electronic library resources of the Dubai Health Authority medical library, as part of the Memorandum of Understanding that the School of Health Studies has signed with the Dubai Health Authority.

All programme aims and learning outcomes for courses delivered on-site in Dubai are identical to the courses delivered in the UK, with some customisation, for example case study material. A single EMBA programme specification applies to all pathways that are delivered in the different regional centres of the University in Singapore, Hong Kong, Manila and Perugia. Since the curriculum delivered in Dubai is essentially identical to that delivered in the UK, the setting of academic standards is a product of the mainstream UK programme approval process.

University of Exeter

The University of Exeter (the University) has delivered a Doctorate in Education (EdD) in Dubai since 1999, moving to its current site in Dubai Knowledge Village in 2010. Specialising in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), this professional doctorate forms a pathway within the Graduate School of Education's (the School's) overall EdD provision. There are 69 registered students; all study part-time and typically work in educational institutions in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other Gulf countries.

The programme is delivered by core 'flying faculty' from the University, combined with well qualified local tutors. It uses a block mode of delivery with regular workshops. Student support between workshops is provided remotely from the University, and through self-service office and library facilities in Dubai. As a result, students get an equivalent experience to studying in the UK with the same programme and faculty. The same internal systems are used, including MyPGR, which is used to track student progress and supervisor interaction.

Academic standards are common in the UK and Dubai, with the ability to study modules at either location if desired. Students are encouraged, but not required, to travel to Exeter during their studies. Electronic communication and learning resources mean that the student experience is comparable with part-time study in the UK.

While students in Dubai do not have direct access to the Exeter campus' academic community, the University has developed students' participation in academic conferences and research forums more systematically than in the UK. Student feedback is actively sought, though student participation in the wider School and the College of Social Sciences and International Studies (the College) has been very limited.

The University has a long-standing connection with the Arab world, starting in the 1970s, with a specific focus on the Gulf, particularly the UAE. This includes the University's Exeter-based Centre for Gulf Studies. The EdD programme is seen as part of this special connection with the UAE, as well as contributing to the development of high-level professional TESOL skills in the region. However, the relative emphasis on the Arab world and the Gulf in the University's overall international activities has reduced. For this reason, while the programme is significant within the College and School as an integral and valued part of postgraduate research in education, the University-level strategic significance of the programme's delivery model is limited. The University has no plans to open other international locations for the EdD.

University of Manchester

The Manchester University Business School (the School) has an extensive network of international centres in several countries around the world supporting the delivery of a part-time Global Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme. As part of its strategy to expand the provision of its Global MBA programme in key global business hubs with high demand for executive business education, the School opened its Middle East Centre in the Dubai Knowledge Village in 2006.

The Global MBA programme is taught in all its international centres by dedicated School staff, following a standard block workshop delivery format, supported by additional online learning. The programme provides opportunities for students to attend modules at different centres around the world, enabling experienced professionals to study globally. The Global MBA programme has over 2200 students registered worldwide, of whom 860 were registered in Dubai in 2013.

The Middle East Centre is professionally organised and well managed with appropriate levels of staffing and resources for students to engage with their programmes of study. The core MBA teaching team, drawn from the School's faculty, is trained, briefed and oriented to deliver the programmes in Dubai. Students expressed overall satisfaction with the delivery of the programme at the Middle East Centre, including the support they received by Dubai-based administrative staff. The MBA Programme Director has overall oversight of the delivery of the Global MBA programme across the world, including in Dubai.

The University of Manchester (the University) indicated that a new, shorter part-time Global MBA programme was launched in January 2014, in response to students' demand to be able to complete their studies before the 36-month period set for the previous Global MBA. This new programme will run over 30 months. In addition, a new part-time Global Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) programme is launching in July 2014 targeting between 30 and 60 mid to senior executive students. Each cohort will travel as a closed group every semester to attend workshops at one of the worldwide centres, enabling every student to have the full flexibility to study modules in a range of the School's centres around the world. The first Global EMBA workshops will be held in Dubai during Easter 2015.

The School currently has no intention to develop the Middle East Centre into a full branch campus with locally employed academic staff; however, it sees the Dubai Centre as a platform from which to eventually deliver further programmes and engage with the wider region.

University of Strathclyde

The University of Strathclyde (the University) has run its Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme in Dubai since 1995 and in Abu Dhabi since 2005. Within the Strathclyde Business School the MBA programme is run on an effective global basis in the UK and nine local centres, including two in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Around 25 to 30 students are recruited twice a year in each centre for the programme, which can be completed in two years.

In the UAE, the University has federal accreditation from the Commission for Academic Accreditation, which allows it to operate outside the free trade zones. It has a partnership with the Higher Colleges of Technology, the largest federal higher education institute in the UAE, which provides facilities and some further support but is not involved in recruiting students or delivering learning. The partnership is a variant of the University's normal contract with a local partner and has provided a basis for delivery of the MBA for many years. While three master's programmes have been accredited in addition to the MBA, these have not attracted sufficient students to be viable.

Core teaching is done by the University faculty who work globally and is delivered through intensive seminars and workshops, typically in two-day blocks. Global coordinators based in the UK and UAE manage the curriculum and teaching of subject areas. This is supported by local counsellors in each subject area who run tutorials and complete first-marking of student assessments. While students are very positive about the University faculty and many local counsellors, they saw significant variability in the quality of teaching and feedback between local counsellors.

While the approach to programme content is global, there is adaptation to local contexts. Assessment and academic standards are managed globally, together with monitoring of local performance. Growing use is being made of the University's virtual learning environment, 'MyPlace'. However, issues with its functionality have led to the use of an alternative platform to provide local materials. In the UAE, the University engages actively with the business community and its alumni, thereby enhancing the student experience.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel: 01452 557 000

Email: enquiries@qaa.ac.uk

Website: www.qaa.ac.uk

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