



QAA

Audit of overseas provision, Singapore

Overview report

July 2011

Acknowledgements

QAA wishes to thank the UK higher education institutions and their partners in Singapore for their cooperation and assistance; the British Council, Singapore, for its help with planning and logistics; and the relevant Singaporean authorities for taking time to provide useful contextual information on higher education in Singapore.

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2011

ISBN 978 1 84979 317 9

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Contents

Introduction	3
Background	3
Higher education in Singapore	4
Regulation of private education in Singapore	5
Provision in Singapore by UK higher education institutions	6
Results of the survey	6
The audits in brief	10
Key points from the audits	12
The case studies in brief	14
Conclusion	16

Introduction

Many higher education institutions in the United Kingdom (UK) offer their programmes to students wishing to study outside the UK through collaborations with other organisations, at overseas campuses or through distance learning. Data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency showed that about 408,000 students were studying overseas for UK higher education awards during the 2009-10 academic year.

Higher education institutions are responsible for maintaining the academic standards of their awards, whether delivered in the UK or elsewhere, or in partnership with other organisations. Through a process called Audit of overseas provision, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) reviews both the partnership arrangements that UK institutions have made with organisations in other countries to deliver UK programmes and programmes delivered on UK institutions' overseas campuses. QAA usually reviews distance-learning programmes as part of activities carried out in the UK.

QAA does not review or accredit partner institutions outside the UK, but provides guidance for UK higher education institutions on selecting partners and agents through the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*.

Audit of overseas provision is carried out according to the same principles and processes as Institutional audit. It is a peer-review, evidence-based process in four stages: the UK institution writes a briefing paper; an audit team visits the UK institution to meet staff and (where applicable) students; the same team visits the partner institution or campus overseas; and the team prepares an audit report on its findings.

QAA conduct's Audit of overseas provision on a country by country basis. Some institutions with provision in the country in question may not be included in the sample selected for audit, but may participate in an information gathering exercise which informs an overview report, or in case studies exploring particular aspects of overseas partnership provision.

Background

In the 2010-11 academic year, QAA conducted an Audit of overseas provision in Singapore. The following 10 partnerships were audited:

- Coventry University and Auston Institute of Management
- Heriot-Watt University and Trent Global College
- London South Bank University, Nanyang Polytechnic and Singapore General Hospital
- Open University and LASALLE College of the Arts
- University of London International Programmes and Singapore Institute of Management (SIM University)
- University of Manchester and Sotheby's Institute of Art
- Northumbria University and the Marketing Institute of Singapore Training Centre
- University of Wales and TCA College
- University of Warwick, Singapore Institute of Manufacturing Technology and SIM University
- University of Wolverhampton and TEG International College.

In the same year, QAA also researched and wrote nine case studies based on a further 10 partnerships:

- Imperial College London and the A* STAR Agency for Science, Technology and Research
- London School of Economics and Political Science and the National University of Singapore
- Loughborough University and PSB Academy
- Oxford Brookes University and Informatics Education Ltd
- University of Birmingham and SIM University
- University of Bradford and the Management Development Institute of Singapore
- University of Huddersfield and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts
- University of Nottingham and the Building & Construction Authority Academy
- University of Strathclyde and Nanyang Technological University
- University of Wales, Newport, and the Asian Educational Consortium College.

Visits to the UK institutions were made between September and November 2010. The visits to partner institutions in Singapore took place between 17 and 27 January 2011. The QAA team, comprising six auditors and three QAA assistant directors, split into three sub-teams for the visits in the UK and Singapore. One case study, involving two UK-Singapore partnerships, was conducted as a desk-based exercise. The 10 audit reports and nine case studies were published on QAA's website in July 2011.

This overview, as well as briefly introducing each of the audits and case studies, gives a short description of the landscape of higher education in Singapore at the time of the audit, so as to give a better understanding of the context within which the UK institutions are operating. It also provides some analysis of the extent of activity by UK institutions in Singapore, based on survey results obtained before the audit. Key points arising from the audits are also highlighted.

Higher education in Singapore

Responsibility for higher education in Singapore resides with the Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education of Singapore. The Higher Education Division oversees the provision of tertiary and technical education as well as registration of private schools, including foreign providers. The Singapore higher education landscape currently comprises:

- four publicly-funded autonomous universities offering full-time bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programmes: the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore Management University, and Singapore University of Technology and Design
- SIM University, a private comprehensive institution that offers publicly subsidised part-time degree programmes for adult learners and working professionals
- five polytechnics offering three-year diploma courses in vocational fields: Nanyang Polytechnic, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic, and Temasek Polytechnic
- the Institute of Technical Education, which offers up to two-year certificate programmes in a variety of areas relevant to industry
- the newly established Singapore Institute of Technology, which, starting from 2010, offers industry-focused university programmes for polytechnic graduates in partnership with the five polytechnics and overseas universities

- two arts institutes, LASALLE College of the Arts and Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, which provide diploma programmes in visual and performing arts
- a number of foreign universities' branch campuses, and many private education institutions, which offer various external degree programmes through partnerships with overseas universities.

According to UNESCO's Global Education Digest 2010,¹ in 2008 there were about 200,000 students in higher education in Singapore, approximately 61 per cent of whom were studying in the private sector. The most recent Ministry of Education data for 2009 shows that of all full-time students approximately 34 per cent are enrolled in universities, 47 per cent in polytechnics, 16 per cent in the Institute of Technical Education, and 3 per cent in the two arts institutions. Of these, approximately 30 per cent are enrolled on programmes in engineering sciences, 20 per cent in business administration, 15 per cent in information technology, 10 per cent in fine and applied arts, and 7.5 per cent each in humanities and social sciences, sciences, and medicine.

Regulation of private education in Singapore

In September 2009 the parliament of Singapore passed the Private Education Act (PE Act) to strengthen the regulatory framework for the private education sector, which has grown rapidly in tandem with the public sector in recent years. Under the PE ACT, the Ministry of Education has established an independent statutory board, the Council for Private Education (CPE), with the legislative power to implement and enforce the new regulatory framework. The new regulatory regime overseen by the CPE includes a strengthened registration framework called the Enhanced Registration Framework, and a quality certification scheme called EduTrust.

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

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

At the time of the Audit of overseas provision in Singapore, PEIs working with UK higher education institutions had registered on the Enhanced Registration Framework and were at varying stages in their applications for EduTrust certification. The Enhanced Registration Framework requires a range of information to be provided to the CPE about the foreign partner (in this case, UK higher education institutions) and the courses to be offered. In addition, heads of all UK institutions partnering with private providers are required formally to confirm their commitment to requirements set out by CPE.

¹UNESCO (2010) Global Education Digest 2010, UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Information notes on the Enhanced Registration Framework specify that the CPE will only permit foreign institutions 'to award certificates and diplomas in Singapore if such programmes are being conducted at its home campus and have at least a batch of students already graduated from them'. In the course of the Audit of overseas provision, the team learned that in Singapore a programme leading to an award from a UK partner is commonly assumed to be the same as an existing programme delivered by the UK institution at its home campus.

As part of the process, audit teams routinely discussed with staff in the UK and Singapore the requirements for the Enhanced Registration Framework and the current status of applications for EduTrust. Individual audit reports and, where relevant, case studies refer to the status of EduTrust application and certification status. Further information on the Enhanced Registration Framework and EduTrust can be found at www.cpe.gov.sg.

Provision in Singapore by UK higher education institutions

In November 2009, QAA surveyed all UK higher education institutions to establish the nature and extent of their provision in Singapore. For this purpose, 'provision in Singapore' was defined as educational provision leading to an award (or to specific credit toward an award) delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through collaboration with a partner organisation. The four main types of provision in the scope of the survey:

- programmes studied entirely in Singapore with a partner institution (in-country)
- programmes studied partially with a partner institution in Singapore and partially in the UK (twinning)
- programmes studied with a partner institution in Singapore that lead to a qualification from the Singaporean institution, giving entry with advanced standing to a programme offered by the UK institution (articulation)
- distance-learning (including e-learning) programmes offered by the UK institution to students in Singapore, with learning support provided by a Singaporean partner (distance learning).

Provision involving non award-bearing programmes, such as contribution by a UK institution to the design or teaching of a programme, or training or continuing professional development courses, fell outside the scope of the survey, as did collaborations solely involving research without leading to the award of any associated qualification.

Results of the survey

Scale of activity

171 UK institutions responded to the survey of provision in Singapore. The results presented below describe the situation found for the 2009-10 academic year.

66 UK institutions were either planning to start or had one or more existing links with Singaporean partners within the scope outlined above. Between them, institutions in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland had links with 82 Singaporean partner organisations, a total of 140 separate links involving some 471 programmes.

Almost half of the UK institutions had one link, a quarter had two, and the remainder between three and seven links in Singapore (see figure 1).

By comparison, almost two-thirds (65 per cent, or 54) of the Singaporean institutions had a link with one UK institution, 15 per cent (or 13) had two links, and the remainder had between three to six links (see figure 2). The vast majority of Singaporean institutions were privately funded.

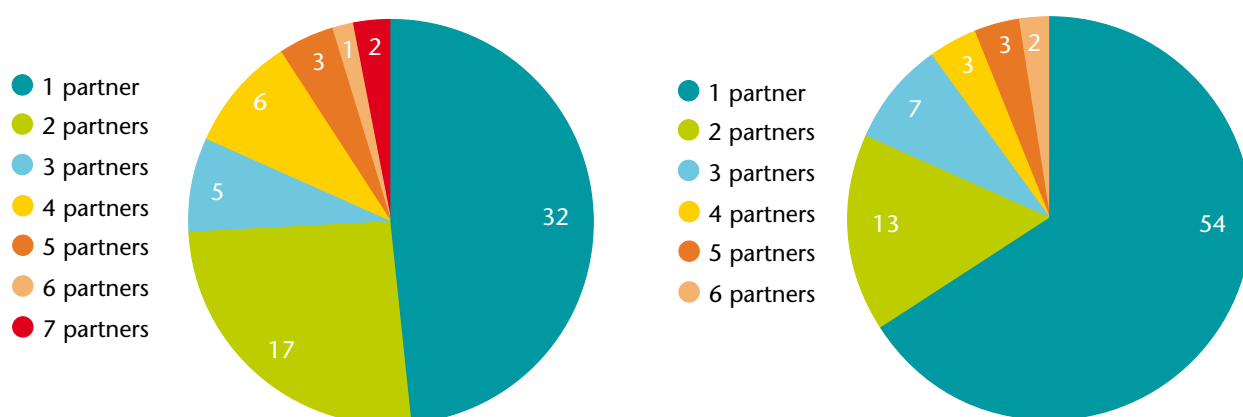


Figure 1: Singaporean partners per UK institution Figure 2: UK partners per Singaporean institution

Characteristics of the collaborations

At the time of the survey, almost two-thirds of the partnerships were under two years old. Of these, 19 per cent were scheduled to start in the next year or so, 12 per cent were less than a year old, and 30 per cent were one to two years old. 20 per cent of the partnerships were three to five years old, 11 per cent were six to 10 years old, and eight per cent 11 or more years (see figure 3). The longest-standing link was established over 20 years ago.

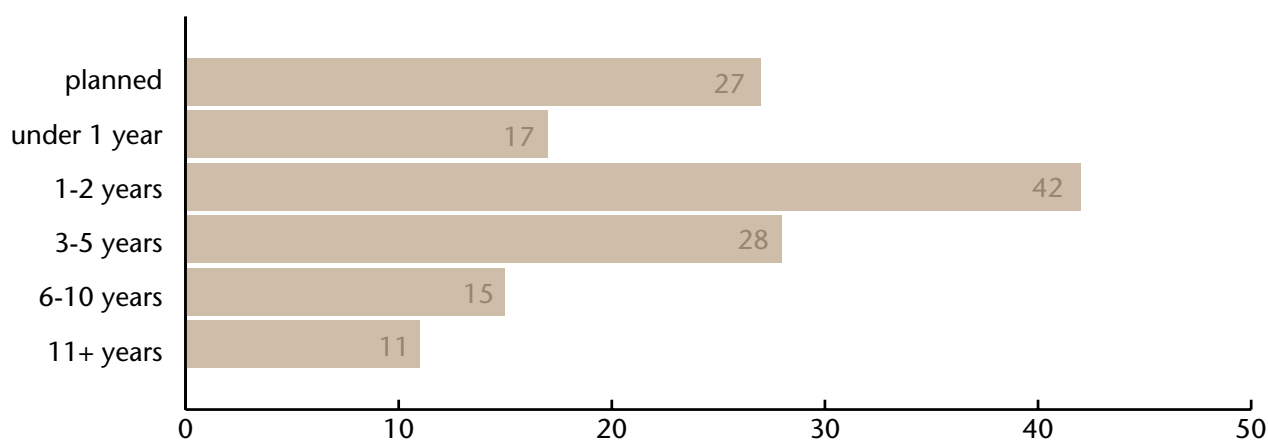


Figure 3: Collaborations shown by age of partnership

Sixteen partnerships, involving 14 UK institutions, were in the process of terminating. Of those terminating, three UK institutions were also adding other partnerships, seven were continuing with existing partnerships, and four would then have no active links in Singapore.

A total of 471 programmes were reported, of which the vast majority (89 per cent, or 417) were studied entirely in Singapore with a partner institution (in-country). Six per cent (29) of these programmes led to a qualification from the Singaporean institution which gave advanced standing to a programme offered by the UK institution (articulation). The remaining five per cent of the programmes were studied partially with a partner institution in Singapore and partially in the UK (twinning), or offered by the UK institution to students in Singapore with learning support provided by a Singaporean partner (distance learning) (see figure 4).

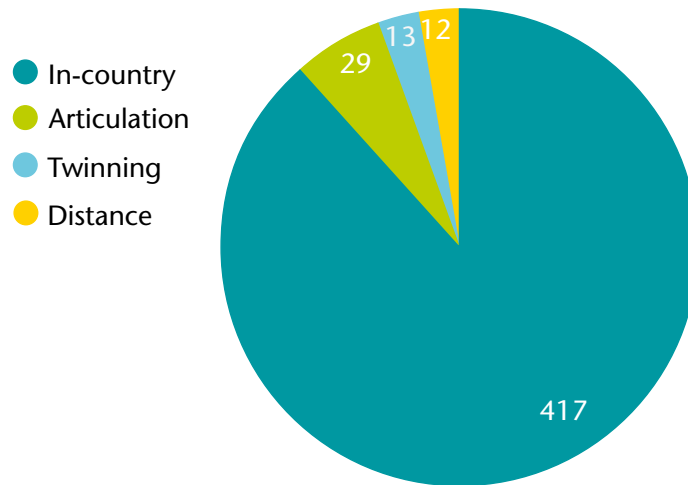


Figure 4: Programmes shown by type of collaboration

Aside from six programmes offered at a pre higher education level, the provision spanned all five levels² of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), published in 2008 by QAA. Seventy per cent of the programmes were undergraduate (FHEQ levels 4-6), mainly bachelor's degrees with honours. Twenty-seven per cent of the programmes were postgraduate (FHEQ levels 7-8). Of these, 24 per cent were at level 7, mainly master's degrees; and about three per cent (13) were doctoral degrees at level 8 (see figure 5).

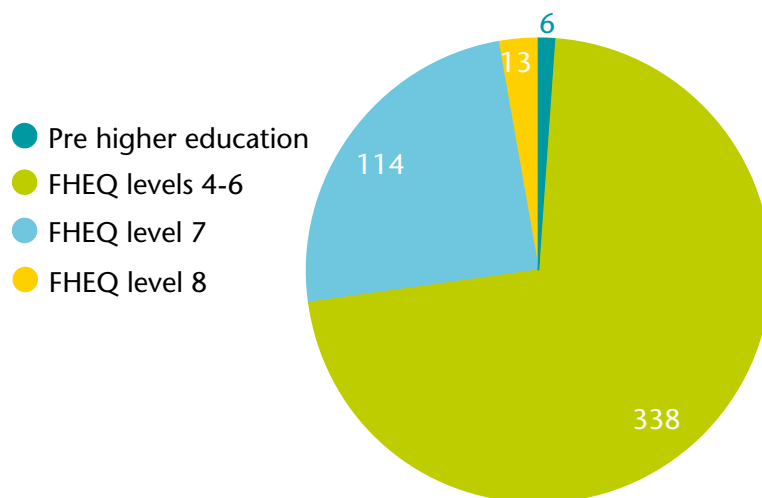


Figure 5: Programmes shown by level of award

The survey showed a wide range of subjects spanning 13 of the 19 Joint Academic Coding System subject groups. Almost two-thirds of the programmes were offered in Business and Administrative Studies, which includes management, which accounted for 292, or 62 per cent, of the programmes (see figure 6).

² FHEQ levels 4-6 include all undergraduate awards, such as Certificates and Diplomas of Higher Education, Foundation Degrees, and bachelor's degrees with honours; level 7 includes master's degrees and level 8 includes doctoral degrees.

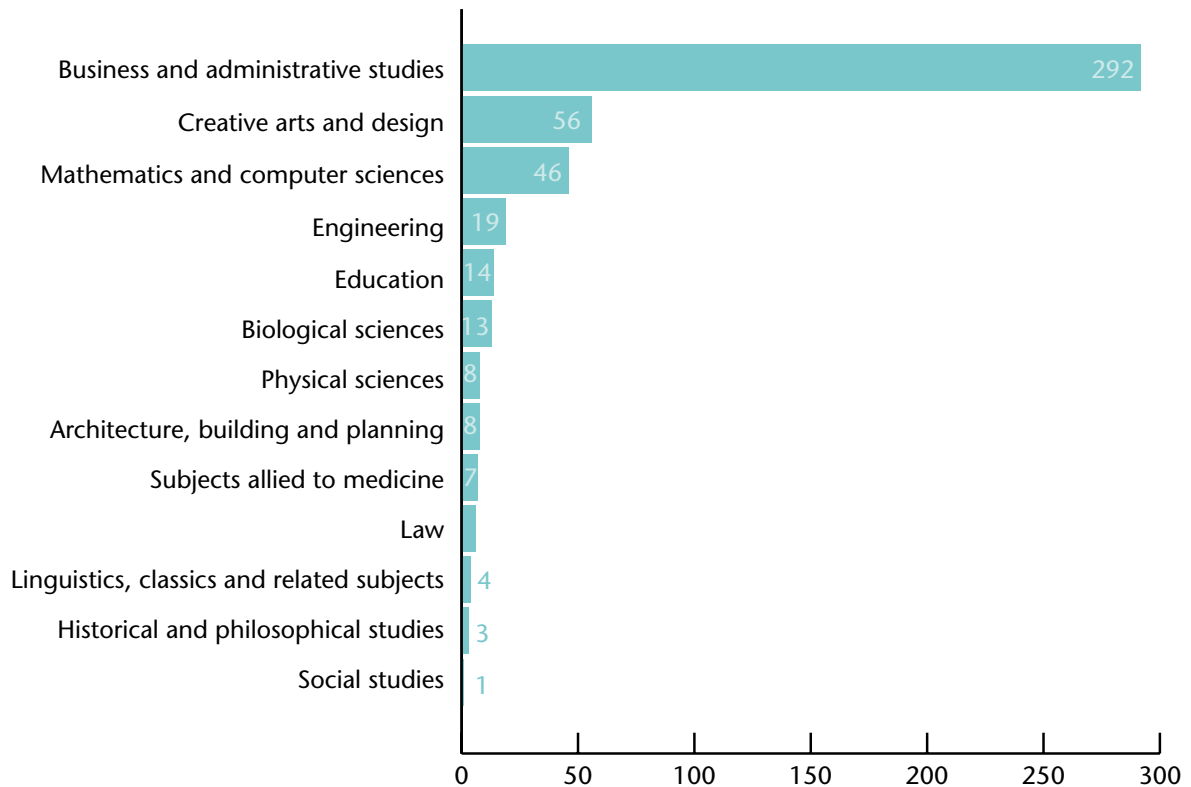


Figure 6: Programmes shown by subject area

UK institutions provided an indication of student registrations per programme. Figure 7 shows that almost half of the programmes (221) reported less than 10 students. This total includes those programmes that were planned or had only recently started. The number of students registered on the 29 programmes articulating to UK awards was not reported. In terms of student registrations, University of London International Programmes had the three largest programmes (see audit report), closely followed by the University of Bradford (see case study).

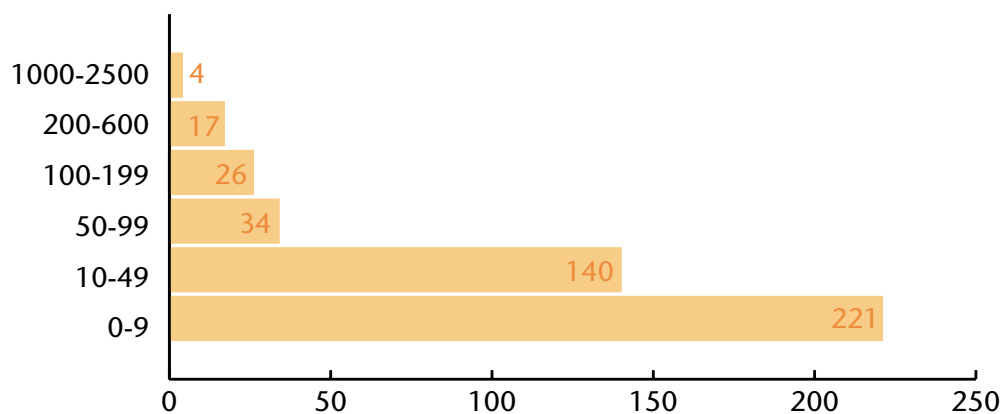


Figure 7: Range of students registered by programme

The audits in brief

Coventry University

Coventry University's link with Auston Institute of Management, a private education institution, started in 2000. The link includes articulations from a range of Advanced Diplomas offered by Auston, top-up programmes leading to a bachelor's degree with honours, and MBAs awarded by the University. As well as the programmes in the Faculty of Engineering and Computing looked at in this audit, the link also involves programmes in the Faculty of Business, Environment and Society. The audit identified positive features including the effective network of liaison, the rigorous approval, monitoring and review arrangements, and the oversight of staffing and staff development. The audit also suggested a number of points for further consideration by the University, particularly in relation to its monitoring arrangements for Auston's new site in Sri Lanka and developing its guidance for partners on student support, representation and feedback.

Heriot-Watt University

Heriot-Watt University established its link in 2004 with Trent Global College. The College is an Approved Learning Partner for the delivery by distance learning of postgraduate taught and undergraduate programmes, including BScs in Quantity Surveying and Construction Project Management, as well as MScs and/or Postgraduate Diplomas in Civil Engineering. Students wishing to progress to honours level must attend the final year at the University. The Singapore Institute of Surveyors and Valuers recognises the BSc in Quantity Surveying, and the Singapore Institute of Building recognises the BSc in Construction Project Management. The audit identified two main areas of strength: the introduction of the Partner Conference as a means of disseminating information and sharing good practice, and well-documented procedures for partner approval and flexible and distributed learning. The audit also suggested points for further consideration by the University. These related to the provision of timelier and more consistently helpful feedback to students on their assessed work; mechanisms for enabling students to have their views represented; and ensuring that feedback on actions taken is disseminated to the College, its tutors and students.

London South Bank University

London South Bank University's link with Nanyang Polytechnic and the Singapore General Hospital began in 1997. The link involves the delivery by the University of the BSc (Hons) Radiographic Studies to radiographers qualified to diploma level in Singapore. The programme is delivered through a blended approach of both distance learning and face-to-face contact with University staff. Students are employed in Singapore as diagnostic radiography or radiation therapy practitioners. The audit identified positive features including strong links with students based on professional credibility, regular and effective communication both electronically and in person, and the effective induction week in Singapore. The audit also identified points for further consideration by the University, particularly in relation to ensuring written agreements are kept up to date, and mitigating against overreliance on a single individual.

Open University

The Open University has a collaborative arrangement with LASALLE College of the Arts, a private education institution that operates autonomously with financial support from the Ministry of Education. The partnership was established in 2004, and at the time of the audit some 1,780 students were studying on a total of 29 programmes, mainly in creative arts and design subjects, leading to BA (Hons) and MA awards. The audit identified two main areas of strength: the University's website for its collaborative partners and its programme approval procedures. The audit also suggested a number of points for further consideration, particularly in relation to ensuring that the University's policies and procedures are fully implemented, addressing partner staff development needs, and auditing the information provided for applicants and students.

University of London International Programmes

University of London International Programmes' link with the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM university) was established in 1985 and is one of six partnerships in Singapore. The University of London has a long tradition of offering opportunities to overseas students worldwide to study for and gain awards through its External System (renamed International Programmes in August 2010). In 2009-10 SIM university had 8,653 students on a total of 20 programmes: 13 BScs, six Diplomas for Graduates and the Diploma in Economics. The partnership has grown to the point where SIM university is now supporting the largest single group of International Programmes students in the world. The audit team identified positive features, including: the commitment and dedication of staff to facilitating wider participation and to maintaining and developing overseas partnerships, and the University's long-term development of a mutually supportive relationship with SIM university. The audit also identified points for consideration by the University, particularly in relation to refining the Institutions Policy Framework's criteria for partner recognition status, and continuing to develop the annual monitoring process.

University of Manchester

The University of Manchester's link with Sotheby's Institute of Art began in 2007. Sotheby's is owned by Cambridge Information Group, a USA-based private management and investment firm primarily focused on education, research and information services companies. The link involves the delivery by Sotheby's of MAs in Art Business and Contemporary Art. In 2009-10 18 full-time and four part-time students were registered on the two programmes. However, the 2009-10 cohort was to be the last, as the partner has decided to terminate the link in Singapore. The audit identified positive features including effective partnership approval procedures, the promotion of effective student representation, and the clarity of information about the student experience. The audit also identified a number of points for further consideration, particularly in relation to keeping students informed of the arrangements in place as the programmes close, clarifying contractual arrangements, and developing a means by which it can demonstrate a documented and systematic oversight of overseas collaborative provision.

University of Northumbria at Newcastle

The University of Northumbria at Newcastle has a collaborative arrangement with the Marketing Institute of Singapore Training Centre, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Marketing Institute of Singapore, which is a not-for-profit national body for sales and marketing professionals. The partnership was established in 2002 and offers seven programmes in the areas of business and management, leading to BA (Hons), MSc and MBA awards. A total of 179 students were on the programmes at the time of the audit. The audit identified a number of areas of strength, including the partner and programme-level approval process and the quality and quantity of engagement by the University with the partner. The audit also suggested some points for further consideration, particularly in relation to the sharing of comparative data and external examiners' overview reports with the partner.

University of Wales

The University of Wales had seven links in Singapore at the time of the audit and established a collaborative link in 2007 with TCA College. TCA started out as a Bible college for the provision of ministerial training. At the time of the audit, four programmes in theology, creative arts and counselling were being studied by 119 students. Two programmes led to undergraduate and two to postgraduate awards. The University's Quality Handbook was identified as an area of strength in this partnership. The audit found shortcomings in the University's arrangements for establishing the partnership and in its ongoing management, and suggested a number of points for further consideration.

University of Warwick

The University of Warwick's link is with two partners, the Singapore Institute of Manufacturing Technology (SIMTech) and the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM university). The link involves the delivery of a Master's in Engineering Business Management, which had its first intake of students in 2006. SIMTech is a research institute of the Science and Engineering Research Council of A*STAR, Singapore's Agency for Science, Technology and Research. SIM university is the largest provider of private tertiary and professional training in Singapore. The audit team identified positive features including the rigour and effectiveness of the University's procedures for selecting and approving partners; and the Collaborative, Flexible and Distributed Learning Sub-Committee's role in advising on collaborative provision and monitoring its delivery, and in commissioning case studies of alternative means of seeking effective student representation and feedback. The audit also identified points for consideration by the University, including the advisability of developing and formalising more clearly arrangements for academic programme management and the constitution of the programme team for the purposes of annual course review; and the need to continue to monitor work in strengthening the arrangements for the supervision and assessment of projects.

University of Wolverhampton

The University of Wolverhampton established its link in 1997 with TEG International College, a private education institution with a subject base that includes english, engineering, business and computing. The link involves two programmes: a BEng (Hons) Mechatronics, which had 37 students; and a BEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering, which had seven students. Both courses are part-time 'top-up' awards providing the opportunity for diplomates from one of the Singapore polytechnics to study locally in Singapore for a UK engineering degree. The audit identified two main areas of strength: the University's framework of policies and procedures for managing overseas arrangements, and the process for selecting and approving partner institutions. The audit also suggested points for further consideration, particularly in relation to the contribution of students and staff to annual monitoring, the separation of the process of institutional review from programme review, and providing information for students on appeals and complaints procedures.

Key points from the audits

Approach to overseas collaborative provision

Audits generally concluded that UK institutions' approaches were effective in setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the academic quality of overseas collaborative programmes. With clear lines of accountability at all levels, most had comprehensive frameworks of policies, procedures and guidance, demonstrating good use of the *Code of practice*. A few institutions were criticised for elements of their overall approach, or the way in which this approach was implemented. Audit reports commented on UK institutions' support of their partners in meeting the requirements of the Enhanced Registration Framework and EduTrust scheme (see above). In most cases, UK institutions had taken a keen and active interest in the new requirements, and some had provided considerable support to their partners.

Approval, monitoring and review procedures

Institutions demonstrated well-designed procedures for selecting and approving partner organisations. Three audit reports recommended action in this area, however, advising that requirements associated with different partnership statuses should be clarified, that oversight

at institutional level should be more systematic, or that the conduct and reporting of new due diligence requirements should be ensured.

Similarly, institutions' procedures for approving and amending programmes of study were mainly effective. One audit report, however, emphasised the importance of ensuring sufficient subject expertise where approvals cover several programmes and subject disciplines.

Half of the institutions audited were advised to take action in respect of their arrangements for monitoring and review of their provision. Recommendations made included the introduction of a process for the review of the partnership separate from the periodic review of programmes, and the importance of mechanisms for enabling students and partner staff to contribute fully to monitoring and review processes.

Written agreements and day-to-day management

All partnerships audited were governed by a written agreement setting out the respective responsibilities of each partner. However, half of the audit reports advised that further action was necessary in this area. In some cases, institutions were advised to ensure agreements were unambiguous, up to date and comprehensive, for example to ensure that responsibilities for residual obligations to students in the event of the termination of the agreement were clearly specified. One report remarked on the importance of written agreements keeping pace with developments taking place within the partner institution, for example where the partner offers UK provision in more than one country.

Many of the audits identified positive features in the way UK institutions' managed the day-to-day operation of the links. Frequent scheduled communication between nominated staff members and regular meetings with students were usually central to these arrangements. In this area, a single postholder can often be regarded as pivotal to the operation of the partnership and, in such cases, audit reports sometimes advised institutions to consider ways of mitigating the risk of overreliance on one key individual.

Staffing and staff development

Positive features highlighted in the audits included the prudent and developmental oversight of staffing and staff development, processes for the approval of new teaching staff, and the introduction of a partner conference as a way of disseminating information and sharing good practice. Four institutions were advised to take action in this area, for example to address staff development needs more promptly, or by adopting a more systematic approach to staff development planning.

Assessment, external examining and certification

Responsibilities and requirements for the assessment of student work were generally comprehensive, secure and robust. A few institutions were advised to take action in the area of assessment, for example to provide students with opportunities for formative assessment, or more timely and helpful feedback to students. Some were advised to develop or make better use of their capacity to compare and/or disseminate data on student performance where there is more than one delivery location.

Arrangements for external examining were generally sound, although several institutions were advised to take action here, for example to ensure that overseas-based external examiners were fully briefed on their responsibilities, to extend the role of the external examiner, or that external examiner reports should be shared with students and partner staff.

Policies and arrangements for issuing award certificates and transcripts of student achievement were robust, although one institution was advised to revisit its means of monitoring transcripts

produced by its partner. The Singapore Council for Private Education requires that certificates awarded following study in Singapore do not bear the name of the place of delivery where it is different from the awarding institution. Precept A24 of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* allows for this circumstance, stating that 'subject to any overriding statutory or other legal provision in any relevant jurisdiction, the certificate and/or the transcript should record the name and location of any partner organisation....' The audits reported on the way that UK institutions had addressed this issue.

Student information, publicity and marketing

Information, both printed and online, about the student experience for applicants and students, as well as admissions and induction arrangements, was generally clear, and positive features were noted in some audits. Several audit reports advised action in this area, for example to ensure that students receive information on academic misconduct and the possibility of taking unresolved complaints to the UK institution.

Arrangements for checking the accuracy and completeness of information for students were mainly effective, although reports occasionally advised the strengthening of procedures for checking the accuracy of publicity and marketing materials produced by partners.

The case studies in brief

Supervisory arrangements and support for research students

Imperial College London has a link with the A*STAR Agency for Science, Technology and Research. A*STAR has a dual role in funding research and as a research provider. The link involves a jointly managed doctoral programme that leads to the award of an Imperial College PhD. The link developed out of a well-established existing research collaboration between the College and A*STAR. The case study looked particularly at the recruitment and admission of students, the student experience of the Transferable Skills Training programme, and the supervisory arrangements.

The case of the dual degree

London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) has a link with Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) at the National University of Singapore. The link commenced in 2007-08 and includes the LSE Master's in Public Administration and the LKYSPP Master's in Public Policy. Each programme predated the link and each is of two years' duration. Under the agreement, students from either institution may transfer to the other in the second year of study, and receive two master's degrees, one from each institution, on successful completion of their programmes. In 2010-11 four students transferred to Singapore and four to the UK.

Joint delivery and assessment of undergraduate programmes

Loughborough University's link with PSB Academy began in 2000. The case study looked at the joint delivery and assessment of the University's BSc Business Studies and BSc Business Studies with Human Resource Management programmes, delivered in Singapore. The partnership is due for renewal in 2011, and the new contract has already been prepared for signing by the parties. The case study highlights some of the challenges and opportunities in adopting a model of delivery involving local tutors.

Developments since QAA's audit of the partnership in 2002

Oxford Brookes University's link with Informatics Education, a private education company, started in 1992. Informatics delivers five programmes in Singapore, all one-year BSc (Hons) top-up programmes, in Computing and Information Systems, Computing and Software Engineering, Information Systems and Software Engineering, Gaming and Animation, and Network Computing. This case study provides an update on developments since QAA audited the partnership in 2002.

Managing a large overseas collaborative provision involving several academic disciplines and one partner institution

The University of Bradford's link with the Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS) began in 1986. MDIS is a not-for-profit institute for the lifelong learning of management professionals in Singapore. MDIS is the largest overseas partner of the University, accounting for 57 per cent of its total overseas provision in 2009-10, with 3,315 students. The partnership includes 18 named awards at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels involving the University's Schools of Management; Life Sciences; Computing, Informatics and Media, and more recently the Schools of Engineering, Design and Technology; and Social and International Studies. As well as providing an update on developments since QAA's audit of this partnership in 2002, this case study explores the management of a large overseas collaborative provision involving several academic disciplines and one partner institution.

Managing the termination of a partnership

The University of Huddersfield established its link with Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, the oldest private arts academy in Singapore, in 1999. Audited by QAA in 2002, the partnership involves the delivery of both full and part-time programmes in art and design by Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, leading to University awards. In total 22 courses are validated by the University at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, but only 58 students were enrolled on seven programmes of study in 2010-11. Both partners have recognised the decline in student numbers and have agreed a phased closure of the provision by September 2012. Managing the process of termination of this partnership forms the theme for this case study.

Investing in a sustainable future

The University of Nottingham has a link with the Building & Construction Authority Academy, which is the education and research arm of a statutory board established under the Building and Construction Authority Act. The partnership was established in 2009, and is one of two the University has in Singapore. This link centres on a two-year part-time programme leading to the award of an MSc Sustainable Building Design. Students are established green professionals working on real projects within prestigious companies. The programme is taught entirely by Nottingham staff who fly out to Singapore during UK institution vacation periods. The Building & Construction Authority Academy is responsible for the programme's teaching facilities, library and ICT resources, and administrative support.

Development and maintenance of a student exchange agreement as the foundation for a wider partnership

The University of Strathclyde has a link with Nanyang Technological University. The main theme of the case study is the development and maintenance of an effective long-term international student exchange agreement as the foundation for a wider partnership between the two universities. Nanyang Technological University has over 23,000 undergraduate and 10,000

postgraduate students from 73 countries. The 20-year exchange agreement between the two institutions has been successful in giving an increasing number of students from both partners an experience of study abroad from which they and their institutions have clearly benefitted.

Mandarin Chinese in UK higher education programmes in Singapore

This case study looked at the inclusion of Mandarin Chinese language in programmes offered through two UK-Singapore links: the University of Birmingham with SIM University; and the University of Wales, Newport, with the Asian Educational Consortium College. Mandarin has been included in these programmes to provide either an opportunity to learn a foreign language for business purposes, or a progression route to bachelor's and master's degrees for those already fluent in Mandarin. While both partnerships were continuing with their provision taught in English, both were terminating the option to study in Mandarin.

Conclusion

QAA's survey of UK higher education institutions showed that over a third had one or more partnerships in Singapore. Most of the links were with private education institutions. Although some were very mature, almost two-thirds of the links were under two years old. Around half of the programmes had student numbers in single figures, but over 40 numbered in the hundreds and several others in the thousands. The vast majority of the programmes were in business and administrative studies subject areas and studied entirely in Singapore at undergraduate level, although provision covering each of the five levels of *The framework for higher education qualification in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) was also offered.

QAA audited a sample of 10 UK-Singapore partnerships to measure the extent to which UK institutions were meeting the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*. The audits generally found that UK institutions were managing the provision in accordance with the expectations of the *Code of practice*. The detailed findings of the audits show many positive features, as well as some areas where further action is necessary.

QAA prepared nine case studies, involving a further 10 UK-Singapore partnerships. A number of the case studies commented on developments since QAA last audited the partnership in 2002. The case studies give further insights into the variety of ways in which institutions in the UK and Singapore are collaborating in the delivery of higher education.

Higher education takes place in a particularly dynamic and competitive context in Singapore. With the recent introduction of the strengthened regulatory requirements for Singapore's private education institutions, that context has changed significantly. Clearly, any UK institution intending to develop links with private institutions in Singapore should expect to engage proactively with these requirements.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

RC 748 07/11