



Review of UK Transnational Education in Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China)

Case Study: University of Hull and the University of Hong Kong, School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE)

May 2018

Background

1 This case study is based on collaboration between the University of Hull (the University) and the University of Hong Kong, School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE). The case study does not attempt to evaluate the overall operation of the partnership in the manner of a review report; the purpose is to look at the scope. After a brief description of the nature of the link, the study is focused on the integration of the two institutions' quality systems from approval to ongoing monitoring - a topic of interest to UK higher education providers who may be considering international partnerships.

2 HKU SPACE was established as the Department of Extra Mural Studies in 1956/57 and was renamed as the School of Professional and Continuing Education in 1992 and incorporated as a non-profit-making company limited by guarantee in 1999.

3 The University of Hull's partnership with HKU SPACE was established in 2006, to deliver programmes in Accounting and Marketing and Management. Two years later the arrangement was extended to include Criminology programmes. To date, the partnership has developed to comprise seven collaborative bachelor's degree programmes, across two Hull Faculties and two HKU SPACE Colleges. There are 427 undergraduate and postgraduate students on a range of full-time and part-time programmes. The programmes are accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ).

4 It is a franchise model of delivery with the University 'flying-in' to deliver intense teaching blocks and HKU SPACE tutors delivering tutorials. Some programmes have specialist input from local lecturers. There are currently no plans to expand the provision.

5 The University's Strategic Plan (2016-20) is underpinned by its strategic intent to be recognised for excellence in international arenas by focusing on high-quality partnerships with leading educational institutions. The University currently has only a small number of

partnerships and HKU SPACE is seen as a strategic partner. Both institutions are committed to internationalisation and it is a clear focus of their strategy.

6 The legal agreements have been adapted over time to take account of additional programmes, for example the agreement for Accounting, Marketing and Management and Criminology covered the period 2011 to 2017 and a new Strategic Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in November 2017.

7 The Agreement contains details of responsibilities, Joint Board of Studies, responsibility for maintaining records, minimum and maximum number of students and termination clauses enabling all students to complete their studies and achieve their intended learning outcomes and awards. The delivery mode is stated in the agreement, requiring the University of Hull academics to deliver lectures and HKU SPACE tutors who have Recognised Teacher Status to deliver the tutorials. Following a review, a more detailed Consolidation Agreement is being established listing individual programmes and the annual approved schedule. This was available in draft at the time of the visit.

8 The University's Code of Practice on the Review, Renewal and Termination of Partnerships and Activities requires the partnership to be reviewed every five years and includes requirements for the termination of a partnership. Aspects of due diligence are also reviewed every five years. There is a well-established process for the reviewing and approval of new partnerships.

9 The partnership is overseen by a Joint Development Board (JDB) which has between one to three representatives from both institutions and meets at HKU SPACE once per academic year. The JDB is informed of decisions made by the Joint Board of Studies. The International Partnership Committee at HKU SPACE meets quarterly.

10 The partnership has had a number of previous reviews including the QAA Collaborative Provision Audit (2011) and the QAA Higher Education Review (2015). The partnership also underwent successful accreditation with HKCAAVQ in May 2014 for the Social Science provision and January 2015 for the Business School provision. The Accounting programme has also been professionally accredited by the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants (HKICPA) and CPA Australia; this makes the programme particularly attractive for students. The University has scheduled its next periodic revalidation of provision in Hong Kong to align with reaccreditation by HKCAAVQ in August and November 2018.

Academic quality and standards

11 The University of Hull is ultimately responsible for academic standards of all awards made in its name, irrespective of the mode, place or pattern of delivery. The same academic quality and standards framework applies across all of the University's provision, including collaborative provision, and the same academic regulations, programme approval, monitoring and review processes, and external examining arrangements apply.

12 The University has a Collaborative Handbook with a number of supplementary Codes of Practice written specifically for the management of quality and standards for collaborative provision to reflect the operational differences between partners and on-campus Faculties.

13 Operational oversight of collaborative provision is carried out by the Faculties through Joint Board of Studies (JBoS) for the University of Hull and the Academic Committee for HKU SPACE for each programme, reporting to the Faculty Education

Committee and the School Quality Assurance Committee respectively.

14 There are up to three members from each institution and one student representative on the JBoS. The JBoS meets in September and the Academic Committee meets in the second semester. They are responsible for the monitoring and review of programmes, annual reports and external examiner reports and quality assurance and enhancement. The location of the JBoS/Academic Committee meetings takes place at the partner institution and some attendance may be via Skype; both institutions are represented on these committees. The JBoS and Academic Committee have similar terms of reference and the integration of the two institutional quality systems is considered a key strength. For example, Hull's JBoS and HKU SPACE's Academic Committee meet alternately, once per semester, to ensure parity of standing and communication while avoiding duplication.

15 Issues discussed at the JDB and JBoS/Academic Committee include the fall in full-time student numbers accessing some programmes; this is a trend across Hong Kong due in particular to demographic changes. The student numbers and viability of programmes have been discussed by both institutions at the JDB and the JBoS/Academic Committee.

16 The University of Hull identified that its processes had resulted in delays in issuing offers in the past, leading to students going elsewhere, this has now been addressed and HKU SPACE are allowed to make conditional offers according to criteria set out in Progression Agreements. A number of other initiatives are being taken including, increasing the marketing of programmes to students on feeder programmes, and in 2018 a small group of students from these programmes visited the University of Hull for a taster experience. The numbers continue to be monitored and action taken where necessary.

17 The Module Evaluation Questionnaire and the Hull Student Survey 2017-18 provide feedback to Module Leaders and Programme Directors. Reports on student performance on modules and programmes are also used, in conjunction with student feedback and submitted to the JBoS and the Student Staff Liaison Committee. Changes are identified to enhance the quality of the provision.

18 Student Staff Liaison Committee is organised by HKU SPACE International College and meets each academic term with representatives from both institutions. The evidence suggests that issues are raised by students at the Student Staff Liaison Committee and appropriate action taken, demonstrating students have a voice and are listened to.

19 At the end of each academic year the Faculty produces, in consultation with the partner, a single summary highlighting issues arising from JBoS/Academic Committee. Copies of annual programme and module reports together with details of action taken is included in the Faculty Quality Enhancement Report. A brief report summarising all Faculty annual summaries is produced by the JBoS for consideration by the University Learning and Teaching Committee. The Annual Monitoring Report, which includes information about student progression, student feedback, external examiners' reports, is considered by the JBoS/Academic Committee and reported to the Faculty Education Committee at the University of Hull, and reviewed by the Academic Committee plus the College Board before being reported to the School Quality Assurance Committee at HKU SPACE. Externals from the professions are involved in the discussions. All issues are followed up and action taken, which is included in the University of Hull summary.

20 Programmes are subject to periodic review as per the University of Hull's regulations, and staff and students from both institutions meet with the panel, which includes external experts. The Periodic Review 2016 recommended the University consider offering development opportunities for HKU SPACE tutors online as well as the PGCert; this is in the process of being developed.

21 The University ensures students studying at HKU SPACE have a comparable experience, and standards are maintained through different means, including the delivery of curricula designed and developed by the University, and block teaching delivered by University staff travelling to Hong Kong. The part-time local staff bring commercial experience contextualising the programme, which provides added value.

22 Teaching staff not employed by the University who deliver tutorials are required to apply for Recognised Teacher Status allowing access to the e-Library, Computer Services and online staff development activities. HKU SPACE Recognised Teachers are encouraged to access events as part of the University of Hull's staff development programme but as most of the events are delivered in Hull this can prove difficult.

23 The University's Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit is considering how continuing professional development (CPD) activities including the PGCert in Academic Practice, compulsory for new teaching staff, might be made available online to Recognised Teachers in Hong Kong. CPD for those delivering the Accounting programme is not considered to be an issue as they are required to undertake professional development for the professional body.

24 Peer support and development is also provided from University academics who visit HKU SPACE on a regular basis. They are required to arrive one day before teaching commences for this purpose. There is also regular informal liaison between both groups of tutors who see themselves as a team. The teaching staff and Programme Directors speak regularly and are continually updated.

25 The University appoints the external examiners for the programmes delivered with HKU SPACE and, wherever possible, the same external examiner is used for campus provision. Where local variation exists, for example in Law and Taxation modules, an additional local specialist is appointed as the external examiner to oversee the module. The external examiner is seen as key to the setting and maintaining of academic standards. Reports are scrutinised for any issues of 'serious concern' prompting further enquiry and follow-up and response to the external at senior University level. The external examiners look at both UK and HK students and are able to compare the overall performance. The University of Hull is in the process of changing its policy on external examining and where there are a number of external examiners involved in the assessment process a lead external examiner will communicate with all the relevant individuals.

26 As indicated, the longstanding partnership between the University and HKU SPACE has been running successfully for the last 12 years. The administration team and teaching staff consider themselves a well-established team. The joint governance arrangements, in keeping with the regulatory requirements of the institutions, have been successfully implemented and avoid repetition. There are no current plans to extend the partnership, the aim is to consolidate and continue to enhance the existing delivery.

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