

Review of UK transnational education in China: The University of Nottingham Ningbo Campus

November 2012

Executive summary

The Ningbo Campus of the University of Nottingham (UNNC) is not strictly collaboration in the terms defined by the current UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), but aims to be a fully integrated campus of the main University of Nottingham. The campus provides a UK-style education, in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, systems, language and resources. The stated institutional intention is to provide its students with the 'Nottingham experience' in China. As an integral part of the University of Nottingham, the academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience at UNNC are equivalent to those of the home university.

UNNC has achieved its stated intention to provide the 'Nottingham experience' in China in less than eight years. Students at UNNC receive as fully a British education as it is possible to provide in China. Together with the Malaysian campus, the University of Nottingham has created a tri-campus university that offers unique opportunities for student exchange and transnational education. This also presents unique opportunities for the development and sharing of innovative practice.

The educational experience qualifies UNNC first degree graduates to go on to postgraduate training in Chinese universities (subject to the usual kaoyan postgraduate degree entrance examination), though many go on to postgraduate study at overseas universities. Student transfer numbers into and out of the campuses remain unbalanced, with students from Nottingham tending to be more reluctant to seize the opportunities offered by the international campuses.

While UNNC may not have the same opportunities for exchange of knowledge and expertise with the single Chinese university of a conventional partnership arrangement, UNNC enjoys fruitful relationships with Chinese institutions and Ningbo city itself has benefitted from the import of expert foreign resource, and long-term relationships are being formed between the University and the local community.

Report

Introduction

1 The Ningbo Campus of the University of Nottingham (UNNC) differs significantly from the other collaborations reviewed by transnational education (TNE) China 2012. UNNC is not strictly a collaboration (although Chinese law requires that a UK university must work in cooperation with a legitimate Chinese partner), but aims to be a fully-integrated campus of the main University of Nottingham. The campus provides a UK-style education, in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, systems, language and resources. The stated institutional intention is to provide its students with the 'Nottingham experience' in China.

2 The University of Nottingham opened as a school for adults in 1798 and became University College, Nottingham in 1881. In 1948, University College became the University of Nottingham. There are currently around 34,000 students and 7,000 staff at the UK campuses, with an additional 5,400 students and 513 staff at the Chinese campus and 4,500 students and 450 staff at the campus in Malaysia.

3 The Chinese partner at Ningbo is provided through the Wanli Education Group, which is involved in all levels of education in China, from pre-school education, through primary and secondary education, to higher education and adult education. At UNNC, Wanli Education Group manages some of the non-credit-bearing activities, and is responsible for all accommodation, catering and retail facilities on the campus. They are an active partner with UNNC and meet with University of Nottingham representatives regularly, including (on a quarterly basis) Board meetings to discuss infrastructure development and student support services. Wanli has links with the Chinese media and also takes much of the responsibility for managing the relationship with Chinese government.

4 The University of Nottingham considers itself to be an international university. International students represent around a quarter of the total number at its UK campuses in Nottingham. China is an important part of this international strategy. In 1999, it opened a branch campus in Malaysia. The proposal for a Chinese campus emanated from the Chancellor, Yang Fujia. UNNC was legally established in 2003, as the first Sino-Foreign collaborative university. A temporary campus was established and the joint venture started in 2004 with 287 preliminary year students, which now has staff drawn from 40 countries. In 2006, the campus was officially opened in the city of Ningbo. In 2009, the Chinese Ministry of Education approved UNNC for the delivery of research degrees.

5 The University states in its Strategic Plan 2010-15 that internationalisation is at its heart and that its aim is to develop a new model for an international university. A stated aim of its internationalisation strategy 2011-15, *Internationalisation: Knowledge Without Borders*, is to secure the University's achievement in establishing two campuses in Asia by fuller integration, coordination and expansion.

6 A key feature of UNNC is that English is the medium of instruction and this is fundamental to the delivery of a British style education. At the time of the visit, there were approximately 5,400 students at UNNC, of whom 94 per cent were Chinese and six per cent international, engaged on a range of programme types, including 2+2 and 4+0 bachelor's and one and two year master's programmes. All programmes at UNNC lead to University of Nottingham degrees (BSc, BEng, MSc, BA, MA and PhD).

7 UNNC currently has three faculties: Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Science and Engineering. There is also a Graduate School. There are currently 11 academic departments: the Centre for English Language Education, Division of Computer Science,

Economics, English, Division of Engineering, School of Education, the Graduate School, International Communications, International Studies, School of Contemporary Chinese Studies, and the Nottingham University Business School China.

8 Graduates tend to go on to employment (35 per cent) or to further study (65 per cent) at UK, US or Canadian universities. Graduates tend not to go on to further education at Chinese universities; in keeping with practice at other top Chinese universities, the core curriculum at UNNC does not prepare them directly for the KaoYan master's and PhD entrance examinations. Chinese cultural courses are confined to the preliminary year.

9 Future plans for UNNC include the continued development of science and engineering specialisms; supporting Ningbo's development strategy and industries; and building research capacity to address the region's needs and enhancing knowledge transfer. Student numbers will increase, particularly in science and engineering (to 3,000), international student numbers (to 20 per cent) and postgraduates (to between 15 and 20 per cent). Recent experience indicates that attracting high quality students will not be difficult, but the increasing numbers will require improvements in aspects of the infrastructure (such as library resources) and enhanced support services for students and staff. The library stock will be expanded, in accordance with Ministry of Education (MoE) expectations of levels of provision per student. Study and social space are currently a challenge; expansion will require reconfiguration of accommodation. Increased student numbers will require increased teaching and professional service staff.

10 There are plans to develop a new undergraduate programme in Marine Economy, driven largely by local opportunities and requirements. The programme would draw on expertise from a number of existing subjects at Nottingham, including one of the University's priority areas of research.

11 UNNC is establishing a research base in global finance and economic policy; sustainable energy and low carbon technologies; sustainable manufacturing; interpretation; and translation and applied linguistics. An area of particular strength is marine engineering. Research is supported by a growing portfolio of grants from municipal, provincial and national levels in China and, recently, from the EU. The MoE awarded a PhD license in 2009. There are currently around 110 PhD students.

12 An International Doctoral Innovation Centre in Energy and Digital Economy has recently been established, with the first cohort of students receiving their research training at Nottingham before transferring to UNNC for three years of their research.

Part A: Set-up and operation

13 The University of Nottingham operates all of its campuses within the same academic framework. The interpretation and application of this framework, however, has to reflect local requirements and expectations at the two international campuses. QAA previously reviewed the University through the Institutional Audit process in November 2009. Overall it was found that the University took due account of the UK Academic Infrastructure (now the Quality Code) in its management of academic standards and the quality of its learning opportunities. It was noted, in particular, that the University had taken care when assuring standards at its international campuses to ensure comparability with its UK-based provision.

14 Some funding for UNNC comes directly from the Chinese Government for science and engineering students but, for the main part, income is derived from student fees. Within the framework of the University Plan, UNNC operates with its own strategic and operational

plans and budget. These plans are developed by the senior management team to ensure that the planning process is informed by local market knowledge and specific discipline considerations. Strategic plans are subject to approval by both the UNNC Joint Venture (JV) Board of Directors and the University of Nottingham Management Board and Council.

15 The Chancellor of the University is also the President of UNNC and the Vice Chancellor is the Executive Chair of the UNNC Board of Directors.

16 Leadership and management at UNNC is the responsibility of the Provost, who reports to the UNNC Board of Directors and also has a reporting line to the University Management Board through the Pro Vice-Chancellor for International Campuses. The Provost is an ex officio member of the University Senate and there are, in addition, non-professorial staff representatives from UNNC on Senate.

17 UNNC representatives sit on all major committees of Senate and participate either in person or by videoconferencing.

Student admissions and record keeping

Domestic students come from 28 (out of 31) provinces in China, with 94 per cent of Chinese students coming through the national higher education entrance exam, the gaokao. UNNC also accepts a small number of off-quota students from Zhejiang Province, for direct entry to the preliminary year. These students must meet strict requirements for English language ability. The gaokao students are tier 1 with an English level attainment of at least 115 out of 150. The gaokao score required for entry to UNNC is rising, and is now just above the first tier threshold. At this level it currently attracts students who achieve a high gaokao score, but not necessarily high enough for entry to Peking or Tsing Hua Universities. A quota for each course is agreed between UNNC and the provincial government, following consultation with the relevant Nottingham-based schools. All students who take the gaokao receive a book containing information about all the universities, including UNNC. There is a specific UNNC website, in Chinese, with detailed entry requirements for Chinese applicants. The requirements are also contained in the programme specifications. Student recruitment and admission office representatives travel across China to talk to prospective students and their parents.

18 For international students, the approach is similar to that used at the UK campus. There are bespoke publicity materials for the Chinese campus. UNNC recruitment staff work closely with the international office in Nottingham. Applications from international students are checked by the Admissions Office and then submitted to the relevant division. Each division has a designated staff member to check the application materials and make a decision before sending it back to the Admissions Office.

19 The Marketing and Communication Office has responsibility for published information and it cooperates with the Marketing Division in the UK, though material is currently not signed off in the UK. The University is aware of the requirements of Part C: Information about higher education of the Quality Code in respect of the fitness for purpose, accessibility and trustworthiness of information, and is putting in place a mechanism to ensure that this expectation is met.

Student induction and support

20 Faculty staff members conduct student induction at the beginning of the preliminary year. There is a three-week introduction to help students make the transition from high school to university, and another induction when they progress into their second year.

The induction process includes an English test in freshers' week. Continuing induction includes a social gathering each year, a library induction and material from the Academic Services Office organises induction as well. Final year students receive information about degree classifications. There are plans to expand the provision of pre-departure programmes for students on the 2+2 formulation. Currently, these vary between divisions.

21 Year one is a preliminary year, comprised mainly of English language training. Although it is available, English language support is not compulsory after year one. The academic division provide workshops and one-to-one tutorials, but the take-up is low. Steps were being taken to encourage more students in years two to four to take additional English courses through the influence of personal tutors. Poorly-performing students will be referred to receive more English language support. There is also a pre-departure, one-month intensive English course for students on the 2+2 formulation.

22 Every student on campus has a personal tutor. Personal tutors meet their students at least once a term. They are required to see their students within four weeks of the start of first semester and after they sit exams. They advise on careers, exams and Curricula Vitae, and try to help students establish personal goals. The Students' Union report on visits to international campuses reported a misunderstanding amongst students about the role of a personal tutor that was exacerbated by the fact that students only met their tutor once per semester. For students with personal problems, the first point of contact could be an academic tutor or a warden from the halls of residence.

Student feedback

23 The international campuses are required to ensure that the University's various mechanisms for obtaining feedback from students are used and that proper consideration is given to feedback from students. These mechanisms include: Learning Community Forums (LCF), Student Evaluation of Modules (SEM), and Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET). The 2009 campus review found some reluctance among staff at UNNC to survey students about their experience, which was possibly the result of administrative difficulties in harmonising the distribution and analysis of surveys with the UK campus. UNNC had, however, introduced a locally administered Student Evaluation of Course. SEMs for modules delivered at UNNC show variable rates of return but general satisfaction; the most common concern relates to the availability of books.

24 Learning Community Forums (formerly Staff-Student Feedback Committees) operate at UNNC and notes of their meetings show few differences in terms of the scope of agendas and student participation from staff-student liaison committees in the UK.

25 The 2009 campus review expressed concern about the lack of autonomy for the UNNC Students' Union. The Students' Union is perceived as one of the 66 student societies on the campus and it has proved difficult to establish its overarching role relative to all the other societies. There are no sabbatical officers. However, students met by the panel were able to give examples of changes that had resulted from Students' Union activity.

Administration of assessment/examinations

26 There is an expectation that equivalent strategies and policies for administrative functions will be implemented across campuses. However, administrative structures have been developed locally to reflect the scale and context of the Ningbo campus. Administrative functions are linked to the appropriate UK campus functions but for operational and implementation purposes their main reporting lines are internal to UNNC.

27 Standard University of Nottingham assessment policies and regulations, as described in the *Quality Manual*, apply at UNNC. There are no differences in this respect between campuses. However, within the fundamental requirement that the content of teaching programmes should be equivalent but not necessarily identical, assessment may vary to reflect local circumstances, so long as the same set of learning outcomes is tested in an equivalent way. The creation of examination papers and the marking of scripts may be fully delegated to staff on international campuses at the discretion of individual schools.

28 External examiners confirm the parity of standards between campuses since, for programmes and modules taught on more than one campus, there will always be a single board of examiners with representation (physical or electronic) from all campuses. The single board allows effective moderation and comparison of outcomes involving staff and scripts from different campuses.

29 The *Quality Manual* includes compensation rules. Detailed regulations are contained in the student handbooks, and also appear on the Moodle virtual learning environment (VLE).

30 According to the *Quality Manual*, internal examiners are considered equal to each other in terms of status, irrespective of campus. Boards may meet at the University of Nottingham, or at the international campuses. In either case, they are deemed to have the same status. It is normally expected that there should be at least one representative from the international campus internal examination board at the final board. In the rare event that this is not possible, the school must ensure that the views of the examiners at the international campus are fully represented.

Part B: Quality assurance

Academic standards and the quality of programmes

31 Academic standards and the quality of programmes at UNNC are determined by the University of Nottingham. Academic divisions at UNNC are integral parts of a UK school and have a dual reporting structure: to their heads of school and to the UNNC Provost or Dean. UNNC has representatives on the University of Nottingham (UK) Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) and Teaching and Learning Board. The Transnational Education Committee (TNEC) is chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Internationalisation and reports to the Teaching and Learning Board. Its remit encompasses both the oversight of the University's TNE collaborative provision and the management of quality and standards at the two international campuses.

32 The University's *Quality Manual* describes the principles for the operation of quality assurance systems across multiple locations. These include: the application of comparable entry standards; the use of comparable or, in some cases, identical external examiners; the operation of appropriate systems for assessment, degree classification, appeals and complaints procedures, and for evaluating modules and teaching; and the operation of review processes. Any procedures particular to local requirements at an international campus are incorporated in the *Quality Manual* and where no separate specific campus documents are included this indicates that the information applies to all campuses. Across all campuses, primary responsibility for the implementation of the procedures in the *Quality Manual* rests with the heads of school under the jurisdiction of Senate and its committees. This includes split-campus schools where the head of school on the UK campus has overall responsibility. The delegation of academic responsibilities and the extent to which decision-making is delegated to campuses varies between individual schools. Schools may decide to give considerable autonomy to their staff at the international campuses, provided

that the policies and procedures in the *Quality Manual* are observed. In any case, it is expected that the senior management of the international campuses should be consulted regarding specific quality assurance arrangements at school level. For those aspects of the *Quality Manual* that are the primary responsibility of administrative services, the respective units at each of the campuses are required to liaise to ensure equivalence of practice within the constraints of the local context.

33 New programmes and courses are developed with the relevant school and are subject to approval through standard procedures outlined in the University's *Quality Manual*. Where UK professional accreditation is relevant this is managed through the school in the UK.

34 When a new degree programme is proposed for delivery at an international campus, the precise approval process depends on whether it is an entirely new programme or one based on an existing one that has already been approved. If the programme under consideration for approval is one that is based on an existing programme it must have the same compulsory modules, be of the same duration (apart from the additional preliminary year), and have the same learning outcomes. Local variations in title, optional modules, modes of delivery and assessment are permissible.

35 Specific detail on operational aspects is a matter for negotiation between the school and the international campus management. The governing principle is that of equivalence: a programme should cover the same broad content and achieve the same learning outcomes. Staff at different locations have the flexibility to deliver the material in a way that is considered appropriate, given their experience and the environment in which they are teaching. With the exception of year one (preliminary year), learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the UNNC programmes are the same as those for the programmes taught at the UK campus. However, the delivery of the teaching and the assessments may vary between campuses to reflect the fact that students at UNNC are undertaking a course in their second (or even third) language. Content may need to be made more explicit and assessments may put more weight on practical learning. However, changes to any modules have to be referred back to the UK for approval, to ensure that they deliver equivalent content as in the UK. Examinations are internally moderated in UNNC, and at the University of Nottingham they need to be approved by the relevant University of Nottingham school.

36 Programmes, including those delivered on international campuses, are monitored annually. The process includes consideration of external examiners' reports and student feedback on their learning experiences, together with data on admissions, student profiles, and progression and completion rates. Every five years programmes delivered on the international campuses are reviewed as part of the School Review process that replaced University Quality Audit, an audit of school mechanisms for managing quality and standards, and Course Review in 2008-09. The process is described in the *School Review Handbook*.

37 The reports of School Reviews and meetings with staff during the campus visit reveal variations in the strength of ties between UNNC divisions and their UK-based schools. While one school was commended for the close links that it maintained with the Ningbo campus, another was advised that there must be an improvement in communication in order to ensure comparability of standards between campuses.

38 Good practice is shared through the senior tutors and between campuses by way of formal and informal staff exchanges. Visits from UK campus staff to UNNC are encouraged in order to ensure a thorough understanding of the local context, including the need to obtain government approval for the delivery of new programmes. A Mobility Fund exists to support staff movement. The review team heard that the two international campuses, in China and Malaysia, have benefited the University through the sharing of good practice. Although they

were initially immature organisations, they soon began to generate innovative practice that found its way back to the UK.

39 School disability action plans cover provision on all campuses and schools, and campus management jointly arrange for a disability liaison officer to be available for all international campus students. Schools, together with international campus management and the Centre for Careers Development, have joint responsibility for ensuring that careers advice is delivered to international campus students in line with the *Quality Manual*. The 2009 campus review team noted that UNNC had an outstanding record for graduates' progression to employment or further study.

Staffing arrangements

40 In view of the planned increase in academic staff, the 2009 campus review report recommended that induction - including awareness of the requirements of the *Quality Manual* - should be formalised, and consideration given to providing training opportunities beyond the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) for junior academic staff. Induction and mentoring are provided for new members of the UNNC academic staff. The PGCHE or equivalent is now a requirement for all new staff. Modules worth 30 credits and 60 credits are delivered by staff from Nottingham over the period of a week. There is also project work that lasts longer than a week. Continuing support is provided for both new and established members of the academic staff by means of specialist workshop sessions, training for supervisors of postgraduate research students, and a system of peer observation of teaching.

41 An Academic Teaching Advisor role is being developed for implementation from the next academic year, to formalise peer-assessed teaching, based upon a model popular in the USA. Introduced in this academic year in the UK, the plan is to introduce it at UNNC and the Malaysia campus soon. The contracts and responsibilities for the new posts would be evenly split; half academic and half professional development, and would be located within specified subject areas.

42 Cross-campus support on such matters as Human Resources, Staff Development, Information Services and Library Systems is made available to UNNC in the form of documentation, reciprocal staff visits and electronic communication. Induction for staff new to UNNC is provided by the University and is often supplemented by a division induction. The university-led induction provides general information, including how to teach in China and on how to provide student support. The division-led induction is provided by the relevant senior tutor. General support is provided by other expatriate staff members and by the International Office, whose primary role is to support and facilitate staff and student exchanges between campuses.

43 Recruitment of new staff has increased as the campus has expanded. The 2009 campus review recommended that the aim of campus management should be to maintain a staff-student ratio comparable to that in the UK. The review team heard that the University's policy is to hire the best quality staff, irrespective of whether they are from the UK, China or elsewhere.

44 There are effective communications between staff in Ningbo and in the UK, and a fund that promotes mobility between campuses has recently been increased. Staff mobility across the University campuses is encouraged and schools offer secondment opportunities to their staff. The majority of senior staff and a number of junior staff on the Ningbo campus are secondees from the University of Nottingham. Staff from the UK make regular visits to UNNC to conduct specialist teaching. Academic staff in a given subject area, whether in the UK or on an international campus, are regarded as members of the same relevant school,

even though their contracts of employment may reside with different legal entities. When external appointments are made, it is expected that they will be made to comparable standards, and representatives from the school's administrative base in the UK contribute to the appointment process.

Assessment and certification of awards

45 Turnaround time for feedback to students on assessment performance is published as 21 days and is monitored through the Senior Tutors, faculty and examinations officer. However, it is not always possible to meet this deadline, particular in the Business School, which has the largest student cohorts. The problem, which is partly due to a transition of IT systems, has been recognised and the review team was assured that it was being addressed appropriately. In the meantime, students are being informed in advance when the work will be returned and if there will be a variance to the published feedback date. The review team encourage UNNC to press ahead with the technical solution and **recommend** that turnaround time for feedback is closely monitored to ensure that stated deadlines are achieved.

46 Videoconferencing is used to ensure adequate representation from the international campuses at examination boards. There is a tri-campus process to ensure that the same criteria are used for making.

47 The Quality and Standards Committee on 13 October 2010 noted 'that University policy was for the scheduling of examinations being taken overseas to run simultaneously with the examination at Nottingham. However, due to the increase in number of students sitting papers overseas, it is becoming increasingly difficult to satisfy this requirement.' Despite this, exploration of this comment with staff during the campus visit revealed that this is no longer a pressing issue, since the examinations tend to vary between the different campuses. Nonetheless, it is still policy to hold equivalent examinations at different campuses simultaneously on the same day.

48 All graduating students from all campuses of the University of Nottingham receive the same style of degree certificates. Each certificate bears the names of the three locations of delivery: Nottingham, Malaysia and Ningbo. For students studying programmes with the same title, the degree certificates will be identical, since the programmes have the same learning outcomes.

Part C: Information

49 English-speaking students are able to access information about UNNC from the University of Nottingham website. UNNC also makes available bespoke publicity materials in Chinese. The UNNC marketing and recruitment teams work closely with the International Office in Nottingham. They have responsibility for the specific UNNC website, in Chinese, which contains detailed entry requirements for Chinese applicants. The requirements are also contained in the programme specifications. They also are responsible for providing advice and guidance on target markets to schools when new programmes are under consideration and for ensuring that there is a web presence for new academic divisions and programmes, and for organising appropriate publicity and marketing.

50 UNNC has instituted a process for central coordination of the writing and publication of student handbooks that has helped to ensure consistency in terms of the content and timing of key information for students. At the campus visit, students were generally complimentary about the quality and quantity of information available in their handbooks. Much of the information is also available on the VLE.

51 In 2011-12, 350 students went to the UK campus, and 80 went to the Malaysia campus, with 120 students going to other partner institutions. A total of 285 students on 2+2 programmes transferred to the University of Nottingham in the UK. Around 160 students came to the Ningbo campus from the UK. Most come for only one year, as being away from the UK for a period longer than that can invalidate a student loan. Students for exchange are selected based on their sound academic performance and active involvement in the University. Students apply during February; their applications are sent to the International Office for consideration and selection.

52 Staff from the International Office at Nottingham come to Ningbo to hold induction sessions for transferring students, and organise sessions where previous exchange students return to talk to current students. At the time of the campus visit, the Centre for English Language Education at UNNC was developing a pre-departure programme for transfer students, designed to complement the post-arrival programme in Nottingham. This is due to start in 2013.

53 Schools also play an important role in facilitating the transfer of students, though the practical details of what is offered in terms of support differs between schools. In general, schools offering 2+2 programmes, in which the first two years are spent on the Ningbo campus, are responsible for providing information and support for students who progress to the UK to complete their awards. At least one school sends staff to the Ningbo campus during the semester, before a cohort's transfer to the UK campus, to meet the students and provide information of the transfer arrangements. On arrival in the UK, the International Office provides a general induction to supplement that provided by schools. One school was commended in a School Review report for organising a 'buddy' system for incoming students from UNNC, and another for providing English language modules for Chinese students while they were studying in Nottingham. Some schools reported that they take action to break up groups of transferring students and try to avoid them living together; some schools encourage the students to write about their experience in the blog of the academic division. Given the wide variation between schools in the provision offered to transferring students, the team **recommends** that attempts be made to harmonise practice, by the establishment of minimum expectations.

54 Exchange students transferring to the UK keep their email address at UNNC and receive a new email address in Nottingham. Their student record is sent to Nottingham but also kept at UNNC. The team was informed by the Vice-Chancellor that students transferring from UNNC to Nottingham tend to perform better than UK students, particularly in the more mathematical subjects, such as engineering.

55 In addition to inter-campus transfers, students may also undertake an exchange with any of 38 partner universities around the world. Student selection is based on academic performance: students must achieve at least 60 per cent on average to be qualified to apply for exchange programmes.

Conclusion

56 As an integral part of the University of Nottingham, the academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience at UNNC are equivalent to those of the home university. UNNC is an impressive achievement; the stated intention to provide the 'Nottingham experience' in China has been accomplished in less than eight years. The QAA Institutional Audit in 2009 noted that 'The integrative activities across separate campuses...help to secure equivalence of the student experience'. This view is supported by the campus visit and documentation of the current review.

57 However, by emphasising maximising the British aspects of the educational experience, UNNC may reduce the Chinese aspects. This has possible consequences for the students if they choose to study at postgraduate level at a Chinese university.

58 The University of Nottingham, by striving to give its students the same experience whichever campus they attend, has possibly diluted the distinctive flavour of the international settings, with the result that the international experience of students exchanging between campuses has been reduced.

59 The numbers of students transferring into and out of the UK campuses remains unbalanced, with students from Nottingham tending to be more reluctant to seize the opportunities offered by the international campuses.

60 The tri-campus university also presents unique opportunities for the development and sharing of innovative practice. UNNC does not simply replicate practices at Nottingham but actively considers what is attractive to both Chinese students and their parents, and the impact of the local context. Staff mobility is an important factor in ensuring that each of the campuses understands the other two. Recent tri-campus initiatives of note are the Global Research Workshop hosted by the Malaysian campus, two-week summer schools, and student competitions. Tri-campus PhD studentships for are being offered by the engineering department.

61 Without a full university partner, UNNC does not have the same opportunities for exchange of knowledge and expertise with a Chinese university. However, Ningbo city has benefitted from the import of expert foreign resource, and long-term relationships are being formed between the University and the local community.

Positive features

The following positive features of the partnership are identified:

- the student experience received at UNNC, which is as fully a British education as is possible to provide in China (paragraph 6), together with the creation of a tri-campus university that offers unique opportunities for student exchange and transnational education (paragraph 39)
- the strength of the staff mobility and exchanges and the general approach taken to support staffing at the Ningbo campus (paragraphs 41, 44 and 45).

Recommendations

The University of Nottingham is recommended to take the following action and consider the following points as it develops its overseas campus:

- the review team encourages UNNC to press ahead with the technical solution to inconsistencies in feedback and recommend that turnaround time for feedback is closely monitored to ensure that stated deadlines are achieved (paragraph 46)
- given the wide variation between schools in the provision offered to transferring students, the team recommends that attempts be made to harmonise practice by the establishment of minimum expectations (paragraph 54).

Glossary

Academic Infrastructure The core guidance developed and maintained by QAA in partnership with the UK higher education community and used by QAA and higher education providers until 2011-12 for quality assurance of UK higher education. It has since been replaced by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (**Quality Code**).

accreditation of prior learning (APL) The identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement that occurred at some time in the past (perhaps as the result of a previous course, self-directed study, or active experience), which is taken into account when admitting a student to a programme of study.

articulation arrangement A process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advanced standing to a subsequent part or year of a programme of a degree-awarding body. Arrangements, which are subject to formal agreements between the parties, normally involve credit accumulation and transfer schemes. Read more in the glossary of *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others* of the Quality Code.

C9 League A group of nine major research universities in China, established in 2009.

CET The College English Test, a national 'English as a foreign language test' in China.

CFCRS Initialism for Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, denoting cooperation between foreign and Chinese educational institutions in order to establish educational institutions or educational programmes. The activities of CFCRS are governed by regulations introduced in 2003.

Code of practice A core element of the **Academic Infrastructure** (now superseded by the **Quality Code**).

collaborative provision or collaborative arrangement A term used to describe how institutions work together to provide higher education, including learning opportunities, student support, and assessment, resulting in a qualification from one or more awarding institutions.

comprehensive university A university in China that typically offers a full rather than a specialised curriculum, which includes a wide range of disciplines such as liberal arts, social sciences, science, technical and industrial studies.

dazhuan A three-year tertiary education diploma in China.

due diligence Enquiries relating to the governance, ethos, status, capacity, reputation and general suitability of a potential delivery organisation or support provider to satisfy the requirements of a degree-awarding body for an arrangement to deliver learning opportunities.

flying faculty An arrangement whereby a programme is delivered by visiting staff from the UK institution. Support for students may be provided by local staff. Also known as 'fly-in fly-out faculty'.

gaokao National higher education entrance examination in China.

IELTS International English Language Testing System, an international standardised English test.

kaoyan Postgraduate degree entrance examination in China.

post-experience education A postgraduate programme that typically requires students, as a condition of entry, to have substantial and appropriate graduate-level work experience, in addition to an undergraduate degree; a programme of this nature is designed to draw on students' experience and practice.

pre-experience education A postgraduate programme that typically does not explicitly require students to have work experience, and is designed to be equally accessible to recent graduates and those who have some relevant experience.

Project 211 A Chinese government programme, initiated in 1995, that is aimed at strengthening institutions of higher education and key disciplinary areas as a national priority for the twenty-first century. The '21' and '1' within 211 refer to the 'twenty-first' century and 'one' hundred universities, respectively. To be included in the programme, universities had to meet scientific and technical standards and offer advanced degree programmes. It includes the **Project 985** universities.

Project 985 A project to promote the development of world-class universities in China, which was initiated in May 1998 and named after the date: year '98', month '5'. Much of its funding is devoted to academic exchanges whereby Chinese academics participate in conferences abroad and foreign lecturers visit China. It includes the **C9 League** universities.

QS World University Rankings Annual university rankings published by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS).

Quality Code Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet.

TOEFL Test Of English as a Foreign Language, an English test by the Educational Testing Service.

The University of Nottingham's response to the review report

'The review is welcomed by the University of Nottingham as it has provided a further opportunity for the institution to reflect on its provision at its campus in Ningbo, and to gain external feedback on this exciting educational venture. The University is particularly gratified by the QAA's recognition that 'UNNC is an impressive achievement: the stated intention to provide the 'Nottingham experience' in China has been accomplished in less than eight years'. We value QAA's involvement in the transnational education review process and the University will now be taking forward consideration of the couple of points suggested in developing the campus.'

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