



# Review of UK Transnational Education in the Caribbean: University of Sunderland and the School of Business and Computer Science Ltd

November 2014

## Executive summary

The partnership between the University of Sunderland (the University) and the School of Business and Computer Science Ltd (SBCS) was established in 1999. At the time of the review only one of the approved programmes, the BA (Hons) Business Management top-up, was operational with some 300 students studying towards the Level 6 award. There are also students in the Caribbean studying remotely on distance learning programmes, but these were out of scope for this review.

The University has in place progression arrangements to recognise a number of nationally accredited UK qualifications permitting students to gain direct entry to the final year of the Business Management programme. All students enrolling at SBCS would have previously completed one of these recognised qualifications before progressing on to the University's top-up award.

The model of collaboration is described by the University as 'tutor-supported delivery' (now known as 'full franchise'). Under this arrangement programmes and the associated learning material are designed and assessed by the University. SBCS provides resources, teaching, and academic and pastoral support; playing an important role in facilitating the contextualisation of learning material and providing support for assessment.

Since the inception of the partnership a number of new programmes have been approved for delivery through SBCS but failed to recruit sufficient numbers, and have since been terminated due to the lack of student support funding. While both the University and SBCS recognise the challenges in gaining relevant in-country approval more could be done to ensure the market viability of new proposals.

The University makes explicit in its agreement the responsibilities of each partner across the full range of areas for the effective operation of the partnership and programme. Partners and students are provided with comprehensive information about the University and the arrangements for the partnership. Together these ensure that the model of operation is well understood by staff and that students have a sense of identity as part of the wider University community, making a positive contribution to the partnership.

Operational aspects of the partnership are managed through regular communication between a dedicated Centre Leader from the University's Faculty of Business and Law and a programme coordinator at SBCS, with appropriate oversight through annual monitoring

processes. Identified areas for improvement include raising the awareness of the role of the external examiner and adhering to the stated turnaround time for assessment feedback.

The University has recently reduced the number of collaborative partners with which it works but SBCS has been ear marked as a long-term partner with the potential for further growth.

## Introduction

1 The partnership between the University of Sunderland (the University) and the School of Business and Computer Science Ltd (SBCS) was first established and approved in 1999, with subsequent approval events taking place to extend the range of programmes on offer. At the time of review, however, the BA (Hons) Business Management top-up degree was the only programme which was operational with some 300 students enrolled on it.

2 The University is located in the North East of England, having developed from a number of predecessor institutions tracing their origin back to 1901; it gained University status in 1992. Its vision is articulated in the Corporate Plan (2013/14-2015/16) and working in partnership continues to remain a key focus with plans to increase collaborations with international partners. Approximately a quarter of the University's 20,000 students enrolled on its awards through 28 collaborative partners in 10 countries. The University has progressively undertaken a review of all its collaborative provision resulting in fewer, more robust, multi-faculty partnerships.

3 SBCS was established in 1987, with the objective to provide 'globally recognised and industry-relevant programmes from world renowned Universities and Professional Associations'. SBCS is a privately funded institution recognised by the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago (ACTT) as a provider of private education. SBCS does not have its own degree awarding powers but instead collaborates with a number of institutions, including five UK universities, to deliver undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The School has four campuses in Trinidad: Champs Fleurs; Port of Spain; San Fernando; and Trincity.

4 The model of collaboration with SBCS is described as tutor-supported delivery (now known as full franchise), whereby the University takes sole responsibility for the design and assessment of programmes. This is the common model of operation and is the type of arrangement in place for 16 of its 28 partnerships. Delivery under this model essentially involves the partner providing resources, delivering pre-developed teaching material and providing academic and pastoral support. The University provides standard teaching materials including PowerPoint presentations for use by academic staff at the partner who are responsible for contextualising the material through local tutorials. The University considers this to be a low-risk model with limited responsibility devolved to the partner ensuring academic standards and the quality of programmes is safeguarded.

5 Over recent years SBCS has been approved to run a number of programmes but which have since been terminated by the University due to non-recruitment as a result of not being able to secure local Government Assisted Tuition Expenses (GATE) funding. Following two years of non-recruitment, the University withdrew approval for four bachelor's degree programmes in March 2014. These programmes had been advertised in anticipation of recruiting privately funded students, but this has not materialised. Although not a formal requirement, it is clear that GATE funding is an important factor in the successful recruitment of students to a programme in Trinidad and Tobago.

6 Furthermore, two of the approved programmes were in Engineering and were withdrawn because they did not at the time have accreditation by the relevant professional body in the UK, a requirement that needed to be met prior to seeking approval from ACTT. Although the University is a recognised foreign awarding body of ACTT, further approval is required for 'specialised programmes', such as those in Engineering. By the time the programmes gained professional accreditation, SBCS took the decision to offer the degrees in partnership with another UK university, which already had the requisite accreditation.

At the time SBCS was approved to deliver the awards neither SBCS nor the University were aware of ACTT's expectations around the professional accreditation of these programmes.

7 ACTT and GATE funding approval is devolved to the partner and the University holds SBCS to account for securing the necessary accreditation. While the review team acknowledges that the partner may be expected to take the lead in such processes, it is important for the University to keep abreast of in-country developments in regulation and funding. Despite not being able to recruit students because of the lack of student funding, the BA (Hons) Graphic Design is still advertised through the SBCS website but for self-funding applicants. Although Sunderland confirmed that there have not been any applications to date there is still a need for the University to ensure the viability of a new programme and not rely entirely on the partner's market research. At the time of the review there were discussions around a further programme being considered for approval despite the uncertainty of obtaining GATE funding. The review team **recommends** that the University fully appraises itself of relevant regulatory and funding requirements for the in-country approval of individual programmes, and satisfies itself of the market viability of any new programme proposals.

8 The BA (Hons) Business Management top-up programme currently running through SBCS is offered in both full-time and part-time modes, with the majority of students studying part-time. Student numbers have fallen over the last three years from a high of 641 in 2011-12 to 302 at the time of the review. Despite a decline in student numbers which has been attributed to increased competition in Trinidad, the University considers SBCS to be one of its high quality partners with which it would like to further develop its engagement through involvement from other faculties.

9 The University also has a small number of students (22) studying on distance-learning programmes through one of its other partners, Resource Development International Ltd, which is located in the UK and provides support for learning remotely. There is also one student enrolled on the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Education as an independent distance learner. These students have been accounted for, for the purpose of completeness, but were not within the scope of this review.

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

10 Given that the initial approval of SBCS took place over 15 years ago, the process for which is now outdated, what follows is an overview of the current process for approving new partners. Partnership approval involves an initial due diligence check, which acts as a thorough vetting process to ensure only those partnerships that are compatible with the University are progressed further. Initial proposals are considered on the viability of the business case and the partner's financial, legal and academic merits, and require the unconditional approval of the University's Due Diligence Panel before moving to the next stage.

11 The Associate Director (TNE) from Marketing and Recruitment together with the proposing faculty take forward formal negotiations, and in doing so liaise with Academic Services to ensure compliance with quality assurance processes. The next stage involves a more in depth desk-based analysis by the University's Partnership Development and Approval Panel, including an external reviewer, and chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). Consideration at this stage is given to quality and standards issues around the proposed collaboration, including the availability of learning resources, processes for the management of teaching and assessment, and the academic governance structures in place. If at any stage during the process it becomes apparent that the partner will not be able

to meet the University's expectations the negotiations are swiftly brought to an end. The Panel undertakes a risk analysis which will inform the type of collaboration proposed - the higher the level of risk the less responsibility is devolved to the partner.

12 The process culminates in an approval visit to the partner by selected members of the Panel and the external reviewer. The agenda for the visit is determined by the outcomes of the preceding desk-based and risk analyses. The visit provides a useful opportunity to triangulate information with staff and students, and for the University to fully satisfy itself of the suitability of the partner. A comprehensive report of the approval event is produced which results in a recommendation as to whether or not the partnership should be approved and also advises on the model of collaboration to be pursued. The final sign-off for approval must be given by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on behalf of the Academic Board. A finalised business plan is then drawn up and approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources). The process for approving a new partner is sufficiently robust with institutional level oversight of all new partnerships.

13 All partnerships are subject to a six-yearly review whereby a Periodic Review Panel visits the partner to review its track record in delivering University programmes and makes a recommendation as to whether the existing agreement should be renewed. The report for the most recent review (2011) of the partnership with SBCS shows that in-depth consideration is given to many of the issues that were considered during the original approval such as the quality of teaching, the availability of learning resources and the quality of the student learning experience. The report indicates that the partnership is of sound academic health with most recommendations relating to the need for the University to update and confirm final versions of teaching-related materials. The report provides evidence of the thoroughness of the review process and the assurance that partners are subject to scrutiny on a regular basis.

14 At the time of its approval and most recent re-approval in 2011, SBCS was authorised to deliver programmes under the University's tutor-supported delivery model (model D). Since 2011 the University has undertaken a review of its taxonomy for models of collaboration. The previous typology is still in use in partners who were reviewed and signed agreements prior to September 2011, and is therefore relevant to the partnership with SBCS. Tutor-supported delivery is now defined as a 'full franchise' arrangement, but this is a rebranding of the model with the arrangements for operation substantially unchanged.

15 Approval of the partner to deliver a franchised programme is embedded within the partner approval and review events. This is because approval is for the partner to deliver a pre-designed programme which has already been subject to standard University processes for the setting of academic standards. Following an initial partner approval event, further programmes can be added to the portfolio by the proposing University Faculty making a request to the Academic Development Committee. Requests require the completion of a form outlining the rationale for the approval of the new programme and following approval by the Committee an addendum to the original agreement is issued. In some instances the addition of a new programme may be subject to further scrutiny by a panel or through a site visit for example, if the programme is in a new subject area. A number of programmes have been approved for delivery through SBCS and there is evidence that these have followed the appropriate University processes. A number of these programmes, however, have since been terminated (see paragraph 5).

16 All partnerships are underwritten by a legally binding Collaborative Provision Agreement which is valid for a period of six years and renewed following a successful periodic review. The agreement uses a comprehensive template constructed by the University legal team. For the type of arrangement with SBCS this includes several annexes such as the programme schedule, the definition of tutor supported delivery, a financial

schedule, and a data sharing policy. Any variation from standard agreements has to be approved by the University Solicitor. In particular, the agreement and accompanying information makes clear the delegation of responsibilities between SBCS and the University for each aspect of programme delivery. The clarity and comprehensiveness of the written agreement which makes clear the responsibilities of each party is a **positive feature**.

17 SBCS is provided with a detailed Operations Manual which describes the practical arrangements for key aspects of programme delivery, as well as the roles of staff in managing the partnership. Each partner is allocated a Centre Leader who is a member of academic staff from the proposing faculty who acts as the main point of contact on behalf of the University for all academic matters. For complex partnerships with multiple programmes across several subject areas, more than one Centre Leader may be appointed. There are also dedicated personnel to act as a point of liaison for all administrative processes and queries. At the partner there is a Local Study Centre Coordinator (at SBCS this is the programme coordinator) who takes responsibility for the delivery of programmes within a particular subject. The partnership is supported by a wider team of lecturers and administrators at the partner and by a programme leader and module leaders at the University. Together this network of staff supports the successful operation of programme-level delivery.

18 Centre Leaders are expected to visit each allocated partner at least twice per year and complete an annual report on the outcomes of the visit to identify areas of good practice and any recommendations which need to be addressed. Visits to SBCS include staff development sessions, peer observation of teaching, and meetings with current students across all four sites. Reports indicate that visits provide good opportunities to address operational issues on the ground while feeding into more formal quality assurance processes. Action plans are generated and any progress against individual actions is tracked in subsequent reports. Initial problems with communication between SBCS and the Faculty have been improved by more frequent telephone, e-mail and Skype interactions between staff. The Faculty of Business and Law have also recently launched an initiative to improve communication through the use of dedicated partner-specific online space.

## Quality assurance

### Academic standards and the quality of programmes

19 The setting of academic standards for a particular award is through the University's mainstream processes. Therefore programmes delivered under a full franchise model would have previously been subject to the University's programme approval and re-approval process. For a partner, approval focuses on the partner's ability to deliver the programme and manage the processes by which the University maintains academic standards on the University's behalf.

20 Programme specifications make explicit reference to relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). Although programme specifications are not made available to students studying through SBCS they are provided with a summary of the programme enabling them to make an informed choice.

21 SBCS is only approved for the final year (Level 6) delivery of the BA (Hons) Business Management degree, with students gaining entry to the programme through approved progression routes. The University has in place a defined process for progression arrangements, whereby particular qualifications are recognised for advanced standing onto certain bachelor's degrees. Entry criteria are agreed as part of the approval process for the

award and faculties are required to map the learning outcomes of 'feeder' programmes onto those for the relevant stage of the programme. The University defines this as a 'type 1' progression arrangement, whereby direct entry is permitted from a number of nationally recognised qualifications.

22 Entry routes to Level 6 of the BA (Hons) Business Management programme include the Association of Business Executives (ABE) Advanced Diploma and Pearson Edexcel Higher National Diplomas. The majority of students have previously completed the ABE qualification at SBCS before enrolling on the University top-up programme.

23 All partners are subject to an annual review in which a clear distinction is made between the review of programmes and the review of the partner. At the end of each academic year the partner is expected to complete a monitoring report for all programmes within a subject area. At SBCS this is undertaken by the programme coordinator for the one programme which is currently operational. The report consists of a standard pro-forma which prompts the partner to consider student achievement, recommendations from the Centre Leader's report, student feedback, and the continued appropriateness of learning resources. An action plan is generated to further develop good practice and to address any areas for development. This report feeds into the annual review of the on-campus provision which takes a holistic view of the delivery of the programme while also giving explicit consideration to the delivery at each partner.

24 Reports from each partner feed upwards through the faculty into higher level reports culminating in the preparation of a University-wide report that is reviewed and addressed by the relevant sub-committee of the Academic Board. This allows the University to have institutional-level oversight of each partner while identifying trends across all collaborative provision requiring more generic action.

25 Evidence of the annual review of the partnership with SBCS indicates that the process provides an effective means for identifying and responding to quality-related issues. The reports are detailed and draw on a wide evidence base, including feedback from students and staff. The most recent report (2012-13) reflects positively on the high levels of student satisfaction and achievement with no particular concerns identified. The emphasis for development is on continuing to foster good communication between the University and staff at SBCS, as well as supporting the development of local tutors.

## **Assessment**

26 The University manages all aspects of assessment under the full franchise model as specified in the Collaborative Provision Agreement. This means that it is responsible for the setting, marking and moderation of assessments, appointing external examiners and holding assessment boards. The partner is responsible for preparing students for assessment, administering examinations, managing the submission of assignments and enforcing the University's policies on academic malpractice and mitigation. All assessments are conducted in accordance with the University's Undergraduate Regulations.

27 An annual schedule of assessments is provided to SBCS in advance of the academic year. Module-level information on assessment for students is published in the Student Handbook. Assessments generally take the form of assignments or examinations and are synchronised across all locations for similar intakes to any given programme. The assessments are released to SBCS via the virtual learning environment (VLE). Students at SBCS submit work via the partner's anti-plagiarism software, Turnitin, and the originality report for assignments is forwarded on to the University for consideration. Students

confirmed that they found Turnitin a useful tool in developing their academic referencing skills.

28 Procedures for the security of examination papers are specified by the University and laid out in the Operations Manual for partners. The exam unit at SBCS ensures the security of examination papers and student transcripts, as well as taking responsibility for organising the invigilation of exams, which is always by non-academic staff to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

29 The University has a four week turnaround policy for providing students with feedback on assessed work. However, staff and students at SBCS stated that on average feedback is received between six to eight weeks after assignment submission. The issue around the timeliness of feedback at collaborative partners has been identified in a previous QAA review (Collaborative Audit 2011). Progress in addressing the resulting recommendation appears to have been slow and the University acknowledges the challenges in adhering to its own timescales for providing feedback. The University is in the process of moving from hard copy to electronic submission, which is intended to go some way in addressing the problem. However, given the lack of progress against the previous review recommendation and the protracted timelines which continue to remain in place at SBCS, the review team **recommends** that the University keeps its arrangements for assessment feedback to students under review in order to meet the University's stated four-week turnaround time.

30 Students who met the review team confirmed that assignments encourage the application of knowledge to practice and support the development of critical thinking skills. However, students are not always clear from the feedback received as to why a particular grade has been awarded. The local tutor plays a key role in supporting students through the assessment process. While students the review team met with valued the high quality of support provided, they sometimes felt that the guidance offered by tutors didn't always correlate with the University's expectations, sometimes resulting in lower than expected marks. This partly results from the fact that under the full franchise model local tutors are not involved in the marking of assessment tasks, and their knowledge of applying assessment criteria is therefore somewhat theoretical. The University regularly provides SBCS with staff development on assessment, but both staff and students may benefit from further support in interpreting assessment criteria.

31 External examiners ensure that the standard of the award is comparable at all campuses and that the standards are consistent with UK national requirements. The University external examiner is required to consider comparable performance and in particular the extent to which standards and achievements away from the University are comparable across the different locations. External examiners are asked to comment specifically on the performance at each relevant partner in external examiner reports and guidance is given to examiners when they attend induction on issues related to collaborative provision. A review of the most recent external examiner report for the business management top-up programme provides explicit confirmation that the standards of student work and achievement profiles at SBCS are comparable with on-campus and other collaborative provision. Although the reports are published on the University website, both staff and students at SBCS are relatively unaware of their existence and students were unfamiliar with the role of an external examiner. The review team therefore **recommends** that the University raises awareness among staff and students of the role of the external examiner and the availability of the reports they produce.



## Quality of learning opportunities

32 The respective responsibilities for matters relating to the student experience are set out in the Agreement and in the Operations Manual. The University maintains oversight of these arrangements through Centre Leader visits and the annual monitoring of programmes and partners.

33 All applications from prospective students are managed in accordance with the University's Admissions Policy and decisions on individual applications are made by the University. Students can either apply directly to the University through an online facility or through SBCS. Local administrative staff facilitate the process by providing guidance and support to prospective applicants and ensuring applications meet University requirements to prevent any delay in the process. For students applying through partners the process is managed by the relevant faculty, but at the time of the review the University was in the process of moving to a centralised system to streamline admissions for all students. Regular communication between the University and SBCS ensures students are promptly informed of the outcome of their application. Students whom the review team met confirmed the promptness of the application process and commented on the helpful support received from local staff.

34 Under the full franchise model induction to the programme is organised by the partner with appropriate involvement from the University. The Centre Leader, where possible, tries to coincide visits with the start of a new intake; this also allows oversight of local arrangements. Comprehensive guidance is provided to SBCS on the expectations of what should be covered in induction, including an overview of the programme, how to access local and University learning resources, and familiarisation with University rules and regulations. Most students enrolling on the programme have progressed internally within SBCS from a recognised qualification allowing entry on to Level 6 and are therefore already familiar with the partner. As such induction is centred on the programme and adapting to study at Level 6. Students whom the team met commented on the usefulness of the induction process and their preparedness for transition to the top-up programme.

35 There are a number of mechanisms in place to elicit student feedback and the University has direct involvement in many of these to ensure it remains tuned in to the student voice. Under the full franchise model, partners are expected to establish a Staff-Student Liaison Committee for each programme once per semester, in line with the requirements for on-campus provision. SBCS holds a Programme Management Committee which fulfils the same function as the latter and is attended by local staff, student representatives, and University staff via Skype. Minutes of meetings provide detailed records of the discussions that take place and include feedback from individual students. As part of their visit the Centre Leader will also hold meetings with several groups of students across all SBCS sites, with any identified issues feeding into an action plan. Module and programme evaluation surveys are also administered by SBCS on behalf of the University, the results of which are analysed and acted on jointly. There are also informal opportunities for feedback directly to SBCS staff. There is evidence of student views informing the delivery of the programme by both SBCS and the University, although students the team met with weren't always aware of the impact of their feedback. Overall students appear to be satisfied with their student experience with many making the deliberate choice to study for a University of Sunderland degree.

36 The suitability of learning resources is confirmed by the University during partner approval and then kept under review by the Centre Leader, and through annual and periodic reviews. SBCS provides students with hard copy access to core materials through an on-site library with facilities for quiet study. All students studying for a University of Sunderland

award have access to online University Library Services, as well as a range of online support tools to enable effective use of the resource, which includes access to a range of electronic journals and books. Some students reported delays in gaining access to online resources, but this issue has since been addressed and students feel well supported in their learning.

37 The University expects all partners to provide students with appropriate academic and pastoral care, as well as guidance on career development. SBCS achieves this through the provision of advice by local tutors and administrative staff, and a Careers Guidance Handbook issued to all students. Recent interventions to support student employability include networking and career development days, internships and the advertising of vacancies.

38 All partner teaching staff must satisfy the University's minimum criteria and be approved by the concerned Faculty prior to their first teaching engagement. SBCS informs the University of any changes to the staffing of the programme and confirms the accuracy of the existing staffing matrix back to the Faculty twice a year. Prior to their appointment local lecturers are subjected to a formal panel interview by SBCS and are also required to attend an initial training programme. The ongoing quality of teaching is monitored both by a local peer observation scheme, and through observations undertaken by University staff during visits, the outcomes of which are recorded in the Centre Leader visit report.

39 Staff development is seen as a joint responsibility between both partners. In response to staff feedback, SBCS has invested in staff development initiatives and this includes supporting those teaching on the University programme in undertaking a Postgraduate Certificate in Education. There is also evidence of extensive staff development activities taking place during Centre Leader visits and topics have included programme organisation, methods of delivery and assessment preparation. More formal training opportunities are provided through the University's Academic Services Department, although the take-up by SBCS staff has been low. Provision is being developed further through partner-specific webpages intended to act as a source of support.

## Information on higher education provision

40 The University exercises control over the accuracy of public information by requesting partners to submit all publicity material prior to its implementation. The partner is responsible for deciding on the appropriate medium by which to advertise the programme. SBCS makes use of a website and print material as the primary means of advertising. Regular monitoring of information is undertaken by the University through Centre Leader visits and on an ad hoc basis by Academic Services. These arrangements are made clear in the Collaborative Provision Agreement and the Operations Manual. Students whom the review team met confirmed that the information available to them on application was accurate and set appropriate expectations for the programme.

41 Inaccuracies are dealt with as and when they arise and the University considers the use of unapproved material a serious breach of contract, although there haven't been any problems with SBCS in this regard. At the time of the review, the University was in the process of further tightening up on its processes for the oversight of publicity material produced by partners, having recently undertaken a review of all partner websites the report of which is to be considered by a University-level committee.

42 Students are issued with a range of handbooks and guides to provide information on individual modules (module packs), the programme at SBCS (Student Handbook) and the University (A guide to the University of Sunderland for students overseas). Module learning material is developed by University staff and issued to students by SBCS staff; this is

accompanied by a detailed assessment schedule for the duration of the programme. Under the full franchise model, partners are provided with a standard template for the Student Handbook containing generic information on rules, regulations and assessment, which is then adapted to include local information. The Handbook is approved by the University prior to its distribution during induction. Staff are also provided with comprehensive information on the operation of the partnership supplemented by verbal support through regular contact with the Centre Leader (see paragraphs 17 and 18). The range and depth of information and support available to staff and students is a **positive feature**.

43 The Collaborative Partnership Agreement sets out the responsibilities of partners in providing information to students on disciplinary, appeals and complaints procedures. The information is contained in the Student Handbook and SBCS students are made aware of their rights and responsibilities during induction. Non-academic complaints are first subject to local partner procedures with final recourse to appeal to the University. Administrators at SBCS support students in accessing the relevant procedure. To date very few formal complaints have been raised by students studying through a partner of the University, with none having been received from SBCS.

44 The University takes full responsibility for maintaining academic records of those students studying through partners. The transcript accompanying the award certificate makes clear the language of study and assessment (which in this case are both English), and states the name and location of study. The transcript is clearly cross-referenced from the award certificate.

## Conclusion

### Positive features

The following positive features are identified:

- the clarity and comprehensiveness of the written agreement which makes clear the responsibilities of each party (paragraph 16)
- the range and depth of information and support available to staff and students (paragraph 42).

### Recommendations

The University of Sunderland is recommended to take the following action:

- fully apprise itself of relevant regulatory and funding requirements for the in-country approval of individual programmes, and satisfy itself of the market viability of any new programme proposals (paragraph 7)
- keep its arrangements for assessment feedback to students under review in order to meet the University's stated four week turnaround time (paragraph 29)
- raise awareness among staff and students of the role of the external examiner and the availability of the reports they produce (paragraph 31).

### **University of Sunderland's response to the review report**

The University of Sunderland regards the report of the partnership in the Caribbean which was considered within the QAA TNE review as very positive. The relationship with the School of Business and Computer Science Ltd (SBCS) is a long-standing one and the report confirms that students and staff are well supported through the partnership. The University has well established processes to consider the recommendations of all QAA audit and review reports and these will be considered in the usual way.

We note that the development of an online system for the submission of student work is progressing well and that this is helping to secure the timely return of work to students. We note too that external examiners' reports are available to all students and staff with a University of Sunderland log-in on the university website and we will make further efforts to make this known to students in our partner colleges. We will also ensure that our partner development and approval processes include clear evidence that we are fully apprised of in-country regulations.

**QAA1124 - MAR 15**

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786