

Introduction

This report considers the collaborative arrangement between London South Bank University and Loyola College, Chennai, India.

United Kingdom

1 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is a United Kingdom (UK) organisation that seeks to promote public confidence that the quality of provision and the standards of awards in higher education are being safeguarded. It provides public information about quality and standards in higher education mainly by publishing reports resulting from a peer review process of audits and reviews. These are conducted by teams, selected and trained by QAA, and comprising academic staff from higher or further education institutions. The most recent Institutional audit of London South Bank University (London South Bank or the University) was conducted by QAA in March 2005.

2 One of QAA's review activities is to carry out quality audits of collaborative links between UK higher education institutions and their partner organisations in other countries. In 2008-09 QAA conducted audits of selected partnership links between UK higher education institutions and institutions in India. The purpose of these audits was to provide information on the way in which the UK institutions were maintaining academic standards and the quality of education in their partnerships. The reports on the individual audits will be used in the preparation of an overview report on the collaborative arrangements for the management of standards and quality of UK higher education provision in India.

United Kingdom further information

3 In April 2008, QAA invited all UK higher education institutions to provide information on their collaborative partnerships in India. On the basis of the information returned on the nature and scale of the links, QAA selected for audit visits 10 UK institutions with links in India. Each of the selected institutions produced a briefing paper describing the way in which the link operated, and commenting on the effectiveness of the means by which it assured quality and standards. In addition, each institution was asked to make reference, in the briefing paper, to the extent to which the link was representative of its procedures and practice in all its overseas collaborative activity. Institutions were also invited to make reference to the ways in which their arrangements met the expectations of the *Code of Practice for the Quality Assurance of Academic Programmes and Standards in Higher Education* (Code of Practice), particularly *Section 2: Quality Assurance of Academic Programmes and Standards* (QAA 2004), published by QAA in 2004.

4 In October/November 2008, one of three audit teams visited each of the selected UK institutions to discuss its arrangements in the light of its briefing paper. In January/February 2009, the same team visited the relevant partner organisations in India to gain further insight into the experience of students and staff, and to supplement the view formed by the team from the briefing paper and from the UK visit. During the visits to institutions in India, discussions were conducted with key members of staff and with former students (Loyola's current students had at this time progressed to the UK). The audit of London South Bank was coordinated for QAA by Mr Matthew Cott, Assistant Director, Reviews Group. The audit team comprised Professor Gareth Roberts and Dr Carol Vielba (auditors), with Mr Matthew Cott acting as secretary. QAA is particularly grateful to the UK institutions and their partners in India for the willing cooperation they provided to the team.

and more are planned. These links operate as bilateral arrangements between London South Bank and the individual partners delivering semester one of the degree. The MSc International Business at Loyola is now self-financing and recruits around 15 students each year out of a total of 100 to 150 students registered worldwide on the programme. Loyola is content to keep its numbers on the programme at the present level in order to ensure that it is student centred.

10 The MSc Corporate Governance was established in 2005. The original London South Bank

in most cases held at the partner institution. Validation follows the procedures designed for on-campus provision. External panel members are only involved where new provision is being validated. After the panel has approved and signed-off the proposal, a memorandum of cooperation and, if necessary, a financial agreement are prepared. Low risk progression and articulation agreements are handled through a simpler approval process.

24 Loyola was initially validated as a partner in 1999, prior to the establishment of the current procedures. An internal panel considered the proposal to part-franchise the MSc International Business both to Loyola and to a college in Germany as part of the European Union-India programme. This was followed by a visit to Chennai. The visiting panel examined the compatibility of the two institutions in terms of their mission and ethos, as well as practical arrangements, to ensure equivalence and arrangements for students' progression. Loyola has a centralised approach to developing collaborative arrangements in which the senior management team is involved in detail in agreeing and monitoring provision.

25 When it was proposed to extend the franchise arrangements to include the MSc Corporate Governance in 2005, a similar two-part process was again employed. The proposal was first considered in London, after which there was a visit by London South Bank staff to Chennai. There was no external involvement in either panel, since the collaboration involved the franchise of parts of an existing approved degree.

26 The audit team concluded that London South Bank has broadly satisfactory processes in place for selecting and approving collaborative partners. Since the link with Loyola was approved, steps have been taken to strengthen the procedures involved. However, the team noted that external members are not involved in all approval decisions relating to new collaborative provision. No formal re-approval of the partnership has taken place in the 10 years since it was first approved, thus limiting the University's opportunity to review the link and its future development. The University may wish to keep the underpinning framework of the partnership under review to ensure that the written agreements are up to date and that the partnership is responsive to the views of both partners.

Programme approval

27 The approval processes employed at Loyola described above involved both the approval of the partner and the approval of the delivery of specific programmes at the partner. The processes for programme approval adopted by London South Bank vary with the type of link involved. In the case of both the MSc International Business and the MSc Corporate Governance, the programmes were approved and running in the UK before they were partly franchised. Where programmes are already approved for on-campus delivery, franchising involves an approval event usually held at the partner's site. The panel comprises a senior member of academic staff who acts as chair, a London South Bank academic from any part of the institution, and a member of the Quality Unit. There is no external input to the franchising process. Full validation processes involving external inputs are only employed for dual and joint awards or validated provision.

28 Approval panels can set conditions and make recommendations. The Quality Unit monitors the meeting of conditions. The Collaborations Committee maintains oversight of the approval process and, in turn, reports to the Quality and Standards Committee.

29 Programme specifications are written for all programmes. Programme amendments normally require faculty academic standards committee approval. The procedures for this are laid down in the QME Handbook. The Handbook also specifies requirements for keeping programme specifications up to date. Information from programme specifications is published through course handbooks. The audit team viewed examples of all of these documents.

30 There is limited opportunity for Loyola to adapt the programmes to meet local needs since the examinations are set by London South Bank and Loyola is one of a number of partners teaching semester one. Lecturers are able to orient examples, cases and aspects of course work to local issues. The staff from Loyola who met the audit team expressed the wish to explore further the possibility of developing the local dimension within the programmes.

Internationalisation of the programmes

31 The academic regulations require collaborative arrangements to include formal written agreements between the partners. Both programmes are covered by formal memoranda of cooperation signed by the heads of both institutions. The memoranda cover such matters as the respective responsibilities of London South Bank and Loyola, academic standards, quality assurance and programme management, resolution of differences and termination. The 2005 memorandum is more detailed and proposes differences in practice from the memorandum drawn up in 1999.

32 The current template for memoranda of cooperation is wider ranging and includes an expiry date. The memoranda covering the two MSc programmes are open ended. The proposed new guidelines in the QME Handbook require both parties to check that they are implementing the memorandum as agreed in the course of annual monitoring; the financial aspect of the agreement is reviewed annually. There does not appear to be a London South Bank procedure for formally updating memoranda, such as those for the two Loyola MSc programmes that were concluded some years ago.

33 New policies enshrined in the QME Handbook require the production of a management handbook for each partnership setting out in greater detail the expected role of each party. The handbook is approved at initial validation and reviewed through periodic review. At the time of the audit no handbook had yet been developed for the Loyola partnership.

34 Staff at Loyola who met the audit team indicated that the memorandum of cooperation was an important platform upon which to build the relationship as it was agreed at the highest level within the College. Operational detail was then worked out between London South Bank and Loyola as the need arose.

35 The evidence seen by the audit team supported the view that the written agreements between the institutions provided a sound basis for establishing the respective roles and responsibilities of each in relation to the link. However, because of the age of the documents, particularly that pertaining to the MSc International Business, the team observed instances where the documents were not aligned with each other or current practice. London South Bank might wish to consider a formal updating process for its older memoranda.

Academic standards and the quality of programmes

Staffing and resources

36 There is a named academic and an administrator responsible for the staffing, learning resources and delivery of the programme at Loyola. They liaise with the relevant UK-based course director and course manager for each programme. A member of London South Bank staff who is a former student of Loyola, with a good understanding of the organisation and culture in Chennai, acts as the key liaison point and undertakes many of the roles expected of a link tutor, such as oversight of admissions. The formal link person is the course director. The revised procedures in the Quality Management and Enhancement (QME) Handbook define formally the role of a link tutor, although none as yet operates in relation to Loyola.

37 A course board, which is a forum in which staff and students formally discuss the operation and potential enhancement of a programme, is held in Chennai each year towards the end of semester one for each programme. It is attended by Loyola staff, a member of staff from London South Bank and student representatives. Similar meetings are held in London during semester two with a broader membership.

38 The Briefing Paper noted that there is regular contact between London South Bank and its partner which facilitates a good working relationship and the swift solution of any difficulties. Arrangements are relatively simple reflecting the small scale of the activity. Liaison occurs at a number of levels. London South Bank module leaders liaise with their counterparts in India. University staff visit Chennai to participate in admissions, induction and assessment. In addition, a semester one lecturer visits each year to meet students and attend the course board as well as to take some classes and observe others. London South Bank recently produced a set of guidelines for staff undertaking liaison visits on the MSc International Business.

39 Several staff from Loyola, both academic and non-academic, have visited London South Bank. A member of staff visits the Loyola students in London each April and also holds meetings with London South Bank staff and former students. Staff in both London and India commented favourably on the extent of communications between the two institutions and the fact that communication took place at all levels from senior management to operational staff. Staff at Loyola who met the audit team noted that there was little opportunity for communications with other partners delivering semester one which limited the opportunity to share good practice.

40 London South Bank is responsible for recording student data, module marks and assessment decisions. When visiting for induction, University staff ensure that enrolment forms are completed to allow students to be registered at London South Bank and added to the student record system. Once registered, students receive a student number, an email address and have full access to electronic resources.

41 During semester one support for students is provided primarily by Loyola, although supplemented by support available through the web from London South Bank. In 2006 Loyola introduced a mentor scheme which covers some of the same functions as a tutorial system and also serves to gather student feedback. Students who met the audit team commented that staff at Loyola were readily available to provide academic and pastoral support and care.

42 Loyola offers a preparatory course prior to the main programme to ensure that students are ready to commence their programme. Loyola has a policy of providing additional academic support to students on the London South Bank collaborative programmes. This includes a mid-semester examination and regular checks on individual student progress.

53 Comparisons between the achievement of Loyola students and those based in the UK are made at both subject and course level. At subject level, comparison is facilitated by London South Bank marking all examination scripts, moderation of coursework, and the compilation of semester one results for discussion at the assessment board. Close contact with Loyola, and in particular the semester one teaching visit, allows London South Bank to assess directly the competence of the students in India. The course report looks formally at performance across the partners and identifies issues of quality and standards relating to individual partners. For example, the 2006-07 report for the MSc International Business noted a rise in referrals and a fall in the overall Pass rate at Loyola. The course reports seen by the audit team demonstrated that where significant problems had been detected in a partnership, actions were identified and progress on achieving them reviewed.

54 The audit team concluded that London South Bank has effective processes in place for monitoring its programmes delivered at Loyola. However, Loyola is not fully part of the London South Bank annual review cycle as it does not receive the reports relating to its provision. There is no parallel annual review cycle at the partner institution or annual report produced for the Loyola partnership. The University may wish to consider involving Loyola more formally in the monitoring, review and enhancement processes.

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55 Both programmes have previously been part of subject area review (SAR) - the MSc International Business in 2006, and the MSc Corporate Governance a year later. SARs evaluate a broad range of programmes at all levels and do not focus on specific programmes or collaborations. The review focuses on degree content, academic standards, quality of learning opportunities, management, and enhancement. Staff at Loyola who met the audit team were unaware of these reviews.

56 The University undertakes ad hoc reviews to address areas of concern. In 2004 a 'focused review' was undertaken of the MSc International Business triggered by the University Academic Standards Committee's concerns about quality in some of its collaborative partnerships. The review was undertaken by a senior internal London South Bank team.

57 The 2004 review covered concerns about consistency of marking, adherence to entry standards, relative performance by students in different partners, student support at London South Bank, staff resources, as well as content and structural issues. Loyola was the subject of concerns regarding entry standards and student performance. The panel made a number of recommendations including tightening of entry requirements and the need for an annual review of partners. So far this aspect of the review's recommendations has not been implemented for Loyola.

58 The agreement signed in 2005 notes that London South Bank would expect to visit the College to review the operation of the partnership at least every four years. Under the new periodic review process there is a six-year cycle and a mid-term light touch after three years. The MSc International Business will undergo a mid-cycle review in 2009. The mid-cycle review of MSc Corporate Governance is scheduled a year later. The reviews will be carried out by internal London South Bank panels. The mid-cycle review is intended to report on the extent to which the recommendations of the previous review and annual monitoring have been addressed. End-of-cycle, six-year reviews focus on the strategic fit of the partnership, the student experience, management of quality, operational matters and future developments. The proposed new version of the QME Handbook stated that collaborative provision will be subject to an additional periodic review focusing on the specific programme and the partner institution. It is not yet clear how this double process will work.

Staffing and Development

59 The Briefing Paper stated that staff appointment and management are delegated fully to Loyola. London South Bank does not keep any formal records of the staff teaching on the courses in India. London South Bank has sight of staff curricula vitae at validation but does not subsequently formally approve new staff that teach on the programmes, although this is stipulated in the Memorandum of Cooperation for the MSc Corporate Governance. London South Bank staff who met the audit team commented that the relationship between the two institutions regarding staffing was one of trust and that it was kept under review informally through day-to-day liaison. Staff at Loyola noted that London South Bank has offered advice on staffing matters.

60 There is no formal staff development offered to Loyola staff by London South Bank, but there is extensive teaching support. Lecturers are supplied with unit guides, assignments, lecture slides, teaching notes and materials such as case studies. Lecturers have remote access to the VLE and London South Bank's electronic library. Staff at Loyola who met the audit team noted the different approach to teaching required by the London South Bank programmes from that normally used in the College.

61 Informal development opportunities exist through regular contact and staff teaching visits (in both directions) between Loyola and London South Bank. As yet no formal exchanges have taken place. The London South Bank faculty member who undertakes a teaching visit during semester one peer observes at least one class at Loyola.

62 The procedures used by London South Bank to assure itself of the quality of teaching staff at Loyola do not fully meet the expectations of the College. The University neither confirms formally the appointment of staff to teach on its programmes nor keeps records of them. The University may wish to review the processes used to approve staff teaching on collaborative provision. The audit team noted the potential for more formal and extensive staff development of Loyola staff by London South Bank to contribute to a greater shared understanding of pedagogy. The University may therefore wish to develop a greater shared understanding and ownership of the learning and assessment model deployed by London South Bank (see paragraph 72).

University

63 The London South Bank Postgraduate Course Guide states the general entry requirements for the MSc International Business. Publicity produced by Loyola indicates the eligibility requirements in local terms.

64 Loyola is responsible for the MSc International Business and takes a lead in the development of the programme.

67 The Briefing Paper stated that assessment and coursework is the same at all centres. London South Bank lecturers set coursework and specify deadlines. Assignments are marked locally at Loyola but moderated at London South Bank. Loyola selects a sample covering a range of marks which is sent to London for moderation. Examinations and the examinations timetable are set by London South Bank and the former moderated by external examiners. Examinations in all locations are held simultaneously. In order to safeguard security, a London South Bank lecturer takes the examination papers to Chennai, invigilates and returns with the scripts. The module leader marks the scripts and these are then moderated by the external examiner.

68 Assessment boards meet in London. Grades go initially to an assessment panel which confirms provisional marks half way through the year and are confirmed later by a subject area board. At the end of the programme, module and dissertation marks are reviewed by an award and progression board.

69 The Memorandum of Co-operation for the MSc International Business stated that staff teaching at Loyola are members of the relevant London South Bank assessment board; however, in the case of the MSc Corporate Governance it is stated that only the Loyola course director is a member. In practice, Loyola staff do not attend or make direct input to the assessment boards in London.

70 The Briefing Paper stated that Loyola lecturers provide students with feedback on their assignments. Students who met the audit team confirmed that extensive feedback on their work was available to them. Students who are concerned about their examination performance may contact the relevant London South Bank lecturer once they receive their results in London.

71 Anti-plagiarism software is used to check dissertations and to allow students to check their coursework. Students receive a briefing on plagiarism and how to avoid it from London South Bank staff during their induction. However, students who met the audit team commented that despite briefings they had received, they were not fully aware of the nature of academic misconduct before they came to the UK.

72 The audit team concluded that the assessment processes applied to the partnership with Loyola are effective. The effective oversight by London South Bank of the assessment process and academic standards is identified as a positive feature of this partnership. However, the lack of involvement of Loyola staff in moderation and assessment boards militates against increased understanding of, and engagement in, the assessment process.

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73 External examiners are appointed by subject areas to individual modules and attend subject area assessment boards. One of the subject-based external examiners is appointed as external to the course and attends the award and progression assessment board. The criteria for appointment and termination, as well as the role and expectations of external examiners, are detailed in the Academic Regulations.

74 Reports from external examiners are received by the Quality Unit and are sent to faculties for distribution. Serious concerns require immediate response. External examiners' reports are commented on in unit review and annual programme monitoring. Faculty academic standards committees receive programme monitoring reports and note whether external examiner comments have been fully addressed. The Quality Unit provides a summary report to QSC identifying good practice and areas for improvement which are fed back to faculties.

75 The same external examiners moderate work across all centres and are thus able to ensure

students studying in different locations. For example, in 2007 the external examiner responsible for the International Trade module commented on the differential performance of students from different centres. Staff at Loyola do not receive copies of external examiners' reports but confirmed that they are briefed by London South Bank on the performance of Loyola students.

76 The audit team confirmed that London South Bank has effective arrangements in place for external examining of the degrees part-franchised to Loyola. These arrangements contribute to the University's effective oversight of academic standards. However, the team noted external examiners are only required to report by exception on standards in collaborative provision. Greater value could be derived from external examiners' work if their reports were read by staff in partner institutions and if these staff had direct contact with externals through participation in assessment boards.

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77 Certificates and transcripts are issued by London South Bank. The Academic Regulations state that the name of the partner will only appear on the certificate if more than one third of the course has been done at the partner institution. The Academic Regulations also state that the transcript will show the location and language of any units studied at a partner institution. For both degrees exactly one third of the credits are earned at Loyola; however, for those who do not complete the dissertation and exit with a postgraduate diploma half their credits are taken at Loyola. Postgraduate diploma certificates therefore do not meet the University's regulations.

78 The examples of certificates and transcripts seen by the audit team contained limited information about the students' studies. For example, neither indicates where the semester one modules were studied; transcripts do not indicate the number of credits awarded or their date of study, and do not contain a guide to the interpretation of marks. Staff at Loyola who met the team indicated that they wished certificates and transcripts to include the College's name which was normal practice in other partnerships.

79 London South Bank staff who met the audit team acknowledged that the information provided on transcripts is incomplete. Progress is being made with developing diploma supplements that will give further information. The University might wish to accelerate this process for students studying part of their degrees in collaborative provision so that the certificates and transcripts issued to students are brought in line with London South Bank's internal regulations and the C, d , - o ac, C .

Information

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80 Prospective students can find out about the course from the London South Bank website inform thato not rdrships. 79

- the opportunities which the link offers to students to experience different cultures and to learn about international business in an international context (paragraph 93).

98 The audit team also identified the following points for consideration by London South Bank as it develops its partnership arrangements:

- keeping the underpinning framework of the partnership under review to ensure that the written agreements are up to date and that the partnership is responsive to the views of both partners (paragraphs 26, 32, 35, 83, 92)
- developing a greater shared understanding and ownership of the learning and assessment model deployed by the University (paragraphs 30, 62, 72)
- reviewing and aligning provisions for student appeals, complaints and discipline and ensuring that these are communicated clearly to students (paragraphs 35, 85)
- developing mechanisms for gathering and analysing student feedback at Loyola in line with those in operation at London South Bank and collecting feedback from graduates (paragraphs 45, 46)
- involving Loyola College more formally in monitoring, review and enhancement processes (paragraphs 54, 55, 72, 76)
- reviewing the processes used to approve staff teaching on collaborative provision (paragraph 62)
- amending the certificates and transcripts issued to students in line with London South Bank's internal regulations and the *Code of Practice* (paragraph 79).

99 The audit team considered that London South Bank makes use of the *Code of Practice*

Appendix A

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Appendix B

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Semester 1: 14 students

Semester 2: 12 students

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No enrolment

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