

Introduction

This report considers the collaborative arrangement between Queen Margaret University and the International Institute of Hotel Management, Kolkata, India.

1. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

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.

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.

2. The collaborative arrangements

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 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 assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, particularly *Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, 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 students. The audit of Queen Margaret University

grant 'deemed university' status to an institution on recommendation from UGC. Degree-awarding powers are vested in universities, but there are also numerous colleges that offer the degrees of universities to which they are affiliated. Colleges may be categorised as public or private based on their ownership; however, funding arrangements blur the distinction because of the self-financing activities of public institutions and because private institutions may receive government aid. The number of private institutions has grown in recent years and these tend to offer more employment orientated programmes than their public counterparts; some award qualifications through collaboration with foreign institutions. The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is one of several bodies established with responsibilities, in particular, subject areas. The remit of AICTE is broad and includes engineering and technology, business and management, hotel and catering management, architecture and town planning, pharmacy, and applied arts and crafts. AICTE introduced regulations in 2005 under which foreign institutions imparting technical education are required to obtain approval from AICTE for their operations in India. There is currently no legal framework for recognising qualifications awarded by foreign institutions on the basis of programmes delivered entirely in India. The so-called 'Foreign Providers Bill', which would introduce such a framework, has been the subject of parliamentary debate but has yet to reach the statute books.

Section 1: The background to the collaborative link

Nurture link

6 The partnership between QMU and the International Institute of Hotel Management (IIHM) was established in 1999. The main focus of the partnership is on the delivery by IIHM of the third year of QMU's BA International Hospitality Management, leading to the award of an ordinary degree by the University. Applicants are normally required to have completed successful

overseas collaborations, QMU considers that the partnership with IIHM remains representative of its approach to overseas collaborations. The audit team heard that both institutions greatly value the link and believe that it has matured over time into a close collaboration between equal partners which has the potential for further growth.

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12 QMU's strategic approach to overseas collaboration is expressed in several documents

17 The Academic Collaborations Manual and agreement state that responsibility for the operational management of collaborative partnerships lies with an academic link person. In 2007-08 this role was undertaken by the School's Academic Director (Collaborations and Partnerships), reporting to the Dean. The Academic Director had been responsible for ensuring consistency of policy and practice across the School's international collaborations and assisted in the coordination required to maintain such partnerships effectively. During its visit to QMU, the audit team learned that following the retirement of the Academic Director, the School's management of its collaborative links has reverted to a dedicated academic link person dealing with operational matters for all overseas delivery of the programme, while the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) had assumed strategic responsibility for collaborative activities.

18 The Quality Enhancement Unit provides support for collaborative activity, including liaison

approved the proposal, monitored progress on the fulfilment of conditions, and received confirmation that these had all been met in April 2000.

23 Since the partnership with IIHM was approved, QMU has revised its approval procedures and these are now codified in the Academic Collaboration section of its Governance and

rights, data protection and applicable law (the laws of Scotland). The schedules include sections on programme management (including staffing, staff development, approval of published information, and responsibility for academic standards); student entrance requirements and terms and conditions; the composition and remit of the Joint Board of Studies and the requirements for the programme team's annual report to the Joint Board; the expectations of each partner; provision of learning resources; minimum student numbers; and the financial memorandum. The audit team confirmed that the agreement encompasses all areas identified in the *Code of practice, Section 2*. Furthermore, the agreement clearly identifies the responsibilities of each

the use of QMU's remote desktop technology and alternative delivery of information. This was

committees are synchronised to ensure an effective reporting relationship. Minutes are also submitted to the Joint Board of Studies and the audit team noted that issues raised by students were considered there. The team heard from students that issues brought to the SSCC are dealt with in a positive and constructive manner.

41 The definitive programme document states that student evaluation is undertaken for each module, using QMU's standard module questionnaire pro forma, submitted anonymously to the programme leader. The audit team understood from its discussion with students that this occurred at the end of the academic year, with action taken in response recorded in the annual monitoring report. The team heard that IIHM also endeavours to solicit feedback from graduates and employers.

Arrangements for monitoring and review

Annual monitoring

42 Arrangements for the monitoring and review of the programme are set out in the agreement and follow the procedures established for home-based programmes, with the exception that IIHM's annual monitoring report is additionally considered by the Joint Board of Studies before submission to the School Academic Board.

43 IIHM's programme leader compiles an annual monitoring report and action plan using QMU's standard template, in consultation with the programme team and with the help and support of the Academic Link Person. The report covers action taken after the previous annual report and action plan with an update on achievement of its objectives; response to any review event; action taken as a result of student feedback and module evaluation, staff and external examiner reports, module tutor and module moderator reports; action taken to enhance equality and diversity; analysis of performance indicators; teaching and learning (including staff development); resourcing; commentary on action taken to address QMU's Quality Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy; good practice and innovation; and an action plan of prioritised objectives for the present academic year. Achievement of the objectives identified in the report's action plan is monitored by the Joint Board of Studies.

44 The audit team scrutinised the two most recent annual monitoring reports, for 2005-06 and 2006-07. The reports recorded action taken to address issues raised by the external examiner and students, and provided clear evidence of improvement in practice. The 2006-07 report also recorded the action taken to fulfil the conditions set by the 2007 periodic review panel. The reports are approved by the IIHM programme committee and appear to comply fully with QMU's requirements.

45 Following approval by the programme committee, the annual monitoring report is submitted to the Joint Board and then to the School. The School Academic Board receives separate reports for each delivery site so that it can compare their performances. The School Academic Board considers an overview from each head of subject and a composite school report from the Associate Dean, to inform the learning and teaching strategy for the subsequent year and to disseminate good practice. Both the heads of subject and School reports include analyses of home and partner programme performance, identifying any particular issues arising from collaborative activity; this demonstrates an effective monitoring of partner delivery at school level. The consolidated reports from QMU's four schools are then considered by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee. Examples of good practice are posted on the website of QMU's Centre for Academic Practice.

46 Through its discussion with staff and students, and scrutiny of documentation, the audit team concluded that the annual monitoring procedures were working well in identifying and addressing any issues related to the academic standards and quality of the programme.

Periodic review

47 Collaborative programmes are normally reviewed on a five-year cycle and in accordance with QMU's standard procedures, with the exception of the composition of the panel which is composed entirely of experienced staff, including staff with experience of the University's collaborative arrangements. Normally the aim of periodic review is to take an overview of the academic health of the programme, identify any problems and to confirm continuing demand for, and the validity of, the programme. However, the review of the provision at IIHM, which is held at IIHM, is limited to establishing how successfully the programme has been operating at IIHM; the broader issues of academic health, currency and relevance are addressed during the periodic review of the home programme. The IIHM review also includes a mapping exercise to determine whether or not the first two years of IIHM's Diploma in Hospitality Management continue to match the first two years of the degree programme.

48 The programme has been subject to two periodic reviews and revalidations in 2004 and 2007. The 2004 review led to the revalidation of the programme but only for three years, reflecting the conditions on enhanced staff development, communication and support for IIHM. The 2007 review recommended approval for a full five-year term, confirming the success of the partners in responding to the conditions of the previous review. The 2007 review panel

discussion with staff and students, the audit team heard that the three-week turnaround was now generally achieved, with occasional exceptions.

59 The programme complies with QMU's policies on the consideration of extenuating circumstances, penalties for late submission, and anonymous marking. Moderation is undertaken by both partners. First, all work is double-marked and moderated by IIHM tutors and an agreed sample submitted to QMU for further moderation. That sample is then sent to the external examiner who has the option of viewing all student work during the visit to IIHM to attend the award board of examiners. All assessment results must be confirmed by the board. A copy of the student's work, plus a copy of the marker's comments, must be retained by IIHM for 12 months to allow for any appeals.

60 The Briefing Paper reported that there had been concerns in the early years of the partnership about marking standards and plagiarism. These concerns were addressed through dedicated staff development and the provision of detailed guidance for students. Recent comments by the external examiner reveal that the situation is now much improved. The 2007 periodic review set a condition that QMU's new regulations on plagiarism and assessment should be implemented within the programme once they had been approved by Senate. The new regulations were subsequently incorporated into the definitive programme document.

61 The board of examiners is established according to QMU's Governance and Regulations, and is responsible to Senate. The board is convened at IIHM, usually by the Dean of School or, in his absence, an approved alternate. It is normally attended by IIHM's Director, the programme leader, teaching staff and an external examiner. The board is serviced by a member of QMU's Registry. The Dean/Associate Dean, or approved alternate, and external examiner attend all boards for the programme to ensure comparability of standards across the different delivery sites; comparative statistical data has recently been made available to boards to aid this function. The board considers results documentation (compiled by School administrative staff) and analytical reports on the operation of the assessment process commenting on student performance and the effectiveness of marking moderation (compiled by each University module coordinator). Minutes and confirmed Pass lists are prepared by the board secretary and forwarded to IIHM for communication to students.

62 The Joint Board meeting is usually held at the same time as the award board of examiners, to ensure representation by both partners. Semester one and retrieval boards are normally held via video-conference.

63 The University's assessment procedures for the partnership are robust. They include module teaching and verification packs, module leader reports, which ensure equity and comparability, and the provision of detailed feedback to students. The audit team identified these procedures as a positive feature of the partnership.

External examining

64 The arrangements for external examining follow QMU's regulations and its Handbook for External Examiners. The external examiner for the programme in Edinburgh also examines the provision at IIHM and produces a separate report for each site. The audit team scrutinised the reports from 2005-06 to 2007-08. It was clear that QMU had addressed any problems that the external examiner had identified. Moreover, in the 2007-08 report, the team noted that the external examiner commended an improvement both in student performance and in the management and teaching of the programme between the two sites.

65 The external examiner submits the report on the IIHM provision to QMU's Principal and Vice-Chancellor. Copies are circulated by the Registry to the Dean of School, the Academic Link Person, the School Manager and to the IIHM programme leader, along with a report distribution form that highlights any issues which require a response. The report is discussed by the IIHM

programme committee, and the programme leader is required to provide a response within eight weeks. The report and response are then sent to the Dean for approval. The response is formally recorded in the annual monitoring report action plan and monitored through the next round of annual monitoring.

66 The audit team considered that the external examining for the programme is operating effectively. The external examiner reports clearly identify any potential problems and there is a procedure to ensure that the partners consider, and respond to, the reports. The procedure is consistent with the *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining*.

C r e d e n t i a l s

67 The University Registry produces degree certificates and transcripts and sends them to IIHM either by courier or with the QMU staff attending the local graduation ceremony (usually the Principal or a vice-principal). The certificate and transcript provide full details of the programme including the name and location of IIHM. They are, therefore, consistent with the *Code of practice, Section 2* and with the European Diploma Supplement. There is no reference on the certificate or transcript to the study at levels 1 and 2 (the IIHM Diploma) or the results achieved, which is standard University practice for any progression arrangement.

Section 5: Student progression to the UK

72 Most Diploma students progress to the degree. IIHM provides a bridging programme to facilitate the transition to year three of the degree through specialist modules at level 2 of the Diploma, and an induction and orientation programme, both for students who are continuing at IIHM and for those travelling to QMU. IIHM provides further bridging support at the beginning of year three which commences with an induction period. At QMU there is a 10-day, two-part programme and also a full-time tutor to support all direct entry students. Students studying at QMU are also supported by IIHM's International Liaison Tutor who visits annually.

73 The 2007 period review report set a condition requiring the '...formal confirmation and documentation of the transition arrangements and bridging programme being undertaken by the Institute that leads to the new award'. In addition, the panel recommended that the bridging programme should be embedded within IIHM's existing Diploma. In its 2006-07 annual monitoring report, the programme team recorded the fulfilment of that condition by providing revised modules for level 2 of the Diploma programme. The students whom the audit team met regarded the bridging programme as an effective preparation.

74 For the small number of students who proceed to QMU to study for the honours degree, there is a further induction programme and a dedicated direct entry tutor provides academic and pastoral support. Most of those progressing beyond the BA programme apply for master's programmes.

Conclusion

75 In considering the partnership, the audit team identified the following positive features:

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Appendix A

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Appendix B

Number of students for 2008-09

Number of students

In Kolkata studying level 3 BA International Hospitality
Management at IIHM, Kolkata:

170

From Kolkata studying level 3 BA International Hospitality
Management at QMU Edinburgh Campus:

33

From Kolkata studying level 4 BA (Hons) International Hospitality
Management at QMU Edinburgh Campus:

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