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India and the United Kingdom

1 This case study concerns the partnership between the University of Sunderland (the University), operating through its School of Health, Natural and Social Sciences, and AIMA College, Kochi, to deliver a BSc (Hons) Nursing programme. It focuses on the recruitment problems encountered following changes in English language requirements for overseas nurses wishing to work in the United Kingdom (UK).

2 India was identified by the University as a growing market during 1999-2000 and initially the focus was on recruiting students, with the help of Chopra Consultants, Delhi, to on-campus programmes, particularly postgraduate computing. In 2004, the University opened its own office in Delhi.

3 The area of nursing education was seen as an opportunity for developing collaborative arrangements in India, and the Delhi office identified possible partner organisations for the delivery of a nursing programme that the University was already operating successfully with partners in Malaysia and Singapore. This programme is a top-up route for nurses with an appropriate in-country qualification leading to a BSc (Hons) Nursing. The degree is not in itself a sufficient qualification to work as a nurse in the UK, since this requires successful completion of an Overseas Nurses Programme (ONP); this is offered by the University as an approved programme leading to registered nurse status by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). Admission to the ONP is restricted to nurses whose applications to register with NMC have been accepted. The combination of a nursing degree with the ONP, which affords work experience in the UK and offers prospects for career progression from nursing into management positions within the health sector, was seen as an attractive product for the Indian market.

4 The subject area of nursing is not within the remit of the All India Council for Technical

7 Students with a Diploma in Nursing, which gives licence to practise in India, are recruited to level 5 (the intermediate level of the programme) and given 200 credits through accreditation of prior learning. They complete 40 credits (two bridging modules) at level 5 and 80 credits at level 6 (the final level of the programme) at AIMA College before attending the University to complete the remaining 40 credits at level 6. The total length of the programme is 48 weeks, 32 weeks studying in India and 16 weeks in the UK. Students who do not transfer to the UK may qualify for an exit award of an ordinary (bachelor's) degree.

8 Among the criteria used by the University in approving partners and degree programmes is sustainable market demand. Since the partnership with AIMA College began in May 2006, there have been three cohorts of students, the last of which completed the programme in 2007-08. In total, 52 students have been recruited; 32 have transferred to the University and 31 have completed the programme. Where students have not progressed to the UK, this has mainly been due to changes in their personal circumstances. AIMA College warns applicants of the financial commitment required to study on the programme and, although there has been some feedback from students about the perceived high cost of living in the UK, financial factors have generally not prevented students completing the programme.

9 A more significant issue has proved to be the English language requirement. Following a review of the on-campus programme (a level 6 top-up degree which recruits both UK and

12 Over a period of four years the University has operated a BSc (Hons) Nursing programme with two partners in different regions of India. Initially the operation was successful in recruiting students, most of whom progressed to the University to complete the programme and undertake the professional qualification that enabled them to work as nurses in the UK. It was the raising of the English language requirement for admission to the ONP leading to registration in the UK, and the associated increase in the entrance requirement for the degree programme that halted recruitment to the remaining partner institution and made the future of the collaboration in India uncertain. Although the BSc (Hons) Nursing programme would require re-approval if there were to be a lapse of over two years, the Memorandum of Agreement with AIMA College runs until 2010-11 and, as the relationship has been a good one, the University hopes to continue working with the College.

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