

**UK Council  
for International  
Student Affairs**

Transnational Education  
and the Student Experience:  
a PMI Student Experience  
project report

by Christine Humfrey

**UKCISA**

THE PRIME  
MINISTER'S INITIATIVE  
FOR INTERNATIONAL  
EDUCATION

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## 1 Introduction

Internationalisation of the higher and further education sectors is here to stay. In spite of the successful global positioning of the UK in this activity both government and the institutions must continue to be vigilant, innovative, sensitive to the market, and responsive to the need for change where that change can be achieved without any diminution of the quality standards on which it relies.

The global market is recognising the need for, and the importance of, transnational education (TNE). The UK, together with a number of our leading competitors and collaborators, is embracing transnational education with its new methods of delivery, revised and adapted systems and exciting innovation in learning and teaching.

The importance of a good TNE portfolio built on partnerships is strongly expressed in the document produced in late 2008 by Sir Drummond Bone 'Internationalisation of HE: A Ten Year View', "...a longer term collaborative view of internationalisation is probably the only safe way forward. Such an approach would dampen the inherent instability of the open market from year to year. If collaborative and long term partnerships are the engine of growth as opposed to aggressive selling, growth is likely to be both more gentle and more stable..."

The UK Minister of State for Higher Education and Intellectual Property has stated the UK belief in the need to offer all students a positive student experience. "The international student experience which we offer is, I believe, one of the UK's great success stories and it is because of the investment which we make in this area that our reputation and satisfaction ratings are as high as they are today." (Foreword to UKCISA's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication, "Mobility Matters: forty years of international students" (2008)).

This report provides an overview of some aspects of the scale, scope and nature of UK TNE operations overseas, gives six specific case studies and some reflections and conclusions. In a separate appendix, there is also a brief description of the 'student experience' from the perspective of one overseas country – Malaysia.

Together the inevitable and progressive growth of TNE in all its incarnations and the acknowledgement of the central importance of the international student experience have made a focus on the quality and form of the TNE student experience a necessary and significant topic for discussion.

It is hoped that this report may move that discussion forward.

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## 2. Remit and Terms of Reference

The second Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI2) launched in April 2006 identified "ensuring the quality of the student experience" as one of the four areas of focus which would drive the UK internationalisation strategy. On the British Council PMI2 section of its website the student experience strand is described thus:

"PMI aims to ensure that all international students undertaking a UK education have a positive experience at every step of the way. We do this through support in three areas:

- visas, pre-departure information and orientation
- benchmarking and best practice
- marketing and communication campaigns"

Much work had already been, and is being, produced regarding the experience of the 'traditional' international students studying in the UK in both the higher and further education sectors, but little so far on the experience of those recruited to transnational education programmes. UKCISA, therefore, applied to the PMI for funding to review the experience of those international students on UK transnational education (TNE) programmes.

Funding was secured for this project with the following title and remit: "**The student experience: some examples of good practice in transnational education in both the HE and the FE sectors**".

Increasing numbers of institutions are becoming involved with, and showing interest in, TNE provision. Such involvement is not restricted to UK institutions, nor indeed to the HE and FE sectors, but is a global phenomenon. This is an area of considerable complexity and importance and this project intends to raise awareness of best practice within the UK HE and FE sectors by seeking and identifying examples from TNE partnerships and analysing such examples in order to offer insights to those working in the sectors.

It is intended that the outcomes of the project should include:

- increased awareness of the scope and concept of TNE
- greater awareness of the opportunities and challenges of TNE and its relevance to the individual UK institution
- presentation of examples of good practice supported by insights into international partnership considerations and the manner in which these are handled to the benefit of the participating students
- growing understanding of TNE by those working with international students in UK institutions with a resultant increase in confidence and competence in TNE activity and, ultimately, in student satisfaction with these arrangements

### 3. Transnational Education: definition, history and context

Transnational education (TNE) covers, in the words of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):

“All types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may belong to the educational system of a State different from the State in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national system.” (Council of Europe 2002 and quoted by the British Council in the paper “Education UK Partnerships: Transnational Education”, February 2008).

The British Council defines it more simply as “education provision from one country offered in another”.

While transnational education in concept is not new, its methods of operation, visibility and increasing importance are. The gaining of one country’s qualifications by whole or partial study in a second or third country has been the principle on which the University of London has run its “distance learning” External Degree Programme for tens of thousands of international students since 1865. The Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) has offered similar opportunities over a lengthy period. The Open University has been influential in raising awareness of these activities and professional bodies have offered their awards in a similar manner for many years. The UK was an early provider of such distance learning opportunities, in part, as a result of its Commonwealth responsibilities.

For the last ten years the trend in the provision of TNE has increased globally with the major English-speaking destination countries (MESDC in British Council ‘Vision 2020’ terms) playing a leading role, as they have in many other types of internationalisation. Australia and the USA, together with the UK, are offering a comprehensive portfolio of activity and so also are countries such as Singapore and Malaysia who aspire to be regional hubs for the provision of higher and further education.

Some examples of overseas campuses (one type of TNE) are the University of Richmond in London, Swinburne University in Vietnam, Monash University in Malaysia, the Universities of Liverpool and Nottingham in China, the British Universities in Dubai and Egypt and the University of Carnegie Melon in Australia. Perhaps the most surprising of these is Malaysia’s Limkokwing University which set up a campus in London.

The establishment of an overseas campus is at one end of the TNE delivery spectrum and many other delivery forms are available. These include:

- e-learning where the whole programme is provided in electronic form, for example the Universitas 21 Global network MBA

- “brick and click” where only a part of the programme is followed electronically and the remainder by some form of attendance not necessarily in the awarding country, for example the MBA at Singapore’s PBS Academy
- overseas campuses where all or a part of the degree may or must be provided in country
- schemes where the awarding institution enters into partnership with an overseas institution for delivery of the whole programme ie ‘3+0’ or ‘4+0’
- schemes where the awarding institution enters into a partnership with an overseas institution for delivery of part of the programme (usually the earlier part) ie ‘1+3’ or ‘2+2’
- schemes whereby selected ad hoc students may progress from the overseas institution to the awarding institution for part of the programme

This list of arrangements outlined above can also be known by terms such as articulation, franchise, progression, twinning or partnership arrangements and can be entered into with an overseas institution in the private or public sector, with private or public universities, with a commercial concern or with a government agency or Ministry. They can relate to sub degree, vocational, professional, undergraduate or postgraduate qualifications and can be awarded as a single degree, joint degrees or double degrees. In some cases students can graduate at two separate ceremonies.

With this wide matrix of opportunity on offer across developed and developing countries it is not surprising that students and institutions are often confused as to terminology. Never has the student choice, the sponsor selection or the institutional opportunity for innovation been greater.

The size and characteristics of this TNE activity are also of interest. It is likely that, for the UK at least, by 2010 the numbers of students registering on HE TNE programmes will be greater than those coming to the UK programmes from overseas by traditional recruitment. Traditional recruitment resulted in 368,000 international students studying in UK HE in 2006/07 (Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) figures). They also showed just over 89,000 students following UK degrees on programmes outside the UK. The latest HESA statistics (for the year 2007/08) which are the first to require TNE data in the same form from every UK HE institution show 196,640 students defined as follows:

“...students registered with higher education institutions but studying wholly overseas.... Students who commence their studies outside the UK and subsequently come to continue their studies in the UK are included in the Aggregate Record up until the point at which they enter the UK, when a full individual record is required”.

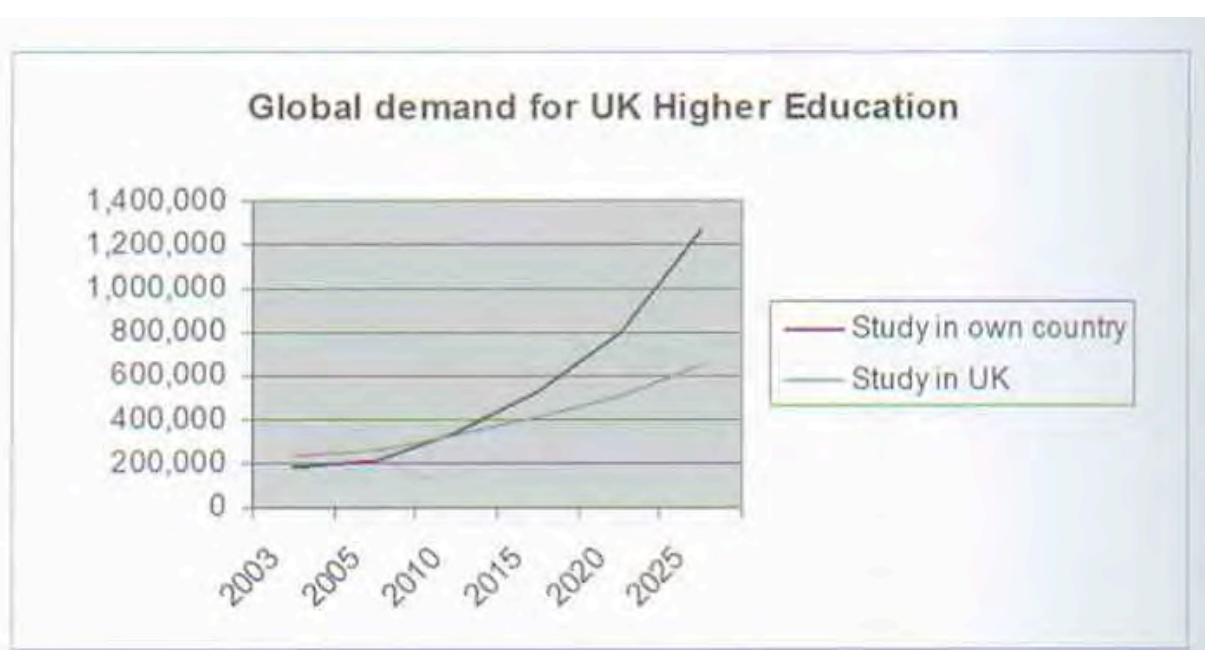
This figure of 196,640 on the Aggregate Record therefore refers to those students registered on UK overseas campuses and on in-country validated courses together with students on some twinning programmes if registered with the UK provider whilst in their home country. The figure of 368,000 international students in 2006/07 returned on the longer established Student

Record will include those students coming to the UK from TNE partnerships or progressions, once they have arrived at their UK higher education institution.

The sum of comprehensive current TNE HE activity is therefore considerably greater than 196,640 and discussion with British Council colleagues believes it to be in excess of 230,000, with country profiles in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong each in excess of 30,000. India, China and Russia are each believed to have TNE numbers of at least 10,000.

Figures show that TNE is expected to outpace traditional international recruitment to the UK by 2010.

**Fig 1 – Traditional and TNE Projected Recruitment**



(Source: “Transnational Education: from vision to reality” in “Quality in Partnership: 25 Years of the Council of Validating Universities”, van-Cauter & Bateman, Open University, 2008)

The expectation that TNE student numbers are likely to increase globally is based on a number of factors among which are:

- capacity to accept traditional international students will become limited especially with the more successful providers
- families and sponsors may well decide for financial reasons to secure all or a portion of the award in a cheaper home or third country
- parents may have anxieties about allowing the undergraduate age student to travel to study in a distant country with perhaps very different values and mores
- international terrorism, awareness of the “carbon footprint” and fear of pandemics may reduce the desire for and necessity of international travel
- leading institutions are aware of the need to secure student numbers and academic influence outside their own country, and technology and the

philosophy of internationalisation has never made such delivery easier or more efficient and acceptable

- employment and employability may be gained more successfully if the student remains aware of the manpower planning needs and the market trends in his/her own country. This would apply initially to that percentage of international students who expect to return home immediately after gaining a UK qualification.

It is quite clearly understood by those countries who are most successful in terms of numbers of international students registered in their institutions that the quality of the student experience is a key factor in that success. Only latterly as numbers of TNE students have grown has there been increased discussion of the quality of the experience as it pertains to them. The UK has been active in these discussions as a spate of recent initiatives and publications prove. Over the last few years:

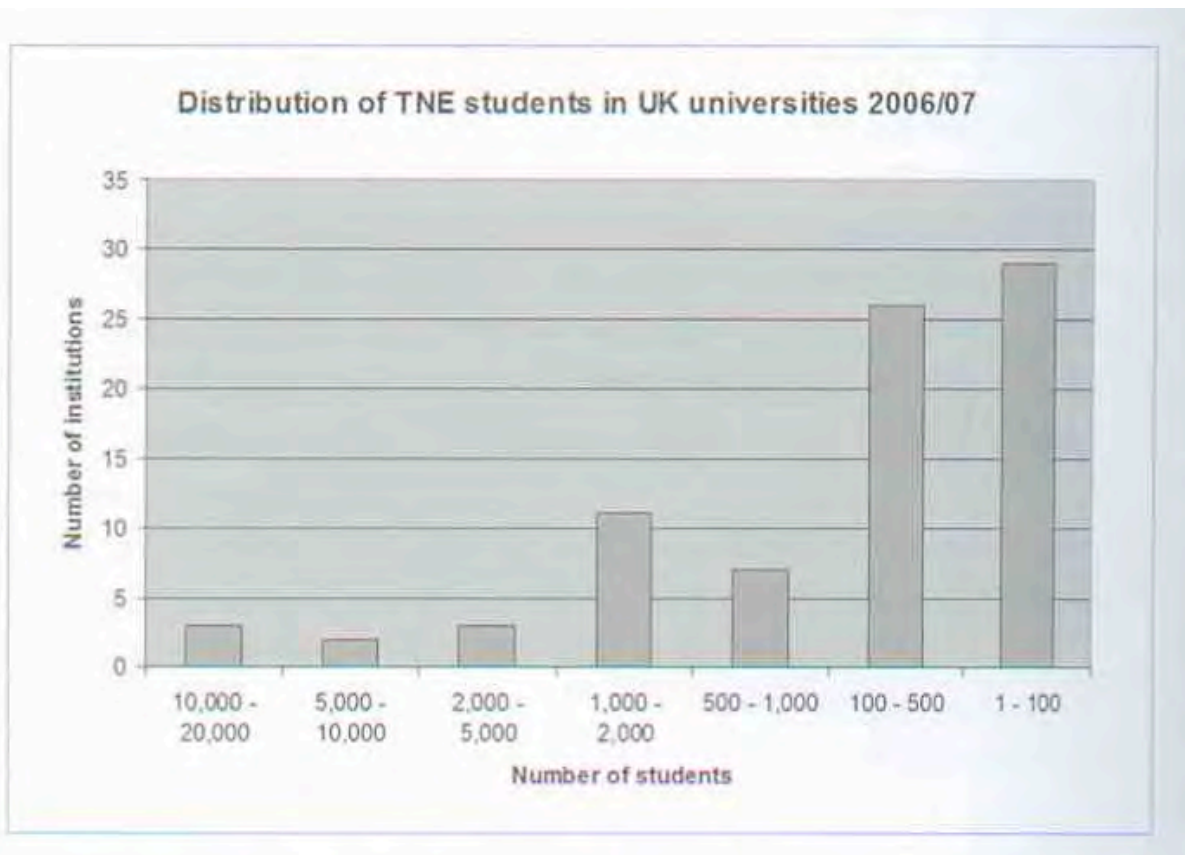
- the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education has been established and produces frequent reports
- the British Council has set up a Transnational Education Service beginning in a number of countries in South East Asia and building on their Malaysian pilot in 2007. Staff have been appointed in country and terms of reference and objectives set:
  1. to build capacity in the region to deliver TNE services effectively in agreed priority countries, which will result in increased take-up of UK TNE programmes
  2. to create a regional model that can be duplicated globally
  3. to work with Education UK partners and local providers to build sustainable TNE partnerships throughout the region

At the same time the Council has appointed and seconded staff with an FE brief in TNE and partnerships.

- HESA now requiring TNE number submission in the Aggregate as well as the Student Record table for 2007/08
- a number of national conferences are being run on TNE and partnerships
- the list of publications in this area is extensive and growing (see bibliography)

Much research has been and continues to be commissioned on level, form, variety, rationale, region and institutions for TNE and some details are already emerging.

**Fig 2 – Size of institutions relative to TNE numbers**



(Source: “Transnational Education: from vision to reality” in “Quality in Partnership: 25 Years of the Council of Validating Universities”, van-Cauter & Bateman, Open University, 2008)

- the predominance of small scale activity, with just over 50 institutions in the UK having fewer than 1,000 TNE students compared with five institutions that enrol more than 5,000 students on TNE
- the high numbers of undergraduate students involved compared with postgraduate students
- the dominance of some of the vocational subject areas over the less vocational disciplines. Business Studies, Management, IT and Engineering are high on the list
- the likely growth of TNE numbers in some regional areas
  1. India from 12,500 to 60,000
  2. Malaysia from 30,000 to 55,000
  3. Singapore from 40,000 to 47,000
  4. China from 10,000 to 35,000
  5. Hong Kong from 21,500 to 27,800
  6. Russia from 12,000 to 19,700
  7. Greece from 6,000 to 8,000
  8. Israel from 4,100 to 5,000

(These are figures in the British Council Education UK Partnerships briefing on TNE showing the '2020 Vision' 2003 actual figures against the 2010 projections).

The reasons given for the predicted increase are:

- Demographics and increased access to higher education
- Government encouragement to build human capital
- Globalisation of professors and professional mobility
- Increasing internationalisation of institutions
- Arrival of new players in the market place

While the opportunities, the facilities and the demand for HE TNE appear considerable, the threats to and constraints on it are also significant, as is the enthusiasm of the private sector to secure an increasing presence.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Identification of the student experience**

The interpretation of “the student experience” is obviously fundamental to this report. That experience has been evaluated, measured, monitored and marketed with increasing frequency and skill over the last decade and has come to encompass a broad portfolio of services including the educational environment. This has included the quality of teaching and academic facilities. It is, however, more than this and the 2004 UKCISA survey, “Broadening our Horizons” for HE (and “New Horizons” for FE ), includes sections not only on academic issues but on student concerns, pre-arrival information, finance and hardship, immigration, employment and the official welcome, accommodation, social integration, leisure and perceptions of the UK. It concluded that “international students’ experiences of studying in the UK were extremely positive” but “key themes for improvement which emerge are about finance, accommodation, social integration, and support”.

At the outset of this consultancy it was agreed that there should and could be no investigation of academic standards nor of the financial sustainability of the model. The Quality Assurance Agency and professional bodies carried the responsibility for the former and the institutional governance together with the Higher Education Funding Councils for the latter. In addition it was made plain that where activities were at an early stage or detail could be classified as commercially sensitive, then they would not be recorded here.

The data collected and, in particular, the case studies and interviews, therefore concentrated on the quality of relationships such as partner to partner and student to partner, the consistency of experience offered between all types of delivery and the home campus, the transparency of the scheme and the care and thoughtfulness with which the programme was delivered, and finally the imagination and sensitivity with which programmes were managed and relationships enhanced.

### **4.2 Terminology**

Those who aspire to deliver TNE at the highest level of quality need to have a strong understanding not only of their own institution but also of the partner institution or organisation as well as the rationale, development and terminology of TNE.

That terminology is complex and as Kevin van-Cauter of the British Council writes, “within the university sector in the UK, the term ‘transnational education’ is not widely used. Most universities use the umbrella term ‘collaborative international provision’ or more commonly describe TNE by its component parts, for example ‘franchised provision’ or ‘distance learning’...key target audiences involved in the local delivery of TNE, as well as students and other stakeholders, are not familiar with the term and typically

use 'distance learning' to describe the programme they are undertaking or involved with".

In the context of this report:

- International students are all students who are defined as 'non-UK' and so includes EU as well as full fee-paying students
- TNE includes the methods of provision listed in the remit also called
  - in-country/flying faculty
  - on-campus provision overseas
  - validation
  - articulation
  - franchise
  - joint award
  - dual award
- It has not included specific mention of
  - study abroad
  - intercalated PhD
  - exchange
  - e-learning

### **4.3 Data collection**

It was recognised that it was important to secure information at an early stage on the institutions' perceptions of and engagement in TNE. To achieve this a survey was distributed via 'Survey Monkey' (a copy of the survey is available in Chapter 11) and this was publicised in both UKCISA's e-news and at the UKCISA Student Experience Summit in November 2008 at Edinburgh and February 2009 in Windsor. A link was placed on the UKCISA website and notification sent to UKCISA contacts by email.

It was initially disappointing that only 27 replies were received and of these only seven included a response to the key question on good practice. We were, therefore, left with little data that could be deemed statistically valid and very few examples of the good practice which we knew existed. The minimal response did, however, lead to reflection on the difficulties of the exercise and helped us to arrive at a clearer picture of the organisational arrangements that had to be made for TNE to be understood and embedded.

It led to a number of considerations:

- Is there a named source within the institution to whom all TNE queries can be initially directed?
- Is the term TNE known and recognised within the institution?
- Are the channels of communication in the institution clear and open between the contact point for TNE and senior management?
- Is all TNE activity clearly and quickly visible in electronic and all other relevant marketing materials relating to the institution?
- Is TNE activity embedded in the institution?

It became clear that if the answers to all or most of the above were positive then there was a high probability that the TNE activity was flourishing.

#### **4.4 The survey results**

Most of those (58%) who responded saw their role as student support and advice and this may reflect the composition of the group that receives and reads UKCISA's e-news items. The most complete forms were returned where the initial contact had discussed the question with other colleagues with responsibility for TNE in the institution.

- Over 92% of respondents stated that partnerships such as '2+2' were the main focus of the TNE activity and 46% talked of partnerships where the whole award was studied overseas.
- The countries listed for location of TNE activity were as shown in other surveys of this type such as "Trans-national Education and Higher Education Institutions: Exploring Patterns of HE Institutional Activity" (DIUS through Sheffield Hallam 2008). It shows Asia being by far the most popular location with the Middle East and Europe following.
- The question on subject areas of TNE provision mirrored other major studies, with 62% in business and finance, followed by engineering and IT. In the DIUS survey the business provision was somewhat lower at 38% and creative arts accounted for less than IT but more than engineering.
- In the survey an equal number of responses (62%) stated they offered TNE at undergraduate and Masters level with the DIUS survey showing over 55% of programmes at undergraduate level and fewer, nearly 40%, at Masters level.
- The majority of respondents offered programmes which had been established or had had first cohort graduation in the last five years.
- The survey gave a limited spread in a drop-down list for numbers of TNE students and this limited the scope of replies. Over a quarter of respondents claimed over 600 TNE students and the case studies show that the actual figure for some of them would have been much higher. 46% of respondents claimed 101 to 200 students and 18% claimed 50 or fewer. It is difficult to compare this with the DIUS data but the data shown in figs. 1 and 2 above does indicate a large number of institutions with small numbers of TNE students and only four or five with over 5,000.
- The question on category of partner was complicated as institutions claimed a variety of partners but 75% stated that the partners were in the public education sector with 67% in the private education sector. The

DIUS respondents gave 30% of partners in the public sector and around 42% in the private education sector while over 20% were not known.

- The survey asked respondents to explain at greater length an aspect of student support in TNE that they had had particular success with or knowledge about. A list of types of student support was provided in the survey and each had the following level of response:

induction and orientation	6 responses
student support and advice	6 responses
graduation and alumni activity	3 responses
pre departure information	2 responses
accommodation	2 responses
student representation, feedback	2 responses
finance and employment advice	1 response
  
- In total only seven responses were made to the invitation to describe these initiatives.

In contrast, the DIUS survey attracted an 82% response rate from all higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK, thus representing a total of 132 institutions. FE institutions were not included in the survey. Some similarities of response in this UKCISA survey, in spite of the difference in percentage of respondents, can be seen. In addition there was a difficulty in extracting the FE from the HE responses which created further ambiguities.

This UKCISA survey did, however, allow some insight into HE TNE activity and provided a starting point for dialogue with institutions. It also prompted a closer discussion with various organisations and institutions in the FE sector.

#### **4.5 Further Education**

It will become clear when reading this report that the further education sector, although having access to the survey, was far less represented in the responses than the HE sector. Six FE colleges opened and began the survey but only two provided material from which a case study could be made. Much information was, however, subsequently gleaned by talking to colleagues with an overview of FE and its TNE activities rather than by following up with meetings in institutions. Individual colleges were, however, most helpful in phone discussions and provided additional background and context.

There are nearly 300 General Further Education Colleges (GFEs) in the UK with the preponderance being in England where 235 are based. As a sector their overall operating surplus is small and considerably less than for HE when figures were last reviewed. GFE College activities can divide their work and their international activities into two streams - Academic, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

After discussion with the co-Chair of the Association of Colleges' International Portfolio group (Nick Lewis), the AoC International Partnerships Advisor

(Diane Mullen) and the Vice Chair of UKCISA and Chair of the TVET UK group (Geoff Pine) the reasons for the position of the FE colleges with regard to TNE were identified.

These could be listed as:

- Non-ownership of many of the qualifications which the colleges regularly award in the UK. TNE activity would therefore require further negotiation between the college and those validating the qualification before TNE activity with that qualification could be established. This can be overcome by engaging with a globally recognised brand such as Cambridge International Examinations to acquire rights to a specified award and partnership status with CIE to offer it. Some colleges have also used access or foundation programmes and others BTEC diplomas but the difficulties over external accreditation remain for many.
- There has been considerable expansion in the private sector provision of Access or Foundation courses through companies such as Kaplan and INTO with robust marketing overseas and links with HE institutions.
- Few colleges are now enjoying financial certainty or a period of surplus. Since most TNE activity needs to be backed by funding, either from the college, the government or a sponsor, few feel sufficiently secure to embark on these activities.
- Many of the overseas governments who require the type of training and skills that UK colleges can provide can obtain them as part of a purchase package from large and global companies such as Vosper Thornycroft. It is difficult, if not inappropriate, for individual colleges to try to compete. This is another example of where the GFE colleges would be assisted by further UK government support (PMI2 has already assisted with some partnership work).
- Many colleges have a robust local international agenda which is given greater priority by them than TNE activity. Colleges often have close involvement with local issues such as social inclusion for ethnic minority groups or links with the countries from which many of their home students originate.
- Further education has chosen in many cases to work in the field of international partnerships rather than the specific field of TNE and these have contributed greatly to international capacity building, skills development, friendship making and staff exchanges across many borders. The British Council publication of 2008, "A Review and Taxonomy: International College Partnership Models" lists six types of FE/VET international partnerships which celebrate the international activities of 100 UK colleges in partnership with agencies and institutions all over the world. These six types of partnership are:
  - partnerships to facilitate mobility and professional development
  - bilateral institutional partnerships

- mono-structural consortia
- multi-structural consortia
- partnerships linked to government frameworks for TVET reform
- networks

Much has been achieved and the survey that supported the publication indicates that “72% (of colleges) believe they have the capacity to further develop their international work”.

- The sector has also chosen to focus on traditional international recruitment, the bulk of which is concerned with progression to the HE sector, although the effect of private providers is evident here (see above). Figures for 2006/07 show a total of just over 70,000 non-UK students in FE, but a proportion of these may be asylum seekers or those with indefinite or extended leave to remain (AoC statistics).
- Very little data is available for GFE colleges and their TNE provision. While the Points Based System (PBS) should make collection of data on traditional international students coming into FE compulsory, it will obviously do nothing for those FE students on TNE courses who never enter the UK. It has been said too that there is no incentive for colleges to report on what some may consider ‘commercial income’.

This position has been much discussed and action taken by the British Council in the appointment and secondment of staff to FE and TVET international partnership and TNE provision portfolios. At the January 2009 partnership conference the Chair of the British Council’s TVET Advisory Forum stated that the FE colleges felt that “the extent of their global involvement has been under measured and under appreciated by the government. Only in the last three or four years has the British Council woken up to the strength of demand for vocational education in developing countries” (Guardian, 27 January 2009).

This report has taken into consideration the comments of such colleagues in the GFE college sector and of the British Council, and has also identified a number of colleges offering examples of TNE, such as Telford College of Arts and Technology, Bournemouth and Poole College, City College, Brighton and Hove, and Weigh and Leigh College. Time constraints allowed only one, Castle College, Nottingham, of these to be interviewed at length (see Chapter 5)

The British Council 2008 FE report does indicate that “...capacity building linked to systemic reform” is key in many partnerships being established but also comments on the likely growth of TNE models in FE in the future.

“The range of international activities colleges are involved in is broad, including recruiting international students, transnational education, distance learning, student and staff mobility programmes, and consultancy. International college partnerships can develop all or some of these activities and provide colleges with opportunities to share best practice and learn from

other countries” (Foreword, “A Review and Taxonomy”, British Council Director, Vocational Education and Training).

There is already, and has indeed been for many years, a suite of TNE enterprise in some of the GFE colleges and there is every sign that this will increase in self selected colleges over the next decade.

The publication of “Global Skills: world-class learning” (2008) which was a consultation on an international strategy for the English further education sector, set as the international goals for the FE sector:

- “to equip learners for life in a global society and work in a global economy
- to support engagement with our international partners to achieve their goals and ours
- to maximise the contribution of FE to overseas trade and inward investment
- to develop an infrastructure that supports and enables those in the FE sector to work effectively in international markets.”

The second of those is perhaps the one most closely aligned to direct TNE activity.

There is also a comprehensive piece of research for the Association of Colleges (AoC) produced in June 2008, “Going Global? UK FE/TVET opportunities for the international market”, which analyses the activity and profile of the UK in comparison to Australia, Germany and the USA across a number of regions of the world. It states that the key actions required are:

- “strengthening quality assurance of qualifications delivered abroad and through franchise
- inclusion of international work in reporting structures
- sector internal debate about staying local or going global”

The conclusions of this considerable piece of research appear to reflect the findings of this, a much less extensive report, “From a supply side perspective, the main international activities of colleges are still very much focussed on the provision of learning places in UK colleges to international students. That said, there is evidence to suggest that colleges have moved into new areas of activity such as capacity building, projects and activities aimed at raising the international profile of the college.”

#### **4.6. HE Case Study Selection**

After reading the completed surveys and interviewing colleagues in the British Council and other organisations it was decided to visit five HE institutions across a number of regions in the UK representing different types, category and size of university with different forms and extent of TNE involvement. Information was gathered in a series of two-hour face-to-face interviews with key colleagues who were most closely connected to the TNE enterprise.

Information was also gathered from websites and printed materials. After each interview the institution was given a written version of the session which they were offered the opportunity to correct for factual accuracy.

In addition to the case study on Castle College, Nottingham previously referred to, the good practice identified in the five HE institutions listed below is showcased in the next section.

- Heriot-Watt University
- University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)
- University of Lancaster
- University of Nottingham
- University of Reading

## 5. Case studies

### 5.1 Heriot-Watt University

Total on Scottish campuses	6,500
Non-UK students on Scottish campuses	2,200
Dubai campus	1,000
UK off campus	2,000
TNE other than Dubai campus	10,000

Although Heriot-Watt is one of the oldest universities in the UK with 180 years of academic history and has one of the longest established alumni associations in the world, it is managing a twenty-first century TNE portfolio which is larger in its total population than its on-campus student numbers.

Its Dubai Campus was the pioneering campus in Dubai International Academic City when it opened in 2005. It is formed through a partnership between the University and a private company in a free trade zone. Other UK universities also have a presence in Dubai, some being located in the Knowledge Village. The campus offers its 1,000 Heriot-Watt students a portfolio of vocationally relevant foundation, undergraduate and postgraduate awards tailored to match the demands of the UAE economic development plans and the employment market in the region. Programmes are offered through study in the daytime, evenings or at weekends and through multi-entry points during the year for postgraduate students. They provide an opportunity for undergraduates to transfer to their main UK campus in Edinburgh (one of three campuses in the UK). The first undergraduate degree ceremony was held in 2008 and this was the third graduation ceremony for postgraduates since the establishment of the Dubai Campus.

The 1,000 students in Dubai comprise a significant element of the total TNE provision which is also made up of around 6,300 undergraduate and taught postgraduate students and approximately 5,500 independent learners on postgraduate programmes, including the Edinburgh Business School MBA. This converts to around 3,000 full-time equivalent students. Heriot-Watt has students studying in 150 countries both through its Approved Learning Partners network (ALPs) and its significant number of postgraduate independent learners.

Heriot-Watt's international portfolio is diverse with an overseas campus, the Approved Learning Partner Network (ALPs) in 30 countries (which began in the 1990s), as well as the international students on their UK campuses. The management of all of this in a relatively small university has required a high level of both central focus and university-wide ownership. Their endeavours and successes are important to the Scottish government and other national agencies.

“Heriot-Watt University has shown great initiative and market awareness opening up a campus in Dubai, and it is quite incredible that the University

now has 10,000 students studying outside Scotland. The University is really showing the way forward to opening up the international demand for Scottish courses and qualifications around the world.” (Scottish Council for Development and Industry, 2007)

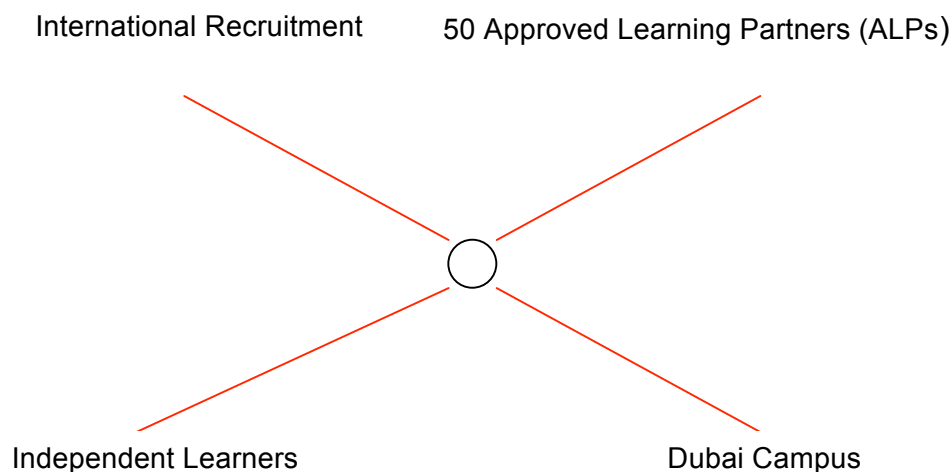
The University is able to state that around 75% of Scottish degrees studied abroad are being provided by Heriot-Watt and it is the ALPs network, combined with the independent learners and the Dubai Campus (with a planned growth to 2,000 students within the next five years), that is the engine for delivering the numbers.

The overall TNE activity is managed along the following lines:

### **Extensive and regulated partnerships**

As at February 2009 the university was working with 50 ALPs across countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and North America. They have multiple centres in Hong Kong, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Caribbean, Greece and the UK which deliver programmes for the Edinburgh Business School, the Institute of Petroleum Engineering, Engineering and Physical Sciences, Life Sciences, Management and Languages, Textile and Design and the Built Environment. This network provides flexible, multi-access points for a wide range of subjects in the delivery of Heriot-Watt approved courses. The ALPs vary in size according to the number of students and subjects delivered and the ALP can follow one of a number of delivery patterns with some, such as the Built Environment, offering a ‘2+2’ attendance in the UK.

### **International and TNE student flow (fig.3)**



The identification of suitable ALPs often arises from individual contacts and visits and, after initial identification, there begins a submission and approval process which includes a visit by key University staff, comprehensive documentation (which involves an ALP application), a visit report, business plan and risk assessment. Standard ALP contracts are drawn up by the

University's legal manager and if, after all this, the Deputy Principal for Learning and Teaching is satisfied, the agreement is signed off by the University Secretary. Agreements are signed for three years in the first instance and individual ALPs are audited every three years.

Most of the students will never visit Scotland and may be learning in an institution with many other streams of students through many other partners. To help to ensure quality and consistency the University has invested heavily in materials and web based developments. While the staff in Dubai are permanent members of Heriot-Watt staff, the ALPs have their own staff who need to be approved by the University as either Tutors or Teachers in order to teach on the Heriot-Watt programmes. Students at ALPs are registered students of the University, but the ALP is responsible for providing the tutoring and teaching and also for pastoral support, access to learning facilities and administrative services for the Heriot-Watt students. The University manages admissions, examinations, provides the programme materials and delivers the programmes in the context of the University's quality assurance arrangements. These arrangements are monitored by ongoing assessment of the ALPs and by the approval of the appointment of all teaching staff. Staff travel between the ALP and the University with Heriot-Watt colleagues undertaking some teaching in the ALP when they are visiting and overseas colleagues spending time at Heriot-Watt.

The University is especially committed to providing well developed learning materials and a great deal of resource and back-up for the teachers. Relationships are well managed and supportive at School level.

### **Organisation and transparency**

The organisation has evolved to fit most appropriately to the international demands. The current Director of International Development held the post of Head of the Dubai Campus before her appointment to the Director's role and so has first hand TNE experience. She has functional line responsibility for the External Programmes Officer and works with the University's International Development Committee which includes senior representatives of the University management and its Schools and Institutes. The Dubai Campus is assisted by an Executive Committee and a high level Steering Group to oversee operations. The Director of Recruitment and Admissions manages the International Office which is responsible for traditional recruitment and works closely with the Director of International Development. There is a target for recruitment and a Business Plan for Dubai.

The internationalisation strategy seems to fall into three categories

- TNE
- international recruitment to Scottish campuses
- ERASMUS exchanges and international student support

There is a strong sense of the activity being embedded in the Schools and among the support staff. It is acknowledged that much of the TNE activity is driven through the Edinburgh Business School which is the Graduate

Business School at Heriot-Watt. Its description on the Dubai Campus website explains some of the factors that have led to the success of the ALPs and indeed the Campus "...offers one of the most popular distance learning MBA programmes in the world. Internationally different we offer you choice and flexibility in your learning style and judge you on your examination results not on your coursework, language of study, attendance record or life experience. In 15 years our Graduate Business School's MBA programme has generated over 10,000 graduates and currently has over 7,000 students in 150 countries."

### **Making it work for the students**

The university is developing a set of materials which will strengthen the expression of the University's brand and values. Many of the ALPs students too will be on articulation agreements and will elect to spend a year or more in Edinburgh. The University is also considering how it can enhance opportunities for student and staff mobility which will reinforce the connection between Edinburgh and the overseas study locations. Heriot-Watt has its own tartan and this has been used extensively at the Dubai Campus in the marketing and recruitment materials.

In such a large and widely spread student constituency it could be difficult to provide the more traditional aspects of the student experience but the various professional groups as well as the Schools at Heriot-Watt have tried to make the operation work to the students' advantage. Timetabling of examinations is an industry yet the students are told that they may choose where they graduate and the University runs a number of overseas graduations and related social events for alumni every year. The students show great interest in alumni activities and the overseas meetings. The Schools involved in TNE send out information each year in Course Handbooks providing detailed information about the course, modules, assessment, and where to find more information on regulations and procedures.

The Fresh Talent scheme for employment of international students in Scotland has been available to any of the TNE students who have studied for at least one year on the Scottish campuses and this together with the efforts of the Careers Advisory Service has created an impressive addition to the service for international students. A series of business simulation case studies will be developed together with a number of enterprise seminars and related web facility to encourage international students to work collaboratively. The Careers Advisory Service together with the Students' Union is also coordinating promotional activities to raise awareness by international students of voluntary work opportunities.

### **Specific points of note:**

- the scale of TNE activity in comparison to traditional international recruitment
- the presence of some UK students among the distance learners

- the impact of one School and programme (Edinburgh Business School) and the involvement of a number of others at the same time
- the robust scrutiny of applications to join the ALP network
- the ability of an 'ancient' university to manage change

## 5.2. University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN)

Number of TNE students overall at UCLAN	3,545
Franchise (courses with a year or more spent in UCLAN UK campus)	1,544
In-country (courses with total overseas attendance)	2,001
Overseas TNE partners	24
International (non-EU) students on UK campus	2,100
EU students on UK campus	550
Total student population	32,000

Winners of two recent Time Higher Education (THE) awards for Outstanding International Student Support.

The University of Central Lancashire has been engaged in TNE activity for over 20 years, beginning in the late 1980s with a '2+1' franchise with Beijing Institute of Technology for a BEng in Electrical Engineering. They now have activities in seven countries and more in the planning stage. From an early stage UCLAN offices were set up in China and there are now three, in Shanghai, Shenzhen Virtual University Park and an inter-university office at Shenzhen University. These offices have a role in business development and maintenance, agent management and student support. UCLAN has 721 students in Hong Kong on courses which are full in-country delivery.

The support in China for the '2+1' programmes is key to their success overall as the vast majority of the franchised students (1466 of the 1544) are in China. A full time member of UCLAN staff heads the China Office team and works with a dedicated in-country Language Co-ordinator who manages 15 English first language speakers who, on a contractual basis and vetted and trained by UCLAN, deliver an integrated English language module. Success in this module is fundamental for student progress as they cannot move to the second year in China without a pass in English. They cannot move to UCLAN for their third year without success on this language module.

This constant reference to the need for English language competence in years one and two, together with regular testing, allows staff and students to be confident of their language competence when they move to the UK in the third year. The School of Languages and International Studies in the UK is the 'guardian' of linguistic standards working with the Language Co-ordinator. Just under 900 students move through the programme in each year group receiving six to eight hours of language teaching each week. No student is admitted to the first year of UCLAN's overseas franchise programmes without passing an English Language test. In the second year in China the language classes introduce technical aspects of language through English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and study skills training. The School of Languages and International Studies has also developed its own language assessment test (English Language Examination) which maps onto IELTS.

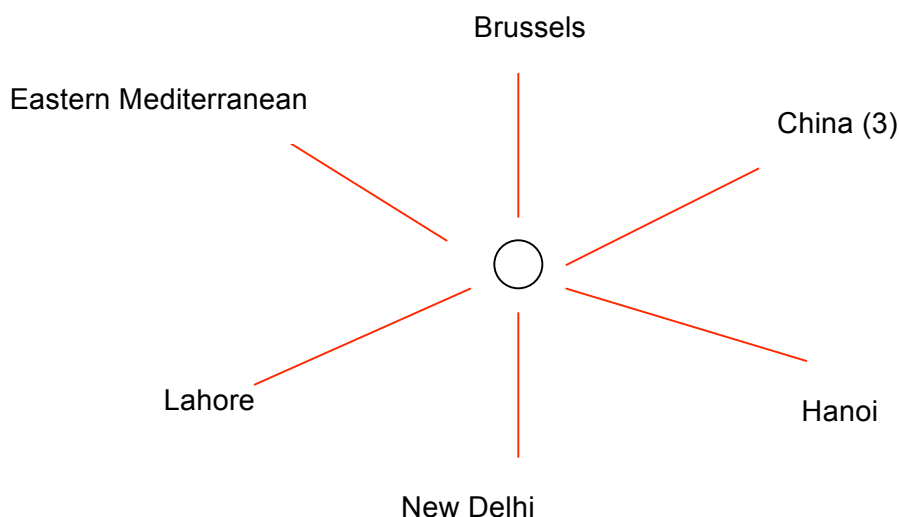
Where the franchised or in-country programmes recruit larger numbers of students, full-time members of UCLAN are appointed or seconded to work

with local staff. More UCLAN staff also deliver modules as ‘flying faculty’ on shorter visits.

### Relationship with partners

This is believed by UCLAN to be fundamental to the success of any overseas endeavour. To this end they have, over twenty years, worked to make the partnership beneficial to all parties. Accounting and budgetary management for these TNE programmes sets up an account for each partner which is allowed to run at a deficit in the early or developmental stages. When students progress to UCLAN the university top slices 10% of tuition fees which is used as a staff development fund for the partner. This fund is used to host various international partner colleagues at UCLAN (often for a stay as long as one year), to pay their course fees if they register on programmes (for example the MBA), and to host senior delegations from the partner to review the partnership. During their time in the UK they are exposed to and learn about pedagogical styles in this country and acquire a ‘teaching toolkit’ and other techniques through discussion in the UCLAN Learning Development Unit. A social programme is also arranged with the intention, not only of welcoming them to and integrating them into UCLAN life, but also to assist with the orientation advice they can provide for their students on their return. Such a visit to this region of the UK of course includes fish suppers, seats for football matches and excursions to the Lake District!

### Overseas Offices (fig 4)



This type of provision for expenditure committed to the partnership may also be used to develop joint research activity. This, UCLAN stresses, is a commitment to long term partnerships where the partners meet the quality standards laid down in the validation agreement. The degree certificates earned by these students are identical to those awarded to students who

study for the whole degree at UCLAN and if these standards are seen to be lowered then the university has not hesitated to use robust methods to 'close down' the route with the offending partner.

### **Transparent processes**

If the university is to be confident in its evaluation of the partners' performance it needs thorough and consistent information. All the partnerships are centrally managed through the International Collaborations Sub Committee (ICSC) chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (International). Criteria are developed for TNE delivery and if potential partners cannot meet such criteria the proposal is turned down by the University's International Collaborative Sub Committee of the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASAQC). All programmes are monitored annually and this results in a review of the past year and an action list for the forthcoming year being presented to a special meeting of ASAQC. The International Office has a new post of Head of International Partnerships and Business Development to oversee partnership maintenance and development. The Deputy Vice Chancellor (International) has overall responsibility for the delivery of the internationalisation agenda, assisted by the Director of International Affairs. That Director is responsible for thirty staff based in Preston and overseas.

There is an International Management Group chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (International) with Heads from the International Office. This central management of the partnerships allows a swift flow of information which results in action by UCLAN in support of a partner when needed, for example with a case of SARS or a traffic fatality.

### **Student Support**

Much is offered through the in-country offices, in particular, support in obtaining visas (with a recent 99% success rate in China), and for the transition to the UK. An international buddy system exists at UCLAN to help arriving students to settle in and a six week (free of charge, except for subsistence) full-time pre-sessional orientation programme is available for diagnostic language testing, additional language support, and departmental meetings. About 860 international students take up this opportunity and this includes all the franchise students. This is followed by a one week free induction programme. A centre has been set up to assist with academic issues called WISER (Walk In Study, Exams and Research Skills). The Flying Start programme is available for all new students, UK or non-UK and provides another opportunity to integrate the various nationalities.

Each Faculty has an International Co-ordinator who works closely with student support colleagues and provides, particularly for the franchise students who are arriving new to the final year of the degree, a suite of academic orientation activities. In the next year an 'e-pal' scheme will offer further contact and pre-departure assistance by UCLAN to franchise students.

## **Selection of programmes**

UCLAN, partly as a result of its portfolio for UK students, has worked with its partners both in franchise and in-country activities with a range of vocational, professionally accredited and culturally responsive programmes. Some examples of these are the BEng in Fire Engineering and the MSc in the same subject offered full-time at undergraduate level and part-time at Masters level in Hong Kong with City University in Hong Kong and the HK Fire Service Department and the Institution of Fire Engineers, Hong Kong. The degree carries professional recognition in the UK. While the modules are those taught in the UK there are also some optional HK specific modules that relate to the prevailing conditions in Hong Kong. All this helps to ensure considerable employment opportunities or career promotion for graduates from the programmes. In addition close relationships are established between UCLAN and the employer network in Hong Kong. This has led to the creation of a network of Honorary Fellows and a significant number of alumni in that country who can influence the next generation.

In a similar way UCLAN offers in-country programmes in Well Engineering in the Sultanate of Oman and an MSc in Gas and Oil Studies will be offered with BRIDGE funding to Russia from September 2009.

An employability centre is being funded through UCLAN in China with PMI2 support. The China Office has developed a strong alumni network and three alumni events are held in China each year. The University launched an International Fashion Institute in Hong Kong in October 2008 by presenting the work of its award-winning graduates. This event, which brought together staff, students, alumni, employers and media in Hong Kong, has led to the interest shown by the Clothing Industry Training Association (CITA) in these programmes.

### **Specific points of note:**

- the commitment to and resources set aside for English language learning and assessment
- the top slicing from income to create a staff development fund for the partners
- the creation of a teaching toolkit for use by partners
- a willingness to cease offering a programme if the monitoring suggests this is necessary
- the keen awareness of the nature of the courses to be offered in any overseas area to meet employment needs

### 5.3. University of Lancaster

Total full time students	11,000 (plus 300 part year Study Abroad)
Undergraduate total	9,350 (of which 550 are non-UK)
Postgraduate total	1,465 (of which 840 are non-UK)
Home student total	9,610
Non UK total	1,390
TNE	c. 600

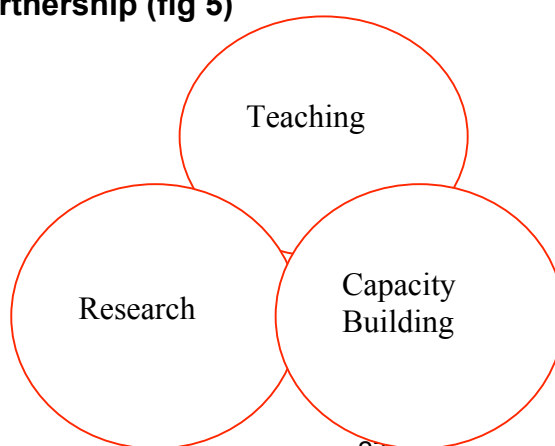
Lancaster is a university which, from its establishment in 1964, was committed to lifelong education and internationalisation, and even in the 1960s registered approximately 15% of all students as non-UK. The advent of full cost fees in the 1980s led to a drive for international recruitment through what came to be known in Lancaster as 'open market recruitment', which was described as more ad hoc and pragmatic than strategic. Over the last five years, however, a schedule has been agreed for internationalisation through a structure and delivery which will "nest" international activity in the life of the university, both in terms of the four Faculties and the management systems.

Overseas visits have been designated into four categories:

- recruitment visits
- academic visits
- strategic visits
- representational visits

It is the strategic visit that seeks and considers partnership arrangements, among them TNE collaborations and the representational visit, made by the Chancellor or Vice Chancellor, where the agreements are signed and celebrated. The strategic visits where possibilities for TNE activity are debated usually include meetings with the appropriate Ministry, the leading HE institutions and the British Council, and the intention is to listen to local requirements, needs and employer demand and then reflect on the contribution that Lancaster could make in accordance with its own mission and strengths. Lancaster prefer to begin in a new country with a teaching partnership rather than embark immediately on research collaboration or capacity building. They regard teaching partnerships as a firm foundation from which to learn about and contribute to the country development in a mutually beneficial programme.

#### Types of Partnership (fig 5)



Lancaster's earliest TNE activity in Malaysia was with Sunway University College taking on the role both of validating the '3+0' programmes in Business, Computer Technology, Hospitality and Psychology and working with the staff of the University College to help prepare them for ultimate University status. The degrees offered in these subjects are joint degrees so that those students who complete their Honours programme are awarded two certificates - one from Lancaster and one from Sunway.

Lancaster is one of a number of partners to Sunway across the world. Even in the UK the University College has another partner, the University of Manchester, which is also involved in the teaching of a Business degree. The Victoria University Melbourne also offers a '3+0' programme. In addition Sunway offers the American Degree Transfer Programme. The University College is conscious of the national desire to see Malaysia as a hub for the ASEAN region for higher education, and has, as its own mission, recognition as a world class institution and the leader in private education in Malaysia.

With a strategy based on these tenets Lancaster moved forward on the basis of the following principles:

### **Regional and flexible partnerships**

These partnerships are entered into in the expectation of reciprocal benefit over the long term and are strategic rather than opportunist, although individual academic links and contacts can provide a starting point for discussion. Partners are engaged for one or all of a number of activities and often one form of partnership can develop into a multipurpose relationship.

Lancaster works with Sunway in both a teaching and a capacity building partnership. Lancaster also has three partners in China and the majority of the work there is based on teaching ('1+3' and '2+2'). The potential BRIDGE partner in Russia is for teaching and research; work with the National University of Malaysia is based on research collaboration; through UKIERI research links have been established with an institution in Delhi and with another for joint teaching; the North America initiatives may build on the study abroad base and contacts have been made with the Middle East.

In order to build strong relationships with the TNE partners, income from the teaching arrangement is top sliced to provide for staff development and capacity building activities which include scholarships. The Sunway partnership has a particularly significant Continuing Professional Development (CPD) component which has provided training and discussion not only for the academic staff but also for colleagues from Marketing, HR and Student Support. Two staff from Lancaster on sabbatical are currently teaching at Sunway but do so as an additional activity rather than as 'flying faculty'. Much is also achieved through virtual learning provision. Some partnerships, while providing a strong and valuable base for institutional development, are not

included as TNE as the students spend most if not all of their time in the UK. This would be true of the robust link with Pakistan.

There is ongoing discussion as to which institutions will be selected for addition to this portfolio in order to secure a sensible and appropriate geographical spread, with Lancaster keen to work to meld cultures of the overseas country and the UK rather than to set up a clone of Lancaster overseas. To this end they hope to have an active mobility or exchange scheme in existence within the next few years. Although there are nascent research partnerships the majority of the TNE work is at undergraduate level and the number of TNE students (currently about 600) is expected to grow significantly in the next few years.

### **Organisation and transparency**

The international activity managed through the International Office is covered by three divisions which separate open market recruitment from overseas partnerships and study abroad and EU activity.

### **Focus for internationalisation (fig 6)**



Student support is not currently part of this portfolio. The TNE programmes are continually monitored and operational procedures, standards and practices are clearly laid down in manuals. The strategy for regional development is clear and all Faculties are kept in the loop and encouraged to work with individual contacts to build the network. The preference for partnerships over ad hoc recruitment is clear as is the wish that partnerships can be the route to well considered TNE schemes.

Each degree offered at Sunway has a named Lancaster course consultant and these consultants have the responsibility of ensuring that the same standard of academic quality is offered wherever the student studies for a Lancaster degree. Course reviews, feedback and training are all part of the TNE deliverables from Lancaster.

## **Special feature**

When Lancaster began its TNE involvement it built on the strengths and experience it had gained from its UK validation activities. It had been responsible for the awards taught by St Martins and Edge Hill Teacher Training Colleges and Blackburn and Blackpool Technical Colleges. All four institutions were teaching students on courses for Lancaster degrees. Professor Alec Ross, of the Department of Educational Research at Lancaster was the Chair of the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers (UCET) when he recommended the initiation of a new body, the Council for Validating Universities (CVU), established in 1983. That Council, which grew in membership and influence, sought to focus on the specific issues involved in the effectiveness of colleges working with their associated degree-awarding universities and thus to encourage best practice. Its aim was to pursue excellence in external validation, and the Chair and Secretary in the formative years were both from Lancaster. The work and discussions centred on the question of how “it could be demonstrated that students in a validated programme achieve the same standard as those on a university based programme”, and a Code was produced. The CVU now has an agenda which covers a considerable amount of TNE debate including articulation and progression routes, joint degrees, mixed mode delivery and study abroad, all with institutions outside the UK.

With this history the University of Lancaster works through an Office of Associated Institutions which oversaw the colleges in previous years and is now responsible for the Sunway programme, its staff, curriculum, marking schemes and assessment.

### **Specific points of note:**

- the practice of listening to the partner’s need or requirement and not seeking to “clone” Lancaster
- partners are identified in a number of categories – teaching, research, capacity building, but their relationship can change over time
- there is evidence of a strong global strategy based on regional partnerships
- a joint degree is awarded with Sunway University College
- some of the expertise and confidence in validation has been built through years of experience in UK validation
- named course consultants ensure that the same standard of academic quality is offered wherever the student studies for a Lancaster degree

## 5.4 University of Nottingham

Total Nottingham-based students	32,000
International (non UK) students on UK campuses	8,000
Overseas campus students	5,500

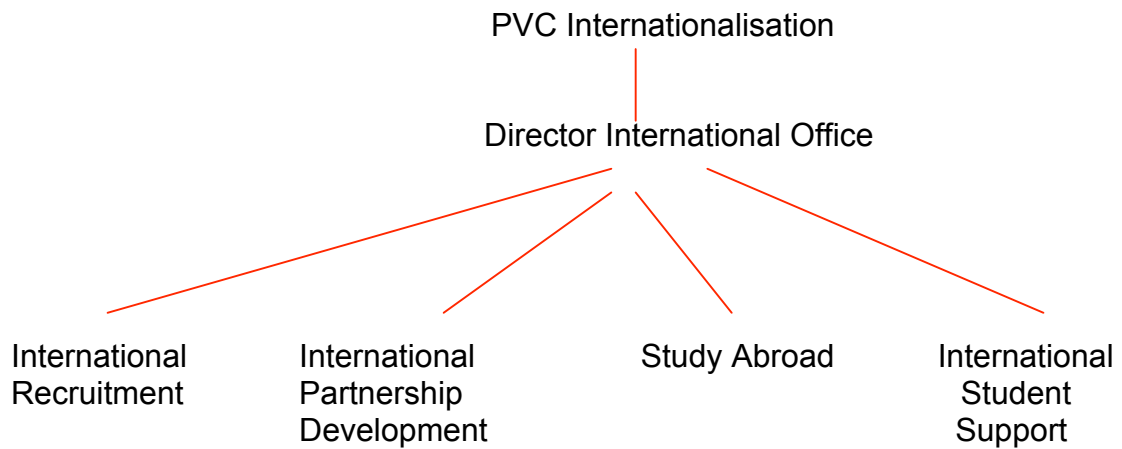
The University of Nottingham established their first twinning programme with Thammasat University in Thailand in 1996. This was brought about through active academic engagement by the Engineering Faculty at both universities as well as institutional support. Built in 1934, Thammasat is the oldest university in Thailand and now registers over 25,000 students. Its Faculty of Engineering is relatively recent, however, opening in 1989 in response to a national demand for well qualified engineers.

This collaboration with Nottingham was a traditional '2+2' arrangement with the first two years (in reality five semesters), spent in the Engineering Faculty in Thammasat and the third and fourth years on the Nottingham UK campus. The arrangement centred on undergraduate study for full-time school leavers and successful students were awarded both a University of Nottingham degree and a Thammasat degree. The joint degree was especially important to these students as the Thammasat degree was conferred by the King. The students entered the Nottingham second year at the end of their second year of study in Thailand, having followed and been assessed on the Nottingham first year syllabus. Students proceeding to Nottingham were required to hold the appropriate IELTS score and a good academic grade at Thammasat.

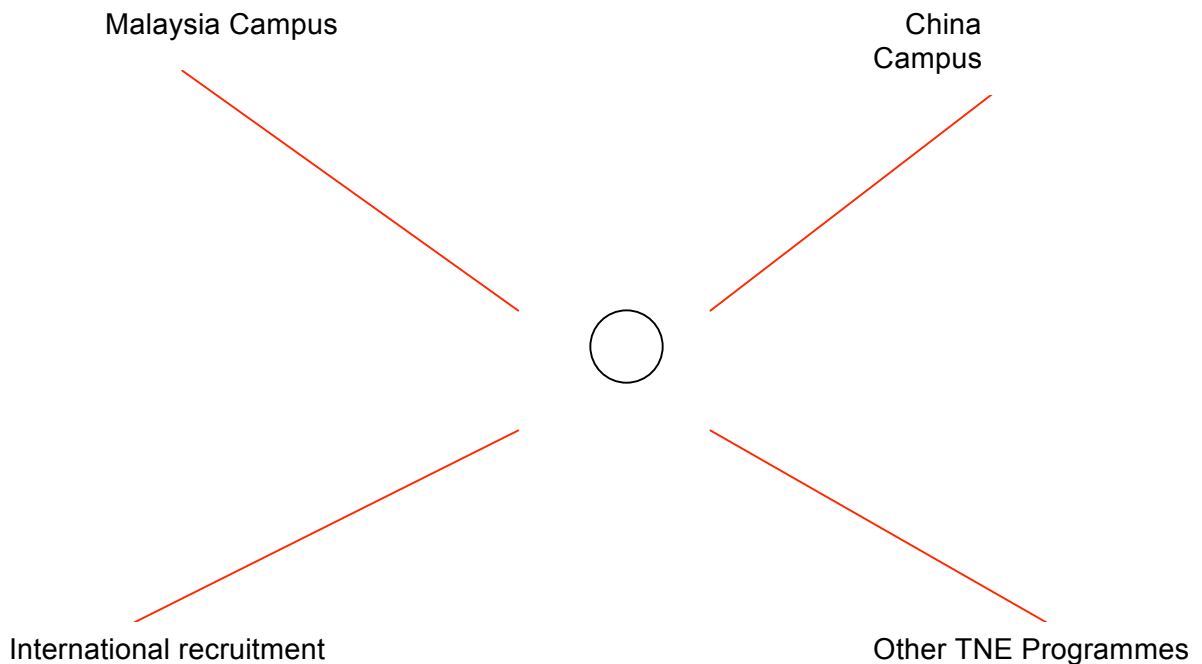
The Thammasat Faculty of Engineering also offers an articulation programme with New South Wales which follows much the same pattern. There are currently about 60 students a year entering the six Nottingham Schools of Engineering by this route.

The expertise and experience gained through the work with the Faculty of Engineering was extended to include another Thai university, Srinakarinwirot, and the Nottingham Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. In this case only the Nottingham degree was awarded. These are articulation agreements with the scheme being marketed as providing seamless progression to the University of Nottingham on condition that the prescribed examinations are passed at the end of the second year in Thailand.

### Focus for internationalisation (fig 7)



### International & TNE Student flow (fig 8)



Another form of transnational education is provided through the '1+3' programme that Nottingham offers with Tsinghua University in China. This again is focused on undergraduate study, with the first or foundation year studied in China and the subsequent three years on undergraduate courses in the Faculty of Arts at Nottingham.

Again this opportunity is marketed as a progression to Nottingham on successful completion of the foundation year in China and the degree

conferred after the four years is a University of Nottingham award. This third articulation programme went live in 2005 with the first students arriving in the UK in September 2006. This development too was helped by the many years of experience with the Thai programmes and the establishment of the two Nottingham overseas campuses in Malaysia and China.

The overseas campuses established in 2000 and 2004, in Kuala Lumpur and Ningbo respectively, now offer purpose built full campus facilities for a wide range of subjects, levels of study and nationalities of students and staff. Nottingham has therefore a significant portfolio of TNE activity and, although each form offers a different structure, all of them are built on the same foundations:

### **Long term and committed partnership with the overseas collaborators**

Many of the twinned students were provided with partial scholarships not only for the undergraduate course but also for continuation to postgraduate study. An increasing number of academic staff as well as students took advantage of this. Members of the Nottingham Faculty gave visiting lectures on the courses and received regular visits from their Thai and Chinese colleagues which led to research collaboration and to a fund being established to assist with the travel and maintenance costs of research students and staff moving between the institutions. Conferences have already been held with these partners. Partners share in the planning and development of the courses and in any suggested extension to other subjects. Several staff of the twinning institutions have graduated with Doctorates from Nottingham and have returned and worked with both the overseas and the Nottingham Faculty to ensure even better understanding. Close academic relationships were the driving force for much of the TNE enthusiasm. A Chinese PhD student who graduated from Nottingham and who went on to hold a senior role in the Chinese university was able to take a unique co-ordinating role in the '1+3' programme implementation.

The prospectuses celebrate this activity and Thammasat makes it clear that the benefits are equally felt in the UK and Thailand. They quote as distinctive features of the partnership:

- “double degree programmes
- effective English preparation
- financial saving
- learning about Eastern and Western cultures and lifestyles
- scholarship availability”

The use of the word 'partnership' is slightly differently interpreted for the overseas campuses. In these cases the partners are those educational or private and public sector organisations which make up the membership of the Board for the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus (UNMC) and the University of Nottingham Ningbo Campus (UNNC). The same principles of trust and commitment apply but their role is more strategic across the whole operation.

## **Creation of a clear focus for integrated activity**

TNE is, of its nature, a complex, dynamic, sensitive and resource intensive activity requiring inputs from a variety of colleagues at all levels within the institution. The aim at Nottingham was to have all this managed through the International Office, in turn taking strategic direction from the PVC for Internationalisation and he/she from the Management Board chaired by the VC. All sections of the International Office (marketing, mobility, student support, and partnership development) have specific roles to play and the integration of these sections is noticeable throughout the planning and provision of the TNE student experience. While the focus may be in one place, the activity was successful because it was owned by the whole community with academic staff committed to curriculum development and quality standards, travel, liaison with professional bodies and identification of 'value added' through further links and centres. The integration of syllabuses between countries, the willingness to make short and long term teaching and research visits and to host reciprocal visits were all seen as vital contributions to TNE.

In some cases the discussions between the Nottingham Schools on TNE helped to bring the various disciplines closer together. Integration was rated as a key element for TNE success, not only with academic colleagues but also with the various sections within the university which provided a service, such as Registry, Finance, Accommodation, Admissions, Careers, and in addition the Students' Union. Where overseas campuses were involved the list of services also included Estates, Catering, HR and IT.

## **Evolving development, transparency and appreciation of the value of precedent**

It was clear that one set of experiences contributed much to the knowledge base that enabled subsequent activity to be approached with greater confidence and insight. Since strategy was overseen centrally, amendment and improvement could be made quickly. Resource for twinning arrangements was made available from an internationalisation budget and the financial responsibility only passed to the individual Schools and Faculties when the partnerships were up and running. This allowed academic colleagues to concentrate on the key issues and to underpin quality assurance by regular and frequent visits. A TNE committee supports the strategy with the PVC Internationalisation as Chair and the Head of Partnership Development present. Partnership Development is located in the International Office.

## **Commitment to student support**

The integration and support offered to non-UK students has always been of central concern and it was recognised that the service offered to Nottingham students spending much if not all of their student life outside the UK needed to be rethought both for the overseas campus and for the other TNE students.

Posts, initially held by Nottingham staff, were created on the campuses with frequent staff visits between UK, China and Malaysia. Even more frequent contact by interactive video link, email and phone was encouraged. The Students' Union was supported in making regular visits and the mobility schemes allowed the experience of students in Nottingham UK, China or Malaysia to be shared.

This was more difficult to achieve with twinning partners than with overseas campuses but managed with Nottingham staff assisting with marketing and meeting students and parents, with pre-departure briefings, reciprocal visits and alumni activities. Dedicated support from Nottingham through a combination of colleagues in the Schools and all the teams in the International Office led to the production of a suite of information (part hard copy, part website and electronic delivery) that included welcome, visa application support and pre-departure briefing visits by teams made as part of the departure preparation. Bids to PMI2 via UKCISA helped to resource these materials producing a web-based orientation guide for incoming international students (known as 'Pathway 1') with further development in preparation ('Pathway 2'). The Schools offered additional academic orientation.

**Specific points of note:**

- the very extensive TNE portfolio in terms of variety and size provided a foundation of confidence, born of experience, for new ventures
- the prominent positioning of TNE ventures such as the overseas campuses on the home page of the website
- a joint appointment of a key member of staff between the University and an overseas partner institution
- the involvement of all sections of professional staff as well as key academic staff and the regular presence of the Students' Union on overseas visits
- the clear focus on internationalisation and communication of the message

## 5.5 University of Reading

Total student numbers	17,000
EU students	1,000
Non-EU international students	2,000
TNE	200

The University of Reading took a significant step towards TNE engagement when, in 2004, after several years of discussion between the University School of Law and, what was then Taylor's College, the first students enrolled in Malaysia. This established a '2+1' or '1+2' programme in undergraduate Law (LLB) with this private higher education institution recognised by the Malaysian education authorities and delivering "both pre University and University level programmes in a range of professionally orientated areas" (University of Reading website).

Taylor's University College (TUC) accepts students at two entry points each year to suit the various dates for end of secondary education. Students who register in October complete in May/June, and the group registering in January completes in July. Students under this scheme must spend at least the first year in Malaysia and then have a choice of remaining for their second year or moving directly to Reading for the final two years. At the beginning, these students were taught on the same campus as the Taylor's secondary school students but a new campus, due to open in 2010, will make it possible to separate the tertiary from the secondary students. It is, as is common with such colleges, the practice to accommodate students on a number of different programmes, linked to a number of different partners in the same learning environment. Students will also come with a variety of school leaving qualifications, whether UK A-levels, the International Canadian Pre university (ICP), International Baccalaureate, South Australian Matriculation (SAM) or Malaysia's school leavers' qualification (known as STPM).

On average 50 students a year enrol on the Reading Law degree from Taylor's and this number is expected to grow to around 75 in future years. While this may be a small part of the Taylor's student community it is not a small project for the Law School. The School took the initiative in establishing the articulated programme and in the beginning was responsible for much of the operational work which was done, both academic and managerial. The Law School has an intake of around 165 EU students each year with an additional 15 from outside the EU. Of those 15, very few are from Malaysia and the greater proportion is from Africa. The School, as the driving force behind the arrangement, was responsible for enrolment, academic visits at least three times a year (in October, January and March), reception of the Taylor's visitors, arranging accommodation for the incoming students, and some staff development for those in Taylor's teaching on the programme. The Law School also hosts the Deepavali/Hari Raya celebrations organised through the Reading University Malaysian, Brunei and Singapore Association (RUMBSA). The School focused its Taylor's arrangements through a senior member of academic staff who had the role of Programme Director.

The success of this partnership has encouraged the University to enter into TNE agreements across a wider range of institutions and countries and to involve a number of service groups such as Student Support. Reading now has a '2+2' programme in Food Science with Henan University in China with a credit bearing language summer school. In addition, Reading is collaborating in the teaching of an MA in Islamic Finance with the International Centre for Education in Islamic Finance (INCEIF), which was set up by the Negara Central Bank whereby students spend nine months on the taught courses in the UK and undertake their dissertation in Malaysia. The School of Politics has also entered a relationship with a number of partners for the delivery of an MA in Security and Strategic Studies wholly in Oman, with Reading staff making teaching visits as 'flying faculty'. Several progression arrangements and split site PhDs have been agreed and there is now a TNE target set for the university.

The success of these TNE activities was modelled to some extent on the first of these programmes to be established through the Law School which was founded on the following principles:

### **Cordial and equal partnership**

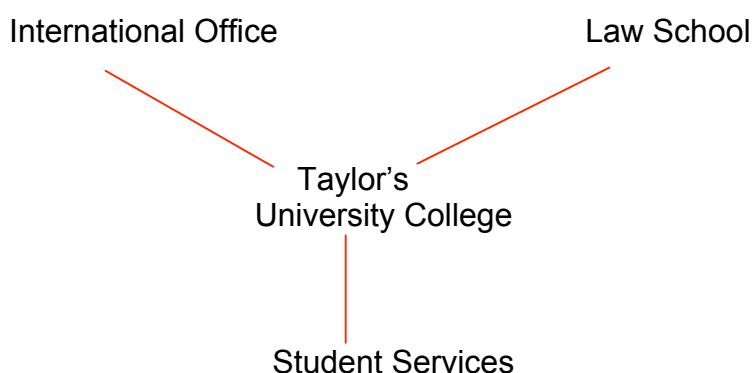
Reading's LLB is intended to be a qualifying law degree (QLD) for all the students who take it, whether in UK or Malaysia. The websites for Taylor's and Reading confirm this partnership in clear and consistent messages whereby Reading is named as Taylor's sole academic partner in Law and the Reading website states, "the curriculum at TUC is identical to that delivered in Reading and the University School of Law staff play an active part in students' education from day one of the programme. At the end of their three years students are awarded a Reading degree". The TUC website acknowledges that as well as being specialists in Law teaching their staff "have been trained at the School of Law at University of Reading on the delivery of the Law programme at Taylor's".

This unequivocal partnership is supported by visits, teaching across both institutions, social activities by both sets of staff with both UK and Malaysian students and recognition of the LLB for professional status in both the UK and Malaysia. There is the possibility of scholarships for Taylor's staff registering on PhDs at Reading. The strength of the academic relationship is evidenced by the working practices of the teaching annual review meetings at which comments from all staff are considered. Any alterations agreed at these meetings are applied to both the teaching in Malaysia and the UK. Staff at Taylor's are invited to contribute written examination questions for first and second year students. Colleagues in Malaysia give considerable help to the students in meeting the first year requirements such as preparing for the Bahasa (Malaysian language) exams, providing the study of ethics as is required by the Ministry and assisting with the preparation for visas to the UK, via the new Points Based System (PBS).

## Focus and development

The Law School at Reading began as the 'owners' of this TNE activity, moving it forward with academic enthusiasm and a knowledge that the partnership and the students were of real significance to the quality of the School. This resulted in a considerable involvement on their part. This changed over the years and the International Office and the Student Support team are now significantly more involved, not only with this programme, but with a number of others which are in their early stages. Several members of the University make regular institutional visits to Taylor's often combined with the Law School visits and help to build the links with the alumni which are co-ordinated through the Law School. A Strategic Steering Group lends additional expertise and support to the programmes and the three PVCs for Enterprise, Research and Teaching and Learning all have membership of this group.

## Supporting TNE (fig 9)



In the last year an International Partnership Manager has been appointed who is now auditing activities and mapping formal and informal relationships. Colleagues in the Quality Support unit are now more engaged with international activity. Students are now directed with confidence by the Law School to the University's Student Services who manage accommodation in the UK among other areas and are particularly important under the new PBS arrangements.

## Student support

Reading was conscious that the integration of 50 new international students into the final year of the Law degree programme might pose difficulties. The whole character of the cohort of 180 existing students could well change. There was a need to find a way of making the incoming students welcome, providing them with a great deal of information over a short period and ensuring that pedagogically and socially they were ready to gain the most from their one year stay in the UK.

The University and the Law School had begun with a buddy system which asked for volunteers from the existing students, arranged for the Counselling

Service to train those students, who were then allocated an incoming student through a matching of interests and an exchange of emails over the summer. The students were paid a small sum to accept this responsibility. The difficulties that ensued were based on misconceptions by both UK and Malaysian groups of students, the former who did not recognise that training might be needed for something they believed came naturally and the latter who felt hurt that friends were being “bought” for them.

The issue was resolved by discussion and clarification. The changes agreed as a result seem to be successful and the welcoming students are no longer paid (but do, on their transcripts, gain credits awarded as a result of their volunteer experience) and have a different type of training which includes a session on feedback and reflection by other Malaysian students. The scheme no longer has “buddies” but “kawan” suggested by the Malaysian students as it translates as “friendship”.

The International Office provides orientation materials and the staff at Taylor’s spend time before the students leave on the differences in learning styles between being in a class of 50 and over 200. Students had originally been split up so that the large Taylor’s intake was not ‘ghettoised’ and care was taken to spread students across the accommodation and in different tutorial groups. Experience has shown that students wanted more freedom to select where they lived and with whom and the Law School agreed. The formulaic selection of students for tutorial groups has now softened to become a random selection.

**Specific points of note:**

- the fact that one School with the right level of commitment could pioneer an activity
- the willingness to learn from arrangements that may not be successful in the first instance and to adapt them
- the increasing collaboration of sections outside the School once the scheme was established
- the spread of TNE activity once it had been pioneered
- the very close and mutually supportive relationship between the university and its key partners
- ensuring that incoming students are provided with the right spread of information over a short period
- ensuring that pedagogically and socially students are ready to gain as much as possible from their stay in the UK

## 5.6 Castle College, Nottingham

Castle College, Nottingham has a strong track record of traditional international recruitment (currently 300 students), most of which has been focused on the progression of students to HE through A-levels or Foundation programmes. It had bid for and won some international partnership work which was based on capacity building and sharing of expertise, some of which was based in the Middle East and Asia.

The College had investigated possible TNE arrangements and decided to take up an opportunity made possible when the intellectual property of the Cambridge International Diploma in Project Management (IDPM) was secured by Castle after considerable work by colleagues adapting it and resubmitting it to Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). The College is now in a position to offer a qualification overseas which is exceedingly well known and recognised globally with a history of international delivery. Students, on successful completion of the programme in their own country, are awarded the Cambridge International Diploma in Project Management, validated by the University of Cambridge International Examinations through the arrangements with individual centres made by and through Castle College in the UK.

The Diploma is offered at academic level 6/7 and targets the following four groups:

- strategic managers who manage projects as part of their portfolio
- managers of multiple projects
- project managers
- members of projects

The College has established a separate team of committed staff to manage these international partnerships, working through a Board of Directors and with a ring fenced budget. It is important that these initiatives, on which work began in 2007, are embedded within the College, and the International Office is sharing contacts and links with the team for the benefit of both TNE and traditional recruitment. The qualification is also available to UK based applicants but that falls outside the TNE category. To help ensure professional recognition the IDPM was developed in conjunction with the UK's professional body, the Association for Project Management (APM). The award of the IDPM provides evidence towards professional membership of this body.

There are currently 80 students registered on this Cambridge/Castle IDPM programme with steady increases in numbers projected over the next 12 months. While Castle recognises that it is too early yet to be certain that this initiative is successful and self sustaining it is satisfied that the most difficult period of investment, start-up, and close monitoring is coming to an end.

This is TNE in its validated or franchised form which includes an element of e-learning and supported learning in its delivery. It is highly unlikely that students registered on the programme will ever be physically present at Castle College. The student experience that these mature workplace based

students require and deserve should include clear explanation before and during the programme, good teaching and learning support, well regulated procedures, expert assessment and finally a qualification which has real currency in their own country and more widely. They also require certainty that those delivering the qualification are working to ensure a quality environment for the teaching process and are underpinning the contract with due diligence.

**Specific points of note:**

- being able to offer a world brand, high prestige qualification
- setting up a specialist group to undertake the intense period of travel, training and negotiation
- earmarking finance to allow these initiatives to run
- monitoring progress through a College group which can set targets and discuss difficulties
- connecting this activity with others in the college such as the International Office and the Marketing Department so each can add value to the other
- seeking professional affiliation or accreditation and possible progression routes in their own countries for those registered should they want them

## 6. Review of the case studies

The specific notes at the foot of each of the studies make it clear that each institution has built upon and developed its own brand, style and type of TNE delivery and organisation. The following points, however, may be pertinent to them all:

- **TNE is and can be offered successfully by all types of HE and FE institutions.** The five selected HE case studies come from the “ancient” Scottish universities, the Russell group, the 1994 group and the Million+ group. The largest institutions have over 32,000 UK campus students while the smallest has just 6,500, but this spread in size bears little correlation with their TNE numbers.
- **Those selected have more than one example, and often a portfolio, of TNE activity.** These include overseas campuses, joint degrees, validation, e-learning and articulation arrangements. In many if not all cases useful lessons had been learned from one activity before beginning on another.
- **While these universities and college worked to an internationalisation strategy, it was clear that the ability to be pragmatic and to be open to opportunity was present in all of them.** Introductions to potential institutions and contacts came from across the institution and this was helped when the route through for such introductions was clear and the processes transparent.
- **All of them recognised the importance of establishing a clear procedure to run the TNE activity.** It was interesting, however, that no one structure applied overall. Universities and colleges, in their internationalisation operation as in many other of their key areas of work, adopt or evolve the systems that most suit their individual mission and character.
- **Whatever the operational system, each of them stressed the importance of a quality product, a quality delivery and a quality environment.** The first two of these requirements was seen to be primarily the responsibility of the UK institution while in some cases the local learning environment was seen to be a shared responsibility
- **The quality of the relationship with the TNE partner was considered to be fundamental to the success of the activity.** It was viewed as a long term commitment, carefully monitored yet growing in trust and understanding, flexible yet robust in matters of quality and, perhaps most importantly, of mutual benefit to those involved. In the best examples changes evolved rather than being imposed and there was an evident sharing of concern for the curriculum and the students. In the same way growth was gradual both in terms of numbers and spread of subjects.

- **The involvement of all parts of the UK university or college community was very important and not only involvement, but ownership.** The supportive commitment of the academic disciplines was crucial and it was they who often sustained the partner staff in the mentoring and monitoring procedures. Important too was the contribution of those involved with “traditional” student management and student support who could transfer and extend those skills and professionalism to the TNE activity.
  
- **The evident enthusiasm of those managing and involved with TNE was clear.** This enthusiasm, for the concept as well as the individual product, had encouraged broad ownership within the institution, and had led to real debate, a steady flow of new ideas, and a resilience to a demanding and dynamic workload.

## 7. Looking forward: challenges and opportunities

National education systems, the internationalisation of education, technology and the 'knowledge industry' are all evolving and there are, therefore, issues of unpredictability in all of these factors.

In his recent review, "The Internationalisation of HE: A Ten Year View" (UK HE International Unit, 2008), Sir Drummond Bone lists many of the uncertainties and difficulties facing TNE providers:

- "In the globalised world where there is pressure on funding and on ease of transport, some forms of transnational education are almost bound to grow very quickly. But the very speed of such growth will almost inevitably bring with it dangers, and reactions. As in any boom situation quality may be the first casualty.
- I have noted that forward projection of overseas student numbers show a considerable swing to part-time study. Some of this, and perhaps a significant percentage of this growth, will be delivered online.
- This is an area in which the for-profit sector is very active and there are significant questions about its relationship to traditional non-profit HE providers.
- Overseas governments' attitude to cross-border education is mixed."

These are the over-arching questions that must be faced by governments, by national bodies and by chief executives within their institutions. The subsidiary questions concern management stretch, staff deployment, redistribution of resources, change in working patterns, changes to organisational structure and the creation of new teams and possible realignment of others.

The opportunities are as comprehensive and stimulating as all those others that have made the internationalisation of tertiary education so rewarding. Here is new demand, new partnerships, new ways of responding to overseas colleagues and non-UK students. Providing a quality experience to students who may never visit the UK, or at best, visit for only part of their programme is not only vital for the enterprise but for the individual student recipient.

The larger issues may lead us all to consider what characteristics identify the UK education experience and what are the unique selling points which we promote when marketing our programmes? What does a UK TNE degree mean and how does it differ from any other delivered outside the country of award? How do we ensure that quality and innovation move at the same pace and that the TNE student experience is not measured solely by a review of completion rates?

Institutions are tackling these questions as evidenced by the examples in this report and so many others across the UK. If we ask what practitioners can do to contribute more fully to these efforts we can suggest, as far as is possible:

- ensuring knowledge and understanding of the institutional TNE portfolio and its ramifications
- reviewing how the best practice currently adopted in the care and support for traditional international students can be adapted for the TNE student
- exhibiting interest in continuing professional development in all its forms

## 8. Conclusions and reflections

The selection of the UK institutions to be showcased was not an easy one. Many, many others could have been chosen and could have provided examples of initiative and good practice. Time did not allow that and a selection was made, not only to demonstrate good practice, but also to encourage debate and reflection in the sectors.

Success in the provision of quality TNE appears, in many ways, to stem from the same general principles of good management as exist for all other undertakings.

It is clear that where institutions have made significant progress in TNE they have:

- adopted a long term perspective and been prepared to work on the scheme with partners without requiring immediate short term gain
- possessed clear vision and leadership from the top of the institution
- found a champion who identified with the scheme, was prepared to work with detail as well as policy, was committed to making it work yet able to share it and engage with other parts of the university or college
- appreciated the importance of the role of the partner and the mutual value of the partnership
- established a point in the organisation where operational work and planning was located and which also had an input into the strategy. The title of such a locus varied from institution to institution but the principle remained
- encouraged ownership by the whole university or college community or at least by the academic departments concerned and all the appropriate support sections
- ensured adequate resourcing to deliver and manage a quality product. Resourcing was seen to include staffing as well as funding
- believed in the need for TNE students to secure the same quality of experience as traditional students even if the type of experience was different
- maintained robust processes which gave a high priority to the maintenance of the quality of the qualification and the reputation of the university
- created partnerships and systems that best reflected each university's character and profile. This was not an activity where one size fitted all

## 9. Thanks and acknowledgements

I am grateful to all those colleagues who generously gave their time to provide me with information, views and reflections. Whether I captured these by email, phone call, interactive video or face-to-face discussion they were consistently helpful, welcoming and thought provoking. They include:

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### **University of Nottingham**

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### **University of Reading**

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### **Further Education institutions**

Nick Lewis (*Principal of Castle College and co-Chair of the International Portfolio Group of the Association of Colleges*)  
Geoff Pine (*Principal of Greenwich Community College, Vice Chair of UKCISA and Chair of the British Council's Vocational Education Advisory Forum*)  
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Paul Flaherty (*Castle College*)  
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Jane Briggs (*Bradford College International Centre*)

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**HESA, and the AoC and UKCISA**  
**And to all those who responded to the survey**

## **10. Some useful background reading**

- Internationalisation of HE:A Ten Year View  
Sir Drummond Bone, UK HE International Unit, 2008
- A Review and Taxonomy: International College Partnership Models  
British Council 2008
- Mapping Borderless Higher Education  
Observatory on Borderless Higher Education 2004
- Transnational Education and Higher Education Institutions  
DIUS 2008
- Global Skills :World Class Learning  
DIUS and Leadership for the FE sector 2008
- Globalisation: Meeting the Challenge  
DIUS for FE 2008
- Quality in Partnerships  
Council of Validating Universities 2008
- Transnational Education in the European Context  
Executive Summary 2009
- Going Global AoC June 2008
- Times Higher Education
- Named institutional websites
- UKCISA publications

## TNE survey questions

One of the current PMI activity strands relates to the international student experience, and a section is focused on the support offered to international students on TNE programmes such as overseas campuses, validated, franchised and other partnership activities. We want to showcase the best of the UK offering in these areas in both higher and further education and need those involved to tell us of their ideas and successes by responding to this survey. It should take less than 15 minutes to complete.

### 1. Please enter your contact details

Name:

Job title:

Institution:

Email address:

### 2. What sector do you work in?

HE

FE

Other (please specify)

### 3. What are your main areas of responsibility?

Recruitment/marketing/admissions

Student support and advice

Mobility/study abroad

Other (please specify)

## Scope of TNE activities

### 1. In what type of TNE is your institution involved?

Partnerships where the whole award is/may be studied overseas

Partnerships where part of the award is/may be studied overseas (eg 2+2)

E-learning where the whole award is/may be studied overseas

E-learning where part of the award is/may be studied overseas

Overseas campus activity where part of the award is/may be studied in the UK

### 2. In which countries do these activities take place?

### 3. In which subject areas does this TNE activity take place?

Other (please give details)

Business and finance

Science

Engineering

Subjects allied to medicine

IT and associated subjects

Law

Other (please specify)

### 4. What qualifications are being offered?

Sub-degree level

Undergraduate degree

Taught Masters

PhD

Other (please specify)

**5. In which year were the students first registered?**

**6. In which year were the awards first made?**

**7. How many students are involved annually in your TNE activities?**

- 1-50
- 51-100
- 101-200
- 201-400
- 401-600
- Over 600

**8. Which sector(s) are your partner(s) in?**

- Public education sector
- Private education sector
- Public sector (non-education)
- Private sector (non-education)
- Government
- Other (please specify)

#### **Good practice in student support**

**1. Which aspects of TNE student support do you want to tell us more about?**

- Pre-departure information
- Induction and orientation
- Accommodation
- Student support and advice
- Student representation and feedback
- Finance and employment advice
- Graduation and alumni activity
- Other (please specify)

**2. Please describe the initiative/s indicated above in no more than 500 words, including any particular challenges and successes.**

**3. Do you have any further comments to make on TNE in general or your institution's TNE activities in particular?**

Thank you for completing the survey.

Our next step will be to contact selected institutions which have provided ideas on and evidence of good practice in this area and ask for further discussion with them. We expect to produce a report to the UKCISA Policy Committee in April 2009.

## **Appendix: Transnational Education – focus on Malaysia**

This report sets out the findings of a visit in March/April 2009 to three of the educational institutions referred to in Christine Humfrey's report which have varying degrees of UK partner involvement. The aim of the visit was to compare and contrast the range of student support available for those studying for UK qualifications in those institutions. In particular, whether the student support provided differed from that for those studying in the UK; what distinguished a 'UK education' when experienced primarily outside the UK; and what cultural and other factors had a bearing on the nature of provision for these students.

### **Partnership models**

The three institutions visited modelled three very different examples of UK study overseas: a fully-fledged **overseas campus** – the University of Nottingham Malaysia campus, a private university college involved in a **twinning arrangement** with the UK (Taylor's University College with University of Reading) and a private university college (Sunway University College) with UK courses **validated** by Lancaster University.

**The University of Nottingham Malaysia campus** is located 40 minutes by car outside Kuala Lumpur in purpose-built grounds. There are currently some 3,500 students from almost 70 countries studying there. The campus is designed to imitate the Nottingham campus in style and there is certainly a very 'British' feel to its design and ethos. Senior staff are seconded from the Nottingham campus, whilst the rest of the core staff are locally employed (and many of these will get the chance to visit Nottingham at some stage).

**Taylor's University College** is a private university college with two campuses situated about 30 minutes outside Kuala Lumpur in a thriving suburb. The campus visited is in Subang Jaya, which currently educates around 6,500 students of both school and university age. The other campus 15 minutes away has around 4,500 students. At the end of 2009, all tertiary programmes will transfer to a new purpose-built campus, whilst the school-age students will continue to be taught at the existing Subang Jaya campus. The twinning arrangement with the University of Reading allows for '1+2' or '2+1', with an intake of around 35 students each year and so there is close contact between Taylor's and Reading staff.

**Sunway University College** is situated in Petaling Jaya, around 30 minutes outside Kuala Lumpur and has around 8,000 students, from over 70 different countries. Around 2,200 (ie over 25%) of these are international (ie not Malaysian). Sunway also has three other campuses across Malaysia. Students can study for one of nine different Lancaster University courses on a '3+0' basis. All teaching is conducted by Sunway staff, with the course being moderated and validated by staff from Lancaster University.

### **Studying for a UK qualification in Malaysia**

The main reason why Malaysian and third country students choose to study for a UK degree (in part or in full) in Malaysia as opposed to the UK is money

– it is much cheaper (even at Nottingham Malaysia which has the highest fees of the three places visited) and also more convenient. A large proportion of these students are Muslim so they are inclined to choose to study in Malaysia, which is a Muslim country that is closer to home than the UK. There are many Indonesians, Pakistanis, Nigerians, Botswanans and other Africans studying in Malaysia for UK awards. There are some European (including British) students, but the numbers are smaller.

Students are also attracted by the value of a UK degree, and especially at an institution that is perceived of being of a high standard (through league tables, for example) and where the quality of teaching and of research is seen as excellent. Although the nature of teaching in Malaysia is not widely different to that of the UK, there is still an awareness of the advantages that a UK-style education can bring to one's future job prospects.

The provision may be similar, but the nature and ethos is a little different. The way the provision is delivered is dependent on the nationality and mentality of the host country. In Malaysia it is forbidden to have alcohol, condoms or cigarettes on campus, so the methods of engaging with students through student support arrangements are rather different to that of the UK, where events can be focused around alcohol and where aspects of sexuality and sexual health education are widely communicated to students.

### **Parental influence**

The range and delivery of student support may in part be due to the level of parental influence in Malaysia which is greater than generally exists in the UK as family links are stronger. Malaysian students are often asked or told to study particular courses by their parents and parents keep a close eye on their children's progress. This level of support therefore influences the type and style of delivery of student support in the institutions visited, where the staff work very closely with the students and the students are able to contact staff at most hours of the day. This level of support obviously encourages expectations that must be explored when students, in some cases, transfer to the UK to complete their studies, where students are more commonly supported in a different kind of environment.

### **Student support**

In all three institutions visited, student support provision is of a high standard, in that staff provide support for the whole 'student journey', ie from pre-arrival to graduation and beyond. For example, part of Sunway's student welcome includes providing all students with a welcome kit, which includes a guidebook to the local area, a bag and towel, toothbrush and toothpaste, an ID card, food voucher for the cafeteria and a phonecard. The kit also includes a 24-hour hotline number and information on accommodation and banking. As in the UK, a great deal of attention is paid to integrating local students with international students. There is a lot of attention to detail and students get close contact with both academics and student support staff, perhaps more so than in the UK.

The immigration system in Malaysia adds to this feeling of one-to-one support, as institution staff must meet individual students at the airport on arrival in order to provide the authorities with the correct immigration documents for each student.

The geographically isolated nature of the Nottingham Malaysia campus means that extra effort is put into keeping students connected. Free buses are available to take students to Kuala Lumpur city centre and the campus support network is very strong, eg the Student Association and Graduate School organise an 'Intercultural Week'. This involves a wide range of talks, as well as social and cultural events.

### **Integration**

As in the UK, all three institutions are keenly aware of the need for students from all nationalities to mix with each other well and form lasting friendships. The thriving student associations provide many opportunities to do this and the respective student services departments also make efforts to facilitate this. Malaysia is a multi-cultural country and so it faces many of the same issues as the UK in terms of 'ghettos' of students and the difficulty of encouraging mixed groups of friends. Sunway University College, for example, set up some new activities in response to a request from a Botswanan student who was finding it difficult to make friends. Taylor's University College has an integrated orientation party for all new students across the range of programmes (not just Reading students).

### **Student representation**

As unions are illegal in Malaysia, students' unions as known in the UK do not exist, although there are thriving student associations and other student-led entities where many of the same student activities take place – clubs and societies are formed, and plenty of social events are organised for different groups of students.

At Sunway and Taylor's student elections are forbidden (there is no concept of a sabbatical officer – Malaysian parents in general would prefer that students complete their studies as soon as possible and begin working rather than taking a 'year out' to be a sabbatical), and student officers who sit on the student association committee are selected by the institution on the basis of academic achievement and a range of other criteria. For example, Sunway's selection process is comprehensive and includes taking the final 60 applicants on a three-day camping trip to assess their suitability for the posts available. The University of Nottingham Malaysia campus however does hold student elections (these were in full swing during the period visited) and three sabbatical positions will be created for the first time in September 2009. At UNMC, in 2008/09 only three out of the nine student association committee roles were held by Malaysians and all others by a range of other nationalities.

### **Staff training & development**

There is currently no equivalent UKCISA-type organisation in Malaysia. This means that support staff working with international students currently have no access to external ongoing support and training in their roles. Their primary

means of acquiring any wider knowledge of the sector or direct support in their roles is to attend education fairs and network with staff in other institutions. At the institutions visited, this lack of an umbrella organisation did not seem to affect the level or nature of provision for international students in Malaysia. Staff were extremely dedicated and hard-working and made every effort to develop their services and innovate.

At UNMC, there is close contact between staff at both the Malaysia and Nottingham campuses, with frequent visits between both, and in both directions. A PGCE course is available at the Malaysia campus and the Graduate School are in the process of setting up PhD supervision training for staff.

At Taylor's the lecturers are local, but they get a lot of feedback from Reading staff. Reading staff frequently visit Taylor's in order to aid staff development and to meet the students on the course. This allows the students to identify with Reading from the very beginning of their studies.

### **Student feedback**

There was an opportunity to speak to students at both Sunway University College (those studying on the range of Lancaster-validated courses) and at University of Nottingham Malaysia campus (those Nottingham-based students spending a year at the Malaysia campus). Feedback from both sets of students was extremely positive. Those at Sunway found that the quality of their course improved when the Lancaster connection was made and that their courses were very demanding and rigorous. They felt that the Lancaster-validated courses provided them with an international experience and that the research aspects helped them to build leadership skills and confidence. The courses had exceeded their expectations and Sunway's level of student support for these students (who were not Malaysian) was highly thought of – they felt safe, supported and had the opportunity to join a wide range of clubs and societies.

The UK-based Nottingham students studying for a year at the Malaysian campus (known as 'mobility students') were equally satisfied with their experience. They had adapted to life in Malaysia and at the campus (which is set in its own grounds, 40 minutes away from Kuala Lumpur) more easily than they had expected. They all took advantage of the 40 clubs and societies organised through the student association and they only wished that more Nottingham-based students had chosen to have the same experiences as them.

The experiences of students who have studied in both the UK and in Malaysia are recorded by podcasts (at UNMC) and these students also write about their experiences in university magazines.

### **Preparation for study in the UK**

This was most obviously in evidence at Taylor's where the course is taught on a '1+2' or '2+1' basis, and begins at their Taylor's orientation (which is compulsory), when students are told about Reading – where it is, what it looks

like, and what kind of lifestyle students have there. As the course at Taylor's develops, students are given more information about their studies at Reading and put into contact with Reading students on arrival as part of the 'kawan' or buddying scheme.

### **Conclusions**

The range of student support activities provided by the three institutions visited were all second to none, with a very dedicated staff. These institutions provide a type of support to students very similar to what we would expect to see in the UK, although the mentality behind this is even more student-focused (for reasons mentioned above). Students get a lot of one-to-one and small group support and the teaching on UK courses is typically in smaller classes than would be the case in the UK. This leads to interesting expectations on the part of the students over what constitutes a 'UK student experience'. Many will not study in the UK at all, but those that do need to have their expectations carefully managed.

The visit gave a strong impression that the cultural aspects of life and study in another country are key to understanding the way that a 'UK student experience' may differ abroad from what is delivered in the UK. It cannot and should not be seen as replicating a 'UK experience' but rather complementing it. This requires sensitive and well-informed staff and well-developed relationships and connections between those working and studying in the UK institution and their respective partners. In those institutions visited, this was very much in evidence.

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