



# Review of UK Transnational Education in Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China): Edinburgh Napier University and CityU SCOPE

**May 2018**

## **Executive summary**

Edinburgh Napier University (ENU) entered into an agreement with the School of Professional and Continuing Education (SCOPE) at the City University of Hong Kong (CityU) in 1997, and is now one of the largest providers of UK education in Hong Kong.

CityU is a public university that is committed to the pursuit of academic excellence and service to the community. SCOPE opened in 1991 and now operates as a separate entity within CityU, with its own mission and vision. SCOPE currently offers a number of postgraduate, three-year degree and top-up degree programmes as well as advanced diplomas, diplomas and short programmes.

The Business School of ENU currently offers a number of programmes in collaboration with CityU SCOPE. The programmes that form part of the QAA TNE Review of Hong Kong are:

- BA/BA (Hons) Accounting & Finance (2009)
- BA/BA (Hons) Accounting (1997)
- BA/BA (Hons) Hospitality & Service Management (2006)
- BA/BA (Hons) Tourism Management (2014)
- BA/BA (Hons) Marketing Management (2010)
- BA/BA (Hons) Tourism & Airline Management (2008).

All of these programmes have been accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ). They are delivered by flying faculty. ENU staff travel to Hong Kong for intensive blocks of teaching, and locally employed tutors then complete tutorials for each module and provide continuity between the visits from ENU staff.

The institutional processes for agreeing and establishing new links, and for monitoring and reviewing quality and maintaining standards are effective and well understood by both ENU and CityU SCOPE staff.

The ENU programme leader visits Hong Kong every year to take part in the induction programme for new students. Ongoing academic and pastoral support is principally provided

by the local tutors, though students may also contact ENU teachers or local or ENU administrative staff. The review team noted the quality of the support that was recognised and appreciated by the students.

## Introduction

1 Edinburgh Napier University (ENU), based in Scotland, has six schools: the Business School, Nursing Midwifery and Social Care, Sports and Exercise Science, Arts and Creative Industries, Computing, and Engineering and the Built Environment. It offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes as well as a number of short courses for industry and commerce. Many of these short courses have been tailored to fit international clients' needs and are delivered abroad. Its Business School is the largest in Scotland with more than 7,600 students. It offers a wide range of Business, Finance, Hospitality Tourism courses at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

2 ENU's Strategy 2020 document, agreed by the University Court in March 2014, outlines the institution's vision of becoming 'an enterprising and innovative community, renowned internationally, with an unrivalled student learning experience'. One of the four key objectives is 'To internationalise our work'. This vision is described in more detail in the Internationalisation Strategy 2020, which includes a section on transnational education. Developing centres with a critical mass of students in key markets through partnerships with experienced providers, and developing radically new delivery models and approaches to staffing, are recurring themes in this strategy.

3 With the exception of the University of London International Programmes, Edinburgh Napier University is the largest provider of UK education in Hong Kong, with 20 years of collaboration with the School of Professional and Continuing Education at the City University of Hong Kong (CityU SCOPE). The strength of the broad-based and long-term relationship that has allowed a deep level of trust to develop between the partners is considered a **positive feature** by the review team.

4 City University is a public university, which was established as an educational institution in 1984 before achieving full university status in 1994. It is committed to the pursuit of academic excellence and service to the community. The School of Continuing and Professional Education (SCOPE) opened in 1991 and now operates as a separate entity within CityU, with its own mission and vision. SCOPE currently offers a number of postgraduate, three-year degree and top-up degree programmes as well as advanced diplomas, diplomas and short programmes.

5 The Business School of Edinburgh Napier University currently offers the following programmes in collaboration with the CityU SCOPE that form part of the QAA TNE Review of Hong Kong:

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- BA/BA (Hons) Tourism & Airline Management (2008).

6 These programmes follow ENU's preferred model for collaborative provision, which involves flying faculty. Academic staff travel to Hong Kong for intensive blocks of teaching. Locally employed tutors then provide tutorials for each module and provide continuity between the visits from ENU staff. More recently, in recognition of the maturity of the

partnership, responsibility for teaching on some modules has been transferred to academic staff at SCOPE, and modules with particular Hong Kong context will continue to be delivered by SCOPE academic staff.

7 All of these programmes have been accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ).

8 Student enrolments on the BA/ BA(Hons) Tourism Management have been declining in recent years due to the number of competitors offering single stream Tourism Management top-up programmes. In response to this, SCOPE made a strategic decision to end the BA/BA (Hons) Tourism Management, and instead to offer the BA/BA (Hons) Tourism and Airline Management because this dual stream has a uniqueness and appeal in the market.

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

9 The agreements between ENU and SCOPE are each valid for a duration of five years; the documents supplied were signed at various dates, ranging from 2013 to 2016.

10 The structures concerned with the establishment, approval and review of collaborative programmes at ENU include the University Collaborative Provision Committee (CPC), which is chaired by the Vice Principal. CPC is a subcommittee of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTC) and has reporting lines into the University's Academic Board.

11 The annual reporting for the programmes delivered in collaboration with SCOPE takes the form of a Programme Leader's Reflective Report that feeds in to the School Annual Summary Report. The programmes are included in ENU's five-yearly programme reviews that include monitoring and review of the partnership and consideration of due diligence. Example reports include explicit reference to the programmes delivered in Hong Kong.

12 Each programme is formally managed by a Programme Board of Studies, the remit of which includes all matters relevant to the management and operation of the programme. The Board normally meets two or three times each session in the UK. It is chaired by the Programme Leader, and members include the UK and Hong Kong Programme Teams, Module Leaders and Module Tutors who deliver the programme. Staff from CityU SCOPE usually participate by telephone or videoconference. There are also Module Boards.

13 Individual and cohort student performance is considered by the relevant Board of Examiners.

14 Senior staff described the partnership with CityU SCOPE as a key part of ENU's international strategy. The relationship was well-established and extended the University's reach and allowed it to widen student access to UK higher education by offering programmes in an important target region.

15 The maturity and depth of the relationship makes it easier for each partner to keep abreast of changes in the higher education sectors of both countries, through regular communication and constant refinement of the provision to ensure it responds to changing regulatory, policy and market needs. Each programme is refreshed on an annual basis to ensure the delivery remains appropriate for current practice.

16 ENU considers accreditation by the HKCAAVQ to be very important. It allows students on the programmes to obtain state grants and gain access to a wide range of subsidised activities. It also provides the opportunity for external review of the provision and drives enhancement.

17 There is a dedicated team at ENU that oversees all aspects of transnational delivery. The key points of day-to-day contact between the two partners are the programme leaders at ENU and CityU SCOPE, as identified in the relevant collaborative agreement, the administrative offices of both partners and the regular visits by ENU flying faculty. However, a programme review of the marketing provision in 2016 identified the need to encourage regular communication across the programme teaching team, not just at times of programme review, to discuss enhancement of the programmes, and the need to keep in touch with the Module Leaders from other Schools delivering modules on the programme, in order to be aware of any changes, and to ensure the programme structure includes prerequisites for modules offered.

## **Quality assurance**

### **Academic standards**

18 There are effective processes in place for programme approval and reapproval. Academic standards and the quality of the student learning opportunities for collaborative provision, including the programmes delivered by CityU SCOPE, is managed, monitored and reviewed through the standard internal processes of ENU. Example reports record the involvement of external academic peers and explicit reference to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

19 Since all the ENU programmes delivered at CityU SCOPE are accredited by HKCAAVQ, their academic standards are recognised as meeting level 5 under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework.

20 ENU broadly defines its admissions policies for undergraduate degrees as 'the possession of prior learning deemed sufficient to allow the applicant to be able to succeed and benefit from the programme of study'. In practice, this means that entrants must have a minimum of 240 credits at SCQF level 8 which, in practice for UK applicants, usually means an HND. For Hong Kong applicants, admissions staff in Student and Academic Services in the UK, and ENU Programme Leaders for Hong Kong accept qualifications at QF level 4, which means an Associate Degree or Higher Diploma. The standard of admission such as a Cumulative Grade Point Average score (CGPA) will be specified as part of that process. If the subject requirement is not obtained, a bridging course will be required. Bridging courses tend to comprise 26 lecture hours plus 13 tutorial hours, and are assessed by a 100 question multiple choice test. A pass mark of 40 percent and 80 per cent attendance are required,

21 If a Programme Team can make a case for deeming certain prior learning sufficient at programme approval stage, then advanced standing can be granted. The case for advanced standing was made for the programmes delivered by CityU SCOPE at the time of their approval.

22 ENU operates an annual module and programme review process that includes consideration of module questionnaires for both students and staff. All staff involved in the design and delivery of a module or programme are given the opportunity to participate in a discussion on the effectiveness of the learning and teaching in which they are involved. Each module and programme leader is required to prepare an annual report and a reflective commentary. The report identifies any areas for development, together with identification

of the individual responsible for addressing the area and a timescale for the action to be concluded. School support offices are responsible for maintaining accurate records that monitor this procedure.

## Assessment

23 The programmes delivered in Hong Kong use the same curriculum, assessment, external examiners and examination boards as the corresponding delivery in Edinburgh, although the assessments may be contextualised to meet the Hong Kong environment.

24 ENU policy is that that all module learning outcomes should be assessed, to make sure that the students have had the opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the learning undertaken. The most common forms of assessment are report, essay and examination. Some of the reports are based on case studies. There is also a live project module and/or a final dissertation. The variety of assessments is intended to allow students to experience different ways of measuring or evaluating their performance.

25 Exam papers are printed in Edinburgh and sent by courier to Hong Kong by the Programme Administrator. SCOPE keep papers secure and conduct the exams according to their procedures, which are suitable for Edinburgh Napier. Exam scripts are couriered to the UK by the Hong Kong Programme Assistant.

26 External examiners' reports confirm that the assessments are rigorous and meet professional body accreditation requirements. The varied types of assessment are also praised by external examiners.

27 Assignments and examinations are set by the Module Leader and moderated by a colleague and the external examiner (levels 9 and 10). All examinations are marked by ENU staff members. If there are two assessments, one of them is marked by SCOPE tutors and the other assessment by ENU staff members. Live project modules are marked by the local tutors. Dissertations are marked by the supervisor and all second marked by ENU staff members.

28 All marks are confirmed by a module board of examiners and feed into a programme board of examiners for the final decision. The external examiner is the same for the module boards, irrespective of the location of delivery, and the programme external examiner is normally the same as for the equivalent UK programme.

29 Feedback to students for assignments is written or typed by the SCOPE tutor onto a pro forma, which is based on the marking criteria for that assignment. It is ENU policy that this is returned to the student within four weeks of submission. A copy of all feedback is sent to the UK for further evaluation during the moderation process.

30 Students reported that they were clear about what is expected of them in relation to assessment, and understood what they had to do to achieve certain grades. However, they also commented on the variability in the turnaround time for receiving feedback on their assessment, which did not always reach them within the published expectations of four weeks, and variability in how far in advance lecture support material was made available on the virtual learning environment (VLE). The review team **recommends** the University take action to reduce the variability of student experience including ensuring compliance with the clear official lines on turnaround times for marked assessments and the posting of materials on the VLE. Students were aware of the external examining system and that the reports were available, but none had taken up the opportunity to read the reports.

31 Information about the procedures for complaints and academic appeals is included in the Regulations which are available from the programme administrator. The information is in the programme handbooks and is also accessible through the student portal. Students seemed to be aware of how to access this information, should they need it.

## Quality of learning opportunities

32 The collaboration agreements state clearly that the final decision on student applications is made by ENU. CityU SCOPE carries the responsibility for marketing, administration, application management and admission recommendation.

33 Recommendations for student admissions to the ENU programmes delivered at CityU SCOPE are made by partner staff and reviewed by the ENU Programme Leader. Firm offers are only made to applicants who already have a qualification. The SCOPE programme leader reviews any marginal applications or from those with any new associate degrees or higher diplomas and decides whether a provisional offer can be made. The decision may include an interview. Difficult applications are referred immediately to the ENU programme leader. Successful applicants receive a letter from SCOPE which makes an offer, typically conditional on them finishing their qualification with an appropriate CGPA or mark. This letter has been approved at ENU. When the applicant has received their final results and provides the Certificate or Transcript, the offer is confirmed or withdrawn and a formal offer letter from ENU is sent. Applicants who will need to undertake a Bridging Course are informed at both the offer stages.

34 Students, including some who had not articulated from a previous programme of study at CityU SCOPE, reported that the applications process was clear. They had understood that, although they applied to CityU SCOPE, their degree award would come from ENU. The information supplied had been clear and helpful. They had been attracted by the shorter duration of the top-up programme, and the combination of block delivery from flying ENU faculty and full-time local tutors. The review team considers the use of flying faculty helps to ensure quality, continuity and comparability of the student experience, and is a **positive feature** of the partnership.

35 The ENU Programme Leader, or their representative, visits Hong Kong every year to take part in the induction programme for new students. The programme includes information about the nature and requirements of the programme, details of the learning resources available at CityU SCOPE and also the ENU library's distance learning service. Further induction resources are available online from the University's website.

36 Students described the induction process as informative. Their Programme Leader from ENU and local staff from CityU had explained what would be required of them and explained what learning resources would be available to them. There had also been senior students who had shared their experience with the new students.

37 Ongoing academic and pastoral support is principally provided by the local tutors, though students may also contact ENU teachers or local or ENU administrative staff. This is explained in the student handbooks. A range of professional and support services is available from the two partners, including IT support, and study skills resources in the Student Development Unit at CityU SCOPE, and online resources from ENU.

38 During the dissertation phase of the programme, students are supported by an individual supervisor. While there had been reports of problems with arranging supervisory meetings with part-time students, students were generally satisfied with the level of support available to them, and reported that supervisors were easily approachable and contactable, and responded very quickly to requests from part-time students.

39 The review team considers the quality of the student support to be a **positive feature**. It was recognised and appreciated by the students.

40 The main mechanisms for listening to the student voice are regular meetings of the staff-student consultation committees and the online student survey.

41 Student handbooks contain information about the role and remit of programme representatives. They are responsible to the students in their cohort and are expected to consult with their fellow students, hear their ideas and note any concerns they may have about any aspect of their programme experience, and to represent these ideas and concerns at the Staff-Student Liaison Committee and the Board of Studies. Programme leaders are expected to facilitate the election of programme representatives within the first trimester for each intake of students. The information in the student handbooks includes an estimate of the time commitment required to carry out the role. The election and responsibilities of the programme representatives were confirmed by staff and students.

42 The student handbooks also describe the remit and membership of the Staff-Student Liaison Committees and the Board of Studies. Membership of the Staff-Student Liaison Committees comprises the Hong Kong and Edinburgh programme leaders (or designate), a member of academic staff teaching on the programme, two representatives from each student group, a convener, who is elected by the committee members, and a secretary to the committee. Staff and students reported that the meetings were constructive, and the way in which they were run had been noted by ENU as an example of good practice.

43 Students on the ENU programmes in Hong Kong are able to participate in internal satisfaction surveys undertaken by CityU (SCOPE) at the end of each module. However, student engagement with the electronic survey has been poor, despite the efforts of the teaching staff to persuade the students to participate. Despite this, students reported that they had a voice and were listened to. The review team was informed that action to improve the poor student engagement with electronic end-of-module surveys was planned. The review team **recommends** that the University continues to monitor the completion rate and takes further action, if required.

44 Students reported that they had access to a comprehensive set of learning resources at CityU SCOPE, accessed by their CityU student card or via the e-Portal or VLE. They were also able to access electronic resources from ENU through their Napier matriculation card, VLE, myNapier and the ENU library e-resources. Access to all these resources is detailed in the student handbooks. Students were generally happy with the quality and range of resources available, though some had complained about the lack of subsidised printing. The ENU students are registered as extension students of CityU and, unlike regular students they did not receive a free printing allowance.

45 Part-time students, in particular, found the 24-hour opening hours of the CityU library to be beneficial to their studies.

46 Students have access to the ENU online environment, MOODLE, as well as CityU's e-Portal CANVAS, they also have two different email accounts, one from ENU and one from CityU. Faced with these two systems, students seemed to be clear about when to use one and when to use the other. CityU's system tended to be used for local communication, local information, forms and assessment results, while the ENU system was used for its academic content that supplemented the classes.

47 ENU's preferred model for collaborative provision is flying faculty with local tutor support; however, considering the strength and length of the partnership and the expertise of SCOPE, the University feels they can now delegate more teaching responsibility for delivering some modules and some delivery has been transferred to academic staff at CityU SCOPE.

48 The teaching is delivered as block modules, each comprising around 15 hours of lectures in the first weeks of the trimester. The ENU module leader or the local tutor delivers these lectures. Following the lectures, CityU SCOPE staff hold weekly tutorials, during which the more general material covered in the lectures is contextualised to Hong Kong. The intention is to show how generic concepts can be applied, specifically in Hong Kong or in Asia. These tutorial sessions are supplemented by lectures of one or two hours per week, delivered by CityU SCOPE, and by an ENU module text that supports the subject matter of the module.

49 The curricula for the programmes delivered at CityU SCOPE are essentially the same as for the corresponding programmes in Edinburgh, but with some contextualisation for Hong Kong.

50 The teaching emphasises turning theory into practice, through the use of examples and case studies, the Live Project module, and frequent references to the theory into practice relationship in lectures and tutorials.

51 Students reported positively on the quality of the teaching and the accessibility of the teachers. However, they found the block teaching very intensive. This was particularly true for the part-time students, who sometimes struggled with the intensity of the scheduling. They generally appreciated the applied nature of the material, especially the live project, which involves working with a real company on a real project. It was seen as a very useful opportunity to engage with industry.

52 However, students also spoke of the desire for further connections with industry, including more input from guest lectures. This theme is echoed in some of the HKCAAVQ reports, some of which recommend using industry practitioners to enrich the teaching. Senior staff responded to these comments, explaining that, at ENU, there is an industry liaison group feeding into the content of the programme. Staff at CityU SCOPE network with alumni engaged with industry who are invited to deliver continuing professional development seminars. Industry visits and other meetings and events are organised. CityU SCOPE also has an advisory committee. The review team **recommends** the University to consider ways of facilitating further and deeper links with industry.

53 Students also reported variability in the extent to which lecture material was posted on the VLE in advance of the lectures, with some appearing very close to the start of the class to which it related.

54 There is evidence that students on some programmes, such as the BA Hospitality Services Management, are opting not to complete the Honours and exiting early because of the demands of working and studying. This does not seem to be an issue with the full-time BA Marketing Management students. Staff explained that this was largely because the hospitality industry tended not to recognise the difference between BA and BA Hons, and part-time students in employment typically were unable to commit more time to their study due to shift duties.

55 The two partners work together in the appointment of new staff to deliver the programmes in Hong Kong. The agreements between ENU and CityU SCOPE state that the latter is responsible for the employment of a sufficient number of suitably qualified, dedicated

staff to ensure fulfilment of their obligations under each agreement. This responsibility includes the selection and appointment of teaching staff, following approval by ENU, based on scrutiny of the curricula vitae. Both partners are expected to provide material for the induction of newly appointed staff, which will be carried out by CityU, and both partners are to be involved in their performance review.

56 The CityU SCOPE staff who teach on the ENU programmes are mostly very experienced with many years of teaching experience. SCOPE tended to select people who had both teaching and industry experience. There were also a number of contract teachers, who brought their professional experience to the teaching, and helped to keep the programmes up to date with current industry practice.

57 ENU staff who delivered the programmes at CityU SCOPE were delivering the same programmes in Edinburgh.

58 Some of the HKCAAVQ reports recommend that the staff/student ratio is kept under review to ensure there are sufficient staff to deliver the programmes. Senior staff reported that CityU SCOPE requirement is no more than 25 students per tutor.

59 ENU has an online portal with training materials for new teachers at CityU SCOPE. This is supplemented by induction training and ongoing updates by visiting ENU staff. Regular communication between the partners ensures that SCOPE staff are kept up to date with any changes to ENU policy or regulations. There are also opportunities for SCOPE staff to visit Edinburgh.

## **Information on higher education provision**

60 Marketing materials for the collaborative programmes include a programme leaflet, an entry in the SCOPE brochure for its top-up programmes, and the programme website at SCOPE. Additional information is available at promotional events.

61 The collaborative agreements state unambiguously that final responsibility and accountability for the control and accuracy of all public information, publicity and promotional activity relating to all programmes and awards offered or made in its name, rests with Edinburgh Napier and no information should be published without the prior written consent of ENU. The International Marketing Manager at ENU is identified as the appropriate contact point for seeking such consent, in the relevant collaborative agreement.

62 Student handbooks for the programmes delivered at CityU SCOPE are prepared by ENU, and then sent to CityU for contextualisation and addition of country-specific information.

63 Students were generally satisfied with the quality and quantity of information available to them. They considered that the programme information they received prior to application was accurate and sufficient. They also said that the student handbooks contained useful reference material. They were aware of the opportunities for student exchange to Edinburgh, and described preparatory briefing sessions, practical support such as airport collection, and the availability of scholarships.

64 Final responsibility for the issue of award certificates, diploma supplements and transcripts associated with the programmes rests with ENU, as defined in the collaborative agreements. The certificate does not include reference to the place of study.

## Conclusion

The partnership between ENU and CityU SCOPE has developed over the 20 years since its inception and has established a strong and mature working relationship between the two partners. During this time, there have been many changes in the higher education sector and employment market of Hong Kong. Student recruitment is challenging, particularly given the changing demographic in Hong Kong, and the need to ensure the programmes remain attractive to the Hong Kong market. The partnership is broad-based, covering a number of different disciplines. This breadth brings advantages, in the flexibility to tailor the provision to a changing job market, and disadvantages, such as the requirement to sustain a large portfolio of provision and ensure that each programme remains current. The broad base also brings challenges of ensuring consistency of the student experience. The short, intensive style of provision on the collaborative programmes was appreciated by the students, but places high demands on their time.

## Positive features

The following positive features are identified:

- the strength of the long-term relationship between ENU and CityU SCOPE and the mutual trust that has developed over time (paragraph 3)
- the flying faculty that helps to ensuring quality, continuity and comparability of the student experience (paragraph 34)
- the quality of the support that was recognised and appreciated by the students (paragraph 39).

## Recommendations

Edinburgh Napier University is recommended to take the following action:

- reduce the variability of student experience that results from a broad portfolio of provision. While there are clear official lines on turnaround times for marked assessments and the posting of materials on the VLE, students reported considerable variability in practice (paragraph 30)
- consider ways of improving the poor student engagement with electronic end-of-module surveys and to monitor the completion rate and take action if required (paragraph 43)
- consider ways of facilitating further and deeper links with industry (paragraph 52).

### **Edinburgh Napier University's response to the review report**

Edinburgh Napier University is committed to the enhancement of the quality of all its provision and welcomes the QAA report on its collaborative partnership with CityU SCOPE, particularly the identification of a number of positive features. The recommendations will help us identify how we can further improve the student experience and strengthen our collaboration and will be the focus of discussions with our colleagues at SCOPE in the coming months.

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB  
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel 01452 557 000  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)