



Audit of overseas provision

**London South Bank University, Nanyang Polytechnic, Singapore
and Singapore General Hospital**

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Introduction

1 This report considers the collaborative arrangement between London South Bank University and Singapore institutions (Nanyang Polytechnic and the Singapore General Hospital).

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

2 The primary responsibility for academic standards and quality in United Kingdom (UK) higher education rests with individual universities and colleges. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) checks how well they meet their responsibilities, identifying good practice and making recommendations for improvement. QAA also publishes guidelines to help institutions develop effective systems to ensure students have high quality experiences.

3 Many universities and colleges in the UK offer their higher education programmes to students wishing to study outside the UK. This is a significant and growing area of activity: data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency indicates that over 408,000 students were studying for UK higher education awards entirely outside the UK in the 2009-10 academic year, either at overseas campuses directly run by UK institutions or through collaborative arrangements that UK institutions have made with foreign partners. QAA reviews both collaborative arrangements and programmes delivered on overseas campuses through a process called Audit of overseas provision. Audits are conducted country by country and in 2010-11 we conducted an Audit of overseas provision in Singapore. The purpose of the audit was to provide information on the way in which a group of UK universities and colleges were maintaining academic standards and the quality of education in their provision in Singapore. The reports on the individual audits will be used in the preparation of an overview report.

The audit process for overseas collaborative links

4 In November 2009 QAA invited all UK higher education institutions to provide information about their provision in Singapore. On the basis of the information returned, QAA selected for audit visits 10 UK institutions with provision in that country. These institutions produced briefing papers describing the way in which their provision (or subsets of their provision) in Singapore operated and commenting on the effectiveness of the means by which they assured quality and standards. In addition, each institution was asked to make reference to the extent to which the provision was representative of its procedures and practice in all its overseas activity. Institutions were also invited to make reference to the ways in which their arrangements met the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, particularly *Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, originally published by QAA in 2004. An 'amplified' version of Section 2 was published by QAA in October 2010.

5 Audit teams visited each of the 10 UK institutions between September and November 2010 to discuss their provision in Singapore. The same teams visited Singapore in January 2011 to meet some of the staff responsible for managing and delivering the provision, and to meet students. The audit of London South Bank University was coordinated for QAA by Ms M A McLaughlin, Assistant Director, Reviews Group. The audit team comprised Dr N Casey and Professor A Cobb (auditors), with Ms McLaughlin, acting as audit secretary. QAA is particularly grateful to the UK institutions and their partners in Singapore for the willing cooperation that they provided to the team.

The context of collaborative provision with partners in Singapore

6 In Singapore, responsibility for higher education resides with the Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education. The Higher Education Division oversees the provision of tertiary and technical education as well as registration of private schools, including foreign providers. The Singapore higher education landscape currently comprises four publicly-funded autonomous universities, a private institution offering publicly-subsidised part-time degree programmes, five polytechnics, an institute of technical education, an institute of technology, two arts institutions, several foreign universities' branch campuses, and a number of private education institutions.

7 In September 2009 the Singapore parliament passed the Private Education Act to strengthen the regulatory framework for the private education sector. Under this Act, the Ministry of Education has established an independent statutory board, the Council for Private Education, with the legislative power to implement and enforce the new regulatory framework. The new regulatory regime overseen by the Council for Private Education includes a strengthened registration framework called the Enhanced Registration Framework, and a quality certification scheme called EduTrust.

8 The Enhanced Registration Framework spells out the strengthened legal requirements in the areas of corporate governance, provision of quality services, student protection and information transparency that all private education institutions operating in or from Singapore must meet. While private education institutions were previously required to obtain one-time registration with the Ministry of Education and could be de-registered only under extreme circumstances, the Private Education Act has introduced a renewable validity period for registration with the Council for Private Education, which can range from one year up to six years, and has provided the Council with the powers to impose a range of graduated penalties on errant private education institutions, including suspension, non-renewal or revocation of registration or EduTrust certification.

9 EduTrust is a voluntary certification scheme which provides a trust mark of quality. It replaces the previous CaseTrust for Education scheme, which was mainly focused on protection of fees paid by students, adding a number of student welfare and academic standards for all students, whether local or overseas, as well as soundness of finances and school administration requirements. As with CaseTrust, EduTrust is mandatory for private education institutions wishing to enrol overseas students. EduTrust certification is one of the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority's prerequisites for the issue of a Student's Pass. Further information on higher education in Singapore is contained in the overview report.

Section 1: The background to the collaborative link

Nature of the link

10 The link between London South Bank University (the University or LSBU) and Singapore institutions (Nanyang Polytechnic and the Singapore General Hospital) originated in 1997 when radiographers at the University were approached by colleagues in Singapore to develop opportunities for clinical radiographers to gain qualifications at degree level. The Singapore Ministry of Health supported an early iteration of a degree programme with the University that recruited three intakes from 1998 to 2003. Although there was insufficient interest to recruit further cohorts of students at that time, the University was approached to re-launch the degree programme in 2007. The programme was re-validated in December 2007 and has since recruited three cohorts.

11 The link currently involves the delivery by the University of the BSc (Hons) Professional Development for Allied Health Professions (Radiography), re-designated in 2010 as the BSc (Hons) Radiographic Studies, to radiographers qualified to diploma level in Singapore. The programme is delivered by a blended approach of both distance learning and by face-to-face contact with University staff. The students are all employed in Singapore as diagnostic radiography or radiation therapy practitioners.

12 Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) was established in 1992 and is the main centre for non-medical education and training in Singapore. Prior to September 2010, it was the sole provider for the training of radiographers in Singapore to diploma level. A Memorandum of Understanding with NYP was signed in 2007 with aims to cooperate and strengthen existing activities, and to promote training and capability development of health and social care professionals. This activity is twofold; currently, NYP sends second-year students to London for a four-week clinical attachment at partner hospitals of the University, and NYP supports the recruitment by the University of final year diploma students to the BSc (Hons) programme.

13 Singapore General Hospital Pte Ltd (SGH) was established in 1821 and is the main teaching hospital in Singapore. It has three postgraduate institutes to support healthcare professionals seeking advanced and clinical skills training and education. A Memorandum of Understanding with SGH was signed in 2008 in furtherance of collaboration in education and research. Currently, the Department of Diagnostic Imaging at SGH supports the LSBU programme by allowing the face-to-face delivery of taught sessions in their teaching rooms. There are also plans to develop in partnership with the University two new postgraduate programmes in Magnetic Resource Imaging and Computerised Tomography. The audit team was informed that the University was considering top-up degrees in Physiology and Occupational Therapy; there were no research links or further course developments to date.

14 The BSc (Hons) Radiographic Studies is taught and assessed entirely in English. At present there is no professional, statutory or regulatory body accreditation of the programme in Singapore. The Head of Department of Allied Health Sciences at the University is an honorary member of the Singapore Radiographers Society, and has discussed national accreditation with the Society. The course seeks to develop students professionally, but does not give students the right to practise as a clinician in the UK. The audit team also met the current President of the Society in a meeting at Singapore General Hospital. The Society helps to promote the programme to new students.

The UK institution's approach to overseas collaborative provision

15 The link with Singapore developed from individual radiography practitioners in the UK and Singapore, rather than through a targeted, structured or strategic approach by the University. Although there is currently no formal international strategy, the University is in the process of formulating a more strategic approach to internationalisation, taking account of markets, demand and existing institutional relationships. Faculties have been asked to identify short, medium and long-term aims. A new Pro Vice-Chancellor External Relations was appointed in 2010 to bring this strategy to fruition.

16 The current approach by the University to international developments was described by University staff as cautious. The Quality Management and Enhancement Handbook contained a detailed section devoted to collaborative provision and advice on associated risks to consider in the establishment of partnerships. The audit team was informed, however, that the programme with Singapore was not considered by the University as a formal collaborative partnership, rather a University programme delivered by blended learning, and as such it was subject to the same quality assurance and enhancement processes and procedures followed by other programmes delivered at the University.

17 The current programme was the only overseas provision offered by the Faculty of Health and Social Care. The Faculty aspires to further international projects and considered that the link with Singapore and the delivery of the programme by distance learning could be used as an effective model and applied to other programmes and disciplines.

18 Faculty officers were aware of the relatively low recruitment to the programme in Singapore and had discussed its sustainability. A target minimum number of 15 had been established for recruitment. The audit team was informed that the Singaporean Government had recently increased the number of candidates entering the radiography diploma course at NYP to 80 which would be expected to enhance the future viability of the LSBU programme. SGH staff informed the team of the rising local demand for trained clinical personnel and that there were further opportunities for postgraduate training within the discipline.

Section 2: Arrangements for establishing the link

Selecting and approving the partner organisation

19 The academic regulations require the University to satisfy itself that a proposed partner is appropriate in terms of status, location, mission, academic portfolio and financial stability. The University has developed a hierarchy of requirements that addresses different areas of risk involved in establishing a new programme and/or a collaborative partnership. The processes of approval and the level at which decisions can be taken are detailed in the Quality Management and Enhancement (QME) Handbook.

20 International provision is initiated at a local level, rather than an institutional level. Faculty processes for selecting and approving a partner organisation are in line with University principles, detailed in the QME Handbook, and follow a four-stage process. A proposal to develop a new award or partner is initially considered by the Faculty Enterprise, Planning and Collaboration Committee (FEPCC). The proposal, including the business case, is then considered by the Faculty Academic Standards Committee (FASC). Subject to approval of the new provision, FASC makes recommendations to the University Collaborations Committee. Finally, requests to develop a new programme are submitted to the Academic Planning Committee before final approval by the Collaborations Committee.

Programme approval

21 The paperwork for the approval of this programme predates the establishment of the FEPCC, the most recent iteration of the QME Handbook (November 2008) and the detailed analysis within the Faculty, which is now required prior to an institutional assessment of risk and the business case by the University's Academic Planning Committee.

22 While institutional approval was not formally required for a programme delivered solely by the University, albeit by blended learning in which the students do not physically attend the University, the then Director of Collaborations and Curriculum Development and the Principal Quality Officer visited Singapore in January 2008 and met key staff at NYP and SGH as part of the validation event. They discussed how University staff would contribute to teaching and student support, the role of the employers, the facilities available to support the students, and the possible development of more formal collaborative links.

23 The programme submitted for validation in December 2007 was the BSc (Hons) Professional Development for Allied Health Professionals (Radiography), Singapore Delivery. The subsequent change in name to BSc (Hons) Radiographic Studies in 2009 responded to student concerns and reflected the situation that graduates in Singapore receive an enhanced salary only if their qualification relates specifically to professional radiography practice.

24 The report of the validation event detailed several conditions, specifically in relation to the detailed roles of University staff and how the University would retain control of recruitment and admissions, which the course team addressed in the following months. The audit team had access to the report of the validation event and to the definitive programme specification.

25 A unique feature of the programme is the formal tripartite agreement between each student, the University (via the Course Director) and the employer (via the Departmental Manager or Clinical Leader at their site of employment), normally one of the five hospitals in Singapore. The Clinical Leaders provide a pool of specialist support and expertise for the students to draw on, most having previously studied on a relevant LSBU programme. They facilitate study by providing resources for projects; support and funding for attendance at relevant conferences; are sensitive to the time-management needs of the students, especially near assignment deadlines; and are able to guide the students during their studies. The audit team noted a very comprehensive approach to student support by the Clinical Leaders.

26 In developing the programme the University has taken account of the Academic Infrastructure. This top-up degree aligns with *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. While the University does not consider the programme to be part of its collaborative provision, there are aspects of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* which apply directly, including distance learning, which the University has taken into account during the development of the programme. As noted in paragraph 11, the approach to distance learning uses blended learning where e-learning is supplemented by face-to-face sessions with University staff.

27 If the programme was to be terminated, the University has standard procedures in place which are detailed in the QME Handbook, and would take appropriate action to ensure that the quality of the student experience was assured until all students had completed the programme.

28 The audit team concluded that the framework within which the link with Singapore had developed demonstrated that the University had effective structures and policies in place to underpin the management of this University provision delivered overseas.

Written agreements with the partner organisation

29 While there are no formal agreements for collaboration with any organisation in Singapore, the University has signed a general Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Faculty of Health and Social Care at the University and the School of Health Sciences at NYP and with the Postgraduate Allied Health Institute of SGH. Neither document contains a specific reference to the programme delivered in Singapore.

30 The MOUs with NYP and SGH were described to the audit team as a 'licence to do business' and as a starting point for further work. The team noted, however, that while the MOUs alluded to further developments in both teaching and research, there was no formal evidence that they had been pursued following the validation in 2008 or that an annual review of the MOUs had taken place. The MOU with NYP expired on 20/09/10. The MOU with SGH, while still valid 'is subject to periodic review on an annual basis by both parties', although the visiting team could find no evidence that this had formally taken place. The University is encouraged to review the relationships with both NYP and SGH and to update the Memoranda at their earliest opportunity. Reference is made in the University Briefing Paper to the development in the future of a more formal agreement with SGH, which will require a formal visit for institutional approval.

31 The Clinical Leaders informed the audit team that, during a recent visit to Singapore, the Head of Department of Allied Health Sciences had discussed the programme with them and reviewed the clinical training needs of the students. She had held discussions about the future development of the profession in Singapore with the local Society of Radiographers and the Ministry of Health.

32 The audit team found that the University had reviewed and revised its committee structures at both central and faculty level in recent years, in order to provide a more effective oversight of the development and operation of international provision. Review of the international strategy is ongoing.

Section 3: Academic standards and the quality of programmes

Day-to-day management

33 The course is delivered in a part-time mode over two years with four units studied in each academic year. The students are all in full-time employment in hospitals in Singapore and study in the evenings and weekends. All learning and teaching is conducted by University staff, either at a distance or face-to-face during visits to Singapore, with the exception of some guest lectures delivered by senior clinical staff, who are alumni of the programme. All marking, moderating and external examining is undertaken at the University according to standard procedures. Academic, administrative and pastoral support is also provided by the University and supplemented by support from Clinical Leaders in students' professional environments as discussed previously in paragraph 25.

34 The Faculty has appointed a Course Director to serve as the main point of academic contact and to oversee the effective management of the programme. The Course Director contributes to the delivery of the programme and oversees a small course team of three unit leaders. The team meets regularly on an informal basis and utilises the subject and pedagogic expertise of other staff in the Department of Allied Health Sciences and the Faculty of Health and Social Care who contribute to the programme. It is the responsibility of the Course Director to ensure that students receive course information in a timely fashion, liaise with NYP and SGH regarding the use of teaching facilities, ensure that assessment schedules are completed, chair the Course Board, attend the Overseas Scheme Management Board, and report to the Head of Department of Allied Health Sciences and the Programme Coordinator for Overseas Courses.

35 The Course Director maintains regular contact with students and Clinical Managers via Skype, email, Blackboard or Facebook. Most communication takes place in timetabled online tutorials, via email and discussion boards during the afternoons in the UK, corresponding to the evenings used for study in Singapore. Support is also provided directly to students during staff visits to Singapore in group and individual tutorials.

36 The Course Director visits Singapore at least three times each year, with visits focused to recruitment, enrolment and graduation. Each visit lasts for up to 10 days and involves face-to-face tutorials with individual students at their place of work. The Course Director also makes contact with the clinical managers in each of the five hospital employers to ensure that an appropriate level of student support is evident in the workplace. These visits allow the Course Director to facilitate regular and effective communication and feedback between the students and the course team. The students and Clinical Leaders met by the team confirmed the effectiveness of these visits and the pivotal role of the Course Director in the success of the programme.

37 A Senior Radiography Officer at SGH is the main point of contact for LSBU staff in Singapore. He facilitates visits, coordinates teaching room requirements, gives guest lectures to reinforce the local and professional context, and is in regular contact with the Course Director. He also communicates issues of individual student progress and notifies the Course Director of any local issues that might impact on student performance.

38 The delivery of the programme is highly dependent on the use of Blackboard. Pages viewed by the audit team included information on learning support; guidelines for referencing; useful University contacts; learning, teaching and assessment strategies; details of coursework submission, including the use of Turnitin software; student administration; materials for each module and guidance on how to engage with e-learning; and interactive learning, including the use of a work-based learning journal, how to interact with the course team and use of the chatroom. Students have elected to use Skype for tutorials, appreciating voice contact and the flexibility and facility to ask questions directly to tutors.

39 Students informed the audit team that meeting tutors in person was much appreciated, providing an opportunity to discuss unit content, expectations and individual progress. They all commented on the demands of independent learning, with its emphasis on research skills and critical analysis, and how LSBU staff and the Clinical Leaders had guided them in their learning.

40 Electronic submission and receipt of assignments via Blackboard has been successful, with occasional difficulties reported with the size of files submitted. Student use of Turnitin software, while not compulsory, has been routinely used as a check for plagiarism. Blackboard is also used to convey marks to the students and to obtain written feedback on their work. Both written and verbal feedback is given, with formal feedback

provided after the assessment boards. Students also request and receive individual face-to-face feedback sessions with visiting staff.

41 Each cohort of students elects two representatives to attend the Course Boards, held in Singapore early in the semester and chaired by the Course Director. Minutes of the meetings and feedback to students are provided via Blackboard. The audit team heard, however, that in reality, all students feel confident that they can raise any issues directly with the Course Director, as and when they arise.

42 Student feedback obtained in reviews and unit questionnaires has resulted in a more structured approach to learning, with the introduction of weekly targets and milestones; the increasing use of Skype as a more dynamic and interactive medium of communication; increased accessibility of hard copies of textbooks and research publications; and the recording of tutorial sessions as mp3 downloads for students who have been unable to attend online tutorials. Students informed the audit team that concerns about the slow return of feedback on written work and the lack of speed of Blackboard were dealt with satisfactorily by the Course Director.

43 The current Course Director has recently been promoted to a Faculty-wide position with responsibilities for e-learning, reflecting his successful input to the delivery of the programme to students in Singapore. The Course Director will continue to oversee programme delivery and operation for two days each week. Discussions with Faculty officers revealed an ongoing succession strategy for the course team.

44 The audit team considered that the role of Course Director provided a valuable focal point for the effective management of the programme. The strength of the link, built on regular communication and visits, is identified as a positive feature of the programme. The team noted the commitment, enthusiasm and expertise with e-learning of the current Course Director. They also noted, however, that this could be construed as an over-reliance on this key individual in the successful operation of the programme and encourages the University to consider how it might ensure that the key role might be appropriately supported by other individuals and systems.

Arrangements for monitoring and review

45 The programme is monitored and reviewed as part of the annual University cycle, detailed in the QME Handbook. An Annual Programme Monitoring Report is prepared by the Course Director on behalf of the course team, reviewed by the Department and the Faculty, and submitted to the University Quality Standards Committee. The 2008-09 report reviewed the previous action plan; considered standards set and achieved, and the quality of learning opportunities; noted student progression; commented on the maintenance and enhancement of quality; referred to external examiner reports; and set an action plan for the year ahead. The audit team heard that the technical expertise of the students had had a direct impact on improving the quality of the materials used in the units.

46 The audit team saw evidence of detailed feedback collated by the student representatives and noted the course team comment in the Annual Programme Monitoring Report of July 2009 that 'it was refreshing to receive such honest and wide-ranging feedback'. The course was 'achieving the desired outcome of professional development and is held in high regards by service managers'.

47 A course review in January 2010 considered 16 constructive issues raised by the students with an accompanying Action Plan for their resolution by the course team. Issues included the continuing discussion on the relative values of Blackboard and Skype; the need

for more electronic resources in the University library; communication and feedback from staff; and criteria and action plans for assignments.

48 The Course Director chairs the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee, is a member of the University Learning and Teaching Committee and has been a member of several course validations as an expert in e-learning. He is the Faculty lead for e-learning and has contributed to several University initiatives relating to e-learning. This has encouraged the sharing of good practice and provided an opportunity for the course team to gain ideas and influences from elsewhere.

49 The audit team concluded that the mechanisms for receiving and acting upon student feedback were clear and dynamic, and that the University has very effective processes in place for the annual monitoring and review of the BSc (Hons) in Radiographic Studies delivered by blended learning in Singapore.

Periodic review

50 Arrangements for periodic review follow the normal University procedures, as detailed in Section 3 of the QME Handbook. The University operates an integrated cycle of validation, monitoring and review over a six-year period. The current programme was validated in year 0 (December 2007), is subject to annual monitoring, and undergoes a mid-cycle review in year 3 (2010) and end of cycle review or revalidation in year 6 (2013).

51 Reflection by the course team on the evaluation and development of the programme is informed by external examiner reports, feedback from Clinical Leaders and students, as well as student progression and completion statistics, as detailed in the Annual Monitoring Reports. Both former and current students and Clinical Leaders informed the audit team that the course team was responsive to their feedback, resulting in changes in module emphasis and content.

52 The programme is scheduled for a mid-term review event in 2010/11 to incorporate the University-wide change in programme design from 15 credit units to 20 credit modules. This will entail a change from seven units to six modules during the year of study, with a review of assessment strategies. It is anticipated that the programme learning outcomes will remain the same, while benefitting students by reducing the assessment burden. The course team has consulted both current and former students, and Clinical Leaders of the proposed changes. The Head of Department of Allied Health Sciences has gathered feedback and discussed the programme with students and Clinical Leaders during a recent visit.

Staffing and staff development

53 Only staff employed by the University are involved in the delivery of the programme, with the exception of two guest lecturers, appointed by the Head of Department and who possess appropriate teaching qualifications and professional experience. These are senior radiography managers based in Singapore who ensure that a clinical and local perspective is included. Both are appointed visiting Fellows of the Faculty, one holds an honorary doctorate and both hold a UK higher education teaching certificate.

54 The course team is subject to peer review and an annual appraisal with the Head of Department of Allied Health Sciences. Course team members' expertise must include skills in e-learning and knowledge of contemporary radiography, and staff development opportunities are available. A member of the course team met by the auditors commented that the e-learning skills developed from delivering the programme had been applicable and of value to the delivery of other University programmes.

Student admissions

55 The Briefing Paper informed the audit team that only qualified radiographers employed in Singapore are eligible to apply for this programme. They will typically hold an approved Diploma in Diagnostic Radiography or Radiation Therapy and are mostly diplomats from NYP with a grade point average of more than 3.2. Applicants with a lower grade point average are only considered with a recommendation from staff at NYP. All are required to demonstrate competence in English Language equivalent to the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) of 6.5 or above.

56 The Singapore Society of Radiographers, as the local professional body, helps to promote the programme. The audit team was informed of a good working relationship of the Society with both hospital radiographers and LSBU staff.

57 The Course Director or Head of Department discusses the programme with diploma students at NYP during his/her regular visits to Singapore. Prospective students may also have heard about the programme in their employment or via the professional body for radiographers in Singapore. A Faculty administrator processes all application forms and, with the Course Director, reviews all applications to ensure they meet the entry requirements. All suitable applicants are then interviewed by LSBU academic staff who make the final decision on admissions. The Course Director or other LSBU staff also take enrolment forms to Singapore for the new students to complete.

58 The profile of the student body differs from the typical University intake. They are a homogeneous cohort. All are in employment, 85 per cent are over 21 years of age and 64 per cent are over 25. The audit team was informed that the wider Faculty is currently examining the implications of student support and curriculum development for a profile of this nature.

59 The University maintains a firm oversight of the admissions process to ensure the maintenance of academic standards on the programme.

Assessment requirements

60 The regulations for the assessment of University programmes are detailed in Section 6 of the QME Handbook. Students are informed about assessment procedures in dedicated course documents and in the programme specification.

61 The Course Director and unit leaders are responsible for setting assignments, marking, moderating and liaising with external examiners. LSBU staff from outside of the course team but inside the wider academic department undertake moderation, which allows a measurement of standards against other provision within the Faculty.

62 The first Annual Monitoring Report (2008-09) noted that some assessments, originally designed from existing units with face-to-face delivery, had been difficult to adapt for distance learners. This has led to adjustments in some units and the clarification of assessment criteria in others.

63 All marks are submitted to examination boards held by the Department of Allied Health Sciences at the University in London. The number of students referred at the first attempt and passing at a subsequent attempt is in line with other BSc (Hons) courses within the Faculty.

64 The audit team was informed that the marks presented to the examination board were in a form that could not easily be disaggregated to indicate the different locations and modes of study. The team heard that the University is developing an analytical, progression analysis tool to allow the data to be interrogated and compared in this fashion.

65 The work of a cohesive course team coupled with external moderation and external examination has led to fairness and consistency in the assessment process. The audit team concluded that the assessment processes applied to the programme are effective.

External examining

66 External examiners are appointed by the University to review unit marks. They are appointed by the Quality and Standards Committee, after receiving advice from the External Examiners Committee. The criteria for appointment and termination, with details of the role and expectations of external examiners, are detailed in Section 6 of the QME Handbook.

67 In the current programme, four external examiners review the outcomes of the seven units that make up the course. The externals also examine the performance of students on the same units but located at the University. In theory, this allows a direct comparison to be made between students undertaking a unit by distance learning in Singapore with those based in London and studying in a more conventional fashion. In practice, however, the external examiners are unable to identify the location of study easily and so are unable to compare standards between study locations in a systematic fashion. Although the external examiners have access to all electronic teaching materials, they do not have the opportunity to meet students studying in Singapore.

68 The audit team was given access to external examiner reports for 2008-09 and 2009-10. Comments in the reports were generally very positive, noting that the marking of assignments was generally clear and consistent. Two common issues raised were incorrect referencing and the need for more detailed written feedback to identify areas for improvement, and the team noted that the course team is taking appropriate action to address these issues.

69 External examiner reports are not shared directly with students and Clinical Leaders were unaware of any issues raised. The audit team was informed that issues arising are informally discussed with the students at course boards.

70 The audit team concluded that the University had a satisfactory and effective system in place for the external examination of the programme. They noted, however, that the external examiners could play an enhanced role if they were able to compare the experiences of London and Singapore-based students in a more systematic fashion. The team encourages the University, in keeping with its regulations, to consider means by which direct access of external examiners to students in Singapore could be facilitated to enable an increased familiarity with the experience of students studying in Singapore. Furthermore, the University is encouraged to consider a more systematic approach to sharing external examiner reports with students in partner organisations.

Certificates and transcripts

71 Certificates and transcripts are issued by the University. Certificates are produced by the University Conferments Office and given in person to the student at graduation. Transcripts of student achievement in each unit are issued by the Course Director. The transcripts are then used by the students to claim an increase in salary from their employing institutions.

72 The audit team saw examples of a typical certificate and transcript issued to Singapore students. The certificate indicated an external location of study, while the transcript did not include the location of study. Although recognising that this practice does not strictly align with the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 2*, the team acknowledged that the University was adhering to the overriding legal requirements of the Ministry of Education in Singapore which prescribes that the name of the partner should not feature on the official certificates produced by the UK University.

Section 4: Information

Student information

73 Prospective students are informed about the course by a promotion flyer, the faculty website, a presentation at NYP and via the Singapore Radiographers Society. Students told the audit team that they were aware that the programme was designed to meet their employment needs. It was also recommended to them by alumni, NYP lecturers and their Clinical Leaders.

74 As noted in paragraph 57, all students were interviewed by LSBU staff. During this process their qualifications were checked and verified. On registration, students are given a detailed Course Handbook, also available on Blackboard, plus information about being a student at the University, including academic standards and access to learning resources. The first week of the course is delivered face-to-face in Singapore and this provides an opportunity to introduce the University regulations and procedures to the new intake of students.

75 The audit team heard that some of the students had enrolled late and had missed the formal induction programme. This was remedied by the Course Director during a subsequent visit to Singapore.

76 The programme is subject to the University procedures for discipline, appeals and complaints. The Department of Allied Health Sciences also has a separate Professional Conduct Committee. Appeals are heard by the University Appeals Committee and a University procedure is followed on student complaints. Advice and guidance are available for all University students on the Student Gateway. The audit team was informed that there have been no appeals or complaints in relation to this programme to date.

77 All the former and current students met by the audit team considered that the programme had benefited the advancement of their careers, as it was directly related to their everyday work and professional knowledge.

78 Students can graduate in Singapore, but also appreciate the invitation to attend a graduation ceremony in the UK. The graduation ceremony in Singapore is greatly appreciated by both staff and students, and serves to raise the profile of the programme in the region.

79 The audit team concluded that the information available to students was clear, accurate and reliable.

Publicity and marketing

80 The publicity and marketing of the programme is managed solely by the Marketing Department of the University.

Section 5: Student progression to the UK

81 There is no progression route for graduates of the programme to study in the UK. The programme does not confer eligibility to practise as a radiographer in the UK.

Conclusion

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

- a blended learning approach to programme delivery based on e-learning processes and regular face-to-face contact (paragraphs 16, 22 and 49)
- a supportive local environment facilitated by the Clinical Leaders (paragraphs 33 and 39)
- strong links with students, based on professional credibility, regular and effective communication both electronically and in person (paragraphs 35, 36, 38 and 39)
- the pivotal role and e-learning expertise of the Course Director (paragraph 36)
- an effective induction week in Singapore to aid the transition from taught diploma student to independent learner at degree level (paragraphs 74 and 75).

83 The audit team also identified the following points for consideration by the University as it develops its partnership arrangements:

- ensure that written agreements are up to date and representative of the views and aspirations of all signatories (paragraph 30)
- consider mechanisms to mitigate against over-reliance on one key individual in course management and e-learning (paragraph 44)
- enhance its capacity to compare the performance of local and distance-learning versions of the same unit/degree, through the alignment of annual and periodic review cycles and the input of external examiners (paragraphs 67 and 70)
- develop an opportunity for external examiners to become familiar with the experience of the students in learning at a distance and to make available external examiner reports to students in its partner organisations (paragraph 70).

84 The audit team considered that London South Bank University makes effective use of the *Code of practice*.

85 The audit team confirmed the University's view of this link as set out in the Briefing Paper. The team noted the University's view that this link does not fit into the model of collaborative partnerships overseas; rather, it is a University programme delivered overseas by distance learning. It does, however, provide evidence of the University's effective management of academic standards and oversight of the quality of the student experience in its provision of an overseas link.

Appendix A

London South Bank University's response to QAA's report on its collaboration with Nanyang Polytechnic, Singapore and Singapore General Hospital

The University thanks the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education for the professional and enhancing approach taken to the review of its provision in Singapore. We particularly appreciate, and note, the positive comments made in respect of the supportive local environment in place for students, staff expertise in the area of blended learning and the strong links maintained with students.

In terms of the recommendations made, many have been (or are in the process of being) immediately addressed. The Memorandum of Understanding has been reviewed and updated and the staff base for the programme widened to reflect a broadening of perspective for international delivery within the Faculty of Health and Social Care, as a whole.

In the longer term, opportunities are being arranged for external examiners to have greater interaction with the students' experience of the programme, through participation in online tutorials and interactive sessions supported by Skype. Additionally, from September 2011 the Faculty will align review activity for this programme within our overall cycle of assurance activity faculty, to facilitate greater input from external examiners.

The University welcomes the opportunity granted by this review process to focus upon a small but developing area of operation and to benefit from the process by incorporating the findings of the review within development work in other areas of delivery.

Appendix B

Student numbers for 2010-11

BSc (Hons) Radiographic Studies - 39 students

RG 760 07/11

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