QAA

Audit of overseas provision

Oxford Brookes University and the Institute for International Management and Technology, India

JUNE 2009

Introduction

This report considers the collaborative arrangement between Oxford Brookes University and the Institute for International Management and Technology, India.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

1   The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is a United Kingdom (UK) organisation that seeks to promote public confidence that the quality of provision and the standards of awards in higher education are being safeguarded. It provides public information about quality and standards in higher education mainly by publishing reports resulting from a peer review process of audits and reviews. These are conducted by teams, selected and trained by QAA, and comprising academic staff from higher or further education institutions. The most recent Institutional audit of Oxford Brookes University (Oxford Brookes or the University) was conducted by QAA in April 2005 and the most recent Collaborative provision audit was undertaken in April 2006.

2   One of QAA's review activities is to carry out quality audits of collaborative links between UK higher education institutions and their partner organisations in other countries. In 2008-09 QAA conducted audits of selected partnership links between UK higher education institutions and institutions in India. The purpose of these audits was to provide information on the way in which the UK institutions were maintaining academic standards and the quality of education in their partnerships. The reports on the individual audits will be used in the preparation of an overview report on the collaborative arrangements for the management of standards and quality of UK higher education provision in India.

The audit process for overseas collaborative links

3   In April 2008, QAA invited all UK higher education institutions to provide information on their collaborative partnerships in India. On the basis of the information returned on the nature and scale of the links, QAA selected for audit visits 10 UK institutions with links in India. Each of the selected institutions produced a briefing paper describing the way in which the link operated, and commenting on the effectiveness of the means by which it assured quality and standards. In addition, each institution was asked to make reference, in the briefing paper, to the extent to which the link was representative of its procedures and practice in all its overseas collaborative activity. Institutions were also invited to make reference to the ways in which their arrangements met the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, particularly *Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, published by QAA in 2004.

4   In October/November 2008, one of three audit teams visited each of the selected UK institutions to discuss its arrangements in the light of its briefing paper. In January/February 2009, the same team visited the relevant partner organisations in India to gain further insight into the experience of students and staff, and to supplement the view formed by the team from the briefing paper and from the UK visit. During the visits to institutions in India, discussions were conducted with key members of staff and with students. The audit of Oxford Brookes was coordinated for QAA by Mr Matthew Cott, Assistant Director, Reviews Group. The audit team comprised Professor Gareth Roberts and Dr Carol Vielba (auditors), with Mr Matthew Cott acting as secretary. QAA is particularly grateful to the UK institutions and their partners in India for the willing cooperation they provided to the team.

The context of collaborative provision with partners in India

5   In India, responsibility for higher education resides with the Department of Higher Education within the Ministry of Human Resources Development. The University Grants Commission (UGC) is the national body responsible for granting recognition to all higher education qualifications; it also regulates the use of university title. Constitutional responsibilities for education are shared between the national parliament and state legislatures. Both can authorise the establishment of universities, public or private, while the national government can grant 'deemed university' status to an institution on recommendation from UGC. Degree awarding powers are vested in universities, but there are also numerous colleges that offer the degrees of universities to which they are affiliated. Colleges may be categorised as public or private based on their ownership; however, funding arrangements blur the distinction because of the self-financing activities of public institutions and because private institutions may receive government aid. The number of private institutions has grown in recent years and these tend to offer more employment orientated programmes than their public counterparts; some award qualifications through collaboration with foreign institutions. The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is one of several bodies established with responsibilities in particular subject areas. The remit of AICTE is broad and includes engineering and technology, business and management, hotel and catering management, architecture and town planning, pharmacy, and applied arts and crafts. AICTE introduced regulations in 2005, under which foreign institutions imparting technical education are required to obtain approval from AICTE for their operations in India. There is currently no legal framework for recognising qualifications awarded by foreign institutions on the basis of programmes delivered entirely in India. The so-called 'Foreign Providers Bill', which would introduce such a framework, has been the subject of parliamentary debate but has yet to reach the statute books. Further information on higher education in India is contained in the overview report.

The background to the collaborative link

Nature of the link

6   The link between Oxford Brookes and the Institute for International Management and Technology in Gurgaon, Delhi, India (IIMT), was established in 2000. It developed from an initiative by the owner of Radisson Hotels in India who wished to improve qualifications available to the hospitality industry. Over time the collaboration has expanded to include general business programmes.

7   The programmes offered at IIMT are all franchised (meaning that Oxford Brookes also provides programmes of the same title in the UK), full-time and taught entirely in English. The programmes are delivered by IIMT staff. The first programme to be offered in 2000 was the four-year BSc Hotel and Restaurant Management. Two computing degrees were approved in 2001: two cohorts of students were recruited but the degrees were discontinued because their design and nomenclature did not fit the local labour market. Approval was given in 2002 for a BBA, Bachelor of Business Administration, three and four-year programmes; and in 2007 for a three-year BBA in Retail Management (which includes common modules with the BBA Business Administration). An MSc in International Business commenced in 2008 with funding from the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI). At the time of the audit Oxford Brookes was also considering the franchise of the MSc Hospitality to IIMT. All programmes are offered at IIMT's Gurgaon Campus. The BSc Hotel and Restaurant Management also has access to the Unitech Country Club and the Radisson Hotel for practical modules.

8   The number of students at IIMT registered on the Oxford Brookes' programmes in 2008 was 358. The largest programme has been the BSc Hotel and Restaurant Management generally with an annual intake of around 70 students. The BBA Business Administration has an annual intake of around 25 students; the intake on the BBA Retail Management has been small, so far under 10 students. Student numbers have fallen recently: in 2008 new registrations on the BSc programme

fell below 30 and there was no intake on the Retail programme. Falling numbers in the hospitality area have been experienced by other institutions. Senior staff at IIMT believed this to be the result of changes in public provision of university places and have responded with the creation of a marketing department and an advertising initiative across India to raise the institution's profile.

9   IIMT is a private institution. It was established in 2000 as part of a strategic alliance between Unitech, a large Indian corporation with interests in hotels and real estate, and Oxford Brookes. It is operated by the UMAK Educational Trust which is guaranteed financially by UMAK Investment Company Private Ltd.

10   IIMT has applied for, but not yet been granted, accreditation by the AICTE which is the relevant regulatory body. At the time of publication the accreditation was still pending. The programmes do not carry any professional accreditation. Since its inception IIMT has developed a research capacity in the area of services management which includes the publication of a refereed journal and co-hosting international conferences.

11   IIMT has had ambitious plans for expansion in terms of campuses, student numbers and subjects taught. To accomplish these plans IIMT has acquired land to develop a new and larger campus in Gurgaon. In 2002 a second site for delivery of the BSc and the BBA (Business Administration), the Raichak Campus, was opened near Kolkata. The Campus suffered from problems of management and accessibility and was closed in 2008 (see paragraphs 23 and 31 below).

12   Oxford Brookes has 11 overseas partnerships in nine countries. IIMT is the only link that Oxford Brookes has in India. The Briefing Paper stated that the IIMT provision, based on a franchise, is typical of the University's overseas collaborative partnerships.

13   Following reorganisation at Oxford Brookes, the School of Hotel and Restaurant Management, which initiated the link with IIMT, has moved to the Business School. All the programmes at IIMT now interface with the Business School.

The UK institution's approach to overseas collaborative provision

14   The Briefing Paper stated that while Oxford Brookes retains ultimate responsibility for all collaborative provision, and maintains a clear overview of the quality and student experience of collaborative provision, there is extensive delegation initially to schools, and through that level to partner institutions. This is particularly so for provision involving registered students (see paragraph 42 below) where the partner institution has responsibility for much of a programme's delivery and for supporting the students studying on it.

15   Collaborative provision is managed by Oxford Brookes using standard processes and procedures except where these need to be enhanced to take account of the distinctiveness of collaborative work.

16   Oxford Brookes places internationalisation high on its strategic agenda. The University developed an International Development Strategy in 2003 which included as a priority the strengthening and expansion of international partnerships. In 2007 the Strategy was reviewed and a one-year action plan was developed.

17   Oxford Brookes' Quality and Standards Handbook has a section devoted to procedures for collaborative provision, focusing on those processes that are significantly different for collaborative provision. It also describes key decision-making bodies involved in collaborative provision. Some of these processes have been amended and strengthened since the partnership with IIMT was originally approved in 2000. The documents relating to the initial approval of the programmes at IIMT and management of the partnership in its early years have now been superseded. This report therefore focuses on more recent events and the application of current policies and procedures.

18   Oxford Brookes' Pro Vice-Chancellor (External) (PVC (External)) has executive responsibility for collaborative provision. Academic Board has overall responsibility for quality and standards of provision but delegates its discharge to various committees. The Learning Partnerships Advisory Group (LPAG), chaired by the PVC (External) is responsible for the approval, monitoring and renewal of collaborative arrangements. Through its Chair LPAG has a direct link with the Senior Management Team. The former Learning and Teaching Committee, which had responsibilities for learning, teaching, assessment, curriculum, student support and retention, and the former Quality and Standards Committee, have been merged and replaced by the Academic Enhancement and Standards Committee (AESC). The Committee's remit extends to collaborative provision.

19   Schools are directly responsible for quality and standards, both operationally and in terms of enhancement, of collaborative provision within their subject area. Their discharge of these responsibilities is overseen by the AESC supported by the Academic Policy and Quality Unit (APQU). The management of collaborative provision at school level is coordinated by a school liaison manager (SLM) who is supported by school-level quality management staff. The current SLM in the Business School responsible for IIMT is also responsible for one other overseas collaboration. The SLM reports to the Associate Dean, Academic Operations. As a result of internal reorganisation in the Business School, from 2009 the separate SLM posts will be amalgamated into the new post of Head of International Partnership Developments whose holder will act as the liaison manager for all the School's collaborative partnerships (currently six overseas partners). This new post will report directly to the Dean. Oxford Brookes has produced a detailed guide for liaison managers which summarises the expectations of the role and provides a schedule of expected activities. The SLM responsible for the IIMT link has a budget to cover associated travel costs and is provided with administrative support by the School's collaborative provision administrators.

20   APQU is responsible for maintaining a central register of collaborative provision. Details are summarised on Oxford Brookes' website. The register is updated after the approval by AESC of each collaborative provision certification form and is published on the University's website.

Arrangements for establishing the link

Selecting and approving the partner organisation

21   The current procedures for selecting and approving partner institutions are laid down formally in the Quality and Standards Handbook. Revised criteria for new international partnerships were developed and adopted by LPAG in 2008. Partnerships should help Oxford Brookes to achieve its academic objectives, be commercially viable, and demonstrate alignment with the University's values and international strategy. Proposals should be accompanied by a risk assessment and the development of an exit strategy.

22   Once a potential partner is identified, discussions take place at school level and with central units. The school drafts a collaborative programme registration form, which requires the making of due diligence enquiries about the proposed partner and its operating environment, and a draft letter of intention to collaborate. Approval is given by the Chair of LPAG. After the letter of intention is sent to the partner, the proposal is formally registered on Oxford Brookes' systems and a project development group (PDG) is established. The PDG involves academic and professional staff from Oxford Brookes and the partner, and is charged with developing a business plan, legal agreement and operations manual for approval by LPAG. There is no external input to this process, although employers may be involved if appropriate, such as for Foundation Degree developments.

23   The audit team saw documents illustrating how some of the procedures described were used by Oxford Brookes in extending the partnership with IIMT to a second campus in a different state. The processes used to approve the Raichak Campus did not include a full risk assessment of the proposed expansion because the approval pertained to an existing partner. As a result, the negative influence of factors, relating to location and governance that led ultimately to the

decision to terminate the Raichak part of the partnership, was not fully identified and dealt with during approval. The team concluded that while the processes of selection and approval of new partners appeared to be sound, the University should exercise greater caution in approval extensions to existing partnerships.

Programme approval

24   Programme approval for collaborative provision follows similar procedures to approval of on-campus provision. The process is managed by APQU. Approval is given at an approval event which, for new provision, normally takes place at the partner's location, but may occur at Oxford Brookes for extensions to existing provision. Approval involves visiting the partner except where a programme is delivered wholly by University staff. Earlier, pre-approval, visits may also take place to review resources and facilities.

25   The Briefing Paper stated that the Head of Quality Assurance and the PVC (External) approve the arrangements for the approval of new programmes. Proposals for new provision that involve limited new delivery may be dealt with using a more limited procedure and making use of written reports on resource issues. For example, in the case of approval of the new MSc International Business at IIMT, approval took place at Oxford Brookes and no visit was required.

26   The approval panel is chaired by Oxford Brookes' Head of Quality Assurance. Panel members are drawn from the host school and other schools and include a quality assurance officer and an expert external to the University. At the time when the initial provision at IIMT was approved only Oxford Brookes staff were on the respective panels. More recently, in the case of the new MSc approved in 2007, under revised procedures, there was external membership on the approval panel.

27   The panel is asked to confirm the appropriateness of the learning resources, programme specification, student handbook, staffing, operations manual and legal agreement. To assist panels in the assessment of the quality of learning environments in collaborative partners, APQU has produced a set of special guidelines. The programme teams from both partner and Oxford Brookes take part in discussion of the proposed programme with the panel.

28   Approval panels can set requirements and conditions for approval and also make recommendations for improvements that the team or school should consider. Programmes may not start, or, in the case of periodic review, continue recruiting until all conditions have been met: the chair of the PDG is responsible for ensuring this. Once conditions have been met formal certification occurs. This process involves checking of formal approval documentation and the completion of a collaboration partnership certification form for submission to AESC and reporting to LPAG. The audit team saw minutes of two recent approval panels held in relation to new programmes to be delivered at IIMT, and were able to confirm that thorough scrutiny of proposals had taken place and current procedures had been followed.

Amendments to programmes

29   Amendments to programmes can be made following procedures set out in the Quality and Standards Handbook. Changes originating from Oxford Brookes are commonly minor amendments to the on-campus version of modules delivered at IIMT. Changes proposed by IIMT, such as substitution of modules, will be considered first by the programme committee, the School's Quality Committee and finally APQU. IIMT submits copies of draft student handbooks to APQU on an annual basis for approval. At this point minor changes, instigated by either Oxford Brookes or IIMT, that have been approved by the University will be incorporated into the definitive documentation.

30   Although the provision at IIMT is franchised, there is no requirement for the programmes delivered there to be identical to those delivered in the UK. Staff at IIMT cannot modify the intended learning outcomes or patterns of assessment. However, they can introduce local and

contextual materials that ensure that the degree is relevant to Indian students. Oxford Brookes' approach to collaborative provision, particularly the use of a buddy system (which pairs University academic staff with IIMT academic staff - see also paragraph 62 below) and joint development of materials, results in the provision remaining closely aligned. The audit team noted that a constructive two-way dialogue took place between the different versions of the degree.

Termination of programmes

31   The problems affecting the provision at Raichak were noted in the periodic review of IIMT's programmes in 2007. The review panel conditionally re-approved the provision at Raichak. However, in the meantime IIMT facilitated the transfer of students to Gurgaon having recognised that the quality of provision at Raichak was unsatisfactory. Later in 2007 a paper was presented to Oxford Brookes' LPAG recommending closure of the Raichak Campus and the transfer of the last remaining students to Gurgaon. A detailed exit strategy overseen by Oxford Brookes has been put in place.

Written agreements with the partner organisation

32   Key elements of Oxford Brookes' framework for managing collaborative provision are formal legal agreements and an accompanying operations manual. Because of the legal requirements of educational operations in India, separate legal agreements have been signed by Oxford Brookes with collaborating organisations acting for IIMT at the Gurgaon and Raichak campuses. For Gurgaon the University has a formal legal agreement with the UMAK Educational Trust which embraces the partnership with IIMT and covers all programmes taught there. The agreement has an attached financial schedule and four appendices comprising the validation reports for the relevant programmes, the Operations Manual for all programmes, a Data Protection Summary and the University's Quality and Standards Handbook.

33   The Legal Agreement lays down the main responsibilities of each partner and sets out how the agreement should operate and how it may be brought to an end. The Operations Manual provides greater detail about the operation of the programmes and individual responsibilities. A legal agreement must be signed before programme delivery takes place.

34   Legal agreements normally cover a period of five years: renewal must be preceded by periodic review of the partnership and programmes. At the January 2007 periodic review a new draft of the Agreement was not available to the panel, but a revised version was signed shortly afterwards. The Operations Manual can be amended more frequently with mutual agreement of the parties involved as well as being the subject of broader review at the time of periodic review. The SLM is responsible for ensuring that the Operations Manual remains up-to-date. At the last periodic review the Manual was rewritten using Oxford Brookes' standard template to bring it in line with the manuals for other programmes.

35   The audit team noted a number of differences between the formal Legal Agreement and the Operations Manual, for example, in the definition of terms which could cause some confusion when the two documents are read together. The 2006 Collaborative provision audit advised Oxford Brookes to re-assess the effectiveness of operations manuals with a view to ensuring that they provide a comprehensive operational guide to the partnership. The University has taken steps to provide supplementary information on areas not fully covered by the Operations Manual. Staff from IIMT who met the team confirmed that the Operations Manual provided a useful framework within which to manage.

36   In 2004 an agreement was signed in West Bengal with the Gramin India Foundation and the GGL Hotel and Resort Company Ltd acting on behalf of IIMT for the establishment of the Raichak Campus. This agreement is rather more detailed than that signed for Gurgaon; in particular, it provides detailed procedures to be followed in the event of termination which have been helpful in the light of recent events.

Academic standards and the quality of programmes

Day-to-day management

37   The SLM is central to the operational management of the link. The role includes coordinating relations between Oxford Brookes and IIMT and ensuring compliance with the University's regulations and the provisions of the Operations Manual. The SLM is supported by the Business School's Collaborative Provision Support Team, and the role includes attending key meetings at IIMT. The SLM reports to the Associate Dean, Academic Operations. The SLM at the time of the audit visit covered provision at both Gurgaon and Raichak and played a key role in relation to disengagement from Raichak.

38   The collaborative provision audit recommended developing a coherent framework for the appointment and management of school liaison managers. This has been addressed by the production of a Guide for Liaison Managers. In addition, a Liaison Managers' Forum has been established which meets each semester to facilitate networking and sharing of good practice. Within the Business School the amalgamation of liaison roles within one post (see paragraph 19) is expected to lead to greater consistency of approach.

39   On the IIMT side the key figure in the partnership is the Academic Dean who is the Chair of the Programme Committee. He attends other key committees such as the Annual Review and the Examinations Committee and is responsible for ensuring that the partnership operates in line with Oxford Brookes' requirements. The Registrar at IIMT plays a key role with respect to registration of students, assessment, approval of teaching staff and of publications and marketing materials, all of which involve close working with the University. Roles and responsibilities are set out in the Operations Manual.

40   Oxford Brookes fosters links with IIMT at all levels. Visits have taken place between senior management on both sides. Academic staff visit each others' institution and work together remotely as buddies providing support in delivery, course development and assessment. A majority of IIMT teaching staff has visited Oxford Brookes at some time and staff who met the audit team indicated that communications between the two institutions were both extensive and effective.

41   IIMT is responsible for creating and maintaining full records for all students enrolled on Oxford Brookes' programmes. The University approves the systems used for processing and storing records in order to maintain compliance with UK legislation. The SLM is responsible for checking that records are being kept appropriately. The Examination Committee is also responsible for monitoring student records in the course of deciding student progress and award of degrees. Students at IIMT are entered onto a database of registered students by Oxford Brookes, which supports the production of Pass lists and transcripts, and also allows for the production of management information on collaborative provision.

42   As registered students, the students at IIMT do not have access to Oxford Brookes' learning resources or other support services. Student support provided by IIMT is required to be consistent with guidance provided by Oxford Brookes and is quality assured by the University. IIMT is required to have regard to UK concerns for equal opportunities and disabled access to education.

43   The SLM is responsible for monitoring the continuing adequacy of resources provided by IIMT. Staff from IIMT who met the audit team indicated that they had been given clear advice on the resources and support they were expected to provide. Students who met the team indicated that the learning resources available to them were satisfactory.

44   Students indicated that they considered the learning support available to them was satisfactory. Students do not have personal tutors but those that met the audit team commended the open-door policy of staff and the quality of feedback they received on their work. IIMT has a dedicated placement tutor and students receive careers advice from staff and through various modules on their programmes. Aspiring placement students are paired with returning placement

students to get advice. Students receive support from IIMT including a tutor visit while on placement. Students also stated that they appreciated the professionalism required of them which differentiated their courses from other local provision and helped to prepare them for the world of work.

45   IIMT is responsible for gathering student feedback and uses end-of-module questionnaires based on the system in use at Oxford Brookes. This feedback is analysed by the administration at IIMT and reviewed by the programme committee. Module feedback is made available to external examiners and is summarised in the annual review report.

46   There is a separate programme committee at IIMT for each Oxford Brookes degree - the BSc and the BBA - which meets twice per semester. The SLM may attend this committee but is not a member. The programme committee has at least one student representative member. Student representatives are elected annually by their fellow students. The programme committee is responsible for communicating actions taken in response to student feedback to the student representative(s) or the student body at large. Students who met the audit team gave examples of change brought about through student feedback such as improving the scheduling of modules.

47   The audit team considered that the day-to-day management of the partnership arrangements at IIMT was effective. Of particular note is the active role of the SLM and the visits by staff in both directions. The strong link between the staff at the two institutions built on regular communications and visits, and the buddy system (see paragraph 62) is identified as a positive feature of this partnership.

Arrangements for monitoring and review

48   The Briefing Paper stated that annual programme review is a core element of Oxford Brookes' quality assurance processes. Programme teams are responsible for the production of annual programme monitoring reports. For collaborative provision there is a special template. The draft report is prepared by the programme team and presented to an annual review meeting which IIMT is required to hold. The SLM is present at the annual meeting. In the year that periodic review takes place the programme team is permitted to write an abbreviated report.

49   The agreed annual programme review report, together with minutes of the annual meeting held at IIMT, are presented by the SLM in summary form to the relevant board of studies and then to the School's annual review meeting. The meeting identifies both issues and good practice. The reports from collaborative programmes are considered alongside the reports from parallel internal provision. Following the annual review meeting, the School compiles a summary of the reports considered for APQU which in turn collates an overview for AESC.

50   In the Business School the reports from programme teams in collaborative provision are also presented to an annual Collaborative Provision Forum chaired by the School's Head of Quality Assurance and Validation and involving school liaison managers, the link Quality Assurance Officer (QAO), and administrative staff involved in collaborative provision. The Forum discusses the reports and any actions arising are taken forward by the individual SLMs.

51   The School is required to complete a report for LPAG on each collaborative partnership as part of annual viability monitoring. The report looks at student numbers, financial profile, changes to assessed risks and key elements of the previous year's activity in order to check that the partnerships remain aligned with the School's business strategy. These reports are agreed by the Collaborative Provision Forum before they are sent to LPAG.

52   The audit team noted that the annual programme review for the courses franchised to IIMT and those provided on-campus were separate. While individually strong processes, they do not converge until the level of the board of studies and the School's annual review meeting, thus reducing the opportunity for comparisons to be made regarding student performance across the different versions of the degrees.

Periodic review

53   Periodic review involves the re-approval of programmes and, for collaborative provision, is timed to occur in the period prior to the end of a legal agreement. Oxford Brookes has a six-year cycle of review of internal provision. Legal agreements for collaborative provision are normally for five years, giving a shorter cycle. The timing of periodic review of provision, which is offered both on-campus and in partners, does not therefore coincide and forms a separate process. The periodic review of provision at IIMT took place in January 2007, some six and a half years after the partnership commenced; however, in the intervening period meetings had been held to approve new and redesigned programmes.

54   The periodic review process for collaborative provision is set out in detail in the Quality and Standards Handbook. It is similar to the process for periodic review of internal provision except that the partnership is also reviewed. Collaborative periodic review is a two stage process. The first stage involves LPAG reviewing the operations manual, legal agreement and the business case relating to the provision. The second stage involves consideration of the currency and viability of programmes, academic standards, the match with Oxford Brookes' strategy and processes for maintaining and enhancing quality.

55   The review is undertaken by a panel nominated by the school and approved by the relevant QAO. The Chair is the Head of Quality Assurance and the other members are the school's QAO, two internal members - one from the host school, in this case the Business School, and one from another part of Oxford Brookes - and an external expert. The panel meets at the partner institution. The 2007 periodic review at IIMT was a three-day event involving meetings at two different campuses. The panel had access to a wide document base and held meetings with staff and students from the programme as well as touring the facilities.

56   Periodic review panels produce reports that identify innovation and good practice and may set conditions that must be met before recruitment can continue; they also make recommendations for improvements. The audit team scrutinised the 2007 periodic review report and noted that it also details minor amendments approved during the course of the event.

57   Periodic review reports are sent to AESC for consideration. AESC receives an annual summary of issues and instances of good practice emerging from periodic review reports across Oxford Brookes. Periodic review reports are also sent to the relevant board of studies for discussion.

58   The audit team concluded that Oxford Brookes had a thorough and effective periodic review process in place relating to its collaborative provision. However, the conflation of partnership and programme review results in a lack of alignment between the review of collaborative and on-campus versions of the same degree.

Staffing and staff development

59   The Briefing Paper stated that the records of IIMT teaching staff are maintained by the SLM assisted by the Business School's Collaborative Provision Support Team. The Operations Manual obliges IIMT to keep Oxford Brookes informed of staff teaching on its programmes and to provide the SLM with the curricula vitae of all new staff. The Briefing Paper stated that staff turnover at IIMT is low.

60   The recruitment and appointment of teaching staff at IIMT is a local responsibility in line with Oxford Brookes' approach to delegation in this area. New staff are expected to meet standards of experience and qualifications set by the University. Oxford Brookes does not supply formal written criteria for staff appointments, but has provided IIMT with advice. The University is consulted on the appropriateness of all new appointments. In meetings with IIMT, the audit team was made aware of instances where proposed appointments had been turned down, thus reflecting the rigour of the system.

61   Oxford Brookes has the ability to confer affiliate status on staff in collaborative provision. Three senior IIMT staff currently hold this status, giving them access to University databases.

62   Staff induction is provided by IIMT. Oxford Brookes provides relevant documents and contact details. Induction is supported by team teaching and shadowing. A buddy system has been established which pairs University module leaders with staff teaching on parallel modules at IIMT. The University sees this system as an important means of fostering parity of standards between IIMT and Oxford Brookes and providing a means of oversight of these standards. Guidance notes to this effect are available for staff who act as buddies. Staff at IIMT saw the buddy system as a particularly valuable structure supporting the development and delivery of each module and the maintenance of academic standards.

63   Email is the main means of communication between Oxford Brookes and IIMT. The SLM previously promoted email discussion between IIMT and the University each semester that took place on set dates. The wider availability of mobile technology has superseded this. The audit team heard that frequent communication between opposite numbers in the two partners takes place.

64   The Briefing Paper described staff development at IIMT as one of joint responsibility. IIMT is responsible for staff appraisal and individual staff development but the University is responsible for providing advice to IIMT on training and development.

65   Workshops are organised for IIMT staff, some facilitated by Oxford Brookes' staff. In 2006, a one-year programme based on the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching Higher Education was offered to IIMT staff. This included peer observation by both IIMT and University staff. The majority of IIMT teaching staff were involved in this programme.

66   Frequent visits occur between staff of the two institutions. For example 10 visits were planned by Oxford Brookes staff in the year 2008. IIMT staff visiting the University have been given the opportunity to participate in teaching. A member of staff from IIMT travels to the University each semester for staff development meetings. There are also contacts between professional staff at IIMT and their opposite numbers at Oxford Brookes, and professional development events, for example on the use of the University's virtual learning environment.

67   The audit team concluded that Oxford Brookes has a satisfactory system in place for oversight of the staffing of its partner institution and has an effective approach to staff development. The University's investment of time and resource in developing and sustaining the link, particularly through intensive staff development is identified as a positive feature of this partnership. This has provided a basis for the successful transference of the Oxford Brookes' learning and teaching approach to IIMT, a further positive feature identified in this partnership which has given students highly valued international programmes that they consider to be differentiated from other provision within the local market.

Student admissions

68   The entry requirements for programmes at IIMT are described in the programme specification for each qualification. For admission to the undergraduate programme students may be admitted on the basis of school leaving qualifications or their equivalent. Admission with credit via either the accreditation of prior learning (APL) is permitted. Those admitted with credit do not have to meet the requirement for school leaving qualifications. Credit rating is undertaken by Oxford Brookes, in the case of APL, with the involvement of IIMT. In addition, candidates must pass an Oxford Brookes English language test administered by IIMT, or provide a suitable International English Language Testing System score, and be interviewed.

69   The admissions criteria appearing on IIMT's website are broadly similar but the audit team noted some important differences from the programme specification. For example, the website does not mention admission with credit. The BSc Hotel Management requires an average of 50 per cent in the year twelve school examinations in the programme specification: on the website

it states that 50 per cent in the best of four subjects is required. Discrepancies also exist between these documents and the Operations Manual that does not mention APL and also stipulates a mathematics requirement. Oxford Brookes will wish to check these documents and eliminate any discrepancies between versions of the admissions criteria for programmes which appear in different documents.

70   IIMT is required to verify the authenticity of entry qualifications. The admissions process is rigorous involving both an entrance test and a panel interview. The SLM both participates in admissions and reviews and checks admissions documents during visits. Oxford Brookes retains the right to refuse admission to candidates who are deemed not to have met the entry requirements.

71   The Operations Manual requires IIMT to take account of equal opportunities and make admissions decisions only on the basis of appropriate academic criteria, except where necessary to consider occupational health issues or the policies and requirements of professional bodies. Students who met the audit team confirmed that the admissions process was as stated in the partner's literature and commented that the interview had provided them with the opportunity to raise questions and clarify matters with IIMT staff.

72   The audit team was able to confirm that the applications and admissions processes in place at IIMT are effective and are overseen effectively by Oxford Brookes. The selection of students is thorough and transparent and contributes to the maintenance of academic standards.

Assessment requirements

73   The programmes at IIMT are franchised and therefore follow the approved assessment strategy for the internal programmes of the same title. Variations are permitted for the assessment of individual modules and are approved as minor amendments. Details of assessment are given in the programme specification and student handbooks. The periodic review in 2007 noted that there was a good balance of assessment on the programmes at IIMT. New approaches to assessment have been explored by IIMT, including the use of peer assessment within group work.

74   Oxford Brookes delegates the drafting of assessments and marking schemes, the operation of the assessment process, and the first-marking and moderation of students' work to IIMT. Coursework and examinations are set by the relevant IIMT module leader and then moderated first by senior IIMT staff and second by an appropriate University buddy. The buddy's comments are sent to the SLM for review and the production of a summary report. The summary and moderation reports, together with the draft assessment, are sent to an external examiner for comment which feeds into the production of the final paper or assignment.

75   The Registrar of IIMT is responsible for ensuring that assessment is conducted in accordance with Oxford Brookes' regulations. External examiners have made positive comments about the conduct of assessment. IIMT has a separate assessment office where all papers are stored securely.

76   The Briefing Paper stated that all coursework and examinations are double-marked by IIMT staff. A sample of scripts is selected and sent together with student lists, assessment materials and comments from internal examiners to Oxford Brookes for review and comment by buddies. The SLM provides feedback to IIMT on the comments made by University moderators and deals with any major differences in marking, if necessary using a third assessor. The SLM prepares a moderation report which is sent to IIMT and to the external examiner, together with mark sheets, prior to the Examination Committee. The moderation report reviews the outcome of assessment across modules and identifies areas where student performance is particularly good or poor. At IIMT the external examiner sees all scripts at the Examination Committee. External examiners meet with IIMT lecturers on a one-to-one basis to discuss student performance at the time of the examination board.

77   The need for moderation to be completed by Oxford Brookes inevitably delays the distribution of confirmed marks, but students are able to receive feedback on coursework after internal marking has been completed. Students who met the audit team were satisfied with the feedback that they received.

78   The Examination Committee follows the University's procedures for assessment boards. It is held annually at IIMT in July, with an additional Committee in January if necessary. The Committee is chaired by the SLM on behalf of the Dean. The composition of the Committee, terms of reference and operational policies are specified in the Operations Manual. At least one external examiner must be present for awards to be made. Oxford Brookes provides detailed guidance on the planning and conduct of the Examination Committee.

79   IIMT operates Oxford Brookes' policies on academic misconduct. Students are well briefed on the nature of plagiarism and how to avoid it but, nonetheless, there was a high level of incidents and subsequent panels reported in 2007-08. The matter was identified in the annual review. Staff and students who met the audit team were aware of the continuing need to develop student awareness of the accepted academic conventions required to avoid plagiarism.

80   The audit team concluded that the assessment processes in place were sound and contributed effectively to the maintenance of academic standards. Oxford Brookes has strong oversight of the processes employed and is involved directly in the moderation of assessment at all stages. IIMT has good and secure arrangements for assessment. The University's strong oversight of the assessment process and academic standards is identified as a positive feature in this partnership.

External examining

81   The audit team confirmed the University's view as, stated in the Briefing Paper, that 'external examiners play an important role in institutional quality assurance and enhancement processes'. External examiners must attend all progression boards and sign award lists. They are also expected to monitor assessment processes and consider overall academic standards.

82   The same external examiners may be appointed for collaborative and on-campus provision but it is not a requirement for this to happen. Two external examiners are involved with the provision at IIMT. They do not cover on-campus provision of the same degrees. The audit team formed the view that the allocation of different externals for the collaborative and the on-campus versions of degrees reduces Oxford Brookes' capacity to draw comparisons between them. External examining arrangements are confirmed at programme approval stage. Nominations are made by the University school involved in the link; considered by a quality assurance officer within the Academic Policy and Quality Unit; and a recommendation for appointment made to the Academic Enhancement and Standards Committee. Unless there are unusual factors, such as teaching in a language other than English, there are no additional criteria employed in appointing external examiners to collaborative provision.

83   Newly appointed external examiners are briefed by the school involved in the partnership and receive general information from Oxford Brookes about their role and procedures.

84   External examiners complete a general report on the programmes to which they have been appointed. There is no prescribed format but external examiners are asked to comment on quality and standards issues in enough detail for those responsible for the programme and its oversight to be able to take appropriate action where necessary. Examples of reports seen by the audit team confirmed that reports are detailed and specific. However, the lack of required structure makes it difficult to compare aspects of provision between different programmes or over time. Externals do not always comment on all key aspects of the programmes they examine.

85   Reports from external examiners are received by Oxford Brookes and then sent to schools, partner institutions and the appropriate quality assurance officer for consideration. The Dean is responsible for ensuring that a formal response to matters raised is sent to the external examiner. External examiners' reports feed into annual review and periodic review and into summary reports provided to the Academic Enhancement and Standards Committee.

86   External examiners for IIMT see all scripts. They are required to visit IIMT at least once a year, normally at the time of the Examination Committee. External examiners are also consulted more broadly about the provision: for example, the external examiner for the BBA Business Studies was consulted on the structure and content of the new BBA Retail Management degree.

87   Oxford Brookes stated that it assures the consistency of external examining between the University and IIMT through the provision of standard information to the external examiner, the chairing of the examination board by a member of University staff and visits to IIMT by the external examiner. The audit team found that the University has a satisfactory and effective system of external examining which oversees the assessment of students at IIMT. The system has a number of strong features, including the visits to IIMT by external examiners; discussions with individual lecturers; 100 per cent moderation and the broader advisory role played by externals. However, the team also concluded that the allocation of the same external examiners to the collaborative and the on-campus versions of the same degrees could improve the University's capacity to draw comparisons between them.

Certificates and transcripts

88   The audit team was provided with examples of a degree certificate and an accompanying transcript. Oxford Brookes has agreed not to include IIMT's name on the certificate on the grounds that the partner's non-accredited status could prejudice graduates' employment prospects. Certificates indicate that the details of the partner institution can be found on the student's transcript.

89   The transcript indicates the name of the collaborative partner, in this case IIMT, the country in which it is located, India, and the language of assessment, in this case English. The transcript also indicates clearly any credits transferred in to the degree as well as any exemptions granted on the basis of APL. The transcript provides detailed information about student achievement and guidance on interpreting grades and degree classifications.

90   Certificates are produced in Oxford upon receipt of a signed Pass list and minutes of the relevant Examination Committee. Certificates are sent to India for distribution to students. IIMT is required to send certificates to students using secure methods and must send Oxford Brookes a record of how each certificate has been dispatched. Transcripts are prepared by IIMT and verified by the University, embossed with the University's seal and signed by the School Liaison Manager. Oxford Brookes keeps a copy of all transcripts as part of the Student Record.

Information

Student information

91   IIMT's website provides information about the nature of its programmes and admissions and applications processes (see paragraph 69). IIMT also produces printed course brochures. The audit team found the information to be generally accurate and useful to potential students. Students who met the team stated that they had received ample information prior to application and including the opportunity to tour the campus.

92   New students have an induction programme provided by IIMT. For undergraduates this is usually two to three days; for postgraduates there is a longer two-week induction. Oxford Brookes does not participate in student induction but students meet University staff on visits.

93   Students are issued with a handbook at the beginning of their programme. Handbooks contain programme and module information as well as general information about studying and student support. IIMT prepares the handbooks but submits them to APQU for checking before distribution. The handbooks contain a brief note of welcome from Oxford Brookes, a description of the partnership arrangement and details of how to contact the SLM. Students also receive a module handbook for each module which is a customised version of the handbook prepared by the University. Students indicated that they found these handbooks very useful.

94   The Operations Manual states that each programme handbook must include a statement on how students may access IIMT regulations regarding appeals, complaints and student discipline. The handbooks seen by the audit team included this information. Appeals against a decision of the examination committee are heard by a panel approved by the Academic Board. The grounds for appeal are clearly stated. At the end of the process the appellant has further recourse to Oxford Brookes if dissatisfied with the process. The SLM is responsible for monitoring appeals and complaints and liaising with staff at Oxford Brookes as necessary in relation to them.

95   The SLM plays a key role in maintaining communications between IIMT and Oxford Brookes and makes regular visits to India to meet with both staff and students. There is no formal requirement for the SLM to meet independently with students, but will have frequent contact with students during the course of visits. Students on placement in the UK have the opportunity to visit the University (see paragraph 97) and the Briefing Paper noted that a new initiative has been undertaken to promote contact between the University and IIMT alumni.

Publicity and marketing

96   IIMT is responsible for advertising and marketing the collaborative provision delivered at its campus. The Operations Manual requires IIMT to send all proposed promotional material to the SLM for approval prior to publication. The Legal Agreement covers usage of each partner's name, logo or images in any publicity. Oxford Brookes' Creative Services department is consulted on matters of design. On the basis of views expressed by staff at both institutions the audit team concluded that Oxford Brookes has generally effective systems in place for checking the accuracy of publicity and marketing materials issued by IIMT.

Student progression to the UK

97   There is no formal progression to the UK as part of the programmes offered at IIMT. However, IIMT and Oxford Brookes have agreed a transfer arrangement by which individual undergraduate students can take the final year of their degree in Oxford. Very few students have taken up this option. The University also offers a 10 per cent discount of fees for master's programmes to IIMT graduates who have achieved at least a Second class degree on their programme. The numbers progressing to the UK are very small. Many students undertake placements in the UK where they remain students of IIMT but are invited to Oxford Brookes during their placement for a familiarisation event. Students expressed their appreciation of the international exposure afforded by the opportunity to undertake placements overseas.

Conclusion

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

● the strong link between the staff at the two institutions built on regular communications, visits, and the buddy system (paragraphs 30, 47, 62)

● the investment of time and resource by Oxford Brookes in developing and sustaining the link, particularly through intensive staff development (paragraphs 47, 67)

● the successful transference of the Oxford Brookes' learning and teaching approach to IIMT (paragraphs 67, 80)

● the strong oversight by Oxford Brookes of the assessment process and academic standards (paragraphs 45, 72, 80).

99   The audit team also identified the following points for consideration by Oxford Brookes as it develops its partnership arrangements:

● increasing its capacity to compare the performance of on-campus and collaborative versions of the same degrees, through the alignment of annual and periodic review cycles and the allocation of external examiners (paragraphs 52, 58, 82)

● eliminating discrepancies between versions of the admissions criteria for programmes which appear in different documents (paragraph 69).

100   The audit team considered that Oxford Brookes was operating the partnership with an appropriate regard for the advice contained in the *Code of practice*. Where the team found aspects of the University's practice that could be improved in the context of the *Code of practice* these are identified in the main report and the points for further consideration.

101   The audit confirmed Oxford Brookes' view of the link as set out in the Briefing Paper. In particular the audit team noted the University's view that this link is typical of its overseas collaborative partnerships. The team found that the link between Oxford Brookes and IIMT was established on the basis of clear understandings of the responsibilities and obligations of each institution and was structured in ways that supported each to achieve its particular goals through the partnership. The University deploys an effective set of processes in the approval, management and review of the partnership and its associated courses which safeguard both academic standards and the quality of provision. It therefore provides evidence to support a conclusion of confidence in Oxford Brookes' stewardship of academic standards and oversight of the quality of the student experience in its overseas collaborative provision.

Appendix A

Oxford Brookes University's response to QAA's report on its collaboration with the Institute for International Management and Technology, India

The University welcomes the very positive report on the collaborative arrangements with the Institute for International Management and Technology (IIMT), India, and the number of positive features specifically identified by the audit team.

The University is also grateful for the points for consideration and will be working to address these issues in the coming months. Work has already begun in correcting the inconsistencies noted by the audit team between versions of the admissions criteria.

Since the audit team visited Oxford Brookes University, the new liaison management structure, as discussed with the audit team, has come into effect with two members of Oxford Brookes Business School staff working in the liaison manager role across the School's international collaborative partnerships, with the aim of providing greater consistency and sharing of good practice between partnerships. IIMT will continue to have a consistent level of liaison and interaction with University, and administrative and buddying links between IIMT and the University remain unchanged.

Appendix B

Student enrolments as at May 2009

BSc (Hons) Hotel and Restaurant Management

Cohort	Students
2005	69
2006	74
2007	71
2008	29

BBA (Hons) Business Administration

Cohort	Students
2005	15
2006	31
2007	20
2008	22

BBA (Hons) Retail Management

Cohort	Students
2007 (first recruitment)	8
2008	-

MSc International Business

Cohort	Students
2008 (first recruitment)	8

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