



QAA



UK higher education in China:
an overview of the quality assurance arrangements



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ISBN 1 84482 625 2

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Printed copies are available from:

Linney Direct

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Registered charity number 1062746

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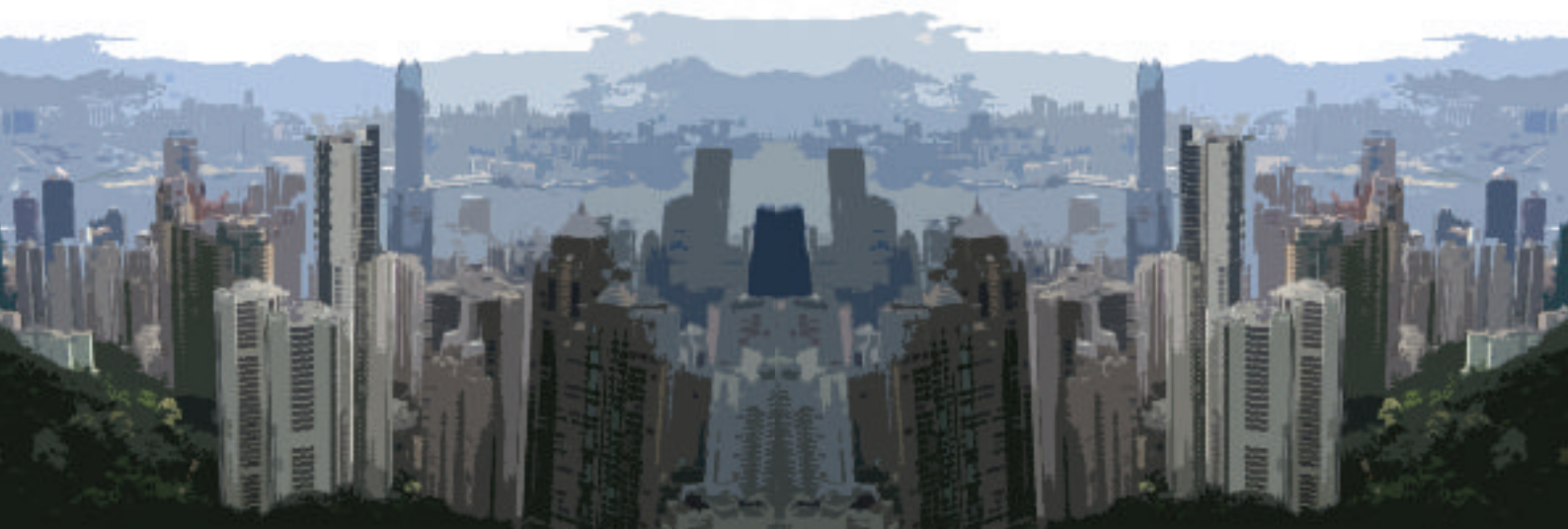
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Executive summary

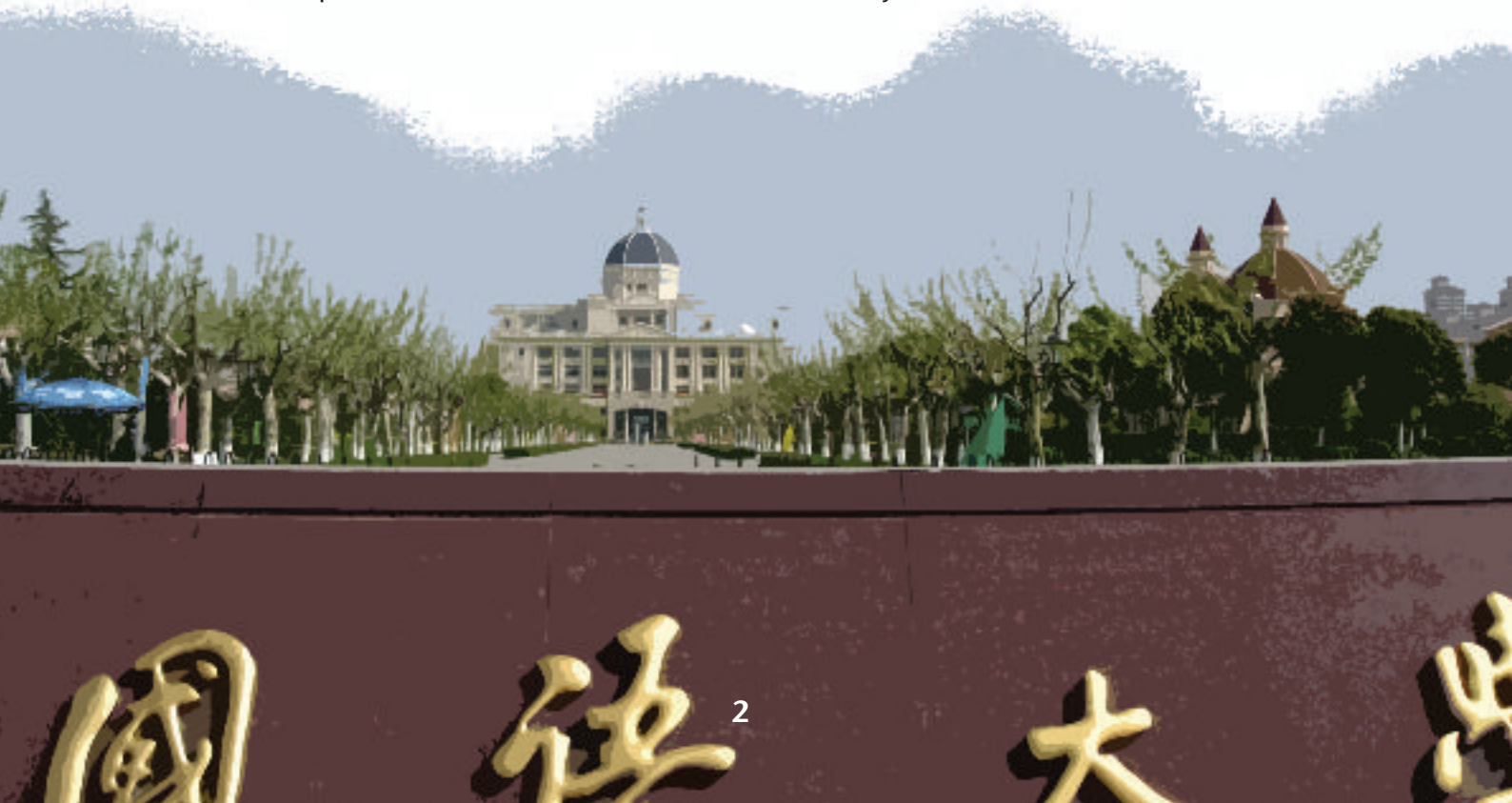
This report provides an account of the scope and nature of United Kingdom (UK) higher education awards delivered in the People's Republic of China (hereafter referred to as China), and an overview of UK institutions' management of the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities associated with those awards. It is based upon the findings of a survey of UK institutions' activity in China, the published reports resulting from audits of 10 individual links (see www.qaa.ac.uk), and desk-based analysis of information received on 30 further links.

The main findings are that:

- nearly half (82) of all UK higher education institutions reported that they are involved in some way in providing higher education opportunities in China
- there is great variety in the type of link used to deliver UK awards in China, the subjects studied and the nature of the awards
- in 2005-06 there were nearly 11,000 Chinese students studying in China for a UK higher education award, 3,000 of whom were on programmes that would involve them completing their studies in the UK
- institutions' individual arrangements for managing the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities are generally comparable with programmes in the UK and reflect the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, published by QAA. In particular,
 - great care is taken in selecting partners, and written agreements generally set out the rights and responsibilities of each partner
 - programme leaders who have day-to-day responsibility for the management of the academic standards and quality of programmes appointed by the UK partner demonstrate great commitment and expertise
 - there are effective mechanisms for communication between partners, normally through electronic media
 - programme approval processes are at least fit for purpose and often more rigorous than for domestic programmes
 - institutions have adequate processes in place to ensure academic standards are maintained, including enhanced approaches to ensuring the English language capability of applicants. Where the language of assessment is not English, extra safeguards are in place
 - external examiners attest that the levels of achievement set for and achieved by students studying in China for a UK award are consistent with programmes in the UK
 - institutions take considerable steps to ensure that the experience of Chinese students studying for a UK award in China is comparable to students studying for a similar award in the UK. These include gathering and utilising student feedback, the use of UK pedagogic practices and the provision of learning resources
 - considerable effort is expended to ensure that students on programmes in China that articulate with programmes in the UK undergo a managed transition to life and study in the UK.

A number of areas for improvement were identified in the management of some of these links. However, each is only relevant to a small number of links and in no case do they suggest that an institution was putting at risk the academic standards or the quality of learning opportunities available to students. Particular areas for improvement include:

- some UK institutions may be exposing themselves to increased risk because UK programme leaders responsible for managing a programme delivered in China receive insufficient specialist training or central support
- in the past, institutions have not always undertaken sufficient formal and comprehensive due diligence enquiries prior to approving a Chinese institution as an appropriate partner
- written agreements that are intended to define the rights and responsibilities of the Chinese and UK partners occasionally retain some ambiguity, including specifying responsibility, in the event of termination of a programme, for registered students, and which system of law applies in the event of dispute
- given the increased risk associated with the delivery of transnational awards in general, the programme approval process conducted by the UK partners could, in some instances, be more rigorous
- the UK partner could, to the benefit of the partnership, achieve greater input into programme monitoring and review processes from Chinese staff
- the English language competence of some students has been identified as an area for improvement in some programmes delivered and assessed in English
- UK institutions could do more to involve Chinese subject staff in responding to external examiners' reports
- institutional procedures for approving the appointment of Chinese subject staff are not always rigorously followed
- information provided to some students was not sufficiently detailed or clear.



Introduction

In the UK, each provider of higher education is responsible for ensuring that appropriate standards are being achieved and the quality of education being offered enables students to achieve the standards set. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) mission is 'to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education'. QAA undertakes a range of activities in fulfilment of its mission, including reviewing standards and quality, and providing reference points that help to define clear and explicit standards. Peer reviewers carry out and publish reviews against these standards. Since 1998, part of the work of QAA has included auditing a sample of UK institutions' arrangements for the management of academic standards and quality of awards delivered in a particular country or region. Since 2005, these audits have taken particular note of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*.

In a recent statement, the UK Higher Education Minister noted that 'Education is at the heart of the UK's developing relationship with China. We have made great progress in strengthening our educational links, and links between UK and Chinese universities are thriving'. In recognition of this and in line with the UK government's international strategy for education (2005), QAA decided that the 2006 audit of overseas partnership links should focus on China (see Appendix 1 for the list of institutions). The main purpose of the audits was to provide reassurance to stakeholders about the academic standards and quality of UK awards offered in China. Hong Kong was not included in this audit and will be the focus of a separate audit in 2007 (for more information on the work of QAA see www.qaa.ac.uk).

In the summer of 2005, QAA surveyed all UK institutions to provide information about their proposed and established links in China: 82 of the institutions had partnership links. Given the number of links involved and the rapid development of activity, QAA decided that it would be beneficial to a range of stakeholders to simultaneously undertake a larger survey of UK higher education awards delivered in China, which would follow on from QAA's *UK collaborative links with China: Report of a scoping exercise, 1999-2000*.

The findings contained in Part A of this report are based upon the responses from these institutions. In addition to the 10 links that were audited, 30 other institutions were invited to submit details of their arrangements for the management of the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities for inclusion; this survey informs Part B of this report.

Part A of this report provides an outline of the environment in which UK higher education institutions are delivering UK awards in China and the nature of those awards. Part B provides an overview of UK institutions' arrangements for the quality assurance of the transnational programmes.





Part A

Context of the audit



Higher education in China

1 Education is seen as a key tool in helping to achieve and sustain economic success for China. In the words of Deng Xiaoping, 'Education must meet the need of the modernization drive, the world and the future'. The Chinese higher education system is the largest in the world and, like many other aspects of China, is characterised by a diverse range of both students and institutions. Over the past two decades, economic development in China has stimulated reforms in the higher education system, which has undergone a period of rapid growth and change.

2 From 1949 China's higher education system was structured on the Soviet model with universities, colleges and specialist institutes controlled by central government, which also managed the student admission system. Since 1977, the higher education system has been restructured and the national entrance examination re-introduced. A decade later the government introduced further structural reforms, merging many specialist institutes to form more comprehensive institutions. Tuition fees were introduced for all university students in 1999.

Project 211 and Project 985

3 As part of the reform process the Chinese government has had a policy of giving priority funding to its top universities. Since the mid 1990s, two state programmes described as 'pivotal' in modernising and enhancing the quality of higher education have been introduced: Project 211 and Project 985.

4 Project 211 was established in 1995, and aims to create a number of first class Chinese universities and a number of key fields of study for the twenty-first century. Under this plan selected universities apply for priority funding. It is a project that deliberately concentrates large sums of money to provide high-calibre institutions and comprises three main components:

- a the improvement of overall institutional capacity
- b the development of key disciplinary areas
- c the building of a higher education public service framework.

The project is now in its second phase and currently involves 116 institutions.

5 Project 985 is intended to develop world-class universities and world-famous research universities. It was established to concentrate high-level funding on a much smaller number of top universities. It is seen as a major element of the national strategy to rejuvenate the country through science and education. This project is also now in its second phase and currently involves 38 institutions.

Higher education today

6 Higher education in China generally consists of four levels: post-secondary vocational education (at junior college level), undergraduate education, graduate education for a master's degree, and graduate education for a doctoral degree.

7 Both private and public institutions offer higher education. Private higher education providers comprise three groups: private colleges, independent colleges (which are linked to public universities), and colleges that provide tuition for students undertaking higher education self-study examinations. This last sector is a fast growing part of the Chinese higher education system.

8 Within the public sector there are also a number of types of higher education provider, including regular college education (colleges and universities, research institutes, junior colleges and independent colleges), adult higher education institutions, distance education and online education. In 2004 there were a total of 2,236 public institutions of higher education, with over 17.5 million students enrolled (see Table 1).

Table 1: Chinese public institutions and enrolled students in 2004

(Source: Zhou Ji, 2005)

Types of institution offering higher education (undergraduate and above)	Number of institutions	Student numbers (millions)
Colleges and universities	1,731	13.3
Adult colleges and universities	505	4.1

9 The number of students in Chinese tertiary education, both public and private, grew from 3.6 million to nearly 20 million between 1998 and 2004, and the participation rate rose from 9.8 to 19 per cent. Over 4 million students began undergraduate and postgraduate courses in China in 2003. It is intended that by 2010 the participation rate will be 23 per cent. One of the tasks of educational development in China's 11th Five Year Plan (2006-2011) is to improve the quality of higher education in China. Consequently, the government has announced that it intends to slow the rate at which higher education has been growing, from an estimated 23 million students in 2006 to 25-27 million by 2020.

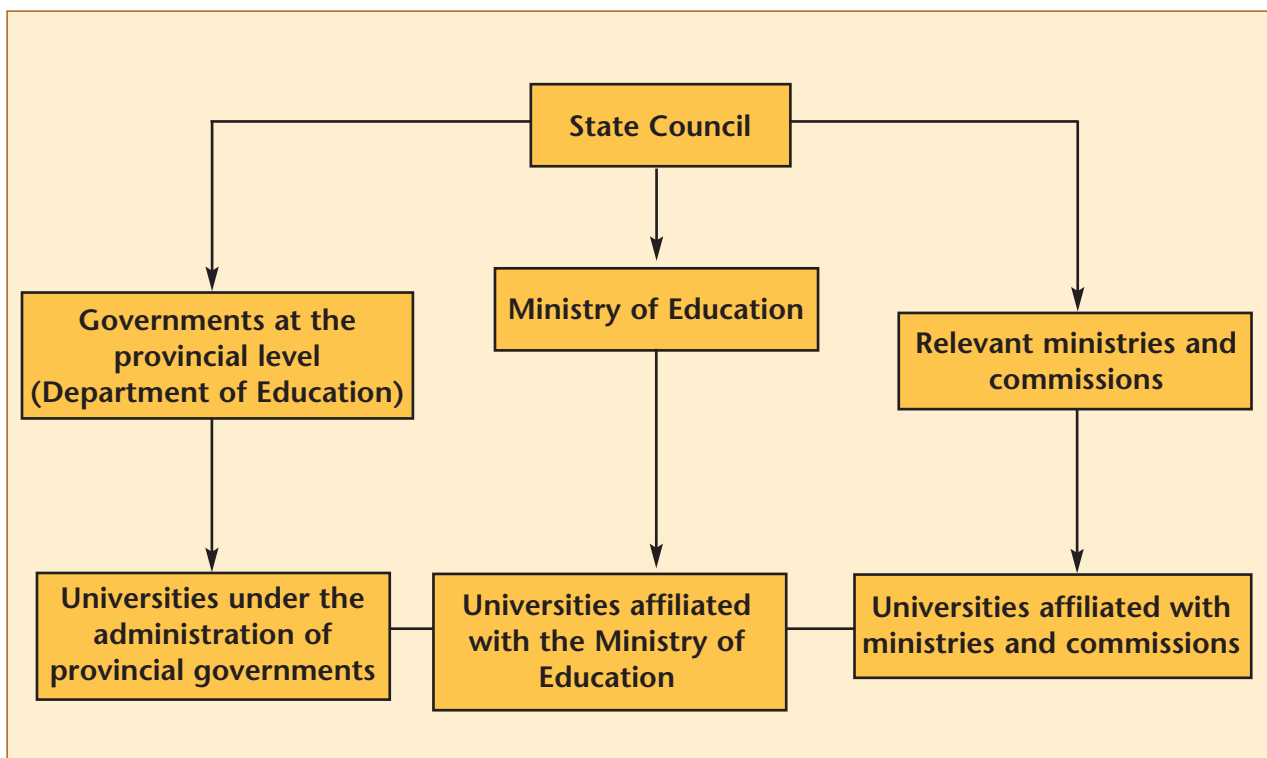
Administration of higher education

10 The administrative arrangements for higher education in China are set out in Figure 1. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is the State Council's executive body for education, including higher education. It is '...responsible for planning for national higher education development, establishment of new schools, relevant policies and regulations, evaluation of the quality of teaching and issues concerning teachers and students'.

11 The MoE formulates policy for devolved implementation at provincial and municipal levels. It retains direct responsibility for 72 national universities and for the evaluation of bachelor's and graduate education programmes. These institutions, according to the Minister for Higher Education, are 'mostly elite universities that enrol students from all over the country'.

Figure 1: Administrative arrangements for higher education in China

(Source: Zhou Ji, 2005)



12 A further 38 universities are affiliated to other national ministries and commissions. There are nearly 1,400 universities and colleges funded and administered by provincial and municipal governments, mainly catering to local development needs. These authorities also have responsibility for vocational education and training. The Minister of Education sums up the picture, stating that the functions of the administrative system 'are divided at the central and provincial levels, with the provincial government administration in the main'.

13 Higher education in China is governed by a number of laws. The overarching Education Law has been in effect since September 1995, and the current Higher Education Law came into force in 1998. It comprises eight chapters providing the legal framework for all aspects of higher education. Other important legislation includes the Law on the Promotion of Privately-Run Education and the Regulations on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools. The latter was enacted in September 2003, following China's accession to the World Trade Organisation, and applies to international partnerships delivering higher education and foreign qualifications within China.

Arrangements for quality assurance

14 In China, higher education evaluation was started up as a trial activity in 1985, and the first regulation on higher education evaluation was issued in 1990 as the Draft Regulation of Higher Education Institution Evaluation. In 2003, the MoE drafted an evaluation plan for tertiary colleges, which is implemented by each provincial education office; the MoE makes periodic checks on the implementation work. Recent developments in the evaluation of higher education include the establishment in 2004 of the Higher Education Evaluation Centre (HEEC) of the MoE. The main responsibility of HEEC is to organise and implement the evaluation of bachelor's degree programmes offered in institutions of higher education.

15 Responsibility for graduate education rests with the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council, and includes accrediting doctoral or master's degree-granting schools or faculties, as well as examining and evaluating the quality of graduate education. There are a number of non-governmental organisations affiliated with the MoE, including the China Education Association for International Exchange, the China Scholarship Council and the Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange. These organisations have a role in student mobility and international cooperation variously, through promoting and managing international exchange, providing information and services to universities, students and other interested parties, and managing scholarship schemes for government-funded students.

Internationalisation of higher education

16 The internationalisation of higher education is an important element of the modernisation of China's educational system. As a result, international cooperation and exchange, and especially student mobility, have been encouraged. It is estimated that between 1978 and 2004 over 800,000 Chinese students went abroad to study. Since 1998, the annual number of new students

studying abroad has risen from 11,000 to an estimated 120,000 in 2004 (Zhou Ji, 2005). In 2004-05, Universities UK estimated that some 52,000 Chinese students were studying in the UK for a higher education award, the majority of which were postgraduates.

17 As part of the modernisation of higher education over the last two decades, China has signed mutual recognition agreements with over 20 countries, including the UK, and has over 100 other types of bilateral agreement. It has also initiated a large number of joint ventures in the delivery of higher education programmes. The latter are a relatively recent initiative, and are defined by the 2003 *Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools*, with a recent addendum in the form of the *Opinions of the Ministry of Education on Some Issues concerning Current Sino-foreign Cooperative Education*. The regulations provide the framework requirements for in-country sino-foreign cooperation. They specify that partnerships must not have profit as their objective, that not less than half of the members of the governing body of the institution must be Chinese citizens, and that a resident Chinese citizen must hold the post of president. In addition, there are prescriptions about the level of tuition fees.

UK-China strategic cooperation in the field of higher education

18 UK institutions have been particularly active in establishing joint venture initiatives with Chinese partner institutions for the delivery of UK higher education awards in China. This has been facilitated by extensive high-level cooperation on education between the Chinese and UK governments. Since 2005, annual Ministerial-level Education Summits have been held, with joint statements strengthening cooperation in all areas of education. The Scottish Executive has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chinese MoE, which was signed in 2005. The Sino-UK Higher Education Collaboration Programme has existed since 1996 and covers strategic collaboration on higher education reform. The aim is to contribute to the development of higher education both in China and the UK by learning from one another's experience and strengthening links. The programme has been supported at the highest levels and the key sponsoring organisations are the MoE, the British Council in China and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). During the course of this programme, collaborative activities and projects have focused on the collaborative assessment of research and postgraduate education, mutual linking of academic networks (JANET and CERNET), President and Vice-Chancellor Forums, e-learning and mutual recognition of degrees and university leadership development.

UK-China education links

19 In response to the 2005 QAA scoping survey enquiring about the delivery of UK awards in China, 82 UK higher education institutions stated that they had or were intending to establish a link with a Chinese institution to deliver a UK higher education award (see Appendix 2). Institutions from all of the four countries of the UK have established links (see Table 2).

Table 2: Number of UK institutions declaring a collaborative link in China

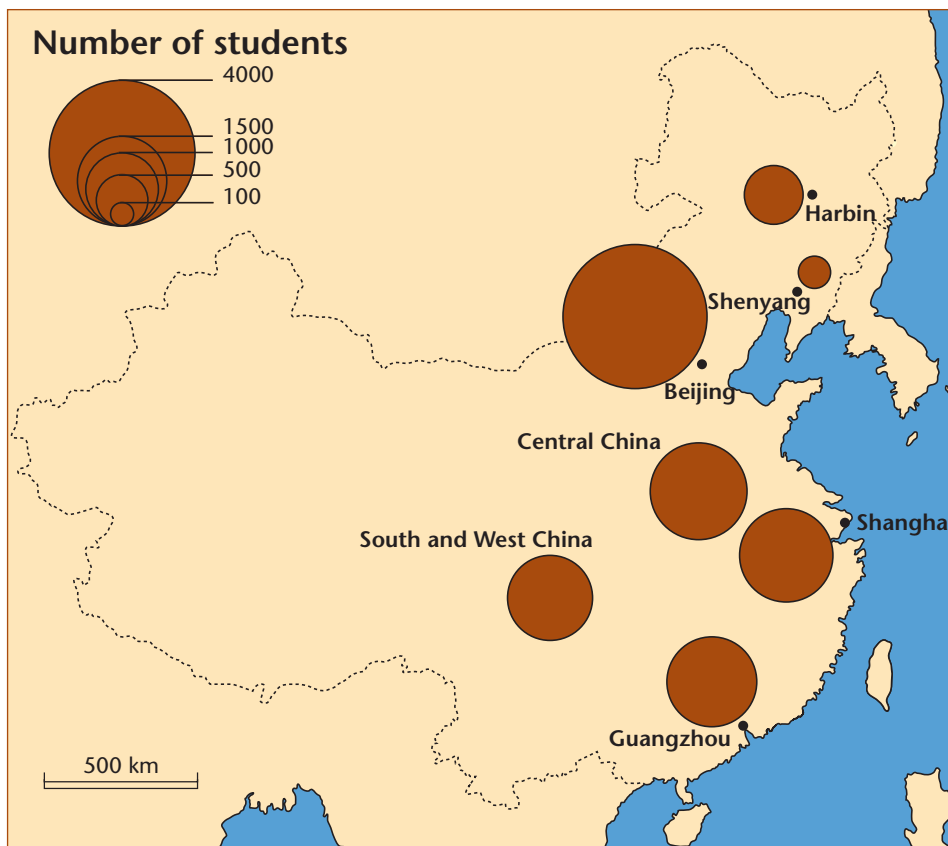
England	65
Northern Ireland	2
Scotland	10
Wales	5
UK total	82

20 UK higher education institutions provided QAA with information on 352 individual links with 223 Chinese higher education institutions and organisations. Most of the Chinese partners are clustered around the cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, although there are also considerable numbers of links with institutions in North-East, Central, and South and West China (see Figure 2). Student enrolments differ from this latter pattern in that a clear majority are studying for UK awards in or around Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou (see Figure 3). Most links reported were established in the last 10 years. For a variety of reasons not all of the links reported had started operation at the time of the survey.

Figure 2: Distribution of partnership links



Figure 3: Students enrolled on a UK award by region



- 21 The type of link that had been established or was in prospect varied. The most common are:
- a arrangements for granting advanced standing for admission to a UK institution, or other preferential admission arrangements for students with specific Chinese qualifications
 - b foundation programme of study undertaken in China prior to admission to a UK higher education programme
 - c arrangements at undergraduate level for students following a first year, or more commonly first and second year, programme at a Chinese institution and then progressing to, normally, two years' study at a UK institution. In a few cases, students graduate with qualifications from both institutions (2+2 or 2+1)
 - d arrangements at postgraduate level, whereby students normally follow a one-year programme in China followed by a one-year programme in the UK (1+1)
 - e delivery of UK higher education programmes in China, either by UK staff or by Chinese staff with support from the UK institution. These include undergraduate level certificates and diplomas and, at graduate level, master's and MBA programmes and examples of 'customised' programmes, for example, for managers of specific Chinese companies

- f UK higher education distance-learning programmes available in China, with support from local Chinese institutions
- g joint-venture UK campuses in China.

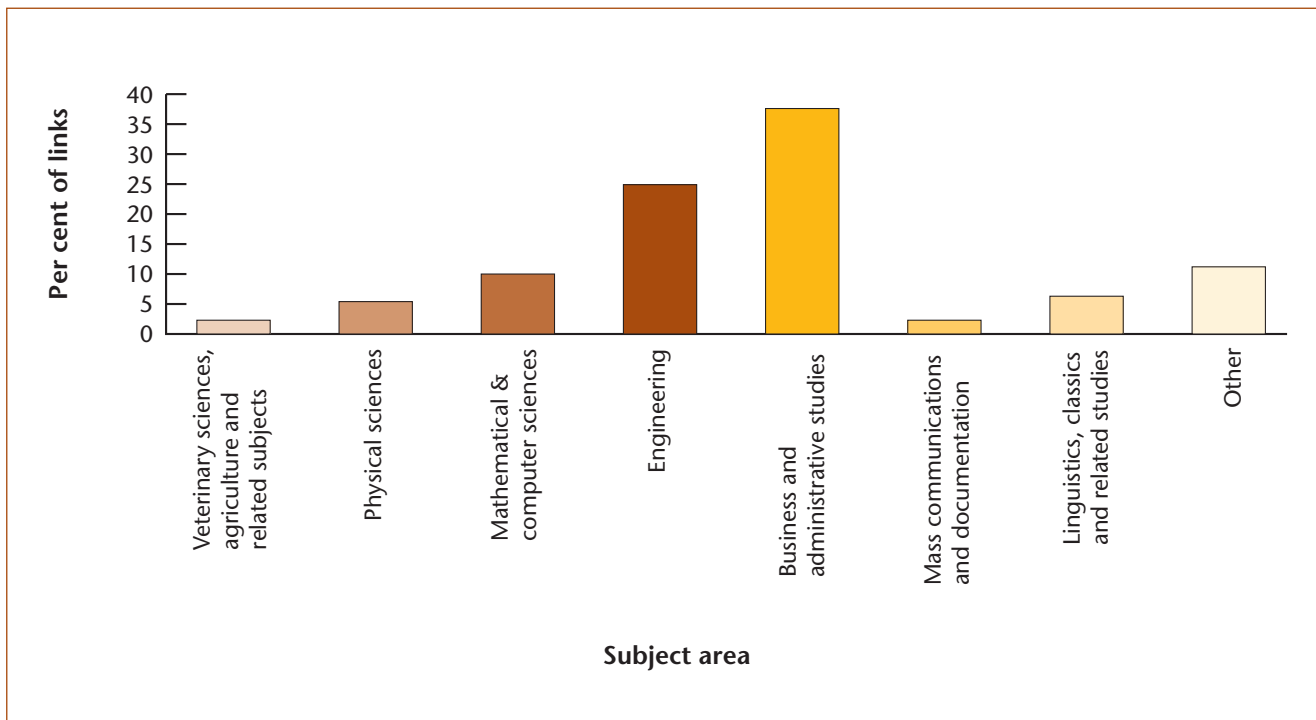
22 Over a third of the specified links are in the form of progression arrangements, with nearly 60 UK institutions having established such links (see Table 3). The largest concentration of students are studying on undergraduate programmes involving progression. There are also a number of franchising and validation arrangements, although these are small in number.

Table 3: Number of links by type

Type of link	Number of links	Number of UK institutions
Advanced standing arrangements for admission (a)	50	17
Foundation programme prior to admission (b)	22	7
Undergraduate progression (c)	140	41
Postgraduate progression (d)	28	17
Direct delivery of programmes in China (e)	20	16
Distance-learning programmes (f)	6	4
Joint-venture campuses (g)	2	2
Other specific arrangements	25	20
General collaborative agreements	55	26
China year abroad	4	2

23 There is a wide spread of subjects offered by UK institutions delivering awards in China. Based on the information received from institutions, the most common offerings are business and administrative studies, engineering, and mathematical and computer sciences, at 37.6, 24.9 and 10 per cent respectively (see Figure 4). Other subject areas offered include veterinary sciences, agriculture and related subjects; linguistics, classics and related studies; mass communications and documentation; and social studies.

Figure 4: Links by subject area



24 Responsibility for delivery depends largely on the type of link and varies from teaching undertaken entirely by UK subject staff on a 'fly-in fly-out' basis, to Chinese subject staff undertaking all the teaching. However, there is no dominant model and teaching is often shared by both UK and Chinese staff. English is usually the formal language of instruction, although there are a number of links which are delivered, at least in part, in Chinese, while some programmes are delivered by UK staff and translated into Chinese. There is some evidence to suggest that the use of Chinese is commonplace, especially in seminars or tutorials. Summative assessment, however, is almost always in English.

25 It is estimated from the survey that in 2005-06 approximately 11,000 students were studying in China for a UK award. Of these, 3,000 were on undergraduate or postgraduate articulations that would result in student progression to the UK to complete their studies.

The conduct of the audit

26 With the support of the British Council in China, senior QAA staff visited China in April 2005 to undertake discussions with central and municipal government bodies, including the MoE, the Academic Awards Committee of the State Council and the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, regarding the proposed audit visit. QAA is grateful for the high level of understanding and cooperation shown by all of these organisations, which enabled the visits to go ahead.

27 In the summer of 2005, QAA asked all UK higher education institutions to provide brief details of any links with Chinese institutions that led to a UK award. The returns were split into three groups: Group A links would be the focus of an audit of the management of the link (see Appendix 1), Group B links would be the focus of desk-based analysis and, finally, Group C links could provide further helpful background information to this report.

28 A number of criteria were used for selecting the 10 institutions to be audited in Group A, including representation from across the constituent parts of the UK, types of UK institution, subject areas and types of link. In addition, the links, together, were intended to reflect the diversity of Chinese partner institutions, and to be located within reasonable reach of the three cities where the audit teams would be based while in China: Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

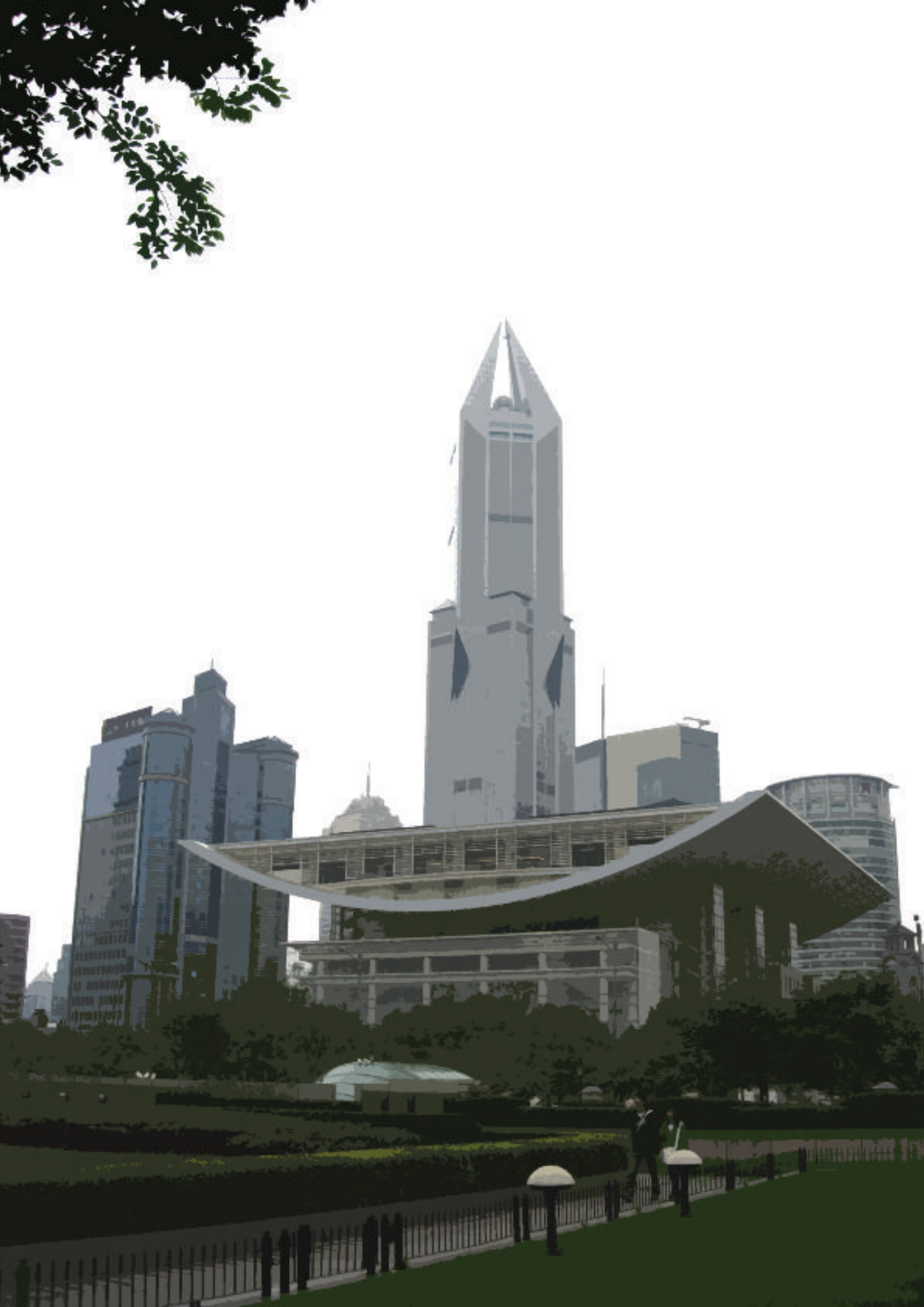
29 QAA's methodology for audits of overseas partnership links is based on a representative sample of UK links in a country or region. Due to the demand for information from its stakeholders, and from interested overseas bodies on UK institutions' activity in China, QAA sought further information in the form of commentaries from institutions on 30 other links (Group B). The main aim of gathering and analysing information from this wider sample was to provide as comprehensive an account as possible of UK institutions' management of their links with Chinese partners. The same criteria were used to select this larger sample as for the 10 links to be audited, excluding the geographical requirements in either China or the UK.

30 QAA appointed three audit teams to undertake the audits. Each audit team comprised a number of institutional auditors and an audit secretary (see Appendix 3). QAA has a number of auditors and audit secretaries who are senior members of staff from the higher education sector, and the teams were drawn from this group. The work of each team was coordinated by a QAA Assistant Director.

31 During February and March 2006, the audit teams visited the 10 Group A UK institutions and held meetings with both senior and operational staff involved in the management of the link. In a number of cases where students had progressed from China onto a programme delivered in the UK, the teams also met a group of these students. The purpose of the visits was for the team to focus on the UK institutions' arrangements for the management of the academic standards and quality of the programme(s) offered through the link, and the UK institution's evaluation of the effectiveness of the link.

32 During April and May 2006, the three audit teams visited China to undertake the audits of the 10 Chinese partner institutions. The teams met senior and subject staff involved in delivering the link. The teams also met current students and recent graduates of the programme. In each case, the team focused on the UK partner's arrangements for the management of the academic standards and quality of the awards, and whether the staff and students at the Chinese partner shared the UK institution's evaluation of the effectiveness of the arrangements.

33 As a result of the information given to the audit teams both in the UK and China, each team wrote reports summarising their findings, identifying features of good practice and making recommendations for further action. All these reports are published on QAA's website (www.qaa.ac.uk).





Part B

Management of academic standards and quality



Overview

34 This section draws on the reports from the 10 individual audits of overseas partnership links undertaken in 2006 and a desk-based analysis of information provided by 30 other UK institutions of their arrangements for the management of academic standards and quality of learning opportunities of UK awards delivered in China. Because the findings in this section are based on only a sample of the links between UK institutions and partners in China that have been established or are in prospect, it does not claim to be comprehensive or exhaustive. However, as it is based on a significant proportion of active links, it illustrates issues of more general significance to institutions.

35 The main conclusion of the survey is that UK institutions have put in place quality assurance arrangements for UK awards delivered in China to ensure the security of academic standards. Moreover, appropriate structures had been put in place to ensure that the learning opportunities available to students studying for UK awards in China were suitable to allow them to achieve those awards. The quality assurance arrangements take due regard of the various aspects of the UK's Academic Infrastructure, which comprises the *Code of practice, The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*, subject benchmark statements and programme specifications. However, there are areas in which individual institutions could improve the design or operation of their quality assurance arrangements, as indicated below.

36 In the interests of brevity, this report does not attempt to include all aspects of UK institutions' arrangements for quality assurance of awards delivered in China. Instead, it concentrates on key areas under 10 broad headings which reflect the main aspects of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, as well as those issues that were most commonly identified in the 10 published audit reports. In keeping with normal QAA practice, individual institutions have not been identified in this report. The aim is to provide the UK sector in general with a useful summary of good practice seen in the management of transnational awards.

Selecting a partner

37 The survey found that institutions generally take great care and time in selecting a partner institution. It found that existing informal contacts between individuals in potential partner institutions have often provided the impetus for the establishment of a collaborative link with a Chinese partner. This can be based on research collaboration or, for many links, alumni from a UK institution employed by the Chinese partner. Initial contact usually precedes relationship building by senior members of the prospective partners. The latter tends to take the form of the head of the UK institution and other senior staff visiting the partner. There were examples of this occurring at the time of signing an initial written agreement between the partners.

38 The next step in the development of a partnership is normally partner approval by the UK institution. The institutional procedures for partner approval are usually codified and reflect precept A9 of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, which states in part that a UK institution 'should undertake, with due diligence, an investigation to satisfy itself about the good standing of a prospective partner or agent, and of their capacity to fulfil their designated role in the arrangement'. Partner approval tends to focus on the compatibility of the two partners, particularly their educational objectives. It routinely involves a panel from the UK institution undertaking a visit to the prospective partner, which may occur in parallel with the programme approval process, and reporting back to the relevant internal committee. The panel is normally chaired by a senior member of the institution and includes representation external to both institutions. In most links seen as part of this survey, there is clear evidence of compatibility of educational objectives, sometimes labelled as 'mission-match'. For example, one link is based upon the partners being largely concerned with delivering vocational subjects and a demonstrated commitment to widening participation in higher education.

39 The section of the *Code of practice* for collaborative provision suggests that partner approval should be dependent upon the UK institution being satisfied on a number of aspects, including the financial situation and legal status of the Chinese partner, and approval by the relevant level of government in China. The detail and rigour of partner approval reports, seen as part of the survey along with consideration by the relevant committees of the UK institution, varied. In most links, comprehensive and rigorous reports were produced which included consideration of the partners' arrangements for assuring the quality of learning opportunities and the security of academic standards; the calibre of academic staff; and the provision of learning resources. Conditions or recommendations were addressed, often prior to final approval being given. However, there was evidence in some cases that only partial coverage by the approval panel of the issues specified in the institution's procedures for partner approval had been followed, particularly risk assessment of the partner, and there was little evidence that formal and comprehensive due diligence enquiries had been undertaken. Furthermore, the procedures for signing-off approval of the partner gave an unclear role to the main committee responsible for collaborative activity in some institutions.

40 Partner approval is usually granted for a fixed period of time and is subject to periodic review. Details of any partner re-approval process are usually contained in the written agreement defining the link. Most of the links considered as part of the survey were only established relatively recently, and thus had yet to be reviewed.

Written agreements

41 Most links are characterised by two types of agreement: the first outlines the intentions of the UK and Chinese institutions to collaborate (a memorandum of cooperation), while the second sets out the details of how a particular collaborative programme will operate (a memorandum of agreement). The *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning*

(including e-learning) suggests that partnerships will have the best chances of success if the agreements are in writing and legally binding, and clearly set out the rights and responsibilities of each partner, particularly on the management of academic standards and quality.

42 From the partnership details seen as part of this survey, legally binding written agreements setting out the rights and obligations of the parties are the norm for collaborative links between UK institutions and their Chinese partners. However, within the sample they tended to vary in the amount of detail they contained. Examples of written agreements which reflected precepts of the *Code of practice* were fashioned in accordance with the UK institution's regulations and distinguished between institutional-level relationships and those aspects particular to the programme(s). They specified the named award(s) that were the focus of the collaboration, copyright and intellectual property rights, the role of external examiners and made reference to the Academic Infrastructure. In addition, they identified termination and mediation provisions.

43 One written agreement seen covered not only the above matters but also had, as an appendix, the UK institution's Regulations Framework, which set out in detail the procedures operated by the institution for ensuring the academic standards of awards. Most written agreements set out with varying clarity the rights and obligations of the contracting parties. The matter that was often least clear was the allocation of responsibility for ensuring that students who were already enrolled could complete their studies in the event of termination of a collaboration. In audited links where this was the case, audit teams were reassured by the institution's previous experience in such matters, or other documented evidence that the UK partner would always make arrangements to ensure that enrolled students could complete their studies. However, a clear description of the processes to be adopted would provide further assurance to the students that their programmes are secure. Other matters not clearly stated in some written agreements seen included the amount of the programme to be delivered in English and which legal system would be applicable in the event of a dispute between the signatories. In some instances, the applicable law was not that of one part of the UK, raising the question as to whether the UK institution had sufficient protection for the management of its academic standards should there be a dispute.

Managing the link

44 Although arrangements for managing the links, once a written agreement has been signed, vary markedly, the agreements seen were characterised by the significant commitment of resources by both partners and an active flow of communication between them. Written agreements generally specify the establishment of a body to oversee the management and development of a programme, sometimes called a Joint Management Committee. The body normally comprises the two programme leaders and senior representatives of both institutions. Its role is to take a strategic approach to the management of the programme, in particular ensuring that communication channels between the subject teams in the UK and China remain open and effective. For example, in a number of links the committee's role includes coordinating changes to the programme, receiving annual reports from the two subject teams, analysing student achievement and

completion rates, agreeing plans for forthcoming delivery of a programme, checking the experience of staff involved in the delivery of a programme and reporting to senior committees within both organisations.

45 Central to many partnership arrangements is the appointment by the UK institution of a programme leader to manage the day-to-day operation of the link. In at least one instance, this individual is based in the Chinese partner institution. Programme leaders are often the people who forged the initial contacts with the partners and have been allocated responsibility for a number of matters, including ensuring that institutional quality assurance processes are followed; programme development and coordination; and maintaining effective communication with the Chinese partner. They usually have relevant subject expertise, are sometimes bilingual and, in many cases, deliver parts of the programme themselves during their visits to the Chinese partner. The commitment of individual programme coordinators was noted as a positive feature in a number of the audit reports, although audit teams sometimes had reservations about the amount of responsibility vested in a single individual, with no obvious deputy in place or in prospect, and the consequent impact there might be on the partnership if this one individual was not able to continue in the role.

46 There are also counterpart programme leaders and programme team members in the Chinese partner. The Chinese programme coordinator is often the main point of contact for the UK institution, and a close relationship and frequent communication between this person and the UK programme coordinator appears to be the key to the success of many partnership arrangements. It is a feature of many written agreements that the Chinese programme coordinator is supported by dedicated administrative staff who may be involved in other ways in supporting students on the programme.

47 In all of the partnerships seen, there is much reliance placed upon almost instant communication, often on a daily basis, between the programme teams; email, virtual learning environments (VLEs) and the internet are the main conduits for this communication. In addition, written agreements normally contain reference to the frequency of staff inter-change, including UK staff contributing to the delivery of parts or all of a programme and Chinese subject staff being granted some visiting status in the UK partner.

Programme approval

48 Programme approval is a key part of the UK higher education quality assurance process. Institutional documents seen as part of the exercise generally described the approval process for collaborative programmes to be delivered in China in a clear way. Given the associated risk with overseas delivery, the approval process is often more rigorous than those for a new award to be delivered in the UK. Professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements, where included, are routinely considered as part of this process.

49 Programme approval is often a two-stage process, with a business case being initially approved by the relevant institutional authorities prior to consideration of the academic case. A visit to the Chinese partner by an approval panel, chaired by a senior member of the UK institution and including a subject specialist external to the institution is, on the basis of this exercise, the norm. Programme approval panels report back to the relevant institutional committee that has responsibility for approving collaborative programmes. The reports often include recommendations or conditions to be met prior to final approval being granted, and do not always result in approval. Programme approval processes may be undertaken in parallel with partner approval processes. Any re-approval processes normally follow a similar process.

50 Based on the findings from this survey, institutional processes for approving the delivery of awards in China appear to be fit for purpose. They generally reflect the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*, in particular *Section 7: Programme approval, monitoring and review* and demonstrate effective use of the FHEQ and subject benchmark statements.

51 Conditions and recommendations attached to programme approval reports in general reflect the overall rigour of the process. Issues that were most often mentioned tended to reflect a lack of preparation by the programme team. These included proof of Chinese government approval, arrangements for admitting students, clarifying methods of delivery and the English language competence and subject-specific knowledge of Chinese subject staff. For example, one programme was approved with the condition that the role of translators in both the classroom and in the translation of assessed work was clarified prior to commencement of the programme. For another link, it was recommended that procedures were put in place to ensure that the UK partner gave approval to proposed staffing levels and expertise at the start of each academic year, while another institution required the Chinese partner to provide '...a copy (with translation) of the document giving Chinese government approval' and for the programme team to provide their Chinese colleagues with a guidance note to aid in selecting students.

52 Audit teams identified a number of positive features of programme approval. One report commended the sound institutional guidance given to subject teams developing a collaborative programme in China. In cases of programmes being delivered in both China and the UK, there were a number of examples of careful mapping to ensure that intended learning outcomes were equivalent. Others noted positive features, including strong central oversight by the awarding institution of the programme approval process.

53 Audit teams also identified a number of matters associated with programme approval which it was suggested required further consideration by the UK partner. The most common problem associated with programme approval appears to be that the process for signing-off conditions is either not clear or is not rigorously followed-up. In a number of audit reports it was recommended that institutions keep a much tighter check on the programme approval process and follow-up. For example, a second programme within the same discipline and programme structure was given retrospective approval even though it had not been considered formally in the programme approval report.

Programme monitoring and review

54 It is clear from the survey that UK institutions manage the academic standards and quality of their programmes delivered in China, in part, through annual monitoring and periodic review. Monitoring is generally undertaken annually, and the procedure for each link is often set out in the written agreement. Such monitoring, the outcomes of which are reported to an internal departmental committee, is commonplace and may be supplemented by reports from joint management committees and periodic review reports. One notable example of good practice beyond annual programme-level monitoring seen by one audit team was the compilation of module reports, based upon feedback from students and staff, being quickly shared via the programme VLE with other subject staff.

55 Requirements for annual monitoring of programmes delivered in China usually follow those used as standard in the UK institution's quality assurance arrangements. To do this, an institutional template is commonly used and includes consideration of external examiners' reports, feedback gained from students via questionnaires and representative committees and performance indicator data. Topics covered in the reports include recruitment and admissions, student performance, learning support resources, teaching, learning and assessment. Particularly noteworthy among the procedures seen was the inclusion of monitoring of progress with actions arising from previous annual monitoring reports, and comparison of student performance for both Chinese and English cohorts.

56 Arrangements for the compilation of annual monitoring reports appear to vary between institutions. It is often the responsibility of the UK programme leader, sometimes in liaison with the programme coordinator in the Chinese partner, to coordinate the production and communication of the report. In a small number of instances audit teams found that this led to local subject staff not being fully involved in the annual monitoring process, making the reports less comprehensive as a result. Also, this sometimes meant that Chinese partner staff were not aware of either the good practice or recommendations arising out of an annual report in time for the next presentation of the programme. Notable good practice was the involvement of both sets of subject staff, either in a joint or parallel process using a common template, reporting to the joint management committee which then reported within the UK institution to the relevant subject or faculty committees.

57 Reporting within the UK partner, in some links, resulted in feedback and comment to the programme team from the senior committees. Sometimes, the annual monitoring on collaborative programmes in China contributed to an institution's specific overview report of its collaborative links. In other partnerships, where one or other of these actions did not occur, audit teams considered it a matter for further consideration by the UK institution.

58 Periodic reviews provide institutions with an opportunity to examine the continuing validity and relevance of programmes' aims and learning outcomes. Determined by the UK institution's periodic review schedule, the timing of reviews of programmes delivered in China is sometimes set out in the written agreement. Such reviews may be at the programme or subject level and, if a

positive outcome is achieved, may result in the re-validation of the award. Good practice noted included visits to the partner institution by a panel that had a member who was a subject specialist external to the UK partner and was not the external examiner for the programme reviewed. The arrangements for conducting such a review are normally contained in the institution's quality assurance procedures and involve consideration of student evaluation and previous annual monitoring and external examiners' reports. Audit teams found that some periodic reviews in the past have not included an external subject specialist and, in more than one instance, recommendations had not been systematically followed through. In one link there was no involvement of Chinese subject staff in the conduct of the review.

Securing academic standards

59 The survey found that UK institutions use a number of approaches and mechanisms in exercising their responsibility to ensure that the academic standards of their awards and qualifications delivered in collaboration with a partner in China are secure. They set the standard of student achievement expected and confirm the level achieved. Any assessment regulations that apply to a link are generally the same as those that pertain for awards delivered in the UK.

60 Arrangements for admitting students, and the academic standards of students to be admitted are usually outlined in the written agreement. Programme approval reports suggest that achieving appropriate admission standards is a frequent concern of programme approval panels. The survey found that where UK institutions are responsible for the award, they retain a role in setting admission standards and, often, in the selection of students. In most links, the UK programme leader or another UK institutional employee is required to attend interviews of applicants. This is intended to enable the UK institution to assure itself that academic entrance standards are maintained, and often also to assess the English language competence of applicants. Other institutions delegate the interviewing of applicants to Chinese partner staff while retaining the right to ultimately accept or reject an applicant.

61 Arrangements for the setting, marking and moderation of assessments are often set out in the written agreement associated with the link, and reflect the good practice contained in the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. The agreements generally stipulate the language of assessment, which is almost always English. UK subject staff normally retain the responsibility for setting standards and marking and internally moderating student assessments. However, audit teams found a number of links where Chinese partner staff are involved to different degrees in setting assessment tasks and/or marking students' assessments. In such cases, UK subject staff often retain a role in moderating the assessed work.

62 Of the links seen, the language of assessment was usually English, although there are a small number of links in which some assessments are in Chinese. In these links, audit teams found that there was generally a bilingual programme coordinator who plays a key role in translating the assessment tasks and offering support to UK staff marking or moderating assessments in Chinese.

63 Only one of the links audited involved delivery and assessment exclusively in Chinese. The programme was at master's level, with the certificate and diploma stages being delivered and assessed in Chinese by staff from the partner institution in China. The final part is delivered in English by staff from the UK institution, with simultaneous translation by a Chinese-speaking subject specialist. At the final stage, the assignments and examinations are prepared in English by staff of the UK institution and then translated into Chinese by bilingual UK staff. Students undertake the assessment in Chinese. The audit team noted the extensive efforts of the UK institution to assure the integrity of the assessment process, including the translation into English of 25 per cent of all assessments for second marking, and verification by external examiners. Chinese-speaking external examiners also sample the assessments in the original Chinese. Translations are undertaken by staff in the Chinese partner and are verified by Chinese-speaking staff at the UK partner. At the time of the audit, external examiners reviewed a 50 per cent sample of the student dissertations at the master's stage. It was planned that external examiners would, in future, see English translations of all MBA dissertations.

64 External examiners have a key role in securing the standards of UK higher education awards. As peers currently working in the UK higher education sector, they are required to report on whether the academic standards set for an award or part thereof are appropriate, the extent to which the assessment process is rigorous and ensures equity of treatment for students, the academic standards of student performance and the comparability of standards with those in the UK sector in general. The arrangements for appointing and inducting external examiners associated with UK awards delivered in China are generally the same as for those appointed for an award delivered in the UK. All audited links had at least one external examiner who was an academic currently working in the UK sector. One link had an additional external examiner who was a Chinese academic appointed by the Chinese partner who had no prior experience of being an external examiner in the UK higher education system.

65 Audit teams found that the arrangements for undertaking exam boards for awards delivered in China vary, but are organised and managed by the UK partner. There are examples of module exam boards and, less often, final award boards, being held at the Chinese partner institution, sometimes via a video link. However, the final award boards are usually held in the UK using the UK partner's regulations. In order to enable comparison of academic standards, exam boards often cover a number of programmes and not just the award delivered in China.

66 There is some evidence that UK partners could do more to promote understanding by their partners' subject staff of the role of external examiners in assuring the academic standards of UK awards. A number of audit reports noted that Chinese subject staff showed little awareness of external examiners' reports associated with their link. In some cases this may have been because the report in its entirety was not communicated specifically to the Chinese partner, although it was apparent that they were accessible via the minutes of joint course committees. This has meant that Chinese subject staff have not always been directly involved in addressing or responding to the external examiners' reports or fully aware of the good practice and advice that they may contain.

67 Innovative and often comprehensive approaches have been taken to assure the security of assessment processes and, in a number of links, UK staff act as invigilators. Where exactly the same exam is sat simultaneously by cohorts in both the UK and China, they are scheduled at the same time so as to prevent collusion across time zones.

68 External examiners' reports seen by audit teams have confirmed the appropriateness of academic standards set for, and achieved by, students studying for a UK award in part or in full in China, and compared their achievement favourably to students studying in the UK. Examiners have, however, also highlighted a number of issues for the UK institution to consider further. The most common of these is students' competence in the use of English as demonstrated in their assessed work.

69 UK institutions retain authority for preparing certificates and transcripts for awards delivered in China. In some audit reports it is noted that in the past certificates and/or transcripts did not specify the name of the Chinese partner where some or all of a programme was studied, or the amount of the programme that was delivered and/or assessed in English. However, these were generally programmes that had not recently had a graduating cohort and audit teams were told that, in future, certificates and transcripts would reflect the relevant precept the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*. One notable feature of good practice is an institution being proactive in the introduction of diploma supplements for Chinese students, regardless of whether they completed their studies in the UK or China.

Student feedback

70 Chinese students studying for a UK higher education award in China have a range of formal and informal ways in which they can express their views about their programme of study. Students met by audit teams were highly positive about the ways in which they could offer their views and especially about the responsiveness of subject teams to their contributions.

71 Chinese students regularly complete module and programme questionnaires, which are used to inform annual monitoring reports and staff appraisal and development activities. Oral feedback from students is commonplace and gathered in a number of ways, including student representation on programme-level committees, course boards, class forums and focus groups. These are frequently scheduled for when UK subject staff are visiting the Chinese partner, but alternatively may be held via a video link. For some links, when visiting the Chinese partner, UK staff schedule a period of time to meet class representatives alone. In one link audited, no formal mechanisms for student representation were currently in place; however, the audit team was reassured that informal mechanisms were adequate to convey any student concerns to the subject team. There were also a range of mechanisms by which subject teams could feed back their responses to students, including email, student notice boards and through subsequent programme-level committees.

72 In their discussions with Chinese students, audit teams heard of many examples where students had been able to achieve changes to their programme of study through informal feedback, thus obviating the need to raise issues in formal forums. Students reported that they found it easy to approach both Chinese and UK staff, who were open to suggestions for enhancing their learning opportunities and, audit teams heard, quick to respond to matters raised in an effective way. Examples were altering the timing of exams to ensure they did not clash with local holidays, and extending the induction period.

Staff appointment and development

73 UK institutions adopt a variety of approaches to fulfilling the expectation that they satisfy themselves about the qualifications of staff involved in delivering UK awards in cooperation with Chinese partners. The process for appointing subject teaching staff is often set out in the written agreement and considered as part of the validation event. It normally involves careful scrutiny of the curricula vitae (CV) of new staff by at least the UK programme coordinator and/or the joint committee set up to oversee management of the link. Any new appointments or changes to staffing arrangements tend to require the approval of the UK programme leader, and in some cases the CV of the new staff member to be sent to the UK institution's academic support office.

74 It is normal for teaching staff to have experience of delivering a similar programme at their own institution. A range of criteria are used in the selection of Chinese subject staff, including their experience of teaching on other collaborative programmes, subject expertise and, where relevant, English language ability. Generally, the process of staff appointment is undertaken with great care, but some individual audit reports refer to the level of information provided about that person being insufficient to assure the UK institution of the experience of the individual.

75 Staff development opportunities may also be set out in the written agreement, and often include staff exchanges. Sometimes, written agreements specify a certain number of visits to the partner by subject staff. The principal aims of the exchanges are to facilitate communication between partners and to introduce staff to local teaching methods. A notable example is a Chinese member of staff being appointed to the UK partner as a teaching fellow for a period of six months prior to the start of a collaborative programme. During this time, the Chinese member of staff gained experience of UK teaching practices and quality assurance mechanisms. More often, Chinese staff are invited to the UK for shorter periods, while some UK institutions appoint Chinese partner staff involved in delivering a programme as visiting or honorary staff, giving them important benefits in terms of accessing learning and research resources.

76 Evidence gathered from the survey showed that staff development activity also occurs when UK academic and learning support staff visit partner institutions, often prior to the commencement of a programme. This presents opportunities for subject staff from both partners to work together on developing programme material and documentation and making use of VLEs in their teaching. Staff development events can take the form of workshops, sometimes scheduled annually and

alternating between the partners, which focus on UK higher education including learning styles and quality assurance processes. In some instances, UK learning resource staff deliver sessions on accessing the UK institution's information technology-based learning resources.

77 While most audit reports note that the Chinese partner operates a peer observation scheme for assessing the quality of teaching staff, there are many examples of UK staff undertaking peer observation during their 'fly-in fly-out' teaching visits. Team teaching by staff from the two partners is also a frequent occurrence. Audit teams were told by Chinese students and staff that this was very valuable.

78 The survey suggests that it is usually a requirement that UK staff appointed to a collaborative programme should have experience of teaching on an equivalent programme at their own institution. UK institutions prepare their own staff for teaching on such programmes in a variety of ways, including providing them with information packs and training, such as briefings on the Chinese higher education system and pedagogical practices.

Comparability of student experience

79 UK institutions delivering transnational education retain ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the quality of learning opportunities available to students studying for one of their awards in China is adequate to enable a student to achieve the academic standards for that award. Some institutions have chosen in the first instance to delegate this task to their Chinese partner, but with the ultimate aim of ensuring that the student learning experience is comparable to that of students studying in the UK. Audit teams considered that, generally speaking, it appears this aim is being achieved. Chinese students met by audit teams consistently indicated that the learning resources available to them were at the level they expected, and indeed their high expectations in this area had been a key reason for them choosing to study for a UK award.

80 Chinese students are provided with extensive information prior to enrolment on a UK programme and during their period of study. Students told audit teams that they had been able to find out about their programme through websites, or had been sent hard copy material by the Chinese partner on request. Enrolled students were provided with a range of information booklets, which include a programme handbook and a student handbook. Students told audit teams that the information was generally of high quality, comprehensive and accurate. Student handbooks usually included information on the programme of study, assessment arrangements, details of the complaints and appeals processes and, where relevant, information about progression to study in the UK. Only in two links did audit teams note deficiencies in the information provided to students, which were insufficiently detailed about opportunities for progression to the UK.

81 One of the most positive features for Chinese students studying for a UK award delivered in China was exposure to UK teaching styles, especially the lecture/tutorial format. Many programmes are delivered by a combination of UK and Chinese staff, with UK staff delivering their sessions during

visits to China. The predominant, though by no means only, pattern is lectures followed by detailed discussion of the content of the lecture in tutorials or seminars. Students told audit teams that they welcomed this approach as it allowed them to gather an international perspective and, during tutorials, to discuss local case studies that helped illuminate the content of the lectures. Furthermore, students consistently told audit teams that they much appreciated the opportunity to discuss with other students and tutors, in tutorials or seminars, subject material that had been delivered in lectures or that they had read. Students also spoke positively of support provided to them when completing dissertations.

82 Audit teams heard that continuing communication between students and staff on academic and personal matters is maintained through a number of mechanisms. Chinese subject staff involved in delivering the programme are often the first point of reference for students with a question related to their studies, but frequently UK staff visiting the Chinese partner are also available for one-to-one discussions with students on academic or personal matters. When in China to deliver lectures and tutorials, UK staff make time available to meet students and respond to their questions. Audit teams also heard of the accessibility of UK staff even when they had returned to the UK: students welcomed opportunities to access staff via email, facsimile or telephone. In a number of links, students were able to access UK staff via the dedicated VLE for their programme. This allowed students to contact UK staff whenever they were studying, which was considered to be of particular importance for students studying on one part-time programme, who often undertook their studies at unsociable hours.

83 As a registered student of the Chinese partner, Chinese students have access to local support services and resources, including library and information and communication technology resources. It is often set out in the written agreement that students may also have access to some of the resources of the UK partner. This frequently includes access to online learning resources, for example electronic journals and teaching material such as lecture notes and case studies, and in some cases access to counselling services.

Progression to the UK

84 Of the links that include progression opportunities, it appeared to the audit teams that the UK institutions' management of the transition to study in the UK is carefully planned and executed. Preparing students for their studies in the UK can start even prior to registration. Information provided to prospective students normally outlines the possible progression routes to the UK partner. Progression is usually into pre-existing programmes and involves entry with advanced standing through the institution's accredited prior learning procedures. For one link, however, an audit team noted that the programme in the UK to which students had been told that they might progress was still in the planning stage by the end of the students' first year, and the institution was recommended to review its progress on this matter.

85 In another link, prospective students and their families are informed of the visa application process, including the importance of demonstrating sufficient financial resources for a stay in the UK at the stage of applying to entry to a programme involving progression. Preparation for progression to the UK can start up to six months prior to the date of departure, with UK subject staff visiting the partner to present workshops, away days and classes on life and study in the UK. At this point students may also be provided with handbooks outlining the timetable leading up to transfer and arrival in the UK.

86 In one link, preparation for study in the UK included Chinese staff modifying their teaching styles to incorporate UK pedagogical practices in order to better prepare students for studying in the UK. Other students benefit from the experience of earlier cohorts, either through email and video conferences with students studying in the UK, or participation by returning graduates in pre-departure induction sessions.

87 Chinese subject staff sometimes travel to the UK with progressing students to facilitate their induction, at the same time as undertaking staff development activities. The students normally have accommodation pre-arranged for them and experience a range of effective induction events. These often include a 'meet and greet' service at the local airport or railway station, events for international students organised by the students' union and student ambassadors, and away days with academic and support staff to introduce them to UK life, culture and higher education.

88 Key to ensuring a smooth transition to the UK is the provision of information about the programme of study, advice on study techniques and the assessment timetable. In addition, some students undertake bridging modules on arrival in the UK prior to the start of their formal programme of study. These are intended to ensure that they have the necessary prerequisites for their UK-based studies. Once registered by the UK institution, progressing students have the same rights and benefits as UK students, and thus have full access to learning support resources, counselling services, and academic and personal tutorial support. Arrangements for continuing English language support varies, with some institutions providing it free of charge for progressing masters students, and at least one providing ongoing free foreign language classes.

89 Progression to a UK programme is recognised by UK institutions as a critical part of a student's experience of studying for a UK award, and it is clear that much is done in this area to make the transition to life and study in the UK as smooth as possible. Student evaluation of their transition to study in the UK is normally undertaken through general or specific questionnaires and focus groups which aim to capture greater insight into the experience of students progressing. Students who intended to or had progressed to the UK to complete their studies told audit teams that, generally, the transition had been well managed and had enabled them to settle quickly into life and studying at the UK institution. They were particularly positive about their experience when they studied with students from other cultures rather than studying only with other students from their own group.

Conclusions

90 Since the publication in 2000 of QAA's scoping report on China, international trade in higher education products and services has continued to grow rapidly. This report has outlined initiatives by the UK higher education sector in response to the modernisation of the Chinese higher education sector, and the willingness of the Chinese government to permit the delivery of transnational education in China. UK institutions have been at the forefront of the delivery of transnational education in China; by mid-2005 82 institutions had established or were intending to establish 352 links with a Chinese partner to deliver a UK award in China. Nearly 11,000 students were enrolled on programmes, which included a wide range of subject areas. The types of arrangement and ways in which the programmes were delivered were highly diverse.

91 This report finds that the UK institutions included in this survey generally have in place effective institutional arrangements for the management of academic standards and quality of learning opportunities, and that Chinese students studying for such an award, in part or entirely in China, experience an education which is comparable to that delivered in the UK. The arrangements generally take due regard of the various aspects of the Academic Infrastructure and, in many cases, reflecting the increased level of risk involved in the delivery of transnational education, are more rigorous than those for awards delivered in the UK. This is not to say that some institutions could not improve the design or operation of some aspect of their quality assurance arrangements.

92 It is clear that the market for transnational education in China is becoming increasingly competitive at the same time as the Chinese higher education sector continues to modernise. While this report attests to the generally appropriate institutional management of standards and quality of UK higher education awards delivered in China in 2006, the sector, both individually and collectively, will want to continue to ensure that this deserved reputation is maintained and enhanced.

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Appendices



Appendix 1 - Audited institutions

The 10 audited UK institutions

University of Abertay Dundee
The University of Bolton
City University
Leeds Metropolitan University
University of Luton¹
Middlesex University
University of Northumbria at Newcastle
Queen Mary, University of London
The Queen's University of Belfast
University of Wales, Newport

The 10 Chinese partner institutions visited

Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications
China Agricultural University - International College at Beijing
Hainan Overseas Education Centre
Nanchang University
University of Shanghai
Shanghai University of Finance and Economics
Shenzhen University
Research Institute of Tsinghua Shenzhen
Zhejiang University of Technology
Zhengzhou University

¹ Now the University of Bedfordshire

Appendix 2 - Institutions included in the desk-based analysis

The following institutions responded positively to QAA's request for details of their links with Chinese institutions.

University of Aberdeen	Heriot-Watt University	Oxford Brookes University
University of Abertay Dundee	University of Hertfordshire	University of Plymouth
Anglia Ruskin University	University of Huddersfield	Queen Mary, University of London
University of Bath	University of Hull	The Queen's University of Belfast
University of Birmingham	University of Kent	University of Reading
Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies	Kingston University	Roehampton University
The University of Bolton	University of Lancaster	Royal Agricultural College
Bournemouth University	University of Leeds	Royal Holloway, University of London
University of Bradford	Leeds Metropolitan University	School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
Brunel University	University of Lincoln	Sheffield Hallam University
Cardiff University	University of Liverpool	University of Southampton
University of Central England in Birmingham	Liverpool Hope University College	Staffordshire University
University of Central Lancashire	Liverpool John Moores University	University of Stirling
City University	University of London	University of Strathclyde
College of St Mark and St John	London Metropolitan University	University of Surrey
University College of the Creative Arts	London School of Economics	University of Sussex
Coventry University	London South Bank University	University of Teesside
Cranfield University	Loughborough University	Thames Valley University
University of Dundee	University of Luton ²	University of Ulster
University of East Anglia	University of Manchester	University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
University of East London	Manchester Metropolitan University	University of Wales, Lampeter
University of Edinburgh	Middlesex University	University of Wales, Newport
University of Glamorgan	Napier University	University of Warwick
Glasgow Caledonian University	University of Newcastle upon Tyne	University of the West of England, Bristol
Glasgow School of Art	University of Northumbria at Newcastle	University of Wolverhampton
University of Gloucestershire	University of Nottingham	University of York
University of Greenwich	The Nottingham Trent University	York St John University
Harper Adams University College		

²Now the University of Bedfordshire

Appendix 3 - Audit team members

Auditors

Professor Joe Bailey
Dr David Furneaux
Dr Phil Garnsworthy
Mr Peter Griffiths
Dr Roderick Haggerty
Professor David Heeley
Ms Mary Heycock
Professor Diane Meehan
Professor David Punter
Emeritus Professor Gareth Roberts
Professor Sarah Sayce
Dr Jon Scott
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Ms Alison Blackburn
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Dr Adam Biscoe
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Mrs Shona Patterson

Glossary

Academic standards: Academic standards are a way of describing the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an academic award (for example, a degree). They should be at a similar level across the UK.

Academic Infrastructure: The Academic Infrastructure provides a means of describing academic standards in UK higher education. It is published and maintained by QAA on behalf of the whole UK higher education sector.

Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education: The *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* is an integral part of the Academic Infrastructure, which is used by UK higher education providers to set their academic standards and manage the quality of the study programmes they offer. It reflects good practice and, in consultation with the higher education sector and its stakeholders, is maintained and published by QAA. It is published in 10 sections: Postgraduate research programmes (2000, revised 2004); Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning) (1999, revised 2004); Students with disabilities (1999); External examining (2000, revised 2004); Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters (2000); Assessment of students (2000, revised 2006); Programme approval, monitoring and review (2000, revised 2006); Career education, information and guidance (2001); Placement learning (2001); and Admissions to higher education (2001, revised 2006).

Collaborative provision: Collaborative provision denotes educational provision leading to an award, or to specific credit toward an award, or an awarding institution delivered and/or supported and or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation.

The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ): The FHEQ is an integral part of the Academic Infrastructure that reflects general expectations about the academic standards of UK higher education qualifications.

MoE: The Ministry of Education in the People's Republic of China.

The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland: This framework is an integral part of the wider Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, which embraces all the main qualifications in Scotland, from schools to postgraduate and from work-based to academic.

Quality: Quality is a way of describing how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their award. It is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for them.

Quality assurance: Quality assurance is the means through which an institution ensures and confirms that the conditions are in place for students to achieve the standards set by it or by another awarding body.

Subject benchmark statements: Subject benchmark statements set out expectations about standards of degrees in a range of subject areas.

Transnational education: Transnational education refers to students located in a different country from the one in which the awarding and/or sponsoring institution is based.

UK: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Responsibilities for higher education in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been devolved to the relevant administrative tier of government.



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QAA 136 12/06