Global opportunities for UK higher education

international unit

A guide to UK higher education and partnerships for overseas universities

UK Higher Education International Unit

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Foreword

This *Guide to UK higher education and partnerships,* now in its second edition, has proved extremely popular with international universities and governments as a clear guide to explaining the UK higher education sector.

The most significant changes you will find in this second edition are to the sections on visas and immigration rules and quality assurance. We have used information made available to us on the UK Home Office website and worked closely with the Quality Assurance Agency to ensure this Guide is as up to date as possible. It does, however, come with a small health warning, as policy in UK higher education is fast-moving and we recommend further advice is sought where needed.

The Guide is aimed at staff working in universities and organisations around the world where there is an interest and willingness to collaborate with the UK. It offers a narrative on the history of UK higher education, the changing nature internationalisation, the different types of collaborative activity in which HEIs are engaged, and the key issues to consider such as visa and immigration laws and the legal regulation of partnerships.

A world-class higher education system is essential for growth and competitiveness in a global knowledge economy. Higher education alone is one of the UK's largest export earners, at over £8 billion a year, and has the potential to more than double in value by 2025.[1] Research and innovation, the key drivers of long term productivity, are already inherently global. Universities are central to attracting and retaining globally mobile investment (and 23% of UK R&D is from abroad more than any large economy).[2] Just as importantly, they attract and network global talent.

And UK HEIs are taking a much broader and innovative approach to internationalisation to ensure they remain leaders in the field, attracting the world's top institutions and businesses as partners. International links between universities are vital, growing and global. These relationships will come to define the nature of UK higher education in the years to come.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the author of this report, Professor Steve Baskerville as well as Nicholas Saunders (Eversheds LLP) Jo Attwooll (Universities UK) and Carolyn Campbell and Rebecca Ditchburn (Quality Assurance Agency) who also contributed. Without their knowledge and expertise, this report would not have been published.

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[1] *Estimating the Value to the UK of Education Exports,* London Economics report for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011. http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/higher-education/docs/E/11-980-estimating-value-of-education-exports.pdf

[2] *BIS economics paper 15: Innovation and Research Strategy for Growth,* 2012 http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/innovation/docs/E/11-1386-economics-innovation-and-research-strategy-for-growth.pdf

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Executive Summary

This Guide was commissioned by the UK Higher Education International Unit with the aim of helping overseas universities to establish successful partnerships and collaborative activities with UK universities. It aims to provide clear and accurate information to assist international partners seeking to work more closely and effectively with UK universities.

Its purpose is to provide an historical background and understanding of how the UK higher education system operates, followed by information on the types of collaborative opportunities available, and the key considerations overseas institutions need to understand before going into partnership.

Partnerships between academic institutions have tended to be the product of working relationships between individual academics; but more recently, as the potential benefits and risks from overseas collaborations have increased, universities and colleges have begun to manage their international partnerships portfolio more effectively.

Increasing competition and the knowledge that working together can often reap greater rewards internationally, is affecting the way UK universities think about their aspirations and how to maintain their international competitiveness. A strategic shift has taken place – away from a focus on international student recruitment (at which the UK sector has been successful) and toward a longer-term and more partnership based conceptualisation of internationalisation.

Governments around the world are increasingly encouraging their universities to embrace the international agenda and to internationalise their institution. They are doing this by supporting and facilitating their higher education sectors to engage at an institutional level with global partners through teaching and research collaboration.

It is intended that the information in the Guide is the most up to date available, although readers are advised to seek confirmation and further advice, especially with regards to Chapter 2 (visa and immigration rules) and Chapter 6 (Legal issues).

The Guide is in six chapters, each designed to give a summary of what overseas universities need to know prior to embarking on partnership activities with the UK:

Chapter 1: Overview of the UK higher education system

Chapter 2: The internationalisation of UK higher education

Chapter 3: Teaching collaboration with UK universities

Chapter 4: Research collaboration with UK universities

Chapter 5: Quality assurance in teaching and research

Chapter 6: Legal issues

A long history

Higher education in the United Kingdom (UK) has a long history. While exact dates are uncertain, teaching in the city of Oxford is documented from 1096, making the University of Oxford the oldest university in the English-speaking world. The University of Cambridge celebrated its 800th anniversary in 2009, commemorating the association of scholars who first gathered in the town in 1209. Three Scottish universities – St Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen – were founded by papal bull in the 15th century and a fourth – the University of Edinburgh -- was established by royal charter in 1583.

A major expansion of higher education in the UK occurred in the 19th century with the awarding of royal charters to the St. David's College, Lampeter (subsequently part of the University of Wales), Durham University, King's College London, and University College London. In addition, the latter part of the century saw the foundation of medical, science and engineering colleges in England's major industrial cities, some of which eventually amalgamated to became the so-called 'redbrick' universities of Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield. By the end of World War II, the UK had nine universities and a number of university colleges, many of whose students received external degrees from the University of London.

During the 1950s and 1960s, as a direct response to the demands of an expanding population and the needs of an increasingly technological economy, the British government set out to expand the higher education sector. New colleges of advanced technology were established from 1956 onwards and were awarded university status in 1966; Aston, Bath, Bradford, Brunel, City, Loughborough, Salford and Surrey all became universities in this way, with the University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology going on to become a constituent part of what is now Cardiff University in 1988. A further 13 UK institutions including Hull and Leicester, both former university colleges, gained university status during these two decades and the seven new universities of East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Lancaster, Sussex, Warwick and York were also created.

Significant expansion followed in 1992 when, by means of the Further and Higher Education Act[3], the UK government granted university status to 35 former polytechnics and to a number of other institutions, principally colleges of higher and further education. Between 2001 and 2013, an additional 31 universities were created, including those resulting from the break-up of the federal University of Wales but excluding the merger of institutions already possessing the university title,[4] and a further ten university colleges have recently had their applications for university status put forward to the Privy Council for formal approval.[5] Collectively these universities are referred to as 'post-92' or 'modern' universities, though it should be noted that many of them have long and illustrious histories as vocational institutions.

This gradual expansion means that higher education in the UK is now provided by a diverse range of organisations, and these are known collectively as Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Many of these are now internationally known, with global reputations based on research excellence and high-quality teaching built up over many years and, in some cases, derived from their early foundation as specialist colleges.

[3] See http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/13/contents

[4] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_UK_universities_by_date_of_foundation

[5] See http://news.bis.gov.uk/Press-Releases/Ten-institutions-on-track-to-become-universities-68404.aspx. Newman University College, the first of the ten to achieve university status, became Newman University, Birmingham early in 2013.

Such diversity means there is wide choice for both prospective students and potential international collaborative partners; but it is vital that interested parties are matched to the right institution for their particular interests and needs. This publication aims to provide clear and accurate information to assist international partners that seeking to work more closely and effectively with UK HEIs.

Key facts and figures

In the UK the power to award degrees is regulated by law and the national authorities only recognise institutions which have been granted degree-awarding powers by a royal charter or by Act of Parliament. Currently, the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992 empower the Privy Council to grant HEIs powers to award their own degrees. Such institutions are known as 'recognised bodies' and include all UK universities as well as some higher education and specialist colleges. There are also more than 700 colleges and other institutions which do not have degree-awarding powers but which nevertheless provide courses leading to recognised degree qualifications. These are known as 'listed bodies' and are institutions which, for the time being, deliver courses that lead degrees awarded by recognised bodies.[6] Additionally, since 2008 in England and 2010 in Wales, further education institutions have been able to apply to the Privy Council for powers to award their own 'Foundation Degrees'.[7]

The UK's higher education sector contributes at least £59 billion to the UK economy and generates some 2.3 per cent of UK GDP.[8] The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) recently estimated that in 2008-9, between institutional fee revenue and off-campus expenditure, international students brought almost £6.8 billion into the UK.[9] Universities and colleges also play a central role in the nation's cultural, social and business life.

UK HEIs vary considerably in size. Nearly a fifth of institutions has fewer than 3,500 students, while the largest has more than 40,000. A different type of HEI is the Open University, which provides distance learning to more than 201,000 predominantly part-time students, across the UK and around the world. In 2011/12, there were 2,496,645 students enrolled on degree programmes at Britain's HEIs, of whom 435,235 (or more than 17 per cent) were from overseas and 302,685 had a 'legal domicile' outside the European Union (EU). More than 230 countries are represented in this student population, with China and India supplying the largest proportion, followed by Nigeria, the United States, Malaysia, Hong Kong and a number of EU countries. Indeed, the UK has some of the most 'internationalised' universities to be found in OECD member countries.[10]

The UK remains the most popular destination for students after the United State, with 13 per cent of the international student market (see Table 1). Added to these are some 227,755 students registered at a UK higher education institution studying overseas, whether at a branch campus, via programmes of 'flexible, distributed and distance learning' or through some other form of collaborative provision.

[6]Follow links at https://www.gov.uk/recognised-uk-degrees#degree-awarding-powers-and-criteria-for-university-title for a full list of the 160 institutions in the UK permitted to award degrees and for the current schedule of 'Listed Bodies'.

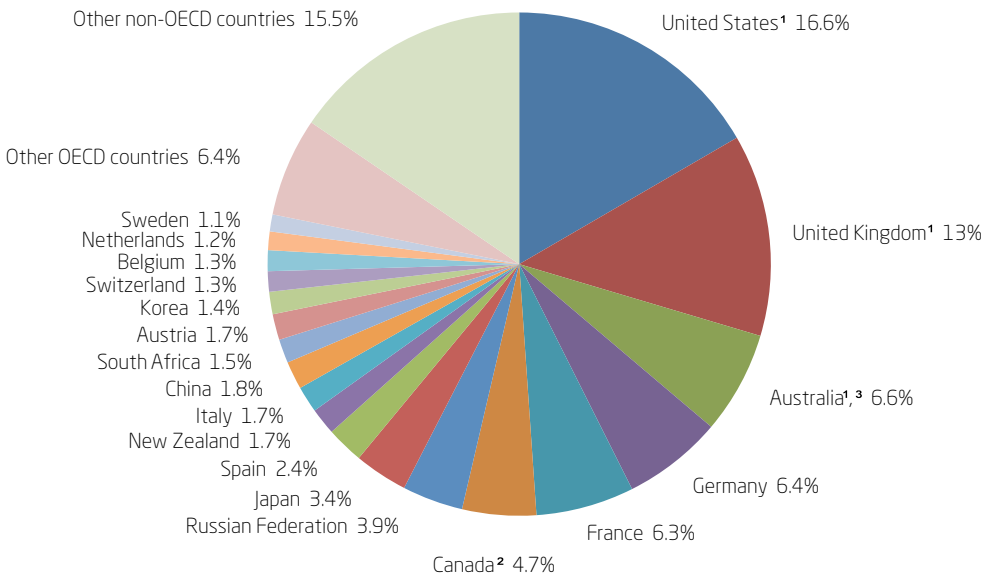
[7]Foundation Degrees are higher education qualifications that combine academic study with work-based learning. Designed jointly by universities, colleges and employers, they are available in a range of work-related subjects and generally require the equivalent of two years full-time study. Further information on foundation degree-awarding powers can be found at http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/BISCore/higher-education/docs/C/11-783-companion-guide-foundation-degree-awarding-powers.pdf

[8] See http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2009/EconomicImpact4Full.pdf, pp.18-21. The figures cited are for 2007/8, which is the last year for which data are available. For evidence that this contribution continues to grow, see http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2012/name,73740,en.html

[9] BIS, *Estimating the Value of UK Education Exports* [BIS Research Paper No. 46] (June, 2011), p.44.

[10] *HESA, Students in Higher Education Institutions, 2011-12* (February 2013), Tables 1 and 8.

Table 1 Distribution of foreign students in tertiary education, by country of destination (2010)



1. Data relate to international students defined on the basis of their country of residence.
2. Year of reference 2009.
3. Student stocks are derived from different sources; therefore, results should be interpreted with some caution.
Source: OECD and UNESCO Institute for Statistics for most data on non-OECD destinations. Tables C4.4 and C4.7, available on line.

In 2010/11 some 571,010 students were studying wholly overseas for the award of a UK HEI. Of the total, 76,360 (13.4 per cent) were studying at institutions within the European Union, while 494,650 (86.6 per cent) were located outside the EU. Though roughly 1 in 6 was enrolled on a taught postgraduate programme, more than 80 per cent were working towards a first degree qualification.[11]

Type of provision	**Number of students**
Branch campus	15,150
Collaborative arrangement	96,075
Distance learning	116,535
Partner organisation overseas	342,910

With respect to staff, in 2011-12 UK HEIs employed 117,845 full-time academic staff and 63,540 part-time (see Table 2). When other categories staff are included, (i.e. administrative and other support personnel) the total figure is estimated to be more than 375,000.

Table 2 - HESA, Resources of Higher Education Institutions, 2011/12 (February 2013)

Staff in UK HE institutions 2004/05 to 2011/12			
Academic year	**Academic**	**Non-academic**	**Total**
2011/12	181385	196860	378250
2010/11	181185	200605	381790
2009/10	181595	205835	387430
2008/09	179040	203720	382760
2007/08	174945	197510	372455
2006/07	169995	194165	364160
2005/06	164875	190535	355415
2004/05	160655	185650	346305

[11] *HESA, Students in Higher Education Institutions, 2011-12* (February 2013), Introduction and Table 0.

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Among academic staff, 25 per cent are employed on teaching-only contracts and 23 percent as full-time researchers, but most (52 per cent) are required to engage in both activities. Most have doctorates and many possess professional qualifications. A clear majority of these academics (64 per cent) are employed on permanent or open-ended contracts, with the remainder being engaged for a fixed term, often in connection with an externally-funded project or initiative. [12]

Governance, management and awards

The UK's HEIs are not owned or run by government. They are independent legal entities, with Councils or Governing Bodies that have responsibility for determining the strategic direction of the institution, for monitoring its financial health and for ensuring that it is effectively managed. While all UK HEIs – with one exception[13] – receive some public funding as a percentage of their total income, the government does not manage this money directly but works through a series of independent Funding Councils to provide both financial support and general guidance to institutions.[14] For many purposes, higher education policy is now developed separately in each of the countries making up the UK, with the Scottish Government, Welsh Assembly Government and the Northern Ireland Executive each having specific and differing responsibilities for certain parts of higher education and student policies. These governmental bodies have no direct role either in determining the courses offered by HEIs or directing the research undertaken by individual academics. Academic and support staff are employed by individual institutions and not by the state. Their pay is negotiated nationally through a joint body representing both management and trade unions, with the resulting agreements taking the form of recommendations to participating universities and colleges.

This governance structure means that UK universities are autonomous and independent institutions with a well-deserved and jealously guarded reputation for intellectual and academic freedom. Indeed, their autonomy is considered a central factor in the UK higher education sector's record of international success in research, scholarship and education.

Each institution makes its own decisions about entry requirements and is responsible for its own admissions procedures. The vast majority of applications to full-time undergraduate courses in the UK – whether by home or international or EU students – are made via a central coordinating agency, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)[15]. In 2007, UCAS set up an online postgraduate application service, UKPASS, but applications for the majority of postgraduate courses are still made directly to the university or college concerned.[16]

First degree courses, commonly known as bachelor's degrees and usually awarded 'with honours', typically take three years to complete in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and four years at a Scottish university. Courses which include a period of practical work outside the institution normally take four years. Certain specialist courses and some vocational or professional degree courses may take longer. For example, medicine and dentistry can take up to six years (not including further specialist training) and architecture up to seven years.

[12] HESA, 'Table B: Academic staff (excluding atypical) by source of basic salary, academic employment function, salary range, professorial role, terms of employment, mode of employment and gender 2011/12' can be found under 'All academic staff' heading via the <Staff Data Tables> link at http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_datatables&Itemid=121&task=show_category&catdex=2. See also HEFCE, *Guide to UK higher education* (2009), p. 8; which is available online at: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_32

[13] The University of Buckingham is the UK's only private HEI.

[14] These are the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC) and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). Only in Northern Ireland do universities receive funding directly from government via the Department for Employment and Learning (DELNI). Their websites can be found at: http://www.hefce.ac.uk; http://www.hefcw.ac.uk; http://www.sfc.ac.uk and http://www.delni.gov.uk

[15] See http://www.ucas.ac.uk

[16] For a list of the universities and colleges using UKPASS, see http://www.ukpass.ac.uk/aboutus/institutions

At postgraduate level, a taught Master's degree normally takes one year, a research Master's two years and a doctoral degree a minimum of three years.

There are also a number of vocational 'sub-degree' qualifications offered in the UK, including the Higher National Diploma (HND), the Higher National Certificate (HNC) and the Diploma in Higher Education (Dip HE), which generally take one or two years to complete. HNCs and HNDs are provided by more than 400 higher education and further education colleges as well as by universities.

Other qualifications include postgraduate certificates, such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). In addition, students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland can take two-year vocational Foundation Degrees and then take a 'top-up' course to honours degree level on successful completion.

Changes to the UK's long-established degree classification system are under consideration.[17] This currently awards students First-class Honours (1st), Second-class Honours, upper division (2:1), Second-class Honours, lower division (2:2), Third-class Honours (3rd), an Ordinary –degree (Pass) or a Fail, rather than the Grade Point Average (GPA) used in the USA and some other countries. Adoption of the GPA system has been examined by a number of UK HEIs, including University College London and the University of Birmingham, but it is Oxford Brookes University that will become the first to implement such a scheme alongside traditional honours degree classifications from September 2013.[18]

Most universities have instead signed up to the new Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), given to a student on graduation, which is intended to provide more detailed information about her/his learning and achievement than the current system and both incorporates and extends the existing Record of Academic Achievement (the 'academic transcript') as well as the European Diploma Supplement.[19] Having been trialled by 30 HEIs across the UK, it was formally launched for voluntary take-up by the rest of the HE sector in October 2012.[20]

This is one of the key developments to emerge so far from the active engagement of UK HEIs in the ongoing work of the Bologna Process, an initiative involving some 47 countries to create a European Higher Education Area in which several aspects of higher education are being reformed and developed in order to facilitate the comparability of systems and qualifications and to enable the mobility of EU citizens across national borders.[21]

Student experience

In England and Wales many young, full-time students in higher education attend institutions located some considerable distance from their family homes. For this reason many UK HEIs provide shared 'halls of residence' for their students, particularly in their first year, while others have worked with large private-sector providers to build new accommodation either on or adjacent to their campuses. Competition generally keeps the costs low and the quality high. This practice of living on or near to the campus means that the lifestyle of those studying at these universities may be very different from that experienced in countries where a majority of students live at home.

[17] See, for example, http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2012/jul/09/degree-classsifications-change

[18] For more about adopting the GPA system, see http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/two-tribes-to-the-wall-elite-set-may-adopt-gpa/416582.article and http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/oxford-brookes-introduces-grade-point-average/2001778.article

[19] See http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1239_en.htm

[20] See http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lt/enh/highereducationachievementreport/. For the final report of the HEAR project implementation group, see: UUK, *Bringing it all together: introducing the HEAR* (October 2012); and for a wider perspective regarding its potential benefits, see the project website at http://www.hear.ac.uk/

[21] See http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/bologna_en.htm and http://www.ehea.info/article-details.aspx?ArticleId=3

However, the number of UK students who are studying at HEIs near their home has been increasing in recent years. The traditional view of a UK student as someone aged 18-21 undertaking a full-time undergraduate degree and living away from home is no longer the reality for the majority of UK students. There are now over 775,000 UK students studying part-time; 64 per cent of all students are over 21 and many are combining study with existing work and other commitments in their local communities.[22] Almost a third of full-time students travels no more than 12 miles to their place of study and may be regarded as local. More than two-thirds travel less than 62 miles to their place of study.[23] Students are now more often than not more embedded in their communities than in their universities and, given the increasing focus on flexible, distance learning, this trend is probably set to continue.

UK HEIs also have a statutory obligation to support their students in establishing some form of 'students' union' – sometimes known as a students' association or (in Scotland) a Students' Representative Council. These organisations aim to work on behalf of all students in discussion with institutional managers and seek to provide a wide range of appropriate social, sporting and community-based activities for students.

Funding

The UK's universities and colleges received a total of £27.6 billion in funding in 2010/11, almost a third of which came from BIS and was distributed in the form of grants by the four UK funding bodies already referred to. The Funding Councils allocate most of their funds for teaching and research using set formulae. The allocation of resources for learning and teaching depends largely on the number of students at an institution and on the mix of subjects it teaches, while almost all financial support for research is related to the quality and volume of that research. Taken together, the money channelled through the Funding Councils currently represents the second largest single source of income to HEIs, after tuition fees and education contracts, though across the sector universities will vary in the percentage of their overall funding that they received from public sources.[24]

Government funding for research is administered under what is known as the 'dual support' system. One strand of this comes in the form of an annual 'block grant' from the Funding Councils as indicated above. This supports the UK's research infrastructure and enables individual universities to carry out research as they determine, in keeping with their own missions and priorities. The other strand provides grants for specific research projects, contracts and postgraduate programmes and is delivered via the seven Research Councils – public bodies charged with investing public money in UK science and research – with additional funding available from charities, industry, the European Union and other UK government departments.[25]

Since 1986, the Funding Councils' allocation of funding to institutions for research infrastructure has been informed by a periodic peer review of the quality of research in higher education known as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). There is a strong tradition of research in all subjects across the diverse range of UK HEIs, and the most recent RAE in 2008 gave the highest ratings of 4* ('world-leading') and 3* ('internationally excellent') to 54 per cent of the research submitted by 159 participating universities and colleges. From 2014, however, this regime is set to be replaced by a new Research Excellence Framework (REF).[26]

[22] HESA, *Students in Higher Education Institutions, 2011-12* (February 2013), Tables A and 3.

[23] See UUK, *Patterns of higher education institutions in the UK: Tenth Report* (2010), p.78, accessible online at: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2010/Patterns10.pdf

[24] HESA, 'Table 11: Total income and expenditure by source of income and category of expenditure 2010/11 and 2009/10' can be found under 'sector level' heading via the <Finance Data Tables> link at http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_datatables&Itemid=121&task=show_category&catdex=1

[25] For further information about the Research Councils, see http://www.rcuk.ac.uk and Chapter 5 below.

[26] For more about the RAE and REF, see http://www.rae.ac.uk and http://www.ref.ac.uk/. See also Chapter 2 under 'Evaluating the quality and impact of research'.

While UK HEIs do receive significant public funding, they also receive substantial private income from the provision of residence and catering facilities; the delivery of services to business, such as contract research, consultancy and training; the fees charged to international students; from endowments; and from a variety of charitable sources. De Montfort University and the University of Cambridge have recently broken new ground by raising private capital for building projects on the bond markets.[27]

Since 1998, English HEIs have also received additional revenue in the form of annual tuition fees. Beginning in 2012, these are now paid by Student Finance England on behalf of UK students as a contribution towards the cost of their education and are repayable after graduation subject to an salary threshold of £21,000 per annum. In addition, various financial support mechanisms, including loans and means-tested maintenance grants, are available to students to help offset these fees and to meet their living expenses while they are studying. Tuition fee contributions are also paid by students studying at HEIs in Wales and Northern Ireland, but Scottish and EU students studying at HEIs in Scotland do not currently pay such contributions. In short, tuition fee and student finance arrangements differ across the various parts of the UK.[28]

UK HEIs are not funded for their international activities and cannot use their public funding to help meet the costs of recruiting and teaching overseas students. Likewise, any work undertaken in collaboration with international partners needs to recover its costs or else be paid for from non-public sources of revenue.

Lastly, it is worth noting that, compared to the larger American universities, and with the exception of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, most UK HEIs have so far managed to attract only small endowments from charitable foundations and business corporations; and none is directly funded by a religious organisation though some do have other religious affiliations. Although the US tax system is still much more favourable towards to potential donors than that operating in the UK, philanthropic giving here is now growing rapidly with the £774 million raised in 2012 being 33 per cent higher than two years ago.[29] In the years ahead it is likely to become a major source of non-governmental income for many institutions.[30]

A reputation for excellence

The benefits of autonomy

The breadth and variety of their funding sources is a key factor in the autonomy of UK HEIs. The block grant approach, and the flexible nature of quality-related research funding, gives institutions the freedom to choose how their resources should be spent. It enables them to invest in innovative research, to develop new areas of expertise and to support exploratory work in high-risk, but potentially high-reward, projects. It enables them to develop partnerships with the private, public and voluntary sectors, among themselves and with international collaborators, and to achieve greater social impact by bringing the results of their research to market. This funding model also equips UK HEIs to respond flexibly to changing needs, while at the same time protecting and growing important research areas. It has led to world-class research outputs and a world-class UK research base, second only to the United States. It has also created a climate in which postgraduate students have opportunities for training and development, and where academic staff can engage with national and international research communities at the highest level.[31]

[27] See http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/420638.article and http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/421474.article

[28] For further information see http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/studentfinance/

[29] See http://www.independent.co.uk/student/news/donations-to-universities-hit-record-high-8567897.html

[30] For a fuller discussion, see More Partnership for HEFCE, *Review of philanthropy in UK higher education: 2012 status report and challenges for the next decade* (September 2012), which can be accessed at via the link at: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2012/philanthropyreview/#d.en.75113

[31] See Chapter 5 for more information on the funding of research collaboration between overseas and UK universities.

The integration of teaching and research

The integration of teaching and research within UK HEIs is a core strength of the sector. While political debate and domestic economic drivers regularly raise questions about the nature and value of their interrelationship, delivering teaching and research together in an institutional context remains central to the idea of a higher education institution in the UK. In fact, government reviews of the UK sector have repeatedly recognised that higher education "embraces teaching, learning, scholarship and research". As Lord Dearing asserted in his 1997 report: "These activities are, and should be, at the heart of higher education."[32] In line with this view, the encouragement of independent, student-centred learning is seen as a key component of the student learning experience in the UK, to which the interaction of teaching and research makes a direct contribution. Indeed, the skills of inquiry and evaluation – central to the undertaking of research and scholarship – are considered essential if UK graduates are to contribute to, and compete in, the global knowledge economy.

International league tables

For the reasons outlined above, UK HEIs have long been regarded as being among the best in the world, and several feature prominently in the international league tables which attempt to quantify their performance and produce a global hierarchy of excellence. Widely acknowledged international rankings are produced annually by the UK's weekly magazine for higher education, *Times Higher Education (THE)* and by the Shanghai Jiaotong University, while domestic league tables are published each year by national newspapers such as the *Guardian* and the *Times*. In 2012, Oxford University, University of Cambridge, Imperial College London and University College London were placed among the world's top 20 higher education institutions in the *THE* World University Rankings.[33] In the same year, the Jiaotong Academic Ranking of World Universities placed Cambridge University 5th and Oxford University 10th in the world, with a further seven UK institutions being placed in the top 100.[34]

League tables are increasingly referenced beyond the academic community, not least by those determining national policy. Important as such league tables undoubtedly are, they are not however an ideal basis on which to choose international partners. Subject rankings and those that concentrate on different areas of specialist expertise may bring the benefits of a potential collaboration into sharper focus, but will not guarantee a perfect 'fit' between even the most outstanding of institutions. Moreover, there are many HEIs around the world with missions which, though excellent in their own context, are never going to qualify them for membership in the world's 'premier league' of research universities. In the end, there can be no substitute for an HEI undertaking its own 'due diligence' (see Chapter 6) and its leaders backing their own judgment when considering and selecting international partners.

[32] The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, *Higher education in the learning society (1997)*. Report of the National Committee, section 5.2.

[33] See http://www.topuniversities.com/u.niversity-rankings/world-university-rankings

[34] See http://www.shanghairanking.com/

What it is and why we do it

While almost all UK HEIs have considerable experience in the field of international recruitment and can point to successful alumni in positions of responsibility and influence around the globe, for many their engagement with a broader international agenda has been more limited and/or more recent. However, during the past decade in particular, a growing number of institutions have begun to develop a comprehensive strategy for internationalisation as a key component in their missions. So what is 'internationalisation', what are UK HEIs doing in order to achieve it, and why do they consider it worth committing the time, effort and resources involved?

The process has both a domestic and a foreign dimension – internationalisation at home and internationalisation abroad, as some have termed it. Responding directly to the complex range of phenomena known as 'globalisation' and seeking to prepare UK students for success in the globally integrated economic environment, many HEIs are moving decisively to internationalise their curricula, to promote cross-cultural understanding and to provide opportunities for the development of foreign-language skills. While international recruitment clearly represents a valuable source of income, it also makes it possible for UK students to live, work and play with other young people from a diverse array of countries and cultures.

It is the development of their physical presence and engagements overseas, however, that a number of UK HEIs have identified as the touchstone of their commitment to internationalisation. The membership of international networks, the instigation of strategic partnerships and the mobilisation of research teams tasked with the resolution of previously intractable problems, especially in the developing world, are just some of hallmarks of this renewed spirit of international cooperation. To be successful, such ventures must necessarily be selective, focused and grounded in academic excellence. In order to justify the investment made in them, international collaborations need to be sustainable for the long term, mutually beneficial and be capable of generating complete confidence and trust between the partners.

Although the fostering of joint research agendas and the development of commercial relationships overseas will have their part to play for some institutions, the largest component in all such international collaborations is likely to be some element of trans-national education (TNE), the various types of which will be considered in detail in Chapter 3. However, this immediately requires prospective partners to recognise that there are a number of risks that must be identified, evaluated and managed if the outcome is to be acceptable to all concerned.

Broadly speaking, these can be divided into two groups: (a) the difficulties likely to confront students and staff seeking to visit the UK as part of a collaborative programme; and (b) the difficulties faced by UK HEIs and their representatives endeavouring to do business in a foreign legal, political and economic environment. The first group will be explored in the remainder of this chapter; the second group will be addressed in the chapter which follows.

Current issues and challenges in the UK[35]

Just like students recruited directly by an institution, students wishing to come to the UK under the terms of a collaborative agreement will need to satisfy the requirements of UK immigration law. So too will international staff seeking to take up employment, visiting professors, researchers and staff on exchange programmes or work placements.

The UK introduced a points-based immigration system in 2008 for all people wishing to work or study in the UK. The points-based system only applies to those from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland. If an HEI wants to employ or teach an EEA or Swiss national, it will normally be able to do so without seeking permission – though there remain some employment restrictions on nationals of Bulgaria and Romania until January 2014.

The system currently has five tiers, with each tier having a different points requirement; the number of points needed, and the way the points are awarded, depends on the tier. Points are awarded to reflect a migrant's ability, experience and age, and the level of need in the migrant's chosen industry where this is an appropriate consideration. Tier 1 is for high-value migrants; Tier 2 is for skilled workers with a job offer, including academics; Tier 4 is for students; and Tier 5 is for is for 'temporary workers'. Tier 1 (General), for highly skilled workers, is now closed but other strands such as Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) and Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) remain open. Tier 3, for low-skilled workers coming in to fill specific temporary labour shortages, has never become operational and remains suspended.

Separate visitor-visa arrangements are in place for academic visitors and student visitors, but these visa categories are restricted both in time and entitlements and so are only appropriate for a limited range of international visitors. People wishing to come to the UK as business or tourist visitors are also covered by visitor-visa arrangements but specific advice on immigration requirements should be sought from the UK visa authorities in advance of travel.

Sponsorship is at the heart of the point-based system: as a general rule, if an HEI wants to employ anyone classed as a 'migrant' or admit an international student, it is required to act as their sponsor during their stay in the United Kingdom.[36]

Prospective migrants must pass an assessment which requires them to secure a certain number of 'points' based on their qualifications, earnings and financial background before they can obtain permission to enter or remain in the UK. Students need to demonstrate that they have a confirmed place at an education institution and the necessary funds to support themselves during their studies.

Education institutions that wish to employ or host international staff under Tier 2, or admit international students under Tier 4, must have a sponsor licence from the Home Office: UK Border Agency (UKBA).[37] Lists of employers and education institutions currently holding sponsor licences are available on the UKBA website.[38]

[35] This section relies heavily on information provided by the Home Office on its website at: http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/. Specific pages and/or documents have only been referenced where they are difficult to locate or have been quoted directly in the text. However, it should be noted that this website changes frequently and that specific links may become inoperative. Readers should always check the advice currently available on the site and not rely on printed-out pages. It is also important to remember that the website does not claim to state the law definitively; consequently, if confusion or uncertainty arises, readers should seek specialist legal advice.

[36] There is no sponsorship model for Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent).

[37] On 1 April 2013 UKBA was split into two separate units within the Home Office: a visa and immigration service and an immigration law enforcement division. Over time, content currently on the UKBA website will be moved to the Government's digital service at www.gov.uk. In the meantime, new and updated content added to the existing website will reflect the new Home Office structure and brand.

[38] See http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/employers/points/sponsoringmigrants/registerofsponsors

UK visa and immigration rules for overseas students

At first sight, the rules applicable to young people entering the UK for purposes of study may appear complicated and bureaucratic; but, at least in the context of collaborations between UK HEIs and their partner institutions overseas, they are in fact quite straightforward. The important thing is to be clear about the category of study involved and how the students intend to support themselves during their time in the UK. Most collaborative agreements that include (or indeed focus upon) the movement of students to Britain for the completion of their studies will see those students registered on a full-time programme of study offered by the UK partner institution, either at the undergraduate or postgraduate level. In the vast majority of cases, the successful completion of this programme will result in the awarding of a UK qualification, usually a degree.

Historically, the UK has not had a system of licensing or registering its HEIs, which is clearly different to its treatment of schools and further education colleges. The protection of consumers from the activities of so-called 'degree mills' has instead rested on the possibility of prosecution of such organisations under the Education Reform Act 1988, for representing themselves, contrary to the provisions of that Act, as entitled to award UK degrees.

As explained in Chapter 1, the UK Government publishes information on 'recognised bodies' that do have such powers, and on 'listed bodies' which have the ability to prepare students to take assessments that lead to the degrees of such recognised bodies. More recently, the immigration system has led to the establishment of the sponsorship regime and the requirement for sponsor licences outlined above. All Tier 4 sponsors must be education providers who can meet the standards set by the Home Office for achieving 'Highly Trusted' status.

The Home Office's key aim is to eliminate abuse of the student visa route and to ensure that students leave the UK once their studies have been completed, unless they are successful in obtaining a visa to extend their stay. To help achieve these objectives, sponsoring education institutions are required to verify that prospective students are qualified for study before issuing them with a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS). The CAS, which is an electronic reference number, is required as part of the visa application process. From 30 July 2013, a prospective student applying from outside the UK for entry under Tier 4 may be asked to undertake an interview by the immigration authorities, either in person, or on the telephone. The Home Office will refuse an application if, as a result of this interview, staff are not satisfied that the applicant is a genuine student, or if the applicant cannot speak English to the required standard.[39]

Tier 4 rules

Under the rules for Tier 4, the sponsor of students enrolled on a collaborative programme must be an education provider based in the UK. Such providers must have been inspected, audited or reviewed by an appropriate body if they are subject to public review or hold valid accreditation from an appropriate body if they are not. Since all UK HEIs (including the private University of Buckingham) are already subject to public review and audit by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), and will in any case hold a sponsorship licence for the purposes of direct overseas recruitment, there can be no problem in principle with the UK institution sponsoring for immigration purposes all the students who enrol with them in fulfilment of a collaborative agreement.

[39] See UKBA, *Tier 4 of the Points Based System - Policy Guidance* (Version 4/13), pp.49-50, 69, available at: http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/employersandsponsors/pbsguidance/guidancefrom31mar09/sponsor-guidance-t4-060412.pdf?view=Binary

Under the current rules for issuing student visas, since April 2012 any institution wishing to sponsor students is required to hold Highly Trusted Sponsor status (HTS) and therefore needs to be accredited by a statutory education inspection body. While this might create problems for a number of private colleges in the further education sector, it generally presents no difficulties for UK HEIs, all of which are accredited by the QAA and most of which already enjoy HTS status.[40] Among other compliance checks, provider institutions are expected to report on non-enrolments and monitor that students remain engaged with their course of study. HEIs are also required to report to the Home Office any student who fails to enrol or who formally withdraws from their course.[41]

Accreditation

An overseas higher education provider does not need UK accreditation to teach its own students in the UK as 'student visitors' (see below), as long as the courses offered here are short-term 'study abroad' programmes (see Chapter 3) delivered directly by the institution in its own premises. The only requirements are that such students should: (a) be enrolled in their home country; (b) come to the UK for no more than half of the total length of their degree course; and (c) return home to finish their degree course, which must be equivalent to a UK degree. However, overseas providers will need to obtain a licence if any of their courses delivered in the UK lasts longer than six months or involves a work placement; they must also do so if they wish their students to undertake part-time work while they are here. In such cases, applicants will need to provide evidence that they are accredited in their home country as a provider of degree courses equivalent to degree-level programmes in the UK, and that this accreditation can be confirmed by the National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom. Under current requirements for 'educational oversight', any overseas HEI seeking to teach complete programmes of study in the UK would need to acquire UK accreditation from the QAA before applying for its own Tier 4 licence.[42]

However, the immigration complexities associated with running their own free-standing operation might be one reason for an overseas institution to work in collaboration with a UK partner that already holds a Tier 4 licence and has experience of complying with the requirements of the UK immigration system. Migrant students can come to the UK for 'study abroad' programmes of less than six months duration (or 11 months if they will be studying an English Language course) using the 'student visitor' route rather than applying through the points-based system; but these student visitors do not have to attend a UK campus of their own institution. They can, in principle, attend any UK HEI holding a Tier 4 sponsor licence provided they will not be doing a work placement as part of their UK studies, do not wish to extend their stay beyond six months (or 11 months if they are undertaking an English Language course) and will not undertake paid or unpaid employment while they are here.[43] Consequently, there may be considerable advantages to be gained by an overseas institution providing short-term study abroad programmes through a UK partner rather than attempting to 'go it alone'. Not only will the obstacles be easier to overcome; the experience of being a student at a UK HEI should also provide a more fulfilling international experience.

[40] London Metropolitan University lost its HTS status in August 2012 but was granted a provisional licence to sponsor Tier 4 visas for international students in April 2013.

[41] For the reporting of non-attendance, see UKBA, *Tier 4 of the Points Based System – Policy Guidance* p.77.

[42] For the rules applying to HE providers based overseas, see UKBA, *Tier 4 of the Points Based System – Policy Guidance* pp.7-9.

[43] See http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/visiting/student/requirements/

Right to work

One final dimension that requires further consideration is the financial resources that an overseas student can call upon while studying in the UK. Different work rights apply to those entering the UK as students, depending on the level of study they are undertaking and the type of education provider sponsoring them. Those studying for degree-level qualifications at a UK HEI under the terms of a Tier 4 licence and who are not nationals of an EEA country are allowed to work under certain conditions, but they cannot: (a) work for more than 20 hours per week during term time (except where the placement is a necessary part of their course and the work to study ratio does not exceed 50 per cent); (b) engage in business, self-employment or the provision of a service as a professional sports person or entertainer; or (c) pursue a career by filling a permanent, full-time vacancy. Those enrolled on programmes of study at sub-degree level (including Foundation Degrees) may work for up to 10 hours per week during term time. All Tier 4 (General) students at UK HEIs or publicly funded FE colleges are permitted to work full-time during their vacations and to undertake a work placement as part of their course with a 'Highly Trusted' sponsor.[44]

It should also be noted that only new government-sponsored students following a course which lasts longer than 6 months and postgraduate students sponsored by a UK HEI on courses of more than 12 months' duration will be permitted to bring their dependants into the country; but in both these qualifying cases the dependants will be allowed to work.[45]

Students who graduate from a UK HEI with a recognised degree, PGCE or postgraduate/professional diploma in education (PGDE) may be able to switch into Tier 2 before their student visa expires. This is dependent on obtaining the offer of a graduate-level skilled job from a sponsoring employer, provided they are still in the UK, and provided the job pays at least £20,300 a year or the minimum 'new entrants' salary specified in UKBA's 'Shortage Occupations List', whichever is the higher.[46]

An important sub-category of Tier 1 is the Graduate entrepreneur route. This currently allows non-European MBA and other graduates to extend their stay following graduation to establish one or more businesses in the UK. The opportunity is limited to 2,000 places per year, with 900 allocated to qualifying UK HEIs for the purpose of endorsing graduates in any subject; 1,000 given to the same institutions but restricted to those graduating with an MBA; and 100 reserved for as elite global graduate entrepreneurs by UK Trade & Investment.[47] Those who apply for leave to remain under this route before their immigration permission to be in the UK as a student expires may work full-time while they wait for a decision on their Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) application. They may continue to do so until a decision is reached but must not engage in business or self-employment and cannot pursue a career by filling a permanent full-time vacancy.[48]

Also of potential benefit to some postgraduate students is the new Doctorate Extension Scheme. From April 2013, those completing their PhD at a UK HEI can apply to stay in the UK for a further 12 months after the course-completion date stated on their CAS. Students wishing to take up this opportunity will need to obtain a new CAS from their Tier 4 sponsor and must apply to the scheme no more than 60 days before that date; applications submitted after that date or from outside the UK will not be considered.

[44] See http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying/adult-students/conditions/ and the <work placements> tab at http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying/adult-students/can-you-apply/course/

[45] See http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/working_during_studies.php

[46] For the Shortage Occupations List, with minimum salary rates for new entrants and experience workers, see: ,http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/workingintheuk/shortageoccupationlistnov11.pdf

[47] See http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/working/tier1/graduate-entrepreneur/

[48] See http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/working_after.php#entrepreneur

Once they have successfully completed their PhD and received permission to stay, graduates will face fewer restrictions on the work they can do, and may use the 12 months to gain further experience in their chosen field, seek skilled work or develop plans to set up as an entrepreneur. Successful applicants can later switch into Tier 1 or Tier 2 (General) and there is no limit on the number of people who can access the scheme. However, this is a sponsored scheme and HEIs must continue to maintain contact with those they agree to sponsor under it.[49]

UK visa and immigration rules for visiting staff

In pursuit of international excellence in research and scholarship, UK HEIs routinely recruit both teachers and researchers from around the globe; in 2011-12, almost one quarter of the academics employed by UK HEIs were foreign nationals.[50] As well as employing permanent full-time staff, many HEIs also welcome researchers, scholars and visiting professors from overseas who come to work here for much shorter periods of time, some of them as part of a bilateral agreement between the receiving institution and their home institution. Post-doctoral researchers may also find employment in this way, having obtained their postgraduate qualifications in the UK through work on collaborative research projects.

With the introduction of the points-based immigration system, the employment of staff from outside the EEA also became the subject of more stringent immigration controls. HEIs can apply for Certificates of Sponsorship (CoS) to bring international staff to the UK under the Tier 2 (General) route, but in doing so must satisfy the resident labour market test: i.e. they cannot make job offers that would displace existing employees and must advertise vacancies to ensure that they cannot be filled by workers already resident in this country. The number of Tier 2 (General) places available each year is limited to a maximum of 20,700 individuals being employed to do skilled jobs with an annual salary below £152,100.[51]

More promising from an HEI perspective is the new Tier 1 (Exceptional talent) route, introduced in 2012 and revised in April 2013, which is intended for people who are "internationally recognised as world leaders or potential world-leading talent in the fields of science and the arts". It is limited to 1,000 entrants a year who must be endorsed by one of four 'designated competent bodies': the Royal Society, Arts Council England, the British Academy and the Royal Academy of Engineering.[52] This is intended to provide access to the UK for leaders in their fields and for people at an earlier stage in their careers with exceptional promise, but take-up so far has been limited.[53]

Tier 5 (Government Authorised Exchange)

With regard to international academic collaborations, the most important part of the points-based system is Tier 5 (Temporary Worker – Government Authorised Exchange). This category is designed "for people coming to the UK through approved schemes that aim to share knowledge, experience and best practice, and to experience the social and cultural life of the UK." It cannot be used to fill job vacancies or to bring unskilled labour into the country, and in most circumstances individual employers and organisations are not allowed to sponsor migrants under its provisions. An exception is made, however, for UK HEIs wishing to bring 'sponsored researchers' into the country for periods of up to 24 months. Special permission is also granted to such researchers to switch into the Tier 1 (Exceptional talent) category without returning home.[54]

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[49] For further information about this scheme, see *Tier 4 of the Points Based System* (Version 04/13), pp.12-13 at: http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/pbs/Tier4migrantguidance.pdf and http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/files/pdf/working/doctorate_faq.pdf

[50] HESA, *Staff in Higher Education Institutions, 2011/12* (Feb 2013), Table 4.

[51] For the employment of skilled workers generally, see http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/working/tier2/general/ and *Tier 2 of the Points Based System – Policy Guidance* (Version 04/13), p.2 at: http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/pbs/tier2-guidance.pdf

[52] See http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/working/tier1/exceptional-talent/

[53] See http://www.ucea.ac.uk/en/empres/epl/int/intrec/pbs.cfm

[54] See http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/working/tier5/government-authorised-exchange/ and *Tier 5 (Temporary Worker) Policy Guidance* (Version 04/2013), p.19.

A UK HEI with a Tier 5 sponsor licence is able to host and obtain the required CoS for a 'sponsored researcher', normally a visiting academic, who does not meet the Business/Academic Visitor criteria (see below) and who will be taking part in a formal research project. The expectation is that such a researcher will have a permanent employment overseas for which they are still being paid and is seeking to come to the UK to undertake a period of research at an employer/host institution. Entry via this route is consistent with a variety of funding scenarios: (a) where the funding for the research remains overseas; (b) where it is transferred to the UK employer or host; (c) where it is arranged and paid by the UK employer or host.

'Sponsored researchers' might also be academics on either paid or unpaid sabbatical leave from their home institutions that are in receipt of funding from their UK employer or host. In all cases, UKBA will need to see evidence of the sponsorship arrangement under which the migrant researcher is coming to this country and confirmation that sufficient funds are available for their maintenance. This might, for instance, be made up of a stipend from a sponsoring body combined with a continuing salary from the researcher's home institution overseas.[55]

Apart from 'sponsored researchers', the Government Authorised Exchange category provides for migrants to be sponsored by one of the overarching bodies that manage the scheme with the support of a UK government department. Most of these recognised sponsorships are aimed at facilitating placements and internships in business and the professions. Some, though, are directly focused on higher education, such as the Chevening Programme, sponsored by the Association of Commonwealth Universities; UK-India Education and Research Initiative, sponsored by the British Council; and the EU-China Managers Exchange and Training Programme, sponsored by Manchester Metropolitan University. Indeed, a number of UK HEIs have become approved sponsors under the broader provisions of this category.[56]

Tier 5 (Youth Mobility Scheme)

A second category of temporary worker under Tier 5 of potential use to international academic collaborations is the Youth Mobility Scheme. Every year, the UK government allocates a number of places on the scheme to each participating country or territory, which then allows young people from those jurisdictions to come and experience life in the UK. In 2013, the allocations were: Australia (35,000), Canada (5,500), Japan (1,000), Monaco (1,000), New Zealand (10,000), Republic of Korea (1,000) and Taiwan (1,000); those benefiting from the scheme are sponsored by their own national governments during their stay. Participants are free to do whatever work they like while in the UK but must leave at the end of their stay; they are also permitted to study but this should not be their main objective. Switching into any other points-based system route or into visitor status is not allowed. However, this clearly opens a number of possibilities for HEIs in the UK and collaborating partners in the scheduled countries and territories, provided they can obtain governmental support for their initiatives.[57]

Academic visitor category

Another category that operates outside the points-based system but within the visitor arrangements is that of 'academic visitor' which enables individuals who wish to come to the UK to carry out research for their own purposes. An applicant must be either on sabbatical leave from an academic institution overseas, and wish to make use of their leave to carry out personal research,

[55] For internal advice to UKBA staff about definition issues likely to arise in connection with this category, see UKBA, *Business and Commercial Caseworker Guidance* (June 2008), <sponsored researchers> link at: http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/businessandcommercialcaseworker/

[56] See http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/immigrationlaw/immigrationrules/appendixn/ for a full list of approved sponsors and schemes.

[57] See http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/working/tier5/youthmobilityscheme/ and *Tier 5 (Youth Mobility Scheme) of the Points-Based Scheme - Policy Guidance* (Version 07/2012).

or an academic taking part in formal exchange arrangements with UK counterparts. This may be applicable "where a university here is collaborating with an overseas university on research and may exchange personnel for some or all of the duration of the project."

Even though the visitor may be hosted by a UK HEI during their stay, this does not of itself constitute employment, which means there is no requirement for a post to be advertised. To qualify for entry to the UK under this route, an individual must among other things: (a) be well qualified in her/his own field of expertise; (b) not receive funding for their work from any UK source; (c) not engage in any work other than the academic activity for which they are being admitted; (d) not be filling a 'normal post' or 'genuine vacancy'; (e) not intend to take employment in the UK; (f) not remain in the UK for longer than 12 months; (g) be able to maintain themselves and any dependants, and meet the costs of their return home, without having recourse to public funds in the UK. Significantly, the stipulation about not being in receipt of UK funding is qualified by the concession that "payments of expenses or reasonable honoraria may be disregarded, as may payments on an exchange basis."

Recent graduates, especially those who have gained their degrees in the UK, would not normally as 'academic visitors' under this scheme, because their level of relevant expertise is likely to be considered insufficient. Also, a person who obtains leave to enter or remain as an academic visitor under these provisions is not permitted to switch into points-based-system employment.[58]

Permitted Paid Engagement Category

Also useful is a sub-set of the Special Visitor category for those undertaking 'permitted paid engagements'. This is intended to cover "a professional who has been invited to the UK for an engagement which relates to their area of expertise and/or qualifications and full time occupation overseas." The Home Office guidance specifically identifies its relevance to examiners and assessors: "individuals who are highly qualified within their own area of expertise invited by a UK Higher Education Institution or a UK based research or arts organisation to examine students, or participate and/or chair in a selection panel as part of that institution or organisation's quality assurance processes."

It also refers to "lecturers giving a one-off or a short-series of paid lectures" in their own field of expertise at the invitation of a UK HEI. Such engagements can only be for a limited period, not exceeding one month, and visitors must leave the country after completing the task(s) for which they were engaged. They can, however, receive a fee for their work.[59] This category might prove particularly helpful to UK HEIs that wish to involve collaborating partners in validation or periodic review activities relating to a jointly devised programme of study.

Business visitor category

Lastly, it is also worth noting that academic staff from an overseas institution intending to come to the UK to accompany students on a 'study abroad' programme can do so as 'business visitors'. While in the UK, they will be permitted to do "a small amount of teaching" at the university hosting their students provided that they continue to be employed and paid by their home institution and do not intend to base themselves or seek employment in the UK.[60]

[58] See http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/guidance/ecg/vat/vat12/

[59] See http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/guidance/ecg/vat/vat30/

[60] See 'Visiting professor accompanying students on a study abroad programme' at: http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/visiting/business/business-activities/

Subject to advice from their personnel teams and other specialist advisors, collaborating institutions should be able to devise staff exchange programmes that are fully compatible with the requirements of these different immigration categories. Provided partner institutions are fully aware of the various schemes outlined above, and succeed in drawing up a Collaborative Agreement (see Chapter 6) that clearly defines their respective duties as well as their aims and operational objectives, then there should be nothing in UK immigration rules to prevent the development of new TNE programmes or to prejudice the continuation of existing ones.

Opportunities for internationalisation

While this chapter has tended to focus on the mechanisms that must be used to facilitate international collaboration, it seems appropriate to end it with some insights into what can be achieved by those who successfully navigate the shoals and reefs of bureaucracy and public policy. Internationalisation includes the recruitment of overseas students and the establishment of branch campuses overseas, but can and should be more than this. Let two examples suffice. The University of Nottingham has an understanding of the internationalisation agenda that is deeply embedded in its strategic vision. As their website explains: "Our understanding of global reach goes beyond our campuses in Asia. The University's current capabilities mean we can conduct coordinated research on some of the most pressing global human concerns and social problems in three very different but complementary national contexts simultaneously. We have a growing global network of commercial partners, with each campus serving as a hub. The geographic and cultural breadth of our student body, in itself a huge asset, is telescoped into a vast distribution of graduates and alumni networks. Finally, we continue to explore what such capability means in terms of our corresponding social responsibilities."[61] Learning, scholarship, research, discovery, dissemination and the commercialisation of knowledge and innovation lie at the heart of what a university does in the 21st century and all can be conducted in an international context.

But if this is internationalisation at the macro level, it can also occur at the micro. In the wake of the earthquake and tsunami that devastated much of Eastern Japan in March 2011, De Montfort University (DMU) arranged to bring to Leicester, for a holiday, 14 students from Tohoku University who had been directly affected by the disaster in their region. Some of the Japanese students had lost family, many had been left homeless and some had been unable to return to their homes because of the fallout from the Fukushima nuclear power station. The visiting students helped to build a Japanese peace garden as part of the University's Square Mile Project; visited the National Space Centre; watched a football match at the King Power Stadium; walked in the Leicestershire countryside; enjoyed a traditional British Sunday lunch; got the chance to visit Stratford-upon-Avon and took in a West End show during a trip to London. The cost of the trip was covered by sponsorship from commercial partners such as Hewlett Packard; the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation and the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation; DMU alumni, Leicester City Football Club; the National Space Centre; local MPs and councillors; the British Museum; and the Japanese Embassy in London. DMU's International Strategy was subsequently shortlisted for a national award in part due to the Tohoku initiative. No immigration or visa problems were reported.[62]

For further information see:

UK Council for International Student Affairs at: http://www.ukcisa.org.uk

UK Border Agency at: http://www.ukba.gov.uk

The UK Government Home Office at: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk

British Council Education UK at: http://www.educationuk.org/Home

[61] See http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/aglobaluniversity/internationalisationstrategy/index.aspx

[62] See http://www.dmu.ac.uk/international/en/international-latest-news/2012/may-2012/japanese-royals-thank-university-for-earthquake-aid-to-students.aspx

Varieties of transnational education

The preceding chapter focused largely on students and staff coming to the UK as the result of a collaborative agreement between their home university and a host institution in the UK. In this section, the focus will be on the different types of trans-national programme available and in particular on the role played by the overseas partner. In the 'Information and Guidance' introduction to Chapter B10 of its new *Quality Code*, the QAA sets out the key principle that "the delivery of learning opportunities with others, wherever and however organised, should widen learning opportunities without prejudice either to the academic standard of the award or the quality of what is offered to students";[63] and it is this goal which should inform and animate best practice in each of the variants discussed below.

Branch campuses

Only a few UK universities have so far been successful in establishing branch campuses overseas, but these have generally been high profile initiatives resulting from the direct involvement of government agencies as well as support and encouragement on the part of academic partners.

CASE STUDY

The University of Nottingham began admitting students to its own facilities in Malaysia back in September 2000, and opened its Semenyih Campus (located 30 km from Kuala Lumpur) in August 2005, thus inaugurating the first purpose-built campus of a British university outside the UK. The following month, in a joint venture with the Wanli Education Group approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education, it officially launched an even more ambitious project in Zhejiang province.[64] Built on a 146-acre site, the University of Nottingham Ningbo, China currently offers 32 undergraduate and 13 postgraduate courses to over 5,000 students selected from all over China and some 40 countries around the world. Its strapline of 'Academic Excellence in the Service of Global Citizenship' is expanded into a mission statement that commits the campus to "developing subjects that combine internationally ranked teaching and research excellence with Chinese needs for internationalisation and globalisation."[65]

Indeed the University sees internationalisation as lying at the heart of both its Semenyih and Ningbo developments, and the commitment of resources for the long term implied by the establishment of a branch campus can clearly yield dividends when it comes to state recognition. Just a decade after first opening its doors to students, in 2010 the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus was granted the power to accredit its own degree programmes rather than having to seek approval from the country's Higher Education Ministry. It was also deemed 'excellent' in The Rating System for Malaysian Higher Education and is now that nation's highest ranking HE provider. Meanwhile, back in China, it was announced in 2010 that the Shanghai authorities had invited Nottingham to establish a Sino-foreign campus in their city as well.[66]

A new joint venture in collaboration with the East China University of Science and Technology, to be known as the Shanghai Nottingham Advanced Academy, was formally launched at the end of 2012 with the first students expected to enrol in autumn 2013. Primary areas for collaboration at the Academy will be in the fields of life sciences, green technology, aerospace and global food security – all of which are key strengths of the partner institutions.[67]

[63] See http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B10.aspx

[64] The University had actually begun admitting students at Ningbo in 2004.

[65] See the University of Nottingham's website at http://www.nottingham.edu.cn/en/about/index.aspx for relevant links.

[66] See http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/news/pressreleases/2010/november/shanghaicampus.aspx.

[67] See http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/news/pressreleases/2012/november/snaalaunchshanghai.aspx

CASE STUDY

Also deeply invested in Malaysia is the University of Newcastle, which in 2011 opened an international branch campus at Nusajaya in Johor to provide "globally acclaimed programmes of medical education [that are] responsive to the changing needs of the Malaysian healthcare system".[68] Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia is also working in partnership with the Royal College of Physicians to develop world-class clinical and educational training opportunities in South-East Asia.[69] The University's five-year undergraduate Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery degree was launched there in 2009 and the first cohort of students is expected to enrol on the BSc degree in Biomedical Sciences in September 2013, when opportunities for postgraduate study will also be introduced. All programmes of study will be identical to those of Newcastle's UK-based provision and lead to the award of the same degrees, thus enabling students to obtain "a reputable UK qualification, from an internationally recognised university, at a cost significantly less than that of studying in the UK."[70]

CASE STUDY

A third UK institution committed to achieving internationalisation through partnership is the University of Liverpool, which is endeavouring to create a new international network for education and research, working with leading institutions. Such partnerships are intended to go beyond simple exchange programmes or research alliances by integrating their activities through mechanisms such as the co-awarding of degrees. The first fruits of this policy came in 2004 with an agreement to set up an autonomous private university in the Suzhou Industrial Park (SIP) in collaboration with Xi'an Jiaotong University and Laureate Online Education; and in May 2006, the Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU) received formal approval from the Chinese Ministry of Education. Successful candidates on postgraduate degree programmes delivered at XJTLU receive an award from the University of Liverpool, while undergraduate degree programmes lead to a dual award: one from University of Liverpool and the other from XJTLU.[71] There are currently nearly 5,700 registered students at the new University[72] and the campus confidently expects to have 10,000 students enrolled by 2015.[73] At the same time, SIP offers opportunities for high-tech research and development, consultancy and knowledge transfer initiatives, many of which are in synergy with the University of Liverpool's research strength.[74]

Also taking the branch campus route is Middlesex University, which has been operating in Dubai since 2005 and which began teaching students at a second overseas campus in Mauritius in 2010.[75] Even more recently, the University of Southampton's South Johor Campus in Malaysia welcomed its first Mechanical Engineering students in 2012, with further programmes to follow including the University's degree in Electronic and Electrical Engineering and opportunities for PhD study as well.[76]

UK universities that are considering the establishment of campuses overseas are doing so for a variety of reasons. Some, like Nottingham and Liverpool, see it as a natural extension of their aspirations to international excellence, as tangible evidence that they are global organisations with a global reach. Others are drawn philosophically toward supporting the educational and reform agendas of developing countries and improving the lot of some of the world's most deprived people.

[68] See http://www.ncl.ac.uk/numed/about/goals.htm

[69] For more on continuing medical education, see http://www.ncl.ac.uk/numed/cme/

[70] Further information can be found at: http://www.ncl.ac.uk/numed/about/

[71] For degrees awarded, see http://www.liv.ac.uk/tqsd/XJTLU/xjtlu_brief_overview.pdf

[72] See http://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/about-us/introducing-xjtlu.html

[73] See http://www.liv.ac.uk/xjtlu/vision-strategy/index.htm

[74] For more on the research underpinning at XJTLU, see http://www.liv.ac.uk/xjtlu/research/

[75] See http://www.mdx.ac.uk/international/campuses/index.aspx and links for <Dubai> and <Mauritius>.

[76] See http://www.southampton.ac.uk/my/news/2013/03/18_opening_celebration.page

Indeed, these aims are far from being incompatible with one another. Yet while none should expect to bring home substantial profits from such engagements, all will hope to avoid incurring substantial losses and most will be looking, either directly or indirectly, to secure a modest return on their investments.

Governments that encourage such initiatives are frequently driven by the need to stimulate the provision of quality higher education in order to meet the rapid growth of domestic demand. This is a natural consequence of both emergent prosperity and the demographic reality that significant proportions of their populations are under twenty years of age. Even countries with ambitious programmes for reforming and developing their own state systems can find themselves transferring substantial financial resources abroad as those students with the ability to pay take the opportunity to study at universities overseas – flights of adventure from which some of the best and the brightest may not return.

It is highly unlikely, though, that foreign HEIs, including those from the UK, will be willing or able to establish enough branch campuses to address these problems; but many more have long and positive experience of delivering their programmes 'in country' in collaboration with local HE partners and such trans-national cooperation may be better suited to meeting the rising levels of demand. It is time, therefore, to consider the variant types of TNE presently in use. It will be noted, however, that the term 'twinning' is absent from this list. This is because its definition tends to be non-specific and can be used to describe any of the first four categories considered below.

Joint and dual degrees

The University of Liverpool is not alone in being attracted to the idea of 'co-awarding' degrees with its global partners. In fact, there are two different conceptions as to how this might best be achieved and both have been the subject of growing interest during the past decade. The term 'joint award' describes a collaborative arrangement under which two or more institutions with degree-awarding powers come together to provide a programme of study that leads to a single award (such as a diploma or degree) being made jointly by both, or all, participants. A single certificate then attests successful completion of this jointly-delivered programme, replacing the separate institutional qualifications. The term 'dual (or multiple) award' is generally used to describe an arrangement by which two or more institutions provide a jointly-delivered programme that leads to separate qualifications being awarded by each of them; though some collaborating universities, concerned by the appearance of 'double counting', have fallen back on the idea of the qualification being awarded by one or other participating institution but not by both or all.[77]

Programmes which confer joint or dual awards on students clearly offer potential benefits to providers that include both the public demonstration of their commitment to international collaboration and some obviously attractive branding opportunities; but it is less clear what students stand to gain in terms of broadening their experience that cannot be achieved by other means. Moreover, there remains considerable doubt about the legal capacity of UK HEIs to, in effect, 'pool' their degree-awarding powers and it is likely that HE institutions in other legal jurisdictions might face similar difficulties.[78] Be this as it may, the number of institutions prepared to make such awards continues to grow.

[77] This is the solution adopted, for example, by the University of Dundee's Quality Assurance Framework, for which see: http://www.dundee.ac.uk/qaf/exteachingcollaborations.htm.

[78] For a discussion of some of the legal and quality assurance issues involved, see UK Higher Education International Unit in association with Eversheds LLP, *International Partnerships: a legal guide for UK universities* (3rd edition. January 2013), pp.26-7, 38 and 79. See also *Quality Code: Managing higher education provision with others*, especially Indicators 4, 6-7 and 13-19.

Programme articulation

Less integrated than the delivery of joint or dual awards, but also far less prone to legal complications, is the development of arrangements that enable student progression between collaboration institutions. Programme 'articulation' in the international context is the process whereby an HEI in the UK evaluates the provision of an overseas partner and finds that a programme of study, or elements thereof, is of an appropriate content, level and standard to be deemed equivalent to specified components (usually completion of a year-stage) on one or more of its own programmes, thereby facilitating direct entry with advanced standing onto year two, three or four of the programme(s) concerned. This will normally involve the accumulation and transfer of 'specific credit', so that the credit achieved for approved study at the overseas institution is recognised and counted towards the academic requirements for an award at the UK partner institution.

In such an arrangement, the two separate components remain the responsibility of the respective institutions delivering them for quality assurance purposes but together contribute to the award of a single qualification. The details are written into a formal agreement whereby the awarding HEI in the UK agrees that any students who have successfully completed the specified programme of study (or components thereof) at the partner institution, and have passed all the assessments needed for the award of credit, are entitled to proceed to subsequent stages of one or more designated programmes delivered at the awarding institution. Programmes articulated in this way may either be pre-existing or else specifically designed with the express purpose of facilitating the progression of students between the collaborating partners.

Franchising

Each of the delivery models considered thus far involves the mingling in some fashion of course components developed and delivered at two or more collaborating institutions, and envisages students undertaking at least part of their studies in the UK. However, international partnership can involve the licensing of intellectual property rather than the movement of students, and may be particularly appropriate for institutions abroad that lack both degree-awarding powers and the necessary expertise to take on programme development on their own account. The process known as 'franchising' assumes an organisational relationship in which a university in the UK authorises another institution located overseas to deliver, and sometimes to assess, all or part of a programme which it has been approved for delivery on its own campus. Typically with such an arrangement, the UK institution will expect to retain direct responsibility for such things as the content of the programme, the teaching and assessment strategy and its implementation, the quality assurance regime, and indeed anything that relates to the delivery of a course leading to one of its own awards. Students will normally be deemed to have a direct contractual relationship with the awarding institution, which will consequently feel entitled to behave vigilantly in order both to protect itself from legal liability and to avoid collateral damage to its reputation.[79]

Validation

Where the overseas partner does have the internal capacity to develop high quality programmes but lacks either degree-awarding powers or else the power to make awards at a particular (e.g. postgraduate) level or in a given disciplinary area, then 'validation' might afford a viable alternative to franchising. This is a process by which assessors evaluate anything from a single module up to a full programme of study that has been developed at, and will be delivered by, a partner institution

[79] For the QAA's strictures about 'serial' franchising, where "the delivery organisation (through an arrangement of its own) offers whole programmes (franchised to it or validated by the degree-awarding body) elsewhere or assigns to another party powers delegated to it by the degree-awarding body", see *Quality Code: Managing higher education provision with others*, Indicator 8. For concerns about the potential misuse of intellectual property, see UK Higher Education International/ Eversheds LLP, *International Partnerships: a Legal Guide*, pp. 11 and 26 .

and approve it as being of an appropriate standard and quality to justify an award from their own university. In this instance, students undertaking the programme will normally have a direct contractual relationship with the overseas institution, but the UK partner will still wish to monitor both delivery and the quality of the student experience to ensure that all validation conditions are being met and that the standard of its awards is being maintained.[80]

Corporate Involvement

A further variation to the formats considered above can occur when either the UK or overseas partner in an international collaboration brings a corporate partner to the table with them. The past decade has seen a greater willingness on the part of businesses worldwide to work more closely with both regional and internationally renowned universities that possess relevant expertise. Although most frequently built around contract research or the instigation of joint research and development programmes (see Chapter 4), bonds between the corporate and higher education sectors can also be forged from the bespoke tailoring of courses designed to train staff in or for the workplace.[81]

Flexible and distributed learning

The phrase 'Flexible and Distributed Learning' is used to include both distance learning and e-learning, both of which are seen as being characterised by approaches to teaching, learning and assessment that: (a) do not require a student's place of study to be physically located within the institution whose academic award is being sought through successful completion of the programme of study; (b) do not assume that a student's programme of study is necessarily delivered directly by the awarding institution; (c) do not assume that a student is necessarily supported directly by staff of the awarding institution; (d) do not assume that a student is routinely working with other students; and (e) do not necessarily require assessment of a student's achievement to take place at the location of the awarding institution.

At first sight, delivery at a distance may seem very different to the concept of collaborative provision, the former apparently endeavouring to cut out 'the middle man' by using the internet and independent-learning materials, much as 'correspondence courses' did for earlier generations. However, it is widely recognised that distance learners require support, feedback and guidance as much as, if not more than, students who acquire their learning predominantly through face-to-face contact. While most of this can usually be provided online, perhaps supplemented by tutorials and/or summer schools on the Open University model, where transnational study is involved there is clearly a benefit to the learner if support and access to learning resources can be provided in-country by a collaborative partner.

English-language and international pathway courses

Most of the students who at present come to the UK to improve their general English-language skills are registered with dedicated language schools and colleges, rather than at universities or colleges of higher education. The language centres based at UK HEIs are largely there to support students who enrol on other programmes, through the medium of pre-sessional and in-sessional courses; but some institutions also provide specialised training at postgraduate level for people needing to develop high-end competencies. Birmingham University's Centre for English Language Studies, for example, offers an MA in TEFL/TESL that is 'intended for teachers of English who wish to upgrade their professional standing', as well as programmes in translation studies and applied linguistics.[82] Other HEIs advertise courses in English for business or academic purposes.

[80] See UK Higher Education International/ Eversheds LLP, *International Partnerships: a Legal Guide*, pp.11, 25-6; and *Quality Code: Managing higher education provision with others*, Indicators 2 and 14.

[81] For further discussion of issues around work placements, see UK Higher Education International/ Eversheds LLP, *International Partnerships: a Legal Guide*, pp. 24, 82-4, 87 and 89. Quality assurance issues around work-based learning are covered throughout *Quality Code: Managing higher education provision with others*.

[82] See http://www.cels.bham.ac.uk. TEFL stands for 'teaching English as a foreign language'; TESL stands for 'teaching English as a second language'.

Although government regulations have become more rigorous in recent years, reputable private colleges are still be able to offer language courses, including the so-called 'pathway courses' that prepare students for higher education study, by working in partnership with UK HEIs and other sponsors with 'Highly Trusted' status that are willing to sponsor their students directly.[83] In addition, an increasing number of universities have started to develop their own international pathway programmes.[84] HEIs are permitted to offer 'pre-sessional courses' to provide intensive English-language tuition or to generally prepare students for their main course of study in the UK. These courses must meet all the requirements of Tier 4, except that they do not have to lead to a recognised qualification; otherwise the student must enter the country as a Student Visitor or Child Visitor.[85]

Study abroad

Study abroad programmes have a long history, with many four-year courses in foreign languages and 'area studies' traditionally offering a year spent studying at an HEI overseas. Much of this movement has been within Europe, but American Studies programmes at UK universities have been exchanging students with partner institutions in the US for more than three decades – helped in part by the wider cultural phenomenon of 'Junior Year Abroad' programmes at those institutions.

Within the EU, the primary vehicle for promoting student mobility has been the ERASMUS programme. Established in 1987, this flagship education and training programme enables 230,000 students to study and work abroad each year. It also funds cooperation between HEIs across Europe, facilitating the movement of staff as well as students between universities.[86] In recent years, businesses too have become increasingly involved with the programme, providing work experience abroad for students and other mobility opportunities for both HE and company staff.[87] Periods of study abroad typically last from three to 12 months, and students taking part in the programme may in certain circumstances be eligible for grants to help cover the additional costs of travelling and living abroad.

The primary objectives of ERASMUS are to benefit students 'educationally, linguistically and culturally' through their experience of living and learning in other countries; to promote cooperation between institutions; and to help develop "a pool of well-qualified, open-minded and internationally experienced young people as future professionals."[88] Yet although these goals refer to a specific EU mobility scheme, they could equally stand as a justification for study abroad programmes in general. This is why so many internationally oriented universities have spent time and effort to develop them. The University of Leeds, for instance, has nearly 900 students studying abroad every year, almost half of whom are not on language programmes. Those interested are invited to 'choose from some 200 institutions from Spain to Singapore' with a view to gaining confidence, broadening their horizons, developing their skills and experiences, and thereby improving their future employability.[89]

[83] Outline information is provided in the UKBA's 'summary of the New Student Policy' at http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/news/summary-student-policy.pdf

[84] For those offered by the University for the Creative Arts, see http://www.ucreative.ac.uk/pathway; for those provided by Oxford Brookes University, see http://www.brookes.ac.uk/international/english-and-pathway-courses/

[85] UK Higher Education International/ Eversheds LLP, *International Partnerships: a Legal Guide*, p. 89.

[86] For more information about the ERASMUS programme, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/erasmus_en.htm and links to ‚ERASMUS for students>, <ERASMUS for staff> and <University Cooperation>.

[87] See http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/erasmus-for-enterprises_en.htm

[88] For further information, see http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc80_en.htm and http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/doc892_en.htm

[89] See http://studyabroad.leeds.ac.uk/outgoing

Bi-lateral cooperation between institutions can clearly be used to provide opportunities for their students to study abroad and multi-lateral arrangements can do even more to increase the choices available. With a little imagination and some good organisation, the outcomes of collaboration can be both impressive and rewarding.

International Volunteering

As well as arranging for their students to study abroad, a number of universities encourage them to participate in international volunteering activities as well. The Southampton University website, for instance, provides links to more than 20 organisations that specialise in volunteering and work placements outside the UK.[90] The Community Volunteering Service recruits, trains and helps place students and staff in volunteer placements both at home and overseas. It also liaises with external bodies to make sure that prospective volunteers have a wide range of interesting and fulfilling placements to choose from. As the website says: "International volunteering opportunities have the potential to benefit you as an individual, the organisation with which you are engaged and society at large. Increasingly, students who have greater global awareness and understanding are sought after by employers for the skills they have developed."[91]

Leeds Metropolitan University has gone even further by establishing a programme that enables both staff and students to volunteer their time and expertise in the service of partner communities overseas. Since it was piloted in 2006, around 650 individuals have taken part in a scheme which seeks to provide "affordable, safe, meaningful, challenging and rewarding experiences" for those volunteering while creating "long-lasting beneficial relationships" with overseas collaborators. The University works with a range of international partners, in some cases liaising directly with communities and in others being put in touch by an associate HEI in the country concerned which may also help with some of the arrangements. Mutual benefit and sustainability are the key themes of the programme, combined with a clear institutional commitment to promoting reflective practice and enhancing the employability skills of the student volunteers. Placements are also possible in one of a number of local projects which involve working with people from different cultures and communities within Leeds and its wider region.[92]

[90] See http://www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/volunteering/international.html

[91] See http://www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/volunteering/index.shtml and associated links.

[92] For further information about the projects being undertaken, see http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/cpv/index.htm and associated links.

Laws and regulations of partner countries

For international collaborations to succeed, it is essential that institutions are both aware of and fully comprehend the framework of legal, administrative and sometimes political constraints within which they and their prospective partners have to operate.

For instance, if they fail to understand the responsibilities placed upon awarding bodies in the UK by the QAA's quality assurance guidance, overseas partners may easily be offended by what could be seen as an overly intrusive appraisal of everything from student feedback to staff's curriculum vitae. Likewise, UK HEIs are frequently exasperated by the need to provide documentary evidence to foreign governments that they are properly accredited as higher education institutions in their own country. It is important, therefore, that both partners and prospective partners should feel able to discuss their respective positions in an open manner, the better to explain to one another the rules and regulations within which each has to operate. Compromise may not always be an option, but at least obstacles to progress can be clearly identified if the parties can sit down to discuss their difficulties in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

Like it or not, UK HEIs that wish to do business in countries overseas have no choice but to work within the regulatory structures controlling the markets they are seeking to enter, and it is always easier to do so if one has advice and guidance from local partners who understand from the inside what is required. The University of Nottingham's landmark development at Ningbo, for example, was only made possible by virtue of a locally sponsored joint venture being able to navigate successfully the demanding provisions of the Sino-Foreign Education Co-operative Law. Of course, collaborating partners will find it frustrating when a state agency asserts the right to accredit overseas qualifications and then fails to handle their joint application in a timely fashion; but at least the overseas institution will know what to do next. Dealing with government officials, quality regulators or professional and statutory bodies can be taxing in any jurisdiction; but understanding the context in which they operate is an essential prerequisite to meeting their requirements.

The other area of collaboration, separate to those mentioned in the previous chapter and worthy of a section in itself, is research. This chapter looks at the potential opportunities for overseas institutions to collaborate with the UK through research partnerships.

Research and scholarship are globally recognised hallmarks of the higher education community, and are indeed what principally distinguish it from other types of education institution. That is not to say that those employed in schools and further education colleges cannot be extremely learned in their fields of study or even active researchers contributing to the sum of human knowledge, but they do so as individuals not as a requirement of the job. Lecturers in higher education, on the other hand, cannot teach students to degree level or contribute to curriculum development without being abreast of the latest advances in their subject; and the best students, particularly at the postgraduate level, will expect to be taught by people at the forefront of their discipline, who are actively engaged in new research.

A recent survey of the global scientific landscape concluded that the world of science is becoming more interconnected and that international collaboration is on the rise. "Over a third of all articles published in international journals are internationally collaborative," its authors observed, "up from a quarter 15 years ago", and went on to identify a variety reasons for the increase: "Enabling factors such as advances in communication technology and cheaper travel have played a part, but the primary driver of most collaboration is individual scientists. In seeking to work with the best of their peers and to gain access to complementary resources, equipment and knowledge, researchers fundamentally enhance the quality and improve the efficiency of their work."[93]

While research in the sciences and, to some extent, the social sciences has long been characterised by team effort, scholarly progress in the arts and humanities has more generally been the product of solitary endeavour. But even the lone researcher is part of an international academic community in which ideas are exchanged, hypotheses are proposed and challenged, findings are reviewed and published. There is a general push across the UK's research councils to support a cross-disciplinary and more collaborative approach to working (both within the UK and internationally) and although such agendas require a leap of the imagination if they are to be successful, they will be building on international foundations that are already well established.[94]

Individual, departmental and institutional collaborations

There is no single roadmap to the setting up of successful collaborations between institutions, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the most robust and enduring relationships have tended to grow out of associations that were forged initially at a personal or departmental level. Senior managers may provide the organisational framework within which joint-working can develop, but it is the researchers themselves who must want to work together and who must be able to discern mutual benefit in so doing. There also needs to be a good fit between their respective research goals and a complementarity between the experience and expertise that each individual or team brings to the project.[95]

[93] The Royal Society, *Knowledge, Networks and Nations: Global scientific collaboration in the 21st century* (March 2011). For the quotations, see the overview at http://royalsociety.org/policy/projects/knowledge-networks-nations/report/, where the full text of the report can be downloaded:

[94] See, for example, the funding opportunities available to researchers in the arts and humanities via the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC): http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/International-research/Pages/International-research.aspx and http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Research-funding/Pages/Research-funding.aspx. For the funding available for international collaboration in medical research, see http://www.mrc.ac.uk/Fundingopportunities/Internationalopportunities/index.htm.

[95] For two excellent overviews of international research collaboration, see Colin McCraig et al., *International research collaborations in UK higher education institutions* [DIUS Research Report] (2008) at: http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/migratedD/publications/D/DIUS_RR_08_08; *International research collaboration: opportunities for the UK higher education sector* [UUK Research Report] (2008) at: http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/gradschool/about/external/publications/international-research-collaboration.pdf/view

Academics get to know of each other's work in a variety of ways that range from reading colleagues' publications to meeting them at conferences, and many successful intra-European collaborations can trace their roots back to EU-sponsored staff mobility schemes. European Union funding for research has long required bidders to work in multinational consortia and, faced with the need to identify compatible partners, many institutions chose to work with people they already knew through the operations of the Erasmus student-exchange programme, which not only facilitates student mobility but also supports university lecturers and invited business partners who want to teach or receive training abroad (see Chapter 3 and below).[96]

If this can be described as the 'bottom-up' approach, with academics forging their own international links, there has also been something of a revolution in the way that institutions promote opportunities for research cooperation 'top down'. This can be achieved in two ways: firstly, through membership in one or more multi-lateral alliances such as the League of European Research Universities (LERU), the International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU), Universitas 21 (U21), the Coimbra Group (CG) and the Worldwide Universities Network (WUN); and secondly, through the conclusion of bi-lateral agreements with selected institutional partners overseas.

Founded in 2002, LERU brings together 21 of Europe's leading research universities that share "the values of high-quality teaching in an environment of internationally competitive research";[97] it currently has Cambridge, Edinburgh, Imperial College London, Oxford and University College London as its UK affiliates. Though more focused on influencing research policy in Europe and spreading best practice than with promoting collaborative research, LERU members are undoubtedly research heavyweights on the international scene, with combined research budgets that exceed €5 billion and 50,000 PhD candidates between them.

IARU is a grouping of ten of the world's most prominent research-intensive universities including Cambridge and Oxford, and was launched in 2005 with the aim of 'addressing grand challenges facing humanity'. In pursuit of this mission, the Alliance has identified 'sustainable solutions on climate change' as one of its principal objectives. Both of its UK members are currently collaborating with international partners on major research projects that relate to ageing, longevity and health.[98]

Established in 1997 as an 'international reference point and resource for strategic thinking on issues of global significance', U21 is an international network of 24 leading research-intensive universities in sixteen countries, whose purpose is "to foster global citizenship and institutional innovation through research-inspired teaching and learning, student mobility, connecting students and staff, and wider advocacy for internationalisation." Collectively, its members enrol over 1.3 million students, employ over 180,000 people, have collective budgets of over US$25bn and enjoy an annual research grant income in excess of US$6.5 billion. Its current UK members are the Universities of Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Nottingham.[99]

[96] For an overview of the Erasmus programme, see: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc80_en.htm

[97] See http://www.leru.org/index.php/public/home/

[98] See http://www.iaruni.org/

[99] See http://www.universitas21.com/about

Founded in 1985, CG is an association of forty "long-established European multidisciplinary universities of high international standard" and is dedicated to "creating special academic and cultural ties in order to promote, for the benefit of its members, internationalisation, academic collaboration, excellence in learning and research, and service to society. It is also the purpose of the Group to influence European educational policy and to develop best practice through mutual exchange of experience."[100] It has been particularly active in developing scholarship programmes for young researchers and in promoting the exchange of staff and students.[101] Its member institutions in the UK are the Universities of Bristol, Cambridge, Edinburgh and Oxford.

From the perspective of research collaboration, perhaps the most interesting of these five multi-lateral alliances considered here is WUN, founded in 2000 as a grouping of 16 top research institutions from around the world and committed to creating "new, multilateral opportunities for international collaboration in research and graduate education. It is a flexible, dynamic organisation that uses the combined resources and intellectual power of its membership to achieve collective international objectives and to stretch international ambitions."[102] Activities include joint distributed learning courses, virtual seminars, and mobility programmes for staff and students, as well as collaborative research carried out between member institutions. Joint research activity is particularly emphasised as enabling member universities to "develop critical mass and competitive advantage and deliver research programmes of greater scale and scope than could be effectively delivered by individual institutions."[103] Collaborative research takes place across a broad range of disciplines, with nine research groups established in the Arts and Humanities, seven in Engineering, 20 in the fields of medicine, dentistry and health, 23 in science, and 26 in the social sciences. The Universities of Bristol, Leeds, Sheffield, Southampton and York make up its current UK membership and between them are actively engaged in almost all of these groups.[104]

Membership of these groups is inevitably selective and by invitation only, though WUN does encourage researchers 'to extend the geographic and cultural scope, and academic capability for specific projects beyond the boundaries of the Network'[105] and appears open to approaches from institutions that might share its values and meet its exacting criteria for closer involvement. However, the benefits which collaborative activity confers are available to any research-active HE institution through the mechanism of bi-lateral agreements. Initial links developed by individuals or departments can be successfully propagated at institutional level provided that care is taken to encourage and support newly created groups. The University of Southampton, for example, has a longstanding relationship with Xiamen University in China's Fujian province, originally taking the form of cooperation between their respective Chemistry departments and more recently expanded into a full-blown strategic partnership. Southampton also has a well-established association with Tsinghua University, with whom they have now set up a Joint Research Centre for Web Science at TU's Graduate School in Shenzhen.[106]

[100] See http://www.coimbra-group.eu/index.php?page=about-us

[101] See http://www.coimbra-group.eu/index.php?page=scholarships-projects

[102] See http://www.wun.ac.uk/about

[103] For quotations, see http://www.southampton.ac.uk/international/wun/about_wun.shtml.

[104] See http://www.wun.ac.uk/research

[105] See http://www.wun.ac.uk/about/how-become-member

[106] For all Southampton's links in China, see http://www.soton.ac.uk/ccc/links/links_with_unis.html; for the launch of the Joint Research Centre for Web Science, see http://www.ecs.soton.ac.uk/about/news/1830

Understanding the research and development spectrum

In the UK as elsewhere, some of the research undertaken by academics is intended to expand our knowledge of the world around us or to improve our understanding of the human condition. It is not expected to have any useful application, at least in the short term, but is carried out in the spirit of intellectual curiosity. But this research has played a fundamental role in driving forward new thinking and ways of understanding the world around us, making a significant and positive contribution to all areas of our society, economy and national life.

UK HEIs have an enviable record of delivering research that reaches the highest international standards. Scholars affiliated to the University of Cambridge, for example, have won more Nobel Prizes than those from any other institution in the world – some 89 in all since 1904, including 29 in physics, 26 in medicine, 21 in chemistry, nine in economics, two in literature and two for their contributions to peace.[107] While some of the work so honoured has doubtless been highly theoretical, some of it, like the discovery of penicillin, has improved the lives of millions.

Because of it enormous cost, research in the 'big science' areas of physics, astronomy and now the biological sciences has become increasingly characterized by trans-national teams using large-scale instruments and facilities. It is heavily dependent on funding from government or international agencies, and is largely the preserve of academics at an élite group of research-intensive universities. Small-scale research and development (R&D) projects, however, can be found at most HE institutions. Sometimes involving commercial partners (see below), these activities often provide a manageable first step for international collaboration, generating intellectual property with potential for commercial exploitation and practical implementation.

Applied research

By far the greater part of the research conducted by UK HEIs falls into the applied rather than the 'blue-skies' category, and is carried across a wide range of institutional types.

CASE STUDY

A good example of world-class collaboration between research-intensive universities is EpiGen, a research consortium originally established in 2006 by the University of Southampton, the MRC's Lifecourse Epidemiology Unit, the University of Auckland's Liggins Institute and AgResearch, New Zealand, and joined in 2012 by the National University of Singapore and the Agency for Science Technology and Research's Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences. The purpose of the consortium is to apply state-of-the-art techniques in the new science of epigenetics to our understanding of how early-life environment can influence future disease risk. EpiGen brings together leading international scientific expertise to focus on methods to identify those who might develop adult diseases such as obesity, Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and osteoporosis, thereby enabling early intervention and prevention; to monitor a therapy or to develop therapeutic targets; and ultimately to find ways of reversing these changes through diet, education and pharmacological treatment. Other uses include screening for toxic effects of chemicals and pesticides, and potentially forensic use. The consortium already has interest from several major food and nutritional companies, as well as technology and pharmaceutical companies.[108] Since its inception, the EgiGen Consortium has filed four international patents, published a significant number of high-quality research papers and fostered the development of early-career researchers and graduate students. It has so far attracted £8.25 million in financial support from academic-industry partnerships, which in turn has helped to access other sources of public funding. For instance, it was knowhow and technology developed by the consortium that led to the establishment by the National Institute for Health of Southampton's £9.6 million Biomedical Research Unit in 2011.

[107] These are listed on the University of Cambridge website at: http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/research-at-cambridge/nobel-prize-winners. Trinity College alone has 32 Nobel Prize winners, the most of any college in the University.

[108] See http://www.southampton.ac.uk/ris/news/Newsletter/current%20edition/May%2009/epigen.html

CASE STUDY

At the University of Edinburgh, researchers in genetic epidemiology and public health have been working in collaboration with research teams at Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, Peking University and the Nossal Institute of Global Health, Melbourne. It has been discovered that pneumonia is currently the leading cause of death among Chinese children. However, the study also predicts that complications caused by premature birth will soon become the leading cause of childhood death in China as increased access to hospital treatment cuts the number of pneumonia fatalities. The research published in *The Lancet*[109], was the first to make detailed Chinese health information available in the English language and was made possible by the recent digitisation of Chinese health research reports. The data confirm that China has already met the fourth of the United Nations Millennium Goals[110], which aims to reduce mortality in under-fives by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015.

CASE STUDY

De Montfort University in Leicester (DMU) is one of the highest performing modern universities for research, with indicative funding from HEFCE of £4.3 million in 2013-14 and a further £10 million annually consistently secured from other research-funding bodies. The academic excellence of the University was confirmed in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), where 43 per cent of its research was rated as 'internationally excellent' or 'world-leading'. DMU enjoys research partnerships with 62 universities worldwide, including Bauman Moscow State Technical University, Texas A&M and St Petersburg State University of Technology and Design.[111] Recent international research highlights have included the DMU Confucius Institute to promote Chinese language and culture, support Chinese teaching, facilitate cultural exchanges, and to showcase the link between creativity and technology. The Institute has been developed in partnership with the University of Science and Technology Beijing, one of China's prestigious 211 Project institutions, to promote world class teaching and research, and also benefits from the contribution made by Hong Kong-based international business conglomerate Sunwah.[112] DMU has also recently announced its involvement in the Human Brain Project, a flagship €1 billion EU research programme that seeks to develop a large-scale ICT infrastructure for understanding the brain and its diseases, and for translating this knowledge into new computing technologies. This infrastructure is expected to stimulate a radical acceleration of research and will help to catalyze a new culture of global collaboration in neuroscience, medicine and computing.[113]

Other post-1992 universities have also developed significant research profiles that involve collaboration with international partners.

CASE STUDY

The University of Plymouth, for instance, with £6.5 million of HEFCE research funding in 2013-14, is committed to promoting international activity and collaborations, and to building strong links and networks with partners in the Asia-Pacific region, South Asia, the Middle East, Europe and North America. It believes that "International partnerships are fundamental to building and sustaining a competitive edge and to ensuring that staff and students benefit from internationalisation in a global environment." Plymouth actively seeks to "identify mechanisms to encourage and promote greater engagement by leading researchers from other countries within the university and the [South-West] region" and to "promote the use of seed-corn funding to develop partnerships and networks."[114]

[109] See http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(10)60060-8/abstract

[110] See http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals

[111] For an overview of De Montfort's research profile, see http://www.dmu.ac.uk/research

[112] See http://www.dmu.ac.uk/about-dmu/news/2013/february/de-montfort-university-to-open-confucius-institute-promoting-chinese-language-and-culture.aspx

[113] See http://www.humanbrainproject.eu/index.html

[114] To see these international commitments (Key Theme 6) in the context of the institution's wider research agenda, see University of Plymouth, *Research and Innovation Strategy, 2009-2012* (Apr 2009) at: http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/files/extranet/docs/PGS/RESEARCH&INNOVATIONstrategy_2009_12.pdf.

Positioned between the élite research institutions and the research-active modern universities are the bulk of traditional 'red brick' HEIs, more or less research intensive in their missions, many of whom have international collaboration as a key theme in their research strategies.

CASE STUDY

The University of Ulster is the lead UK partner[115] in a high-profile collaborative research project with seven research institutes in India led by IIT Madras. The India-UK Advanced Technology Centre (IU-ATC) is "responding to the growing global demand for affordable and efficient broadband by researching new technologies to meet the needs of the emerging digital economy."[116] Established in 2009 and funded by the UK's Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, the Government of India's Department of Science and Technology, and industrial partners in both countries, IU-ATC is now the largest India-UK ICT research collaboration, employing 200 scientists in both countries, and in 2012 attracted a further £10 million of investment that will "allow the Centre to focus its efforts to develop low-cost solutions for rural access to broadband, improved use of available spectrum as well as applications for rural health monitoring, emergency and disaster communications, social TV-Virtual Classrooms and other services. The ultimate aim of the IU-ATC is to develop solutions that can scale to benefit the lives of millions of users as well as the Digital Economy in both the UK and India."[117]

CASE STUDY

The Leeds Social Science Institute (LSSI) at the University of Leeds has established partnerships with major international research centres and institutes with a view to strengthening comparative research in the fields of population change and equality, diversity and security. With collaborators based in Europe, Australia, China, India and the United States, LSSI is currently developing further international research ventures including an international journal and joint grant applications.[118]

CASE STUDY

At the University of Cardiff, members of the Cardiff Institute of Infection and Immunity conduct research that promotes understanding of the immune system. Their activities span fundamental biology and translational medicine and are geared towards improvements in both the diagnosis and therapy of infection, inflammation, autoimmunity and cancer. Local, national and international collaborations support interactions with basic scientists, clinicians and the pharmaceutical sector. These networks link multiple centres around Wales (including hospitals, research institutes, general practice and trials units); the rest of the UK, via the Medical Research Council's Stratified Medicine initiative and the Severnside Alliance for Translational Research (which links Cardiff and Bristol); across Europe through EU Framework Programme initiatives such as Network of Excellence and Collaborative Project awards and a Marie Curie Initial Training Network); and around the world through visiting scholars, post-doctoral fellows and joint appointments with Monash University in Australia. Such partnerships are leading to novel drug discovery and development, improved patient stratification and an understanding of disease progression.[119]

[115] The other eight UK partner institutions are: the University of Surrey, Lancaster University, Queen Mary, University of London, Southampton University, University of St Andrews, University College London, University of Bristol, and the University of Cambridge. The six other Indian partners are: IIT Delhi, IIT Mumbai, IIT Mandi, IIT Kanpur, IIT Hyderabad, and IISc Bangalore.

[116] See http://news.ulster.ac.uk/releases/2010/5255.html

[117] See http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/newsevents/news/2012/Pages/indiaukict.aspx

[118] See http://www.lssi.leeds.ac.uk/about/

[119] For further information about the Institute, see http://medicine.cf.ac.uk/infect-immun/

These are, of course, only a few instances chosen from across the range of HEIs in the UK to illustrate the impressive amount of research activity currently being undertaken by UK HEIs in collaboration with overseas institutions. They should suffice, however, to demonstrate the real potential for developing productive research partnerships, either as the prime focus or an added dimension of almost any international collaborative agreement.

Applying jointly for funding with international partners

Most academic research in the UK, whether collaborative or otherwise, is made possible by grant funding. Each year roughly £3 billion is provided by the UK government via the seven Research Councils for project-based research.[120] The rest comes from the European Union through its Framework Programmes and Structural Funds;[121] or from the private sector, both through charitable foundations such as the Wellcome Trust;[122] and directly from industry and commerce.

Consequently, HEIs contemplating international research collaboration need to think carefully about their respective sources of funding and how best to make them compatible. In general, UK funding bodies will only support the activities of research teams at UK institutions, though in some circumstances this might include the temporary employment of a researcher from an overseas partner institution. Collaborating international partners will therefore need to have access to complementary sources of research funding in order to secure their own participation.

The UK Research Councils run a number of schemes in support of activities that foster international collaboration. With a focus on initiating or further the development of long-term relationships between researchers in the UK and another country, their objectives include the establishment of partnership links between research institutions, the improvement of existing links between research groups and the extension of disciplinary networks. They also encourage individual researchers from overseas to undertake research in Britain and UK researchers to spend time abroad. Most importantly, they aim to make it simpler for UK academics to collaborate with their preferred research partners around the world by supporting enabling activities and reducing barriers. One potential barrier to international collaboration is the so-called 'double jeopardy' problem, where a proposed joint project gains approval in one country but not in another. To prevent this, Research Councils UK (RCUK), the overarching body, works with funding partners overseas to minimise this risk, and has developed a flexible range of funding mechanisms that aim to build partnerships from first contact to large collaborative programmes.[123]

At the national level, RCUK has developed a number of Cross Council Research Programmes, multi-disciplinary programmes of research, which aim to address global-level research challenges over the next 10 to 20 years. Current themes are in areas such as environmental change, lifelong health and wellbeing, energy, and dealing with global uncertainties in a rapidly changing world.[124]

Other organisations with a remit to help promote overseas research partnerships include the Royal Society and the British Academy. The International Exchanges Scheme run by the former is intended for "scientists in the UK who want to undertake a collaboration with scientists overseas through either a one-off visit or bilateral travel." The scheme covers all areas of the life and physical sciences,

[120]These are: the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC); the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC); the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC); the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC); the Medical Research Council (MRC); the Natural environment Research Council (NERC); and the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC). Further details can be found by following links on the website of RCUK at: http://www.rcuk.ac.uk

[121]For Framework Programmes, see http://cordis.europa.eu/home_en.html; for Structural Funds, see http://www.international.ac.uk/policy/eu-policy-and-initiatives/eu-policy-structural-funding.aspx

[122]See http://www.wellcome.ac.uk

[123]See http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/international/funding/Pages/home.aspx and follow the links to <International funding opportunities>, <Funding international collaboration> and <Funding international collaboration through grants>.

[124]See http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/xrcprogrammes/Pages/home.aspx

including engineering, but excluding clinical medicine. There is also a cost-share programme for those intending to collaborate with partners in Taiwan, France, Ireland, China or Russia. Although the sums of money are relatively small (currently a maximum of £12,000 over two years), they should in most cases be sufficient to facilitate mobility of the key staff needed to design a collaborative project and draw up a fully costed research proposal to be submitted for more substantive funding from other sources.[125]

The British Academy's International Partnership and Mobility Scheme "aims to support the development of partnerships between the UK and other areas of the world where research excellence would be strengthened by new, innovative initiatives and links." It currently funds one-year and three-year partnerships up to a maximum of £10,000 per year between UK scholars and their counterparts in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, South Asia, East Asia and South-East Asia. Awards may cover any branch of the humanities or social sciences, and "are intended to focus on collaborative research on a specific theme of mutual interest, rather than purely on establishing networks."[126]

The EU also offers a range of opportunities for trans-national collaborative research. These are provided currently through the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7), the largest funding programme of its kind in the world, with €8.1 billion available for research in 2013 under the final and largest ever package of calls under this present iteration. Starting in 2014, 'Horizon 2020' – the new Framework Programme for Research and Innovation -- will succeed FP7 as the main financial vehicle supporting European R&D. Running from 2014 to 2020 with a proposed €80 billion budget (a 46% increase over its predecessor), the new programme will form a key part of the EU's overall drive to create new growth and jobs across the continent. Among other objectives, it aims to strengthen the Europe's position in science with a dedicated budget of €24.6 million. This will provide a boost to world-class research, including an increase in funding of 77% for the very successful European Research Council. It will also provide €31.7 million to help address major societal concerns shared by all European countries, such as climate change, developing sustainable transport and mobility, making renewable energy more affordable, ensuring food safety and security, and coping with the challenges of an ageing population. International cooperation is expected be an important cross-cutting priority of this exciting new programme.[128]

Split-site PhDs as routes to research collaboration

A particularly innovative mechanism for increasing collaborative research while providing enhanced opportunities for international students has been the development of the 'split-site' PhD. This enables a postgraduate student to obtain the degree of an overseas university while spending only a part of her/his time researching at that institution; the rest of the time is spent researching at a partner institution in the country of origin. Key to the success of such arrangements will be the attention paid to designing and supervising the student's programme of research, and this in turn will be dependent on the establishment of mutual confidence, excellent communications and compatible facilities and expertise between researchers at both the sponsoring universities. Minimum residency requirements in the UK vary and a minimum of twelve months spent in Britain (not necessarily continuous) would not be unusual. Some, though, are much shorter. De Montfort University, for example, allows overseas students to enrol under the 'six-week rule' whereby students having access to appropriate research facilities and supervision in their own country must spend at least six weeks of every year at DMU in Leicester.

[125]See http://royalsociety.org/grants/schemes/international-exchanges/

[126]See http://www.britac.ac.uk/funding/guide/intl/International_Partnership_and_Mobility.cfm

[127]See http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm

[128]See http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/index_en.cfm?pg=h2020. The new programme is still under negotiation within the European Parliament and the EU Commission, with final agreement and approval of the proposed budget expected in summer 2013.

In the case of research degree programmes offered by one or more delivery organisations, consideration should also be given to establishing a contract with the student, expressly to clarify the responsibilities of the different parties (including the student) and what each is expected to do. A 'Cotutelle agreement', for example, is an arrangement by which a PhD student is jointly supervised, typically by supervisors from different awarding bodies and in different countries.[129] Although such doctoral programmes could in principle be the subject of a joint or dual award (see Chapter 3), most of those developed to date lead upon successful completion to the award of a degree from the British partner institution.

CASE STUDY

One conspicuous exception to this norm is the 'U21 Jointly-Awarded PhD Project' in which 14 of the group's members, including all four from the UK, have recently developed a scheme under which two partner universities create a tailor-made programme of study for the student, taking their specific research needs into account and enabling close collaboration between the two institutions. The student has a supervisor in each location but graduates with a single degree awarded for one PhD thesis. The project "aims to foster the internationalisation of graduate research programmes and enhance student mobility and exchange", thereby enhancing considerably students' research and employment opportunities on a global scale. As Birmingham University's website explains: "Collaborative degree programmes lead to a more sustainable type of relationship than many other internationalisation strategies and bring important academic benefits, including: knowledge transfer and sharing of research, learning and resources; international research collaboration; improved employment prospects for students; enhanced recruitment of excellent graduate students, and access to additional sources of student financial support." Participants also benefit directly by experiencing "two different high-quality research environments and cultures, [the] training and facilities of two research-intensive universities, the added value of international networking and a head start in future career planning and professional development."[130]

Knowledge transfer and capacity building

UK higher education has long experience of equipping businesses to understand and implement the new technologies and techniques that are constantly being developed at the forefront of research, and this process of 'knowledge transfer' is now seen increasingly as having a key role to play in improving the effectiveness of the UK's international development effort as well. As we have already seen, a number of research-intensive universities are extremely active in the fields of climate change, health care and sustainable agriculture and many more possess expertise in the low-energy, low-carbon technologies that are of particular importance to the transitional economies of the developing world.

[129]See QAA, *UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality. Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others.* (2012), pp.23 and 46.

[130]See http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/collaborate/universitas21.aspx; and for links to the memorandum of understanding establishing the programme and 'Guidelines from U21 for Students and Supervisors', see http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/graduateschool/newmodelphd/u21jointphd.aspx

CASE STUDY

A good example of what can be achieved is provided by the new London International Development Centre (LIDC). Made possible by an investment of £3.7 million from HEFCE's Strategic Development Fund, the Centre is a multi-disciplinary collaboration between six University of London colleges: Birkbeck, the Institute of Education, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the Royal Veterinary College, the School of Oriental and African Studies and the School of Pharmacy. As well as the ability to draw upon the range and depth of expertise at these six specialist institutions, LIDC will also be working in partnership with researchers, policymakers and practitioners in Africa, Asia, and other low- and middle-income regions. In his keynote address at the launch event in April 2010, the then Secretary of State for International Development was clear about the importance of this collaborative dimension: "Only by working together can we ensure that we translate research findings into knowledge that can used to good effect in those countries most in need." The value of adopting an inter-disciplinary approach was also stressed by the Director: "This Centre brings together a uniquely large and diverse community of natural scientists and social scientists and their respective development partners which will contribute innovative, inter-disciplinary research, teaching and capacity building programmes towards the achievement of international development goals."[131]

Impressive as this commitment of research resources undoubtedly is, knowledge transfer and 'capacity building' should not be regarded as the sole preserve of large-scale centres such as LIDC. Most UK HEIs are used to working with governmental agencies at the national, regional and local levels and have much to contribute in the international sphere as well, especially if they can build constructive long-term relationships with overseas development partners. The opportunities are there to be seized.

The commercialisation of collaborative research

In conclusion, let us consider the financial benefits that can accrue to HEIs as a result of successful collaborative research. While most institutions are naturally keen to protect their intellectual property (see Chapter 6), the effective exploitation of R&D outcomes can often depend on combining the results with those achieved from work undertaken elsewhere, either using a different approach or a complementary skill set. Some of that work will almost certainly be taking place at institutions located overseas, by researchers with outstanding expertise who nonetheless lack the experience, infrastructure and connections needed to bring their discoveries and inventions to market. Likewise, UK-based researchers can often best find markets in Asia, Africa and the Americas by working with counterparts who understand those societies from the inside.

A few clicks on the website of almost any UK HEI will quickly find a list of the prominent, often multinational companies with which that institution is already in partnership. The potential for developing multi-lateral, trans-national collaborations between HEIs in different countries and their respective commercial partners has yet to be fully explored, but is likely to be vast. Care of course needs to be taken to ensure that HEIs do not exclude themselves from potentially lucrative cooperation with business, either by harbouring unrealistic expectations of what their research discoveries are actually worth or by delaying commercial exploitation with inappropriate bureaucracy.[132]

By insisting on their wider social responsibilities, universities and colleges can also exert a positive public influence on corporate behaviour. In 2009, for instance, Edinburgh became the first UK HEI to help make medicines available cheaply in the developing world by only licensing its research to those pharmaceutical companies willing to provide life-saving drugs to poorer communities at cost price.[133] Clearly, the research, commercial and international development agendas do not have to be mutually exclusive.

[131] All quotations are from http://www.london.ac.uk/797.html where further details can be found.

[132] See, for example, http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/mar/12/business-research-spin-outs

[133] For further details see http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2009/apr/26/cheaper-medicines-edinburgh-university

Chapter 5: Quality assurance in teaching and research

The UK higher education sector is large and diverse. Its constituent institutions differ in size, subject focus, research interests, infrastructure and priorities. This heterogeneity is a key strength of the system, as it enables the sector to meet the varying needs of different types of student and to cover a wide range of institutional missions.

There is no national curriculum in the UK. Instead HEIs develop their own programmes of study, often in conjunction with employers and professional bodies, so that currently there are more than 50,000 different courses on offer.[134] Within this context, quality assurance is a responsibility the HE sector takes very seriously. A national system based on the principle of peer review ensures that both the quality and standards of awards are broadly consistent (not equal or identical) across the sector. This national system, described in detail below, defines the academic standards required – that is, the level of achievement a student has to reach to gain a qualification – as well as the academic quality required – that is, how well the learning opportunities made available by the university help students to achieve their award.

As HEIs in the UK are autonomous institutions, each is primarily responsible for maintaining the quality of the education it provides, and the standards of the qualifications it offers. While they are not owned or managed by the state, almost all institutions receive government funding, distributed by the different Funding Councils for England, Wales and Scotland, and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland. These funding bodies have a statutory obligation to ensure that the higher education they fund is of good quality.

They meet this obligation through an independent body, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA),[135] which reviews and reports on how well UK universities and colleges set and maintain their academic quality and standards, and supports these institutions through enhancement activities. The review process varies somewhat in different parts of the UK. In England, for example, Institutional Review teams make judgments in the areas of academic standards, quality of student learning opportunities, information about the learning opportunities, and the enhancement of quality. Where a review team makes a judgment of 'requires improvement to meet' or 'does not meet' UK expectations in one or more areas of the review, the report will be published and a formal programme of follow-up activity will be instituted to address the recommendations of the review. Each funding body has its own policy on unsatisfactory quality which could lead, ultimately, to the removal of funding.

As major funders of higher education, the UK's governments, like state authorities everywhere, take a keen interest in the continuing quality and standards of their HEIs. In recent years, this has led to public and political debate as well as extensive media coverage. Universities and colleges have participated fully in this debate, taking steps to demonstrate the rigour of the UK's quality assurance model. The sector has also publicised how it responds to legitimate concerns.

[134] See http://www.ukcoursefinder.com/

[135] See http://www.qaa.ac.uk. For a general introduction to how the UK's quality assurance system works, see http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Quality%20Code%20General%20introduction%20Dec11.pdf. Also useful is: QAA, Self-Evaluation Report of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education: External Review for Confirmation of Full Membership of ENQA (March, 2013), available at: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/ENQA-self-evaluation-report-13.pdf

Assuring the quality and standards of taught programmes

The current UK system for assuring quality and standards is long-established – indeed, it has influenced parallel developments worldwide[136] – and is based on seven key features:

- Independent external review of universities by the QAA, leading to published reports;
- The *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* – developed by the QAA in consultation with the HE sector;[137]
- HEIs' own internal systems for maintaining quality and standards, including the use of external examiners at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels;
- Engagement with more than 50 professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs);
- Engagement with a wide range of relevant stakeholders, including students and employers;
- Mechanisms to support improvements in quality, such as sharing good practice and developing enhanced professionalism in teaching;
- Measures to address student complaints.

Let us consider each of these briefly in turn.

Independent external review[138]

All universities and higher education colleges in the UK subscribe to the QAA. Its reviews take a slightly different form in different parts of the UK but include: making regular visits to HEIs and Further Education (FE) Colleges offering HE; publishing reports on the confidence that can be placed in each institution's ability to maintain standards and quality, provide appropriate information and enhance opportunities for learning; following up any areas which need attention to ensure that HEIs take satisfactory steps to address any shortcomings; and providing information to the UK funding bodies.

Assessments of collaborative arrangements between UK HEIs and overseas organisations[139] that lead to the award of degrees by the UK institutions have since 2011 been undertaken as part of the 'institutional review' process wherever practicable; however, separate 'Audits of Collaborative Provision' may still be used in situations where the collaborative arrangements are too extensive or too complex to be appraised in this manner.[140]

Quality Code

The QAA has worked with the HE sector to develop a set of nationally agreed reference points, known as the *Quality Code,*[141] which institutions use to guide their policies for maintaining academic standards and quality. These give all institutions a shared starting point for setting, describing and assuring the quality and standards of their HE programmes. It sets out the 'Expectations' that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet in designing and delivering their programmes

[136]See http://www.qaa.ac.uk/International/Pages/default.aspx for an overview of the QAA's work outside the UK and links to their monthly newsletter *Quality Update International.*

[137]See http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/quality-code-brief-guide.pdf for a simple introduction to 'the Quality Code'.

[138]From 2013-14, QAA will be launching a new process of Higher Education Review (HER), a more risk-based approach to the quality assurance of higher education in England and Northern Ireland. Reviews under the new method will begin in January 2014 with a final version of the explanatory handbook expected to become available during the summer of 2013. For further information on the development of HER, see http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Newsroom/Consultations/Pages/Higher-Education-Review.aspx. Further details of the new approach will be made available at www.qaa.ac.uk shortly and queries about it should be addressed to international@qaa.ac.uk

[139]Collaborative activities between UK HEIs and other UK-based partners are subject to precisely the same process of assessment.

[140]See http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/Pages/Audit-collaborative-provision.aspx

[141]See http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/Pages/default.aspx

of study, and a series of 'Indicators' which HE providers have agreed reflect sound practice, and through which they can demonstrate that they are meeting the relevant Expectations.[142]

Part A of the *Quality Code* is concerned with defining "the minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award" and incorporates the previously distinct frameworks for higher education qualifications, subject benchmark statements and programme specifications. It also provides an introduction to the role that various forms of externality play in the assurance of standards and quality in UK HEIs, and introduces the Foundation Degree qualification benchmark.[143]

Part B of the *Quality Code* supersedes the various parts of the Code of *practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* which was developed and used by the QAA between 1998 and 2011, and adds new chapters on 'Learning and teaching', 'Enabling student development and achievement' and 'student engagement'. Of particular relevance to collaboration with international partners is Chapter B10: 'Managing higher education provision with others'.[144]

Part C of the *Quality Code*, which focuses on the information that HEIs need to provide for students and other interested parties, also draws on aspects of the former *Code of practice* and makes reference throughout to other Parts and Chapters of the *Quality Code* as appropriate. It sets out to respect "the autonomy of higher education providers, while recognising that this may be curtailed by various legislative and regulatory requirements to which they are subject. It recognises that differences in mission, size, organisational structure, range of provision and the nature of the student body will determine a provider's intended audiences and the preferred means of communicating information." It is therefore not concerned so much with "the mechanisms used to produce information, nor the media chosen to communicate it, but with the quality of the information in terms of whether it is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy."[145]

Internal systems

UK HEIs continually assess their courses and systems to ensure that students are properly supported, and that the courses stay up to date. They do this in a variety of ways: for example, by making sure that new courses meet the right standards and will be supported by high quality teaching; Programme Approval Panels, usually involving external experts, assess whether proposed new courses are in line with the relevant quality frameworks, subject benchmark statements and programme specifications. Institutions also review and monitor existing courses on a regular basis, using feedback from students, employers and recent graduates where appropriate. Steps are also taken to regulate how student work is assessed so as to make sure standards are maintained. Particular importance is attached to the use of external examiners – experts drawn from other HEIs or relevant professional practice – to advise on standards and to benchmark student performance by means of full participation in both the examinations process and the assessment of coursework.

Students are also increasingly involved in all the mechanisms by which UK HEIs manage quality and standards, from internal and external review to membership of the QAA Board. QAA currently has a pool of more than 100 student reviewers who participate in institutional reviews of universities and colleges across the UK.

[142]See QAA, *UK Quality Code for Higher Education: General Introduction* (2011), pp.3-4 – online at: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Quality%20Code%20General%20introduction%20Dec11.pdf

[143]See QAA, *UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards* (2012). This is accessible online at: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/Pages/UK-Quality-Code-Part-A.aspx

[144]See QAA, *UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality* (2012). This is accessible online at: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/Pages/Quality-Code-Part-B.aspx

[145]See QAA, *Quality Code for Higher Education. Part C: Information about higher education provision* (2012). This is accessible online at: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Part-C.pdf

In recent years, HEIs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have been required to provide basic information about every course they offer to a national website.[146] This includes a profile of each institution; an analysis of the student body; the qualifications and UCAS points needed for admission to any particular programme of study; the employment prospects for graduates; and a detailed breakdown of what students did or did not like about their courses and institutions. The student satisfaction data are collected annually through a process known as the National Student Survey (NSS) and are much more objective and comprehensive than the remarks posted on 'whistle-blowing' sites or found in internet blogs.[147]

In response to a growing interest in the extent to which academic programmes of study promote students' employability and earning power, HEIs are also required to publish Key Information Sets (KIS) to help prospective students anticipate their employment prospects after a particular course of study.[148] KIS data is intended to provide them with "access to robust, reliable and comparable information in order to help them make informed decisions about what and where to study."[149]

Engagement with PSRBs

Employers in the UK are often involved in designing and reviewing higher education courses, and UK HEIs work with a large number of PSRBs to ensure that their graduates are properly prepared for employment. These include organisations such as the Health Professions Council, the Architects Registration Board, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Solicitors Regulation Authority and the Engineering Council. For those professions regulated by law, only those graduating from courses accredited by the relevant body – the General Medical Council in the case of medicine – are given a 'licence to practise'. Wherever practicable, every effort is made to rationalise the oversight of HE providers by these different bodies, and to reduce the regulatory burden that might otherwise result from uncoordinated activity. Joint action between PSRBs and the QAA is particularly helpful in the development of TNE, reviews of UK collaborative provision overseas and the resolution of problems arising with respect to the international recognition of UK degrees. The PSRB Forum was established in 2008 as a joint venture between QAA and the UK Inter-Professional Group and is intended to provide an opportunity for representatives of PSRBs to share ideas and experiences and discuss areas of mutual interest with QAA, with a view to "sharing good practice and achieving economy of effort".[150]

Engagement with other stakeholders

The QAA also consults and works with a wide range of other stakeholder groups who have an interest in the quality of UK higher education, and encourages individual HEIs to do the same. These include: higher education staff, students (both current and potential), employers, government bodies, the four HE funding councils, and the European and international HE sectors. These interactions not only facilitate the sharing of information and experience, but also help to ensure that UK higher education remains aware of and responsive to the multiple communities which it exists to serve.

[146]The information can be accessed at: http://unistats.direct.gov.uk

[147]Final-year undergraduates at all publicly funded HEIs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and at participating HEIs in Scotland are invited to take part in the NSS. In England, FE colleges with directly funded higher education students are also eligible to participate. The 2012 survey made public the views of some 287,000 students. See http://www.thestudentsurvey.com for information about the 2013 survey.

[148]See http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/Pages/employability.aspx

[149]For more information about KIS, see http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lt/publicinfo/kis/

[150] See http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Partners/PSRBs/Pages/default.aspx

Supporting improvements in quality

UK HEIs are committed to learning from their own experience, and that of other institutions, as an essential prerequisite to improving their offer to students. They do this by listening to those who take their courses; by responding positively to feedback from the NSS; and by availing themselves of the support provided by national bodies such as the Higher Education Academy,[151] the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education[152] and the QAA itself. All three are independent bodies which support universities and colleges in their aim to enhance quality in higher education through providing professional development for teachers, managers and administrators.

Addressing complaints

Student satisfaction is consistently high in UK higher education, with the latest results of the National Student Survey showing an 85 per cent overall satisfaction rate among undergraduates at participating universities and colleges, and a further 8 per cent of students who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. This said, there are robust systems in place at all HEIs to respond to complaints. Almost all legitimate grievances are addressed within the institution concerned; but where the internal procedures are exhausted without a satisfactory outcome being achieved, students have free access to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator in England and Wales, the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman in Scotland and Boards of Visitors in Northern Ireland.[153] Moreover, if there is sufficient documentary evidence to warrant further enquiry, the QAA will investigate any significant causes for concern identified to it by HE sector bodies, internal 'whistleblowers' or indeed by any member of the public, and will publish its findings.[154]

Evaluating the quality and impact of research

British research is of world-class quality and UK universities and research institutes have produced 44 Nobel Prize winners in the last 50 years; there have been 69 UK-born Nobel laureates in the categories of chemistry, physics and medicine since 1901, more than from any country except the United States.[155] A 2009 study showed that the UK produces 7.9 per cent of the world's academic papers and 14.4 per cent of the 1 per cent most highly cited. Its research productivity is among the highest in the world: in the UK, academics produce 32 papers for every billion US$ of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).[156]

Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)

For more than 20 years, the quality of research carried out in the UK higher education sector has been assessed through a formalised process, based on expert peer review, known as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).[157] Undertaken jointly by the four UK higher education funding bodies, six RAEs took place between 1986 and 2008.

The RAE was a discipline-based process in which judgments on the quality of research were made by researchers and experts active in that discipline. Its main aim was to produce quality profiles for each submission of research activity made by UK HEIs. In the last RAE, conducted in 2008, each academic discipline was assigned to one of 67 units of assessment (UOAs). The submitted work was assessed by separate sub panels for each UOA, comprising more than 1,000 members drawn from

[151] See http://www.heacademy.ac.uk

[152] See http://www.lfhe.ac.uk

[153] For the OIA, see http://www.oiahe.org.uk; for the SPSO, see http://www.spso.org.uk; and for Boards of Visitors, see http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Complaints/concerns/Pages/What-to-do-if-we-cannot-investigate-your-concern.aspx .

[154] See http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Complaints/Pages/default.aspx for more information about QAA's 'Concerns Procedure'.

[155] For a full list of UK Nobel Laureates, see http://nobelprize.org

[156] Evidence Ltd. for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, *International comparative performance of the UK research base* (September 2009), p. 4. This report, the sixth undertaken by Evidence, is available online at: http://www.dius.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/migratedd/publications/i/icpruk09v1_4.pdf

[157] See http://www.rae.ac.uk

higher education institutions and the international research community, working under the guidance of 15 main panels. All work submitted to a UOA was classified into four levels of quality, defined in terms of originality, significance and rigour as 'world-leading' (4*); 'internationally excellent' (3*); 'internationally recognised' (2*); or 'nationally recognised' (1*). An 'unclassified' category recorded work which fell below this standard. A quality profile was then drawn up for every institutional submission to show the proportion of research activity found at each level.

For the 2008 RAE, 2,344 submissions were made by 159 higher education institutions. The world-class standing of UK research was demonstrated by the results, which showed that:

- 54 per cent of the research submitted was either 'world-leading' (17 per cent at 4*) or 'internationally excellent' (37 per cent at 3*);
- 87 per cent of the research submitted was of international quality (taking the top three grades together);
- 150 of the 159 UK institutions who made submissions had some work of world-leading quality;
- 49 institutions had research of the highest quality in all their submissions.

Research activity submitted included strategic, basic, applied and inter-disciplinary research across the whole of the UK. The results were consistent with other benchmarking data which indicate that the UK maintains second place to the US globally in major subject areas.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the funding of research in the UK is selectively allocated on the basis of performance, and the results of the 2008 RAE are now being used to allocate more than £1.5 billion annually for research infrastructure in the UK's universities and colleges.

The Research Excellence Framework (REF)

Commencing in 2014, the RAE is due to be replaced by a new system: the Research Excellence Framework (REF). The REF will consist of a single framework for the funding and assessment of research across all subjects. The quality of research outputs will continue to be the primary factor used in the assessment, as with the RAE, with judgments being made by expert panels against international standards of excellence.

During 2008-09, HEFCE conducted a pilot exercise to test and develop bibliometric indicators of research quality for use in the REF. Twenty-two UK HEIs took part, covering 35 units of assessment from the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise. The pilot exercise concluded that citation information was not sufficiently robust to be used formulaically or as a primary indicator of quality in the REF, but that there was scope for such data to inform and enhance the process of expert review.[158]

More controversially, the 'impact' of research on the wider society will also be included among the assessment criteria, alongside 'outputs' and 'environment'. The assessment of impact will be based on expert review of case studies submitted by HEIs. "Case studies may include any social, economic or cultural impact or benefit beyond academia that has taken place during the assessment period, and was underpinned by excellent research produced by the submitting institution within a given timeframe. Submissions will also include information about how the unit has supported and enabled impact during the assessment period." The weighting of this 'impact' measure will eventually be 25 per cent but will be reduced to 20 per cent for the 2014 exercise because its use at that stage

[158] See http://www.ref.ac.uk/background/bibliometrics/

will still be 'developmental'. The assessment of research 'outputs' will account for 65 per cent and 'environment' will account for 15 per cent of the overall assessment outcomes in 2014, and these weightings will apply to all units of assessment.[159]

The primary outcome of the assessment will be an overall quality profile awarded to each submission, showing the proportion of the submission that meets each point on a five-point scale (1* to 4* plus unclassified). The deadline for submissions will be 29 November 2013. These will then be assessed by the REF panels during the course of 2014. Results will be published in December 2014 and will be used by the HE funding bodies to inform research funding from academic year 2015-16.[160] The most important thing to know, however, is that the new system will continue to provide an objective external appraisal of the quality of research work undertaken at UK HEIs.

[159] See the executive summary of 'Decisions on assessing research impact' (2011), a report produced by the four HE funding bodies, at http://www.ref.ac.uk/pubs/2011-01/ where the full text can also be downloaded.

[160] For a full explanation of submission procedures, assessment criteria and the proposed timetable, see 'Assessment framework and guidance on submissions' (2011) at http://www.ref.ac.uk/pubs/2011-02/

Chapter 6: Legal Issues and problems

This chapter has been written by Nicholas Saunders and Mark Taylor, Eversheds LLP with revisions and additional material from Steve Baskerville

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Introduction: the UK's legal systems

UK universities and the law

Viewed historically, partnerships between academic institutions have tended to be the product of working relationships between individual academics; but more recently, as the potential benefits and risks from overseas collaborations have increased, universities and colleges have begun to manage their international partnerships portfolio more effectively, which in turn has meant involving lawyers on a larger scale than ever before. However, most UK HEIs choose not to adopt the more legalistic approach to partnerships that is common at many American universities. Consequently, negotiations between potential collaborating institutions are likely to be led, at least in the first instance, by staff from a 'Partnerships' or 'International' office, or even by faculty members, with lawyers being brought in at a fairly late stage to document the agreed arrangements.

An important example of the way in which UK HEIs continue to avoid a legalistic approach in these matters is their use of the term 'partnership' to describe collaborations between academic institutions. No lawyer would use this term, which in the UK's legal systems refers to a legal relationship in which each party is fully liable for the acts and omissions of the other, even where they have had no involvement with the activities in question. Any lawyer consulted regarding a collaboration agreement will include a clause stating that the agreement is not intended to create a legal partnership. Nevertheless, given its widespread use in the higher education sector, this chapter will continue to use the term 'partnership' in its colloquial rather than its legal sense.

The UK legal system: three legal systems in one state

The United Kingdom is a unitary state; for although there are governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, these possess only the specified powers that have been devolved to them. However, it is important when considering legislation passed by the Westminster Parliament to check whether it extends beyond England. Much legislation relevant to international partnerships, such as employment and immigration law, is UK wide, but there are differences in education legislation between the four countries. For example, the remit of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, set up to deal with student complaints against HEIs once an individual has exhausted all internal processes, does not extend to Scotland or Northern Ireland.

Sovereign immunity

Whereas many non-UK universities, especially in Europe, may be treated as organs of the state and so may be immune from legal liability in some situations, all UK HEIs are in law separate from the state for this purpose. Sovereign immunity, therefore, does not apply to them. Most are corporate legal entities established by Royal Charter, individual Acts of Parliament, the Companies Acts or general education legislation. However, most receive substantial amounts of public funding and are treated as public bodies for other purposes such as the procurement of goods and services, the application of freedom of information legislation and their susceptibility to judicial review.

Law and regulation

As will be apparent from earlier chapters, higher education in the UK is heavily regulated, especially with regard to quality assurance, immigration compliance and a range of financial matters. In addition, all businesses in the UK, whether in the private or public sectors, are subject to substantial regulation in areas such as health and safety, employment and data protection. Therefore, in drawing up agreements for international collaboration, overseas universities need to be mindful of the legal and regulatory constraints under which their UK partners are operating, just as UK HEIs must be aware of similar restrictions in other jurisdictions.

The rights of third parties

It is quite common for potential partner institutions to spend both time and effort negotiating agreements between themselves, while overlooking the fact that the arrangements they put in place will involve a range of other stakeholders, in particular staff and students. These will not be parties to the final operating agreement between their respective institutions, and indeed it is not unusual for such a partnership agreement specifically to deny any rights to them. It has also been common for UK HEIs intending to validate the courses of a partner institution to seek to prevent that institution's students having any rights against them. Such attempts may be doomed to failure, however, with the courts being prepared to imply a contract between the student and the validating institution. Similar problems can arise as well where the staff of one institution undertake activities on the premises of another, and where that other institution has control over such staff.

It is therefore vitally important that collaborating institutions agree their respective responsibilities toward third parties and ensure that these are appropriately dealt with when drafting employment contracts for staff, enrolment and academic regulations for students, and all similar documents pertinent to the successful operation of the partnership.

Preparing the ground

Rationale

No institutional partnership will survive for long unless it is based on a realistic and explicit rationale agreed by the parties. Moreover, no legal documentation is likely to be effective unless it is grounded in robust answers to the following questions:

- Why are the universities proposing to work together rather than undertaking the project(s) by themselves? Each party must have an answer that grows out of, and is congruent with, their wider strategic aims.
- Why are these particular universities proposing to partner with each other rather than with other institutions? To answer this question, institutions must have a realistic assessment not only of their prospective partner but also of themselves.
- Is the proposed collaboration to be a single 'special relationship' or do the parties intend to operate other collaborations in parallel? While there may be some conspicuous advantages to be derived from exclusivity, there may be even more to be gained from access to a ready-made network of existing partners.
- How long do the parties want their partnership to last? It could be a short 'one-off' project or it could develop into a longer and broader relationship.

Risk assessment

With the fundamental shape and purpose of the proposed collaboration clearly worked through and explicitly shared by both parties, it is time to consider what might go wrong. Before spending substantial time and money undertaking due diligence and drafting partnership documentation, it is important for both parties to undertake a preliminary risk assessment. While this initial exercise can be fairly rough and ready, in the longer term it will be necessary to conduct a thorough-going review that is much broader in scope than the obvious evaluation of financial hazards. What happens if government policy changes or if research students are unhappy with the quality of the supervision they receive? How will the university's reputation be affected if its partner institution fails a quality assurance review or loses major contracts from a multinational sponsor? What will be the cost of protecting visiting staff and students if a national currency collapses and exchange rates worsen dramatically? Universities have had to cope with all of these eventualities and other during the past two decades, and will doubtless encounter some of them again in the future. Frank and imaginative discussion is the essential prerequisite to identifying, evaluating and managing risks, and peace of mind can usually be achieved once contingency plans and counter measures to be adopted have been formulated into a comprehensive risk register.[161]

Undertaking due diligence

Why undertake due diligence?

Institutions which have experience of acquiring or collaborating with other organisations of a commercial nature will need no introduction to due diligence as a standard business process. However, those who have in the past been wholly dependent on public sources of funding may be less familiar with it. Many UK HEIs will have previously undertaken some due diligence with respect to overseas partners, especially those operating in the private sector, but are not used to receiving due diligence enquiries on themselves. Indeed, when pressed, they may suggest that, as quasi-public bodies that make much corporate information publicly available, they have no need to provide additional information to potential partners.[162]

In fact, at any one time, HEFCE and the other UK funding bodies identify a small number of HE institutions as being at financial risk, though their identity is only made public some years after the event. Rather more publicly, as the result of institutional or collaborative provision audits, the QAA has expressed limited confidence in the quality and standards of an equally small number of institutions. Thus while the financial and academic soundness of most UK HEIs can be assumed, overseas institutions should still make appropriate enquiries into their proposed UK partner.

When to undertake due diligence

Due diligence should be undertaken after the initial risk assessments have been completed, and it has been confirmed that both institutions are potentially suitable partners. Given the likely cost of enquiries, some institutions may wish to wait until after the preliminary Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed; but sufficient time should be allowed to undertake the enquiries, and to consider both the results and their effect on the negotiations. Preparation of a draft partnership agreement can, of course, continue in the meantime.

[161] Comprehensive guidance on managing risk in collaborative partnerships is provided in QAA, *Quality Code: Managing higher education provision with others.* Indicator 5, pp. 15-17.

[162] For a more comprehensive discussion of due diligence, see UK Higher Education International Unit in association with Eversheds LLP, *International Partnerships: a legal guide for UK universities* (3rd edition. January 2013), pp.40-7. See also *Quality Code: Managing higher education provision with others.* Indicator 6, pp.18-20.

Types of due diligence

Most academic institutions will be aware of the need to have confidence in the proposed partner's academic credentials and to recognise a good 'fit' with their own academic plans. Institutional audit reports on all British universities can be found on the QAA's website, and the reports published by some other inspection bodies, such as the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), and by a number of professional and statutory accrediting bodies, are also readily available. UK institutions may find it harder to establish the credentials of their proposed overseas partners, especially where there is tension between public and private HE providers, but should nonetheless make every effort to do so. The British Council may be able to help in some situations.

Some institutions will also be aware of the need to consider financial suitability, and there are several sources of information available to overseas institutions that seek them out. The annual financial statements of UK HEIs are published and usually available on their websites; the funding bodies publish details of their annual grants to institutions; and for those UK HEIs that are registered charities, their accounts also have to be filed with the Charity Commission. However, as indicated above, it is somewhat harder to find good authority for information on an institution's financial standing, which has led a few UK HEIs to secure a rating from the established rating agencies. An equally small number have become embroiled in major disputes with funding bodies leading to significant 'clawback' of funds, but these episodes have in general been given wide publicity in the news media. A final source of guidance worth considering is again the QAA, which UK institutions must inform if a collaborative relationship is terminated, but the reason for the termination may not be made public.

Many HEIs, though, will be largely unfamiliar with legal due diligence. This involves questions being put to the proposed partner, either by the other party or their lawyers, and regarding UK institutions, will include issues such as:

- The legal status of the institution – is it a Royal Charter Corporation, a body established by a specific statute, a company incorporated under the Companies Acts or a Higher Education Corporation established under the Education Reform Act of 1988?
- If a Higher Education Corporation, when it was awarded its University or University College title?
- Evidence of any change of name and approval of this by the Privy Council.
- Evidence that delivery of the objectives specified in the proposed partnership will be within the institution's powers. This is especially important with regard to proposals for the awarding of joint degrees (see Chapters 3 and 4).
- The procedure within the institution for authorising the partnership.
- Details of any claims or disputes involving the institution that might affect the partnership: for example, any pending legal action taken by staff, students or former institutional partners.
- Evidence of any permissions, licences, etc. needed to operate the partnership, such as those required from accrediting bodies.

Reviewing the results of due diligence

Due diligence should not be regarded as a tiresome formality but as a last opportunity to avoid future difficulties. The results should be reviewed, in the case of academic due diligence, by an individual and/or committee not involved in the proposal; in the case of financial due diligence, by the finance department, calling upon external professional advice if need be; and in the case of legal due diligence, by the institution's in-house lawyer and/or external legal advisors.

The impact of due diligence on the negotiation

The various due diligence reports should identify the seriousness of any issues identified and suggest how they might be addressed. Provided that they are not so serious as to stop the partnership from going ahead, most problems can be dealt with by inserting suitable provisions in the partnership agreement, for example regarding indemnities, and/or adjusting the financial arrangements. Ultimately, the responsible body within the institution should be in receipt of recommendations which will ensure that all identified risks are suitably addressed and that the proposed partnership agreement can safely be signed.

Documenting the partnership

While there are no hard and fast rules about the documentation that should be drawn up in order to place a new collaborative venture on a secure footing, there is a wealth of experience to suggest what constitutes good practice and how best to avoid the pitfalls that others have encountered. Knowledge of this will be a helpful guide to staff responsible for taking the partnership proposal forward and should assist them in briefing those charged with actually drafting the paperwork. Regardless of whether the prospective activity is a franchise, a progression accord or a joint venture for purposes of teaching or research, it will be necessary to set out the detailed contractual terms agreed for the collaboration in a legally binding agreement, and this will need to be signed off prior to commencing operations.[163]

Memorandum of understanding (MOU)

Once prospective partners have worked out the basic framework for their collaboration, the key principles of this should be set out in an MOU, sometimes referred to as 'heads of terms'. This document may or may not be legally binding, but it helps to ensure at an early stage that the institutions involved both envisage the same outcome from the proposed collaboration and that any potential deal-breaking difficulties are raised as soon as possible. This is not intended to be a document that goes into fine detail, so squabbles over precise wording need to be avoided if at all possible.

A distressingly large number of MOUs fail to get developed into substantive proposals and this has led some institutions to set strict time limits on those they sign so as to encourage immediate follow up. Likewise, because of what such documents are committing the signatories to, many UK HEIs will now insist that they should be signed-off at a senior level, usually by the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor or Vice-Principal, rather than by a departmental representative. It is important, however, to balance the risks associated with undue haste against the need to maintain momentum. It is also vital not to lose the enthusiasm of those who will have to make the collaboration work on the ground, and to keep them informed and involved as the legal formalities are taken forward.

Confidentiality and exclusivity agreements

Senior managers will often want to follow up the MOU with measures designed to preserve the confidential nature of what is being negotiated or of information being exchanged in the process. From a legal standpoint, it is actually arguable what weight a confidentiality agreement carries, since such documents can be difficult to enforce; but experience suggests that a confidentiality agreement can nevertheless help to focus the minds of the parties on having proper procedures in place to protect the confidential information that each party will be divulging to the other during the due diligence procedure. Confidentiality agreements are also sometimes used to reduce the possibility of either party poaching key personnel from the other.

[163] For a fuller treatment of issues surrounding documentation, see: UK Higher Education International/ Eversheds LLP, *International Partnerships: a Legal Guide*, pp.48-60.

In certain circumstances it may also be desirable to ensure that the prospective partners do not enter into any negotiations with other parties that could have an impact on the transaction; but an exclusivity agreement intended for this purpose will require careful drafting if it is to be legally binding. For example, whilst an agreement not to negotiate with others should be enforceable provided its terms are sufficiently precise, a simple 'agreement to negotiate' is unlikely to bind the parties.

Collaboration agreement

The key document for regulating the terms of the proposed partnership, though, is the collaborative agreement itself. As the QAA formerly reminded us in its now superseded Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision, "Partnerships are more likely to succeed when all the partners fully understand their rights and responsibilities."[164] Those negotiating any collaborative agreement will therefore need to pay attention to a wide range of issues, including but by no means limited to such issues as operational viability, legal jurisdiction, taxation and other liabilities, payment terms, dispute resolution, and exit strategies.[165] In addition to these key contractual areas, an agreement regarding collaborative provision between prospective partners must also take account of the somewhat longer and more precise list provided as part of the explanatory text to Indicator 7 in Chapter B10 of the Quality Code.[166]

Perhaps the most contentious of these issues is that of agreeing what body of national law the partnership should be governed by and in which courts any disputes will be determined. Legal advice to UK institutions will invariably insist that all international collaborative agreements should be subject to the laws of England and Wales (or of Scotland or Northern Ireland for those HEIs established in those jurisdictions). Almost as frequently, overseas partners will want to see precedence given to their own legal systems. Obviously, if neither side is prepared to shift its position then collaboration is doomed, so this stand-off needs to be resolved at an early stage. The parties might, for example, agree to be governed by the law of the country in which most of the collaborative activity is to take place; or failing that, agree to an escalating schedule of conflict resolution measures culminating in binding arbitration in a third-party jurisdiction.

However this and similar issues are eventually dealt with, the need for a comprehensive agreement covering all aspects of the relationship and anticipating all future scenarios that might reasonably be anticipated should be self-evident. Painful experience has clearly demonstrated that what many academic colleagues may regard as an overly prescriptive and bureaucratic process is in fact the only reliable means of minimising (if not wholly eliminating) the risk of protracted and costly legal wrangling if the collaborative relationship turns sour. Conversely, if the principles and operational requirements set out in the collaborative agreement can also be grafted into the culture of international activity across both institutions, then the partnership is likely to proceed and prosper on solid foundations.

[164] QAA, *Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education. Section 2: Collaborative Provision and Flexible and Distributed Learning* (Amplified Version of the 2nd Edition, 2010), p.34). Commonly referred to as *The Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision*, this guidance has now been superseded by the *Quality Code: Managing higher education provision with others*. However, the *Code of Practice* remains accessible on the QAA's website.

[165] See Kathleen Kwan, *Good Practice: Contract Negotiation for Transnational Higher Education* (OBHE, August 2005), sections 3 and 4 passim. The full text is free to Observatory subscribers or can be purchased online at http://www.obhe.ac.uk/documents/view_details?id=38.

[166] *Quality Code: Managing higher education provision with others*, pp. 21-3.

Intellectual Property Rights

Two of the of the key issues referred to in Indicator 7, Chapter B10 of the Quality Code are the need for clarity regarding: (1) "arrangements for ownership of copyright and intellectual property rights."; and (2) "arrangements governing the use of the degree-awarding body's name and logo; and provision for oversight, by the degree-awarding body, of information relating to the arrangement and any associated promotional activity that has been placed in the public domain."[167]

Generally speaking intellectual property (IP) created by the employee of a UK university will vest in that university, although this position can be varied by the employee's contract of employment and the institution's own policy on how IP produced within the university environment will be owned, and what can and cannot be done with it. In most cases, such policies will also deal with IP created by students, visiting academics and individuals holding honorary contracts with the institution. Student-generated IP, for instance, will normally be the property of the student and IP arising from the creation of scholarly materials (such as textbooks, theses, conference papers, etc) will normally be owned by the person who created such materials.

Against this general backdrop, overseas institutions need to be aware that the charitable status of most UK HEIs may constrain what they are able to do with their IP, as might arrangements entered into to secure funding for research. Moreover, in the context of a joint venture between two HE institutions, factors such as what IP each will be bringing to the project (including their brand) and the balance of work to be undertaken between them will also be important when it comes to determining who will own any new IP created from their partnership.

The forms of IP most likely to be created out of teaching collaborations are copyright in teaching materials and 'know-how', though in some situations trademarks might also. be relevant. For example, if a particular course or project is branded in any way, then the partner institutions may create a trade mark for it. With respect to research collaborations, there are a number of IP rights that might arise. For instance, any written materials and diagrams produced will benefit from copyright protection; any new inventions may be patentable; and new designs may be protected by design rights. Likewise database rights may protect results recorded in databases and there will doubtless be know-how arising from the project as well.

The permissible use of IP already owned by each institution at the beginning of the partnership, often referred to as 'background IP', needs to be specified in the collaborative agreement (or in a parallel IP agreement), with both parties asserting that they intend to retain their rights in such IP. If the institutions need to be able to use each other's background IP during the course of the partnership, then explicit cross-licensing rights will need to be established.

More problematic is the question of who should own any new IP created as a direct result of the collaboration. One approach is that the institutions should own such IP jointly, which seems to be in keeping with both the spirit of partnership and the principle of mutual benefit. The joint ownership of IP can to lead to problems in the future, however, and many lawyers advise that it should be avoided where possible. Certainly, before agreeing to a joint-ownership solution, prospective partners should carefully assess the potential consequences and anticipate the problems which might arise. For instance, where IP is jointly owned, each institution will normally need to obtain the other's consent before transferring or licensing it; and any disagreements arising in relation to the use of such IP can easily escalate into formal disputes.

[167] *Quality Code: Managing higher education provision with others*, p.22.

Ownership of IP can be both administratively and financially burdensome. If, for example, the IP is protectable by way of registration, such as a trade mark for a course or set of teaching materials, then the institutions would need to decide who will be responsible for registering and maintaining it, including the filing and other costs involved. They should also work out how they are going to deal with any infringement claims. In light of this, where one of the partners simply requires the ability to use the IP created from the project, then obtaining a licence to use the materials from the other may prove a cost-effective alternative to ownership, though the scope of such a licence and the rights granted by it will need to be the subject of careful consideration and drafting. A further advantage of this approach is that both parties can use the IP without the need to seek consent from the other.

If, notwithstanding the potential difficulties, joint ownership is eventually agreed upon, the collaboration agreement should clearly set out: (1) which institution will be responsible for registering and maintaining any registrable IP; (2) which partner will manage any claims that arise in relationship to such IP; (3) who will pay for any associated legal fees; and (4) what will happen if one institution wishes to pursue a legal claim in connection with the jointly-owned IP and their partner does not. The partners should also agree how to handle any IP that is created by the collaborating teams after the research project commences but independently from their joint endeavour (often referred to as 'sideground IP'). Of course, at the beginning of a new project, the participating institutions cannot be certain what IP will come out of it, and this frequently leads to a provision being inserted in the collaboration agreement committing the partners to negotiate the ownership of such IP at a later stage. However, under English law this type of arrangement is known as 'an agreement to agree' and is unenforceable. It is therefore always preferable for the institutions to set out the IP provisions in terms of ownership and licensing rights, etc. before the project commences.

Conclusion

It is hoped this guide provides a starting point for potential overseas partners wishing to establish collaborative activities with UK universities. While it covers the main points to consider, it is by no means a comprehensive guide to international collaboration and further advice and information will be required on both sides to take activities forward.

What it does do, however, is set the scene and make overseas institutions aware of the range of opportunities open to them with UK partners, hopefully encouraging a greater level of collaborative work at all levels and in all fields.

Successful partnerships rest on a number of key factors, not least the willingness and commitment of all those involved, but there are other tangible markers that should also be met. These include:

- Successful partnerships are formed from a sound financial basis. Both overseas and UK institutions should enter a collaboration with the financial backing required to ensure it is successful and with the assumption that there will be some shared financial risk.
- Both sides of the partnership should understand fully the regulatory environment in which they are operating. Thorough due diligence and an understanding of the laws that govern partnership activities is a must to ensure a successful collaboration. Despite extensive changes to the visa and immigration system in the UK, provided partner institutions are fully aware of the various schemes outlined in Chapter 2 of this report, there should be nothing in UK immigration rules to prevent the development of new partnerships or prejudice the continuation of existing ones.
- Partners should be clear from the outset the type of partnership that will occur between the institutions: a staff and student exchange programme, a joint degree or course validation? Setting realistic goals understanding what is expected from both sides will avoid confusion later down the line.
- Maintaining quality and reputation are fundamental. UK institutions pride themselves on their strong global reputations for delivering high-quality programmes. A successful partnership must adhere to the same standards as any other activity undertaken and HEIs will seek out partners of a similar standing, with matching interests and commitment to ensure reputation is assured.

Governments around the world now recognise higher education and research as major economic drivers and the future for creating highly skilled knowledge economies. With this in mind, they are encouraging and supporting the development of partnerships, thereby significantly increasing the opportunities to collaborate on a range of different levels and across a broad spectrum of fields.

Ultimately, it is every higher education institution's goal to be able to offer world-class teaching and research opportunities to both students and staff and international partnerships are one of the key drivers in achieving this success.

Global opportunities for UK higher education

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The IU works to support the development and sustainability of the UK HE sector's influence and competitiveness in a global environment and promotes the sector's distinctive strengths internationally. It supports the sector's engagement in European Union and Bologna Process policy debates.

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