

Overseas Quality Audit Report

Leeds Metropolitan University and
Zhejiang University of Technology,
People's Republic of China

APRIL 2006

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ISBN 1 84482 635 X

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Leeds Metropolitan University overseas collaborative audit

1 This report considers the collaborative arrangement (the link) between Leeds Metropolitan University (Leeds Met) and, Zhejiang University of Technology (ZJUT), Shanghai, in the People's Republic of China.

Introduction

2 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is a UK organisation which seeks to promote public confidence that the quality of provision and standards of awards in higher education are being safeguarded. It provides public information about quality and standards in higher education to meet the needs of students, employers and funders of higher education. It does this mainly through a peer review process of audits and reviews. These are conducted by teams of auditors and reviewers comprising academic staff from higher or further education institutions, but with some members drawn, where appropriate, from industry and the professions. The most recent institutional audit of Leeds Met was conducted by QAA in November 2004.

3 One of QAA's activities is to carry out quality audits of collaborative links between UK higher education institutions and their partner organisations in other countries. In the spring and early summer of 2006, QAA conducted audits of selected partnership links between UK higher education institutions and institutions in the People's Republic of China (PRC). The purpose of these audits was to provide information on the way in which the UK institutions were maintaining academic standards and the quality of education in their partnerships. The reports on the individual audits will be used in the preparation of an overview report on the collaborative arrangements for the management of standards and quality of UK higher education provision in mainland China.

The process of audit for the overseas partnership links

4 In July 2005, QAA invited all UK higher education institutions to provide information on their collaborative partnerships in PRC. On the basis of the information returned, QAA selected for audit visits 10 UK institutions with links that were representative of UK provision in mainland China. Each of the selected institutions produced a commentary describing the way in which the link operated, and commenting on the effectiveness of the means by which it assured quality and standards. In addition, each institution was asked, as part of its commentary, to make reference to the extent to which the link was representative of its procedures and practice in all its overseas collaborative activity. Institutions were also invited in their commentaries to make reference to the ways in which their arrangements met the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, particularly the section on *Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, published by QAA in 2004.

5 In spring 2006, audit visits were made to each of the selected UK institutions to discuss its arrangements in the light of its commentary. In April-May 2006, one of three separate audit teams (based respectively in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong province) visited the partner institutions in PRC to gain further insight into the experience of students and staff, and to supplement the view formed by the team from the institutions' commentaries and from the UK visits. During the visits to institutions in PRC, discussions were conducted with key members of staff and with students. The full audit team based in Shanghai were Dr P Garnsworthy, Prof D Meehan, and Prof D Punter as auditors, and Mr G Clark as audit secretary. Dr A J Biscoe coordinated the audit on behalf of QAA. QAA is particularly grateful to the UK institutions and their partners in PRC for the willing cooperation they provided to the team.

The context of collaborative provision with partners in PRC

6 In PRC, responsibility for higher education planning and policy resides with the Ministry of Education, which is the State Council's executive body for education. It also has direct responsibility for a number of universities and for the evaluation of bachelor and master's level programmes. However, responsibility for the majority of provision, including vocational education, is devolved to the relevant regional and municipal authorities. China has a comprehensive set of laws covering the provision of higher education, notably the current Higher Education law, 1998. Of specific relevance to collaborative arrangements are the Regulations on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, 2003, which apply to higher education institutions and cover matters relating to the management of overseas partnerships and the level of student fees. As part of the continuing process of modernisation of higher education, two state programmes have been introduced: Project 211, which aims to create 100 first-class Chinese universities and a number of key fields of study for the twenty-first century; and Project 985, which aims to develop world-famous research universities. Both these projects channel funding selectively to designated universities. China has been progressively developing its quality assurance system for higher education since 1985, when the evaluation of institutions was first implemented. Current arrangements entail the evaluation of tertiary colleges by provincial education authorities, according to a national plan introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2003; the evaluation of bachelor degree programmes by the Ministry's Higher Education Evaluation Centre, established in 2004; and the evaluation of graduate education (master's and doctoral programmes) by the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council. Further information on higher education in China is contained in the overview report.

The background to the collaborative link

General background to the link

7 The collaborative arrangement (the link) between Leeds Met and ZJUT with respect to the delivery of the Leeds Met award Master's in International Trade and Finance (MAITF or the Course) recruited its first cohort of 28 students in October 2004. The Commentary stated that the 'arrangements, procedures and practices under which this collaboration are managed are representative of the model adopted in the Faculty of Business and Law (FBL) with reference to all of its collaborative activity (currently focused on Hong Kong and mainland China) and is underpinned by university strategy'. The FBL currently operates four Collaboration Agreements, as well as a range of Articulation Agreements and Student Exchanges, and exercises powers in relation to them on behalf of Leeds Met.

8 The audit team learnt that the Course had been developed using the previous experience of the Vocational Training Council (VTC) collaborative provision in Hong Kong. The Course was first delivered by Leeds Met in 2003-04 and the subject content was specifically designed to reflect the significance of China's entry to the World Trade Organisation in 2001. Full-time versions are delivered at both Leeds Met and ZJUT are run in parallel, with identical modular structures and assessments. The Course is advertised as being truly international. There is an option for students undertaking the first semester in one location to undertake the second semester in the other location, and this has been a popular option for some students commencing their studies at ZJUT. The dissertation will normally be done in the student's second-semester location. In 2005-06 a part-time version of the Course began to operate at ZJUT.

9 The Commentary advises that the MAITF is delivered and assessed in the English language, and is partly delivered by University staff on a 'fly-in/fly-out' basis. The Courses have

the same external examiner, although there is currently a restriction on the number of elective modules available in Zhejiang. The College of Business Administration (CBA) is responsible for delivering both the full and part-time Courses at ZJUT. The latter is delivered on the City Centre Campus in Zhejiang, whereas the full-time variant is delivered on the new Pingfeng campus.

10 The audit team heard that the collaboration was regarded by Leeds Met as of high level importance, and that ZJUT was regarded as a long-term partner. In particular, the team heard that the development of the collaborative MAITF was part of Leeds Met's vision to become a 'World Class Regional University with World Wide Horizons' in accordance with Leeds Met's Corporate Plan and Internationalisation Strategy 2004-2008. The team heard evidence that ZJUT too regarded this as one of its most advanced collaborative courses, and had supported it strongly through investment in books, information technology (IT), accommodation and the provision of teaching staff. It is also important for the CBA in ZJUT; the Dean herself manages the Joint China-Britain Education Office, and the CBA prides itself on its excellent resources, including its multimedia classrooms, stock of reference books and teaching materials.

11 Established in 1953 with a focus on industry and management, ZJUT is now a multidisciplinary provider which provides education and undertakes research in a range of subject areas including technology, the social sciences, medicine, management, education and the liberal arts. It is empowered to award doctorate, postgraduate and undergraduate degrees. It has 28,000 undergraduate students and 1,700 postgraduate students. There are 2,800 academic staff, including 800 professors and associate professors. ZJUT has partnerships of various kinds in the USA, France, Germany, Australia and other countries.

12 The Course complements ZJUT's existing portfolio of four postgraduate degrees in Technology, Economics and Management;

International Trade; Management Science and Engineering; and Business Administration. The Commentary stated that development and award of the degree has meant that ZJUT was the first University in China to offer a UK-validated award in this specific combined field.

13 Leeds Met has a significant number of other collaborative arrangements in the UK and overseas. A number of faculties are involved in overseas collaborations including arrangements with partner institutions in France, Japan, Cyprus, Ireland, Germany, Malaysia, India, Bulgaria, Croatia, Austria and the USA among others, as well as with Shenyang Normal University and the Tianjin University of Commerce in China and the Hong Kong VTC. The process of approval of the Course is described as following the standard system at Leeds Met, including the requirements that 'all collaborative provision leading to an award of Leeds Met must satisfy its normal requirements for the conferment of an award and also that the quality of the student experience is equivalent with that provided by Leeds Met'.

The UK institution's approach to overseas collaborative provision

14 The University's Internationalisation Strategy 2004-2008, refers to 'Developing and fostering international partnerships and alliances', and specifies the purposes and benefits of partnerships, including, inter alia, staff exchange, joint research opportunities, student exchange programmes and the development of collaborative programmes.

15 Leeds Met maintains a register of its collaborative provision which is overseen by the University's Registrar and Secretary to keep it up to date. It contains a range of types of links with overseas institutions, of which 'collaboration' is one. In its Commentary, Leeds Met defined collaboration as a University scheme whereby 'an approved scheme or course, or a whole or part of a level of courses designed and assessed by the university, is delivered in a recognised institution. Some or all of the delivery may be by the staff of the recognised institution. The formal consideration

of assessments will be the responsibility of the university. Students are registered by the university which is accountable for the standards and quality of the award, which is to be delivered at the collaborating body's premises'. The Commentary set out the locus of responsibility for the Course in more detail, including stating that Leeds Met exercises its responsibility through institutional recognition, approval of the course of study where appropriate, validation of delivery and assessment of the award and review and monitoring of arrangements. The Memorandum of Collaboration (the Memorandum) sets out in detail the respective rights and responsibilities of Leeds Met and ZJUT, specifically affirming that 'students are enrolled and registered by Leeds Met, which is accountable for the standards and quality of the award, which is to be delivered at ZJUT's premises'. The audit team understood this to mean that Leeds Met is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name.

16 Academic Board (AB) has overall responsibility for quality and standards of Leeds Met awards. AB is advised by the Academic Committee (AC) on the development of academic policy, the institutional framework for managing academic quality and standards and the quality and standards of provision. However, there is considerable devolution by the centre to the faculties for the maintenance of quality and standards. Each faculty has a committee structure which broadly mirrors the central Leeds Met committee structure, and in the FBL it is the Faculty Academic Monitoring Sub-Committee (FAMSC) which is responsible for the general quality assurance and management of the standards and quality of the Faculty's courses, including this Course. There is also a Faculty Board which reports to AC.

17 The University's regulations for its collaborative courses are set out in the University Principles and Regulations. The Regulations require that all collaborative provision leading to an award of Leeds Met must satisfy its normal requirements for the conferment of an award and also that the

quality of the student experience is equivalent with that provided by Leeds Met. The Commentary stated that equivalence 'relates to the quality of staff and the resources available to support delivery', and that 'the latter must be appropriate to achieve the learning outcomes'. However, the audit team was unclear how the University assured itself that this was being fulfilled (see paragraphs 41 and 52 below).

18 The Commentary stated that the University exercises its responsibility for the management of standards and quality 'through institutional recognition, approval of the programme of study where appropriate, validation of delivery and assessment of the award and review and monitoring of arrangements'. All arrangements for collaborative activity are covered by appropriate legally binding documents', in this case the Memorandum and an associated document setting out the legal and financial framework. There is an explicit prohibition of 'onward franchising'. Risk assessments had been carried out and reported, and the audit team was satisfied that safeguards were in place against the danger of financial malpractice.

Public information, publicity and promotional activity

19 The audit team had access to a range of material publicising and promoting the Course, including the Course description on the Leeds Met website and the general brochure produced by the CBA. Students informed the team that they had heard of the Course from a range of sources including the internet, newspapers, word of mouth, and their own undergraduate tutors, and many had accessed the Leeds Met website. It was clear to the team that the material made clear that this was a University award and that students might study the course at either Leeds Met or ZJUT. The team heard from students studying at both sites that they found the information available to them was informative, comprehensive and accurate, and also that further information was readily available to them on a one-to-one basis

from Course staff at ZJUT and/or by email from staff at Leeds Met.

20 The audit team learnt that Leeds Met takes responsibility for publicity and promotional information relating to the Course whether delivered at Leeds Met or at ZJUT. The team heard from University staff that the information provided by ZJUT is reviewed by the Faculty Marketing staff and Faculty Registrar prior to being signed off by the University Registrar in accordance with a new compliance procedure for branding and marketing. ZJUT's copy for advertising campaigns is seen by Leeds Met three times a year, and comments and changes are sent back to ZJUT.

Formal arrangements for establishing the link

Selecting and approving the partner institution

21 The initiative for the link was the visit of the then Dean of the FBL to the Dean of the CBA to collaborate on a research paper in 2000. Staff from both institutions subsequently worked together to facilitate the progression of ZJUT students onto University postgraduate courses resulting in the signing of an Articulation Agreement in May 2003. As a consequence, 12 ZJUT students register on University postgraduate courses in 2003-04, including six on the first delivery of the MAITF in Leeds. At the same time a member of staff from ZJUT spent six months at Leeds Met researching teaching methods.

22 A Course Development Team (CDT) was set up in 2003 to progress the approval. School and Faculty approval at Leeds Met were obtained in February 2004 through a joint meeting of the Advisory Board of the School of Accounting and Finance, and the Academic Quality Sub-Committee of the FBL (FAQSC). Approval in China for ZJUT's participation in the collaboration was secured from the Education Department of Zhejiang Province and from the Ministry of Education.

23 The University undertook a combined Recognition and Validation event held at ZJUT in March 2004, although the two events resulted in separate reports which were processed by the appropriate University and Faculty committees. The event was chaired by Leeds Met's then Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) and included as the external assessor an individual who was 'based in the region with great experience of UK higher education'.

24 The University's Regulations set out the requirements for recognition of a potential partner institution. These include financial and legal checks and that the potential partner 'has an infrastructure and learning resources adequate to ensure that the academic standards of the University's provision and the quality of the student learning experience are maintained and enhanced'. The process of recognition, the Regulations state, will 'be informed by University guidance'.

25 There was an extensive Institutional Recognition Document available to the Recognition panel which covered appropriate matters related to due diligence undertaken by Leeds Met. The recognition report concluded that the educational objectives and philosophy of the two institutions were compatible. The audit team learnt that this conclusion was based on the commonality of educational approaches and missions adopted by the two institutions, for example, the common focus on vocational courses and the commonality of widening participation missions.

26 The overall outcome of the recognition event was that ZJUT was approved as a partner institution without condition but with one recommendation. The recommendation concerned the hours of access to learning resources at ZJUT. The Recognition Panel also stated that there should be a further review within three years. In line with University procedures the FAMSC approved the Course Team's response to the recommendation at its meeting in September 2005.

27 The audit team concluded that the institutional approval process for the Course

was operated in accordance with Leeds Met's regulations which reflect the precepts of the *Code of practice*. The team noted as a positive feature of the link the compatibility of the two institutions and, in particular their considerable experience of collaborative activity.

Course approval

28 The MAITF was initially approved for delivery in Leeds in 2003. The Course specification matched content with the Benchmark Statement for Masters Awards in Business and Management and *The framework of higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. The Route Documents set out the detailed structure of the Course, and the Course specifications for the two sites of delivery are the same. ZJUT staff were not formally involved in the development of the specifications, although the audit team learnt that informal discussions were held during the initial planning stage in order to confirm the relevance of the Course for delivery in China.

29 In accordance with University regulations there was a formal validation event in March 2004 to approve the Course. This included consideration of the full-time Course, and also mention of the part-time version scheduled to start in the second year of operation. The Course was approved but with four conditions and one recommendation. The recommendation from the validation event was to give the Joint Education Committee (JEC) responsibility for 'ongoing oversight of staff development between the institutions'. The conditions were that there should be appropriate textbooks and copies available at ZJUT; a detailed staff development course be established and delivered at ZJUT; a quality manual be established by Leeds Met in part through the staff development activity, to assist and facilitate the delivery of the Course at ZJUT; and that the final version of the Student Handbook be approved by the Chair of the Validation Event.

30 Approval reports from the Recognition and Validation Event were subject to follow-up and approval of action by FAMSC.

Confirmation of a satisfactory response to the conditions and recommendations was given by the Chair of the Committee in September 2005. This was further confirmed through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and the discussions at the JEC in October 2005.

31 The procedure for reapproving the partner has not been specified, but the Memorandum notes that a review of progress must take place between March and August 2006. The audit team learnt that this event took place in March 2006, although it appears that it fell more under the heading of staff development than of progress review. It consisted of two Leeds Met staff visiting ZJUT firstly to meet with staff and students to brief them on the collaborative audit process and secondly to deliver seminars on teaching methods and making themselves available for general discussion about the development of the Course. The team suggests that the University may wish to consider if this meets the requirements of the Memorandum.

32 Through its reading of the validation report and relevant Faculty committee minutes the audit team concluded that the process of approval of the Course followed Leeds Met's standard procedures for collaborative courses, which are broadly in accord with the precepts of the *Code of practice*.

Written agreements with the partner institution

33 The University's Regulations state that written agreements will be put in place 'which specify clearly the mutual arrangements agreed by the recognition and validation processes'. The Commentary stated that the Memorandum for this link formalises the responsibilities of each party, sets out the detailed agreement and identifies the responsibilities of the two partners. It covers the first eight intakes of students, and states that renewal for further cohorts will be dependent upon a review of the link. It contains sections on responsibilities for the standard and quality of provision and awards, including admissions, course management, course review, student assessment, staff development, resourcing and

periodic review; academic administration; lecturers, textbooks and course material; rights and responsibilities of the two universities; the status of students, including student support management; and a schedule of liaison arrangements.

34 The audit team noted the breadth of issues covered by the Memorandum but considered that while it contained a useful section on the rights and responsibilities of Leeds Met and ZJUT, it sometimes lacked clarity. For example, it states that the Faculty is responsible for monitoring 'any quality issues relating to the collaboration'. Given the fact that Leeds Met considers ZJUT is responsible for ensuring an equivalent experience for any students registered on the Course, the team was unclear how Leeds Met would be able to monitor quality issues.

Quality management of the link

35 The Memorandum states that 'an Academic Committee will be formed by both parties to arrange all affairs related to the running and decision making of the course'. In October 2005 the partners agreed to rename the Committee as the JEC and extend its terms of reference to include responsibility of the strategic management of the collaboration, consider and approve staff appointments, and consider and approve the annual report prior to submission to the FAMSC. The Committee is composed of two members from each partner including the Dean of the FBL and the Dean of the CBA and is required to meet annually.

36 In accordance with the University's Principles and Regulations operational oversight for the Course lies with the Course Committee based in the FBL. The Committee reports to Head of School, and in their turn to the FAMSC. There is also a parallel Course Committee in ZJUT which oversees the general management of the Course and students on it. The Committee is responsible to ZJUT for the quality of student experience. A member of University staff is a member of the ZJUT Course committee and this individual is responsible for maintaining effective liaison and submission of appropriate quality assurance reports to Leeds Met.

37 Students apply to entry for the Course through ZJUT. Applicants are interviewed by the two Course leaders or nominees. The ZJUT Course leader forwards student application forms to Leeds Met where the final decision about who should be admitted is made (see paragraph 54 below).

38 The Leeds Met Academic Principles states that all members of a course team are 'required to maintain such records of student attendance, submission of work and academic progress as shall make it possible for them to report on student general and academic progress as required by the Scheme or Course Leader'. The audit team heard that for the Course these sets of data were shared between the Course Leaders in ZJUT and Leeds Met during visits to Zhejiang.

39 The audit team saw considerable evidence of effective liaison at the administrative level, facilitated in particular by strong course leadership in both institutions and by the provision at ZJUT of a dedicated modern administrative office with a high level of attendant facilities. The Course is supported by a dedicated secretary/administrator and the team considered the robustness and responsiveness of the dedicated Course Office at ZJUT and the commitment of resources by the local partner (see paragraph 10 above) to be a positive feature of the link.

40 The Memorandum states that ZJUT is responsible for the provision of a student support infrastructure and the day-to-day pastoral care of students. However, there is also provision for students to seek advice from Leeds Met's Student Services on matters relating to appeals, harassment or grievances involving either University or ZJUT staff.

Arrangements for monitoring and review

Annual monitoring

41 The Memorandum states that the arrangements for annual review of the Course are in accordance with University procedures and that the Faculty 'will ensure that

monitoring of the quality of the scheme or course is taking place effectively'. Each course committee is required to produce an Annual Report which is submitted to the Head of School who in turn reports to the FAMSC. This report is based on the Course Leader's annual report and on student comment. The Leeds Met Course Leader's Report should be based in turn on data about student achievement, admissions statistics, staff development reports, output from student questionnaires and from module evaluations, evaluations of market strength and comment on strategic fit within the school, the faculty and the University.

42 The audit team read the annual reports produced for 2004-05. The Leeds Met report dealt with issues arising from analysis of external examiners' reports, progress indicators, student evaluation, module evaluation, staff development and other key issues. Significant points addressed included the successful performance of the Chinese cohort and positive evaluation responses from students studying at ZJUT. It was, however, reported that module evaluation was not carried out (see paragraph 83 below). In addition, ZJUT facilities were commended. The ZJUT Course Leader's Operation Report focused on cohort statistics and on staff development opportunities. It also detailed arrangements for the management of the (then new) part-time Course. At ZJUT, the team heard that this was very much considered to be the responsibility of the Course Leader, a responsibility he discharged by inviting and following up student suggestions. The team understood that, where appropriate, these suggestions and consequent actions were passed back to Leeds Met staff during their visits. The wider staff team at ZJUT were not engaged with the annual monitoring process.

43 The Head of School's Annual Report 2004-05 commented on the MAITF. In particular, the degree results were commended, and the size of the second cohort was reported. Staff development of both Leeds Met and ZJUT staff was stated to be 'ongoing and collaborative with useful sharing of ideas from both teams'. Improvements in student support services were

reported, and it was stated that there will be further additions to personal student support.

44 The Commentary stated that Leeds Met considered the process of Annual Review 'had worked well for this collaboration'. Based on the evidence available to it, the audit team generally concurred with Leeds Met's view but considered that Leeds Met could further enhance the effectiveness of the process by ensuring the wider engagement of ZJUT staff in the process.

Periodic review

45 University regulations require that a periodic review of courses are scheduled to take place at a maximum of five years after commencement of a new course but may occur earlier at the discretion of the Dean. The Memorandum states that the Course will be subject to periodic review in line with University principles and regulations no later than August 2008. There is also provision for a review at any point 'should any cause for concern arise or come to the attention of the parties'.

Staffing and staff development

46 The Commentary stated that the model for delivery of the Course builds on the 'very successful model' that has been developed by the Faculty in its link with the VTC in Hong Kong. University subject staff 'fly-in/fly-out' to deliver half of each module over an intensive four or five day period with ZJUT staff delivering the rest of the module during the remainder of the semester. The Memorandum states that all staff appointed by both partners are to be approved by the JEC.

47 The audit team learnt that University staff appointed to teach on the Course must have experience of teaching on the Leeds Met version of the course and that ZJUT is responsible for appointing local staff. The latter are selected on the basis of academic and linguistic competence and, the team heard, the feedback from the frequent student evaluation of local staff conducted by ZJUT. The team saw the evidence upon which JEC confirmed local staff appointments for 2004-05 and concluded

that, while there have not been any major concerns about the quality of local staff appointed, Leeds Met may wish to reconsider the level of detail contained in the curricula vitae of local staff seen by the JEC. The team was also not clear as to how Leeds Met would proceed if it had evidence of unsatisfactory teaching by ZJUT staff. Although it was clear that the local Course Director would be the first port of call in the event of any difficulty, Leeds Met may wish to consider what the next steps in such a case might be.

48 Publicity and promotional information make it clear that the Course will be delivered entirely in English, and the audit team learnt that this was generally the case. However, it also heard from students it met that in some instances local staff giving tutorials sometimes supplement English language course materials with Chinese language explanatory materials. While some students would have preferred English language throughout, most others reported that they found Chinese language input helpful since success on the Course depended on a clear grasp of technical terms which were new to them, and also on the provision and discussion of local examples and case-studies. These case-studies were seen as particularly useful, and there was evidence of flexibility in the ways in which they were designed, delivered and assessed. ZJUT staff were clearly engaged with issues to do with the difference between English and Chinese teaching styles, and particularly valued the concept of 'independent learning' which was seen as extending the range of pedagogic techniques available to them. The team heard that staff appointed to teach on the new part-time Course had specific relevant experience of teaching part-time students.

49 Staff development activities have been a long-standing feature of the link. They began in earnest in late 2003 prior to the Recognition and Validation event and have involved various members of the CDT visiting ZJUT with the aim of developing a collegial approach to the link. A major event was held in July 2004 when 18 ZJUT staff members, including the Dean of the CBA

and the Course Leader, attended a week-long staff development session delivered by University staff.

50 There is observation of teaching as a matter of course at ZJUT, and staff also reported that they benefit in particular from the presence of Leeds Met staff and their teaching. The audit team was told that one of the benefits of the Course is that it provides opportunities for exchanges of ideas about teaching methods which differ widely between China and the UK. Students reported that they derived great benefit from exposure to this variety of teaching methods, and that the UK style, which involves the students in greater levels of participation, enhanced their learning experience. Local staff attend lectures given by Leeds Met staff during their visits, and felt that this gives them access to new teaching methods to place alongside normal Chinese pedagogical practice. A repeated theme mentioned by students was that practices of 'self-study', whereby the student takes on more responsibility for his/her own learning, were a critical and much appreciated part of the value and success of the Course.

51 The audit team learnt that further interchange occurs between subject staff of both partners during the 'fly-in/fly-out' visits, which had recently been extended in part to accommodate this. The visits allow for discussion of the Course and its delivery, as well as informal staff development opportunities for ZJUT staff. The team heard that new staff joining the Course felt that they were able to access their Leeds Met counterparts on a regular basis either in person or via email. Specific support is provided by the Leeds Met dissertation coordinator for ZJUT staff newly involved in the supervision of dissertations.

52 Staff development was also undertaken for Leeds Met colleagues preparing to teach at ZJUT. This took the form of a session 'covering learning and teaching strategies; the expectations of the students and colleagues at ZJUT; roles and responsibilities; assessment; student support and guidance' as well as an introduction to Chinese customs and protocol.

Staff who had already taught in a China or Hong Kong context were encouraged to share their experience with newly deployed staff.

53 The audit team considered that in general the nature and extent of staff development was a positive feature of the link. However, the team would encourage Leeds Met to consider ways in which it can better assure itself that the information it receives on the experience and qualifications of local teaching staff is made more comprehensive. Yet, it was clear to the team that considerable value was being added to the educational process through the exchange of ideas on teaching methods, and observation of teaching events, that were also impacting on students in ways which benefited their learning experience and their international career prospects.

Student admissions

54 The Memorandum states that ZJUT is responsible for 'ensuring that all students enrolled meet the admission requirements' of Leeds Met, but at the joint meeting in February 2004 of the School of Accounting and Finance Advisory Board (SAFAB) and the FAQSC it was confirmed that the MAITF Admissions Tutor based at Leeds Met would 'receive all application forms from ZJUT and would be responsible for all application decisions'. The audit team formed the view that this meant that ZJUT was responsible for checking that applicants met the minimum requirements, as laid out in the validation report, and for checking Chinese qualifications, while Leeds Met authority is exercised through the selection process based on joint interviews which served to confirm students' English language capability, as well as their relevant prior experience and likely commitment to the Course.

55 The entry requirements, including English language proficiency for admission to the Course, are the same as those for the MAITF delivered in Leeds and are clearly set out in the Route Document and in the Course specification. Language requirements are fulfilled by the insistence of an International

English Language Testing System (IELTS) score before admission of 6.0. In the case of applicants who do not have the appropriate IELTS score there is the possibility of undertaking a University devised English test. Drawn up by Leeds Met's Leslie Silver International Faculty this had been introduced following the suspension of IELTS testing by the British Council during the outbreak of SARS. There is a process for the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning that reflects the Leeds Met scheme.

56 The audit team heard from all students it met that they were interviewed by both Leeds Met and the ZJUT Course Leaders, and it considered this a positive feature of the arrangements for assuring the standards of the programme. In 2004, 52 applications were received and 28 students recruited; in 2005 82 full-time applications were received and 48 students were recruited; also in 2005, 20 part-time applications were received and 12 students recruited. Students whom the team met had varied profiles, including some who had worked in various sectors for up to ten years and some who were former ZJUT graduates. Most students come from Zheijiang province, but there was also representation from other areas of China.

57 In their meetings with students the audit team heard positive comments about the initial Course induction process and considered this a positive feature of the link. In particular, there was comment on the provision of a Course handbook prior to arrival, on the accessibility of key ZJUT staff and on the presence of Leeds Met staff at the very start of the Course. Timetables for both semesters were provided as well as Course and module details (including learning outcomes), learning materials and reference to necessary books and sources. The Leeds Met presence was seen by students as a guarantee of the quality of the qualification and of Leeds Met's commitment to the Course.

58 The audit team concluded that Leeds Met has established an appropriate mechanism by which to assure itself about the quality of students admitted to the Course while enabling

ZJUT to bring its local expertise to bear on the process. This process, which reflects the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 10*, includes joint interviews by the two Course Leaders or their nominees which enables a further check on the English language proficiency of applicants.

Assurance of academic standards

Assessment of students

59 The assessment regime for the Course conforms to Leeds Met Standard Assessment Regulations which the QAA institutional audit report (2004) confirmed met the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. Students are assessed by a mix of course work and formal examinations and the requirements for this are carefully set out in the Student Handbook. The audit team learnt that while the Memorandum suggests that ZJUT staff would undertake the initial marking of course work for students on the second cohort and thereafter, in fact the setting, marking and moderation of all examinations and course work has to date been undertaken by Leeds Met staff. The team heard that ZJUT staff would be willing to take on more responsibility in this area, and that this may occur as they become more familiar with general standards of assessment. ZJUT staff are responsible for the supervision of dissertations, where they work with between one and four students; students stated their satisfaction with this arrangement. There are overall dissertation managers at both Leeds Met and ZJUT who provide advice and, where necessary, training to dissertation supervisors; the team heard that this was particularly valued by ZJUT staff.

60 The Commentary stated that in order to minimise the possibility of collusion by students in Leeds and ZJUT, assessments undertaken by students on the Course 'are identical in format to, and taken at the same time as, students studying in Leeds'. The validation report required that 'module material to be delivered in China will be contextualised as appropriate',

and thus there may be variation in content to suit local conditions. The audit team learnt that in practice this means that any exams are timetabled to eliminate the time difference between the two locations and that although there have been issues to do with timing, largely because of the differences of public holidays in the UK and China, these have been addressed by the local Course Leader.

61 Since the part-time Course has only just started, the audit team was not in a position to fully evaluate the effectiveness of its procedures. No issues relating to part-time delivery were brought to its attention, other than that the patterns of work and assessment on the part-time Course have been designed to accommodate the fact that the students are all in full-time employment and the Course has been specifically designed with this in mind.

62 The students whom the audit team met were on the whole satisfied with the feedback they were receiving on their assessments, and felt confident about how they were managing the Course and developing their own work. However, the team learnt that formal feedback on the first summative assessment is not provided until the beginning of the second semester. As a consequence students moving from ZJUT to Leeds Met to complete their studies may have little formal feedback on how they are progressing until they arrive in Leeds. The team found that, in practice, feedback on performance on assignments undertaken in the first semester was provided, and that it was usually possible for the ZJUT Course Leader to give students informal feedback on their overall performance before the end of the first semester. There was also some concern about the length of time taken to provide students on the Course with feedback on their work; University policy is to provide such feedback within three weeks, but the team heard that this timescale may slip because of the need to allow for couriering documents.

63 The audit team noted Leeds Met's careful approach to securing the assessment process. The team noted deviation from the terms of the Memorandum in that Leeds Met staff

continue to set, mark and moderate all examinations and course work and that it has put in place a number of devices to minimise collusion between students in the two locations in exams. The team, however, would encourage Leeds Met to monitor the timing of feedback to students on their assessed work during the first semester to enable them to be aware of their progress prior to commencing the second semester of study.

External examining

64 The process of appointment of University external examiners is clearly specified in Leeds Met Regulations. In accordance with these the Memorandum states that Leeds Met retains exclusive control over the appointment of external examiners. The Courses in Leeds and ZJUT currently have the same external examiner, and assessment outcomes for both Courses are considered at the Course Examination Board held in Leeds.

65 The external examiner's report signs off standards set, student performance and the conduct of processes; it also allows for substantive comment on the operation of the Board of Examiners; any actions taken in response to the previous year's report; the overall performance of students in relation to those in other institutions and their general strengths and weaknesses; standards of assessment; matters of curriculum and resourcing; and module content. External examiners' reports are received by Leeds Met's Registrar and Secretary's office and are circulated to the Vice-Chancellor and the relevant deans who identify any issues of concern.

66 The audit team read the 2004-05 external examiner's report, which commented on both Courses, and noted that although it had not yet been finalised, it was generally satisfactory. The external examiner's report relates to the whole of the MAITF and not just to the collaborative link. The report confirmed the standards and performance and the soundness of assessment processes, and in particular 'found the work of the full time students to be

on a par with other universities of similar standing'. The report found assignments, examination scripts and dissertations 'to be marked in a fair manner appropriate to the standard of the MA degree', and recorded careful marking and good feedback to students. It expressed satisfaction with 'the module content, consistency of the modules and the assessment mechanisms across the programme', and with the fit between assessments, syllabi and learning outcomes. The team learnt that the external examiner receives a sample of assessed work and that it was possible that this may not contain work undertaken by ZJUT students. The team recognised that this was statistically unlikely but would encourage Leeds Met to consider whether this possibility allows it to remain as well sighted on the performance of ZJUT students as it might.

67 The audit team learnt that the external examiner had been unable to attend the assessment board in either 2004 or 2005, which is contrary to the requirement stated in the Academic Principles and Regulations that all external examiners are required to attend assessment boards. Through its reading of the Course Committee minutes and annual report the team saw evidence that the external examiner's report for 2004-05 had generally been carefully considered.

68 The audit team learnt that in accordance with Leeds Met regulations ZJUT staff and the local Course Director should be able to access the external examiners' reports via the minutes of Leeds Met's Course Committee, although it is a University regulation that a partner's Course Team should receive copies of the reports. In a meeting with ZJUT staff the team heard that ZJUT had yet to read the 2004-05 report. The team considered that Leeds Met may wish to secure greater understanding and full engagement of the local partner with Leeds Met's external examiner arrangements.

69 The audit team considered that, overall, the external examiner plays an important and effective role in securing the standards of the award. However, the team would encourage

Leeds Met to consider whether it had made partner staff sufficiently aware of the role of the external examiner and of its own need to act upon any recommendations arising from his/her report. The team would also encourage Leeds Met to consider how it might ensure that it remains well sighted on the performance of ZJUT students given the current arrangements for sending the external examiner a random selection of student's assessed work.

Certificates and transcripts

70 The audit team reviewed copies of certificates received by students in the first graduating cohort in October 2005. The team considered that the venue of study and language of instruction along with the joint badging of the Course were clear. The University has been proactive in the introduction of diploma supplements and saw copies of the supplements given to the first cohort. It considered that these reflected the expectations of the *Code of practice* and the team noted the proactiveness of Leeds Met in introducing diploma supplements for students completing the Course to be a positive feature of this link.

Quality of information and support for students

71 Under the terms of the Memorandum Leeds Met retains ultimate responsibility for the quality of the learning opportunities available to students, and it expects ZJUT to provide the relevant resources so that students receive an equivalent experience to students studying at Leeds Met.

72 The audit team accessed a wide range of electronic and hard copy information that is applicable to both Courses and available to potential and enrolled students. All such material is available in English. Most students met by the team reported that they had accessed the website for initial information on the programme and that on request they had received a Course prospectus. Following registration there is an induction programme

and students are provided with a Course handbook, which has been developed to be specific to the ZJUT, and module handbooks which contain statements of aims and learning outcomes. Students met by the team stated that the quality of the information was good, and the team saw evidence that it was, for the most part, accurate and comprehensive and met the required standards.

73 Students receive a formal induction at ZJUT over the first three days of the Course that includes presentations by University staff. The findings of the Annual Survey suggest that students view the induction positively and the audit team heard from students it met that the induction provided comprehensive introductions to most aspects of the Course as well as providing an early opportunity for interaction between staff and students. The commitment of Leeds Met staff to making sure that the students fully understood the course of study on which they were embarking was highly appreciated, and assured students that they were entering upon a properly collaborative course to which Leeds Met staff were fully committed.

74 The audit team was told by University subject staff that the Course Handbook is common to both Courses, and is based on the handbook developed for the first presentation of the course in Leeds in 2003-04. The team noted that the handbook had not been fully adapted for use by students studying at ZJUT. However, the team was told that this situation had now been rectified and there was a dedicated ZJUT Course handbook. Students met by the team considered that any difficulties caused by this in the past were slight and that any misunderstandings arising had been addressed by the Course Director.

75 The audit team heard from students of their general satisfaction with the information provided to them both prior to and after enrolment. They found it to be informative and accurate. The team gained a similar view from its reading of ZJUT Course Committee minutes and from its reading of a variety of information made available to students.

Student support arrangements

76 The Memorandum states that ZJUT 'is responsible for the provision of a student support infrastructure and the day-to-day pastoral care of students'. Accordingly, students on the Course have access to a wide range of services, but in practice the local Course Director is the first port of call in case of any difficulty. This function is regarded very highly by the students met by the audit team who felt that they had a ready and responsive contact in the event of any difficulties or uncertainties. Students also informed the team about the availability and responsiveness via email of University subject level staff on academic matters.

77 The formal position on complaints against ZJUT staff is that they will be dealt with locally in the first instance and that if necessary details should be forwarded to the Leeds Met Course Leader. Complaints against Leeds Met staff would be dealt with in accordance with Leeds Met's normal procedures. The audit team heard that this process had yet to be tested. In practice, the team heard that students, while in ZJUT, would likely take up such matters via the local Course Leader who would act upon or forward them as appropriate. The team noted that there was no mention of an appeals process in the Course handbook although both are detailed in the Student Handbook.

78 The students reported that there was no additional English language support provided during their first semester at ZJUT. However, University staff stated that any students who had language difficulties would be identified at an early stage through tutorials and assessments, and that additional support would be given. Additional English language support during induction in Leeds is available to students who undertake the second semester of study in the UK as part of their induction. Further formal courses could be taken on payment of an additional fee. The students in Leeds also appreciated being taught in small tutor groups alongside the UK-based cohort, which they felt broadened their international experience.

79 The validation report specified that the JEC will 'review the development of library and IT resources and will set out requirements to both the Dean of Leeds Business School and the Dean of the College of Business and Administration at ZJUT'. The joint meeting of the SAFAB and the FAQSC of February 2004 reported that the CDT had confirmed that 'ZJUT was fully committed to the development and that the learning resources made available to students based at ZJUT would mirror those of Leeds-based students'. The audit team heard evidence that there had been specific liaison between library and IT support staff between the two institutions, including a visit from the relevant Leeds Met member of support staff to train ZJUT students in the use of facilities and resources including the e-library.

80 The audit team also heard that issues had been raised by students with regard to access to the internet, with the library facilities at ZJUT being overstretched. As a result dedicated slots of internet access time have been provided. A further issue concerned accessing search engines. Facilities of this type were reported as having greatly improved with the move of the full-time Course to the new campus, and at the JEC meeting of 2005 and at the annual review in November 2005, it was reported that there was no longer a problem.

81 The issue of plagiarism is addressed through the Course Handbook, which refers to Leeds Met Regulations' definition of plagiarism as 'the substantial unacknowledged incorporation in a student's work of material derived from the work (published or unpublished) of another', and adds an explanatory paragraph. More specifically, plagiarism is referred to in the induction process at ZJUT as 'the use of someone else's work without acknowledgement', and the warning is given in the Course Handbook that if plagiarism is suspected the student may be failed on the specific module or expelled from the Course.

82 On the whole, and especially considering the recent development of the Course, the audit team felt that arrangements for student

support were adequate, and noted in particular the well-equipped physical resources, the level of access to internet based technologies, and the easy access to advice both locally and also, via email, from Leeds Met.

Student input into quality management

83 The Memorandum makes no reference to the ways in which students can input into the management of the quality of their learning opportunities, other than briefly citing in its Schedule of Liaison Arrangements the titles of two relevant processes: 'Module Evaluation Questionnaires' and 'Course Committees'. However, the audit team heard from staff and students that in accordance with University regulations students on the Course are able to feedback their views in a number of formal and informal ways including the annual Student Survey, module questionnaires, representation on the local Course Committee, a class forum and direct communication with the Course Leaders and teaching staff.

84 The audit team learnt that module questionnaires were not used during the first delivery of the programme at ZJUT, although staff indicated that there had been sufficient feedback elicited through the representation on the Course Committee and the Student Survey. The team heard that it is up to the faculty whether module questionnaires are operated for any given course and for a number of reasons, principally timing, the Leeds Met Course Leader decided that the existing module questionnaire could not be distributed to the first cohort.

85 The ZJUT Course Committee has elected student representatives and the sets of minutes provided for the audit team indicated that students were able to raise issues. Responses to students' views are fed back to them by the local Course Leader. The audit team heard from students that they felt their views were taken account of by subject staff. The discussions with the students also indicated that there was a class forum. Students at ZJUT have their own Students' Union which, together with a system

of class monitors, provides a rapid and effective means of drawing issues to the attention of the Course Leader.

86 The general responsiveness of the Course Team to formally delivered students views was apparent to the audit team. However, in meetings with students and staff the team heard that student views expressed outside of the formal mechanisms were often rapidly dealt with in a satisfactory manner. The team heard that this often meant that issues were dealt with before they were communicated via the formal mechanisms, and the team considered this a positive feature of the link.

87 The audit team heard evidence of specific changes which had been made as a result of formal and informal student representation, examples of which are referred to above (see paragraphs 47, 59, 73 and 75).

88 The audit team noted the wide range of formal and informal mechanisms available to students to feedback their views of the Course to subject staff. The team considered the responsiveness to informal representation was a positive feature of the link, but considered that the Faculty had perhaps missed an opportunity to gather feedback via module questionnaires during the first delivery of the Course in 2004-05.

Student progression to the UK

89 There is a mechanism for full-time students to study one semester at one venue and the second at the other. To date, in practice this has only been one-way. In 2004-05 one student transferred from ZJUT to Leeds Met, with two more arriving for dissertation supervision. In 2005-6 the figure was 12. The decision is made by students during the first semester. The audit team heard that there is no 'progression requirement' for the transfer as students who are accepted onto the Course at the beginning are regarded as already having demonstrated sufficient expertise in the English language to progress to Leeds if they so wish and, therefore, no further testing is required or offered. The dissertation can be prepared in

either Leeds or at ZJUT, and supervision is on offer at either site.

90 The audit team heard from students it met that the reasons why some students apply to make the transfer and others do not are not dependent on language skills, but are complex. They include the relative perceived value of UK and Chinese educational experience in relation to the topics of the Course, since the case-studies will necessarily differ depending on whether they are being taught at Leeds Met or ZJUT; the question of whether a student feels able to derive maximum benefit from teaching delivered wholly in English without the benefit of a Chinese language level of academic support; the personal support offered at ZJUT by local tutors; the prior work experience and future career plans of the students, in the sense that it may seem more apposite to remain in China; and personal circumstances.

91 The audit team met a number of students who had recently commenced semester 2 at Leeds Met during the audit visit. Some commented that they had received little assistance in planning their trip to the UK, including advice regarding visa applications and arrangements for accommodation, while others said that this was really an issue for the students' own planning. On arrival in Leeds, there is a one-week 'introduction and welcome' event, which also provides advice on any necessary English language support. It was not clear to the students to whom the team met whether more individual, ongoing support would be available.

92 Although no student that undertook semester 1 in Leeds has yet to take semester 2 at ZJUT, the audit team was told by University and ZJUT staff there would be no difficulty with such transfers, and that this emphasised the true flexibility and international nature of the parallel Courses. The library and electronic resources, the help available from the Course Director and staff, and the quality and experience of the ZJUT students were among the positive points which would make such a transfer smooth. Indeed, ZJUT staff emphasised that they would welcome this as the next development of the Course, and are confident

of the benefits it would bring to incoming and local students alike. On the whole, the team felt that the structures are in place to enable considerable flexibility in student access to a UK degree, and that there is commitment at both institutions to produce further development in this area.

Conclusion

93 In considering the partnership the audit team identified the following positive features:

- the timeliness of the course in view of, for example, China's accession to the World Trade Organisation (paragraph 8).
- the enhanced opportunity offered to students by flexible access to the study of a UK degree (paragraph 9)
- the compatibility of the two institutions and, in particular their considerable experience of collaborative activity (paragraph 10)
- the robustness and responsiveness of the dedicated Course Office at ZJUT and the commitment of resources by the local partner (paragraph 39)
- the opportunities for staff development offered by the observation and discussion of teaching methods and the enhancement of the student learning experience deriving from the varied cross-national teaching approaches (paragraphs 49, 50 and 52)
- the efforts of the two institutions, particularly through induction arrangements, to ensure and develop broad equivalence of student experience (paragraph 57)
- the responsiveness to student feedback (paragraph 86), and

94 The audit team also identified the following points for consideration by Leeds Met:

- to secure the full engagement of the local partner with Leeds Met's Annual Monitoring Process (paragraph 44)

- secure greater understanding and full engagement of the local partner with Leeds Met's external examiner arrangements (paragraph 68), and
- ensure that new collaborative programmes undertake to make full and effective use of module questionnaires (paragraph 84).

fully engaged ZJUT staff in how that might be lodged and considered through the formal processes.

95 The audit team considered that while the University's procedures were generally in line with the *Code of practice* there were certain aspects of the University's practice which could be improved and these are identified in the main report among the points for further consideration.

96 The audit team found the Commentary to be helpful and accurate in describing Leeds Met's management of this link. The team noted that this is a relatively new collaboration, albeit based on pre-existing ones operated by the Faculty, which has only just seen its first cohort of students through to final assessment and is still in the process of development. The type of collaboration, which is only operated by this Faculty, is underpinned by the overall University strategy, and devolves the management of standards and quality to faculty level. The team was told that the arrangements, procedures and practices under which this link works are representative of the model adopted in the Faculty and, this being the case, the findings of the audit would support a conclusion of confidence in the University's stewardship of academic standards and oversight of the quality of the student experience in this type of overseas collaborative provision. The team was also told that the University is confident that the collaboration offers a student experience which is broadly equivalent to that of students studying the MAITF in a Leeds-based context. The findings of the team generally supported the University's view of its arrangements; however, the team was not always clear how the University, through the Faculty, assured itself that there was an equivalent student experience. The team considered that there were various instances of continuous monitoring of provision, involving a range of ZJUT staff, but that Leeds Met staff had not

Appendix 1: Update on partnerships since the audit visit

Ministry approval

Since the audit visit the collaborative arrangement has successfully received approval from the Chinese Ministry of Education to operate for both the 2006-07 and 2007-08 academic years.

Annual review

In accordance with the University's academic principles and regulations the course at ZJUT is presently preparing for its course committees in December 2006. The outcomes from these meetings will, in turn, feed respectively into the Faculty of Business and Law and the University's annual quality reports.

Management and administration

For the start of the 2006-07 academic year the Faculty of Business and Law appointed their Hong Kong based Co-ordinator as course leader for the course at ZJUT. This has immediately improved communication between Leeds and Hangzhou. In addition, the faculty has also appointed an International Development Administrator with specific responsibilities for provision in Hong Kong and China.

Joint Education Committee

The annual Joint Education Committee between the institutions is scheduled to take place in Leeds in December 2006. Amongst other things it will consider the outcome from the QAA visit and also review the current memorandum of collaboration (MoU). The MoU sets out in detail the respective rights and responsibilities between Leeds Met and ZJUT.

Student achievement

The ZJUT students enjoyed a presentation ceremony on 01 November 2006. 40 students graduated and in terms of their final award, nine students achieved a Merit and 29 a Pass, with two students deferring. There were no fails and these statistics compare favourably with the Leeds-based cohort.

University guidance on international collaborations

As part of the university's ongoing commitment to its internationalisation strategy, revised guidance on the approval and validation of overseas partnerships was introduced at the start of 2006-07

Appendix 2: Enrolment numbers

Student enrolments for the 2005-06 session was 48 full time students and 12 part time students. For the current 2006-07 academic year to date 35 full time students and 21 part time students have been enrolled. The full-time students are based in the new Pingfeng Campus and the part-time students are based in the old Chaohui Campus, based in the centre of Hangzhou and, therefore, more convenient for the part time cohort.

Year	Number of full-time students	Number of part-time students
2005-06	47	13
2006-07	35	21

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