

Overseas Quality Audit Report

City University and
Shanghai University of Finance and Economics
and the Bank of China, People's Republic of China

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The City University overseas collaborative audit

1 This report considers the collaborative arrangement (the link) between City University (the University), Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (SUFE) and the Bank of China (the Bank).

Introduction

2 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is a United Kingdom (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 the University was conducted by QAA in December 2004.

3 One of QAA's activities is to carry out quality audits of collaborative links between UK higher education institutions (HEIs) 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 on 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, Professor D Meehan, and Professor 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 partnership between the University, the SUFE and the Bank involves the delivery of a two-year part-time Executive Master's of Business Administration (EMBA China). The programme has a similar pedagogical basis and ethos to the full-time and part-time MBAs delivered by the University's Cass Business School (Cass) in London and is accredited by the Association of MBAs (AMBA). The School is accredited by the European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS). It comprises 12 core and three elective modules and a Business Research Project. The modules are studied sequentially and each involves a calendar month of study. The programme is aimed at busy professionals who aspire to an international business education, but wish neither the costs nor the inconvenience of relocation for study abroad. The University's commentary stated that the EMBA is taught and assessed in English.

8 The initial impetus for the EMBA came from the then President of the Bank (and a City MBA Alumnus), Mr Liu Mingkang in 2001. The Bank, which is the second largest commercial bank in PRC, sought to build upon its existing relationship with Cass which aimed to develop the management skills of the Bank staff through specific staff development courses.

9 Established in 1917, SUFE has more than 21,000 students in total, including more than 5,000 postgraduate students. It is a multidisciplinary institution of higher learning with theoretical economics as its foundation and applied economics and management as its main focus. SUFE is under the direct jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, and was one of the first universities in PRC to offer PhD and master's (including MBA) programmes. The MBA School at SUFE delivers five MBA programmes (including the EMBA). Of the School's teaching staff, 75 per cent have studied overseas and 30 per cent of the faculty

have international teaching experience. In 1997, SUFE started a joint MBA programme with Webster University (USA) which was one of the first programmes of its type in PRC to be fully accredited by the Ministry of Education.

10 The EMBA China was approved by the University in 2002 and was given approval by the Ministry of Education in 2002. The first intake of 39 students began their studies in February 2003 with a second intake of 49 students commencing in October 2004. Students follow a structured study timetable for each module and are required to study two units per week. Each module comprises eight study units and a specimen examination paper. Normally, on the third weekend of the month there is a face-to-face workshop which covers a combination of revision material and introductions to new topics. Week 4 is devoted to consolidation of the module and preparation and completion of coursework. Each module has an examination. Examinations are held every four months, and cover the preceding block of three modules. Coursework and examinations contribute 50 per cent each to the assessment for each module. Modules are equally weighted and contribute 75 per cent of the overall EMBA assessment; the remaining 25 per cent is taken up by a Business Research Project. There are no prerequisites and, therefore, if a student misses an element of teaching or assessment they can retrieve this at a later date.

11 Workshops for the first two cohorts have been based at the Bank's Institute of International Finance (IIF) in Shanghai. The facilities include computing, library, accommodation and catering both for students sponsored by the Bank and non-Bank students and visiting faculty. Although students have access to online library database resources at the University, IIF's library has been boosted and updated as part of the programme set up for the benefit of the EMBA students. Students also have access to SUFE resources, located in a different part of Shanghai.

12 The start date for the third cohort had not been agreed at the time of the audit. However, the audit team learnt that the University, SUFE and the Bank were involved in discussions and hoped to be able to sign a new agreement in the near future. The most significant development is that SUFE will take over the local administration of the EMBA China and all workshops would take place at SUFE's MBA school campus.

13 The Commentary stated that the quality assurance processes 'that operate for the EMBA China are the same as for other programmes: the EMBA China, therefore, has the same status and is examined to the same standards as all other MBA programmes'.

The UK institution's approach to overseas collaborative provision

14 The University has two categories of collaborative provision: 'validated' or 'partnership' arrangements. Different processes for the management of quality assurance apply to each category. Validated programmes are 'developed and delivered by approved institutions' while partnership programmes are delivered in conjunction with partners. For both categories the University retains control over the standards and quality of learning opportunities for awards granted in its name. The University has 24 award bearing and non-award bearing overseas collaborative agreements; 23 of these are partnerships. The Commentary stated that the EMBA is a 'partnership', and thus its quality assurance arrangements are largely governed by the Partnerships Policy for Awards of City University. The policy draws on the guidance in the *Code of practice, Section 2*. It contains definitions and details of the University's approaches, principles, governance and processes relating to partnerships. The document states that the purpose of the Partnerships Policy for Awards of City University is to 'support the development and management of partnerships in a coherent manner that safeguards the University's reputation and has due regard for its responsibilities for the academic standards of

its awards'. The Policy and associated Partnerships Framework are also intended to provide clarity for those wishing to develop partnerships and support for such developments. The Partnership Policy is formulated, reviewed and implemented by the Academic Practice, Programmes and Standards Committee (APPSC), which reports directly to Senate. Local governance for partnership arrangements takes place at School/Institute level with oversight from the relevant board of studies. The Policy states that delegation levels for sign off of a partnership arrangement vary depending on the type of arrangement and associated risk assessment: in some cases, the partnership is signed off centrally and in others this happens locally. The rationale behind this is to ensure that the University has sufficient control to discharge its overall responsibility for the standards of its awards and for managing risk and reputation. The Policy requires that all partnership activity is fully costed with financial arrangements set out in an agreement between the partner and the University. The University procedures are intended to safeguard against financial or other temptations that might compromise academic standards or the quality of learning opportunities. The Policy requires that proposers complete a checklist that includes the need to inform professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and a risk assessment. Overseas partners with no knowledge of UK higher education policies, procedures and standards are considered to be high risk, requiring Council approval; overseas HEIs with identifiable policies, procedures and academic standards that are consonant with those in the UK are considered to be medium risk, requiring Vice Chancellor/University Secretary approval. The Commentary stated that the arrangements for the quality assurance of this programme was representative of the University's approach to collaborative programmes offered in partnership.

15 The Commentary stated that the University is both the 'programme presenter' and the awarding institution for the EMBA degree. Cass, therefore, provides the complete academic product, including setting admission

standards and administering the entry process, content and curriculum, all formal assessment, the majority of the teaching, and oversight and management of quality and standards. These responsibilities are listed in the Heads of Terms Agreement (the Agreement), which also lists responsibilities of the Bank (provision of facilities and local management) and SUFE (application for approval from the Ministry of Education, library provision and assistance with teaching).

16 The University assures itself of the quality and standards on the EMBA China through a number of quality assurance processes set out in the Academic Handbook. Central oversight of quality and standards of partnerships rests with the APPSC, whose remit is to oversee processes to assure the quality and standards of taught programmes, including assessment practice, performance and procedures, undertaking a review at least annually and reporting its finding to Senate. The following committees were subsumed in to APPSC from the start of 2005-06: Quality and Academic Standards Committee (QASC); Programmes Committee; Teaching Learning and Assessment Committee (TLAC); Teaching and Learning Assessment Group (TALAG); Academic Working Group (AWG); AWG Assessment Group (sub-group of AWG); Assessment Regulations Working Party (sub-working party of AWG Assessment Group). Administrative oversight is through the Academic Development and Services Department (ADSD).

17 At school level, quality assurance processes are managed by the Cass Board of Studies and its committees, in particular the APPSC and the Visiting Appointments Committee. Reports from programmes, including the Off-Campus Programme which delivers the EMBA China, are a standing item on the agenda of the Board of Studies. Boards of Studies report directly to Senate. The quality assurance processes that operate for the EMBA China are the same as for all other Cass programmes.

18 The audit team scrutinised policy documents and committee minutes at school and university level and found evidence of thorough consideration of the partnership and programme, and evidence that these adhered to the University's policies and procedures. The team concluded that the University's policies and procedures underpinning the management of overseas collaborative arrangements as applied to this partnership are effective.

Public information, publicity and promotional activity

19 The University maintains a comprehensive record of its collaborative arrangements in the form of a register. The Agreement states that the Management Committee, which includes at least two representatives from each party, is responsible for overseeing the marketing of the EMBA China in China. The audit team was told, however, that all publicity material related to the programme is approved by the EMBA Programme Director and School Marketing Manager. The team learnt that a bilingual member of the Cass administration team checks on all publicity material issued by the University's partners and therefore that it could be confident of any material produced in Chinese. All parties recognised the need to provide more publicity and raise the profile of the EMBA China in China. Hitherto, publicity had been largely restricted to the Bank.

20 The audit team scrutinised a range of publicity material including the University Postgraduate Prospectus, a Cass Business School brochure, the EMBA China Prospectus, the SUFE Prospectus, and other advertising and recruitment information. The team noted that in all cases it was clear that this was a joint programme involving all three partners, and that this was a University award delivered in China.

21 Students met by the audit team confirmed that publicity material provided before registration was accurate and complete. They told the team that they had learnt about the EMBA China through various means, including employer recommendation, from the internet

and from colleagues. In each case, students were directed to the Cass website for authoritative information, and further information was provided by email or telephone contact with Cass. The team checked the website and confirmed that it provides comprehensive information about the programme, which had been updated to reflect the change in site of delivery for the third cohort of students.

22 Based upon the evidence presented, the audit team formed the opinion that the University has a sound approach to provision of public information and maintains adequate control of publicity and promotional activities.

Formal arrangements for establishing the link

Selecting and approving the partner institution

23 The Commentary stated that although the EMBA is regarded as a partnership arrangement 'the novelty of the partnership and entry into a strategic market' led the City University Courses Committee (renamed Programmes Committee in 2004 and subsumed into APPSC from 2005-06) to adopt the more stringent validation style institutional review approval process to approval of SUFE and the Bank as partners. The process for institutional approval is set out in the University Policy on Validation. The Regulations for validation state that 'The Senate Committee on Validation shall investigate the suitability of any institution proposing a course or courses for validation. In particular, the Committee shall satisfy itself as to the institution's fit with the University's Strategy, corporate values and academic portfolio. In addition, the institution's objectives, governance, funding, resources, academic capability, general standing, location, critical mass, quality assurance systems (including audit reports carried out by external agencies), risk and existing or previous links with other institutions will be considered. The investigation shall include a visit to the

institution by appropriate University officers and academic staff. The Committee shall proceed to the next stage of validation only when this stage is complete'.

24 The institutional review involved visits by the Director of Academic Development, the University librarian and other senior staff which resulted in a formal report to the following committees of Senate: Strategy, Planning and Resource Committee; QASC; and Courses Committee. The report indicated that the reviewers conducted due diligence enquiries. In particular, they were satisfied about the good standing of the prospective partners and their capacity to fulfil their designated roles. They stated that both partner institutions have sound reputations; their existing higher education links are with appropriate bodies; and, in terms of governance, the academic programme is safeguarded by the agreement, endorsed by the Ministry of Education, that the University will have the final say over academic matters. The report outlined the risks and benefits of the proposal. Risks included the requirement of the Ministry of Education that the agreement is governed by Chinese law. However, the reviewers formed the opinion that the proposed programme could bring much benefit to the University and in many important respects the University's criteria were satisfied. The reviewers recommended approval of the proposal subject to three conditions. These were: sight of the Ministry of Education Certificates and confirmation that the University would have academic control over the programme; approval by Cass Board of Studies of the SUFE staff who would contribute to the programme; approval of necessary regulatory and procedural changes to reflect the nature and location of delivery. The Board of Studies gave full and final approval to the outstanding matters related to the EMBA China on 21 May 2003. This was noted by the University Programmes Committee in November 2003.

25 The process followed for approval of this partnership took into account the need to operate within the legislative and cultural requirements of the overseas country, including

approval by the Ministry of Education in China. This requirement is not explicitly stated in the University's Partnership Policy. When considering the *Code of practice*, however, the QASC noted that 'cultural elements should be considered thoroughly when looking at potential new partnerships with another organisation'. The University may wish to consider adding this requirement to its Partnership Policy.

26 It was clear to the audit team that the choice of SUFE and the Bank as partners fitted well with the University's strategic goal of increasing its international scope and reputation by collaborating with partner institutions abroad. It also satisfied Cass Business School's aim to forge alliances, at the appropriate level, in both international financial centres either established or developing and international business centres.

27 The audit team concluded that the University's arrangements for selecting and approving partners reflect the *Code of practice*, and in this case were followed. For this partnership, the University chose to operate its more stringent validation style review, which provided a more detailed assessment of risks involved. The team noted, however, that validation and partnership arrangements are subject to separate, but partially overlapping, policies and procedures. In its ongoing development of its Partnership Policy, bearing in mind that it implemented a validation review in this case, the University might consider incorporating a formal need for review in cases where higher risk is possible. The University might also expand the Partnership Policy to incorporate existing procedures that are not yet formalised such as evaluating legislative and cultural requirements.

Programme approval

28 New programmes and amendments to existing programmes whether collaborative programmes or internal programmes, are normally considered in two stages. For partnership programmes there is an additional Stage 0, which is the agreement of the

proposed partner. Stage I is approved by the School's Board of Studies, and is then considered by a delegate of APPSC in conjunction with the Deputy Academic Registrars Team (DART). Stage I approval is then reported to APPSC and if approved enables advertising and recruitment to commence subject to final approval. After review and sign-off by the Board of Studies, the Stage II proposal is considered by a University panel established solely for that purpose. This panel includes at least one external adviser, PSRB representatives, where appropriate, and two internal members of staff. It addresses detailed issues relating to the proposed programme and module specifications, programme management and syllabuses. Panels report to APPSC which is a Committee of Senate. Detailed notes for guidance, checklists, forms and flow charts for partnership provision are provided in the Academic Handbook. The Commentary stated that the process broadly reflects the structure of the *Code of practice*, in particular, Section 2.

29 Internal approval of the EMBA China by the Cass Board of Studies and the Programme Committees took place in 2001-02 and 2002-03. The audit team reviewed the full Stage II Approval Documents and other relevant documentation. The programme specification included reference to the *Subject benchmark statement* for Business and Management. Programme learning outcomes were mapped against module learning outcomes. The programme specification does not make specific reference to *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), although the University's notes for guidance on completion of programme specifications does require this. The review panel found that aims, objectives and learning outcomes were of an insufficient level for a master's course in the initial submission, and stipulated that they should be revised. In 2003, the EMBA China was re-approved using the new Credit, Assessment and Programme Specifications (CAPS) whereby the programme was required to address elements of the Academic Infrastructure.

In preparation for CAPS approval, programme specifications were rewritten to adhere to FHEQ and benchmark descriptors. The three MBA programmes were approved together, which ensured comparability of aims and learning outcomes.

30 Given the nature of the EMBA China as an off-campus programme which uses a blended learning approach, careful attention was paid to issues relevant to the students' learning off-campus, such as access to library and computing facilities, teaching rooms and tutorial support. The CassLearn virtual learning environment (VLE) was developed to provide support for students between the face-to-face contact of the weekend workshops.

31 Approval of the EMBA China included the condition that SUFE staff delivery on the programme is approved by Cass. The audit team heard from staff at SUFE that Cass provides a detailed study guide that contains an outline of the programme. SUFE adds to it, specifically providing case-studies based upon local Chinese examples. The audit team was told that all material provided by SUFE is approved by Cass before delivery.

32 It was also a condition of approval that due to the innovative nature of the EMBA China a formal review should be undertaken six months after the first cohort were enrolled. The audit team was told that this review did not occur as the University was satisfied that no major issues had arisen and the programme would be reviewed as part of the overall MBA review process. However, on the basis of its meetings with staff and reading of relevant committee minutes the team could not easily ascertain how the University determined that there was no need for the six-month review or who took the decision not to undertake the review.

33 Minor amendments to partnership programmes are considered at three levels: Cass APPSC, Cass Board of Studies, and the University APPSC (in some cases with sign-off delegated to ADSD staff or panel chairs). There have been several minor modifications to the

EMBA since its validation, including a change to the award title. The audit team saw evidence that these minor amendments were approved using the appropriate amendment procedure.

34 The EMBA China was presented for accreditation by AMBA at the same time as the initial approval by the University in November 2002. The Director of Accreditation at AMBA was a panel member at University's Stage II Course Approval meeting (11 November 2002) and the International Accreditation Board approved the programme unconditionally in September 2003. The programme was also included in the School's accreditation by the EQUIS. The School was assessed by a panel of international peers in December 2005 and was accredited in February 2006. The Commentary stated that the programme was to be presented along with all Cass's other MBA programmes for re-accreditation by AMBA in March 2006.

35 The audit team concluded that effective procedures are in place for programme approval and appropriate use is made of external reference points. The two-stage process provides a mechanism for judging outline proposals, so as to avoid wasted effort in preparing detailed documents for partnerships that are unlikely to be approved. Review of the Stage II documents is conducted at programme, school and University level, and include the use of external assessors and reference points. The team noted that these processes were followed for the approval of the EMBA China.

Written agreements with the partner institution

36 The main document detailing the partnership between the University, SUFE and the Bank is the Agreement which is dated January 2002 and includes the University's Ordinances and Regulations and Charter and Statutes. The Agreement was amended in May 2002 to include the provisions that disbursement of surpluses should only be enacted if the healthy development of the programme could be fully ensured, and that the Agreement shall be governed by the laws of

the PRC instead of England and Wales. These amendments were requirements of the Ministry of Education. The Agreement detailed the key characteristics and academic content of the EMBA China, the managerial responsibilities of the three partners and matters related to resources, termination and review. In general this document was fit for purpose and consistent with precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 2*. It clearly identified what the three partners individually should contribute to the link. The team noted that the Agreement did not cover copyright and intellectual property rights, as suggested in the *Code*. The issue of copyright was raised during the Programme Approval process. It was noted that all learning materials are Cass-copyrighted, as clarified in authors' contracts, and that the contract with the Bank respects all copyright issues as vested in Cass.

37 The arrangements for termination of the link are specified as any party 'giving 2 years notice of termination for whatever reason...bankruptcy or insolvency of any party' and 'a conclusion from an annual review of the Programme considered by the Management Committee that the Programme was not sustainable either for financial or for academic reasons'. In view of the fact that the duration of the programme is 24 months, the team concluded that the requirement for two years notice provided adequate safeguard for any cohort of students currently on the programme at the time of termination.

38 The Agreement specified that a special review should be conducted 21 months after the first cohort of students commenced the EMBA China. This review would allow consideration of the possibility of continuing the programme by taking on a further cohort or cohorts of students. The Agreement stated that this would be a matter for negotiation among the Parties and a new agreement among them. The review was presented to the Management Committee in October 2004. The team was informed that negotiations were ongoing at the time of the audit.

39 The original Agreement stated that the laws of England and Wales should take precedence if there was any disagreement between the partners. The Agreement was amended in May 2002 following its consideration by the Ministry of Education to read that it 'shall be governed by and construed in all respects with the laws of the People's Republic of China and the parties agree to submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of the People's Republic of China'. In its validation-style review, the University noted that this amendment introduced an unknown risk; a change in law might force the programme to close and the University might be vulnerable to legal action.

40 The audit team concluded that the written agreements clearly establish the respective responsibilities of the partner institutions and the students. The team noted that the Agreement did not cover all the matters included in the *Code of practice*, which it predated.

Quality management of the link

Management of the link

41 The Agreement established a Management Committee comprising at least two senior members from each partner institution. The functions of the Committee are to oversee the marketing and administration of the programme, review all significant issues relating to the programme and review the whole programme at least once in every 12-month period to ensure it is meeting its objectives. The Committee has decision-taking powers on a number of matters and advisory powers in relation to all academic matters where the University retains sole decision taking powers.

42 In its first meeting in October 2004 (on the eve of the commencement of the second intake), the Management Committee conducted a full review of the experience of the first intake and agreed to several specific recommendations to improve future delivery. The audit team saw evidence that actions were

taken to address all of the areas highlighted, and the Commentary claimed that this led to a significant increase in students' appraisal of the programme during the second intake.

43 The audit team heard that the intention was that the Management Committee should meet approximately once each year. In practice, the team learnt that the Committee meets only once per cohort, and its second meeting will take place when a new Agreement is signed.

44 A Course Planning and Management Committee (CPMC), comprising all teaching faculty involved in developing the learning materials and delivery of the programme and the programme team meets regularly. The PMC considers quality assurance issues and future developments are discussed, feedback is provided and experiences are shared. More broadly, this has also proved a useful forum for exchanging ideas and promoting and disseminating a new culture of teaching in flexible and distributed learning environments at Cass. Initial meetings were concerned with designing the programme and module contents. Following the launch of the course, CPMC regularly considered programme updates and ongoing evaluation of workshops, online support and assessments. The CPMC also received and considered student feedback and minutes of the staff student liaison committee (SSLC). CPMC always meets in London and only one meeting was attended by staff from SUFE. Local staff in PRC who met the team felt, however, that they had adequate engagement with the programme through regular meetings with the programme team when they visited China.

45 Operational management of the EMBA China standards, learning opportunities and student support is through the Programme Team, which consists of the Cass's Associate Dean for Off-Campus Programmes (who is also the EMBA Programme Director), Programme Manager and Learning Support Officer, the Bank's Programme Director and Programme Officer and the Programme Director Designate at SUFE. This team maintains daily communication and meets during the frequent

visits of the Programme Director to China. Local staff in PRC told the audit team that they considered that there is effective control and administration of the programme.

46 The Programme Director is a full-time employee of the University and is based in Cass. He is responsible for the academic leadership and oversight of the EMBA China in the UK and China, including academic development, delivery and quality assurance. He visits Shanghai regularly to meet with the Programme Director Designate at SUFE and with the Bank's Programme Director who is currently responsible for local operational management issues in China including the oversight of the teaching facilities and workshops. The Programme Director is integrally involved with liaison at all levels between the three partners.

47 Higher level management and strategic discussions are maintained during visits to China by the Dean of the Business School and the University Vice-Chancellor. These involve contacts with the Bank President's Office and the HR Department in Beijing, as well as SUFE management, including the President, Vice Presidents, the Dean and Deputy Dean of the MBA School in Shanghai. As required by the Agreement, an Advisory Board was established for the programme, comprising high-ranking officials from government departments, financial institutions, business institutions and the partner institutions. The audit team learnt that the Board provided a wide range of advice and opinions during establishment of the Partnership.

48 Elected student representatives meet frequently with the Programme Director and local staff in the SSLC during his visits to Shanghai. The audit team learnt that three student representatives were elected for the first cohort; this was increased to four for the second cohort, so as to increase the number of student representatives not sponsored by the Bank. SSLC minutes are sent to the representatives for approval before distribution to the rest of the cohort. A formal report on the action taken is provided at the subsequent

SSLC or a notice may be put on CassLearn if an immediate response is required.

Annual monitoring

49 The arrangements for monitoring and review of the EMBA are the same as for all Cass programmes, and are set out in the Academic Handbook. At the end of each module students are invited to complete an online evaluation questionnaire (see paragraph 97). Cass and SUFE staff involved in delivering a module are then asked to provide an evaluative report of the module and this is reported to CPMC and the Programme Committee.

50 Annual monitoring occurs via the Annual Programme Evaluation (APE) which, for the EMBA China, is completed by the Programme Director. This routinely contains an update from the previous programme review, a summary and review of activity for the current academic year, an evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme, an action plan and an analysis of student progression, achievement and entry profiles. The APE is informed by external examiners' reports, minutes of SSLCs, Programme Management meeting minutes, statistical data on student recruitment, progression and achievement, and student evaluations. The audit team read the APEs for 2003-04 and 2004-05 and noted that they provided a thorough evaluation of the programme. Action points from the first APE included: providing support for the business project, which was achieved through a skills workshop and specific academic support; and improving the quality of learning materials, which was achieved by rewriting two modules and revising all others. Action points from the second APE included securing a new contract for a third cohort; improving publicity and promotion in China; and recruiting a more diverse cohort of students for the third cohort, with less reliance on the Bank. To enable the University to compare standards and quality of learning opportunities across all of its MBA provision the EMBA China APE is received by the Cass Board of Studies. The audit team noted that all action points listed in the 2003-

04 APE had been completed. Minutes of the Board of Studies recorded receipt and approval of the APEs, but recorded no comment specific to this programme. A generic summary by the Chairman stated that the documents show many positive elements in terms of achievement of the programme aims and learning outcomes; maintenance of academic standards; student support; quality of learning resources; quality enhancement and student achievement. The APEs seen by the team fit with this appraisal.

51 The audit team noted that the Bank and SUFE staff do not have direct input into the production of the APE, but heard that their views are channelled through the Programme Management Committee. The audit team considered that the University may wish to reconsider the involvement of its partners in the annual monitoring process.

52 The audit team concluded that formal annual monitoring procedures, as applied to this partnership, are effective. However, the team considered that some developmental benefits might be derived from engaging SUFE staff more fully in the annual monitoring process.

Periodic review

53 The University's Periodic Programme Review (PPR) process, which normally operates on a five-year cycle, takes a long term view of the structure, curriculum, delivery and management of programmes and the continuing relevance of their aims and objectives. The details of PPR are set out in the Academic Handbook which states that there must be an external subject specialist on the panel. The Handbook also states that for partnership arrangements PPR should explicitly address the effectiveness of the partnership elements of the programme.

54 All Cass MBA programmes including the EMBA underwent PPR in June 2005. The Board of Studies and the School Programmes Committee were involved in the preparation of the self-evaluation document (SED). The review included appropriate external participation and

student input including a meeting with one EMBA student who was in London at the time. The audit team read this report and noted that it affirmed a number of areas of good practice as well as identifying areas for further development for the MBA programmes as a whole. The SED for the PPR stated that one external examiner highlighted that the 'critical' capacity of MBA students needed to be improved. As a result the study skills component of the EMBA Induction Workshop had been reconsidered, defining more clearly the expectations of coursework and assessment in general. There were no specific issues for EMBA identified. Although the Academic Handbook states that the review should explicitly address the effectiveness of the partnership elements, this element was missing from the SED. The PPR report highlighted a number of features of good practice for all MBAs including the use of CassLearn and the amount of staff development around this area; meeting the needs of students; and programme handbooks and induction.

55 The report, together with the Programme Director's response, were received and considered at the Board of Studies in autumn 2005. The PPR report was then received and approved by APPSC. In reading the minutes of the Board of Studies and APPSC the audit team noted that the Board made various suggestions for incorporation in the responses, and that APPSC simply recorded approval of the report. The audit team considered that the PPR process was generally thorough, with appropriate oversight at school and university levels. The combined review of all MBA programmes in a single exercise provided a good opportunity to compare programmes, to identify common weaknesses, and to share good practices.

56 The audit team noted that there was no direct involvement of the Bank or SUFE staff in the periodic review process. The team was informed that inputs from these staff are incorporated through their interactions with the Programme Director. The University might like to consider involving staff from partner institutions directly in its review processes with the view of strengthening the partnership and

increasing their awareness of UK quality assurance procedures.

57 The audit team considered that the periodic review of the Cass MBA programmes in 2005 followed University procedures and found the resulting PPR report to be comprehensive, with the exception of specific mention of the effectiveness of the partnership. There was appropriate external involvement and in general it reflected the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*. CassLearn was highlighted as a feature of good practice.

Staffing and staff development

58 The EMBA combines modular and flexible learning (including e-learning) with regular face-to-face teaching workshops in Shanghai. The latter are organised around four-day monthly residential teaching blocks and are taught by a combination of Cass academic staff visiting from the University and SUFE faculty. Outside of the workshops CassLearn links students with faculty and programme teams for the duration of the EMBA China.

59 A number of Cass faculty and University visiting lecturers were recruited to design and deliver the EMBA and were initially provided with detailed briefing sessions by both Programme Director and support team regarding logistics and teaching and learning in China. Staff were invited to write specially designed learning materials and to provide academic support including delivery of weekend workshops, online support and setting and marking coursework and examinations. Tutors who wrote module learning materials attended a workshop delivered by the Programme Director on Best Practices in Distance Education: Writing Good Study Units. They were provided with an agreement detailing all that was required and a template to follow when writing materials. In addition, the learning materials were both academically and copy edited, ensuring that feedback was provided to the tutor during the entire writing process. Final production was done by the Cass Learning Support Officer according to house-

style guidelines which were specifically developed for the programme.

60 Tutors were also given training in the use of CassLearn and provided with the comprehensive CassLearn User Manual for Tutors. If required, tutors are given one-to-one training sessions before their module starts to ensure they are confident in the use of the VLE. Learning between staff is also shared when tutors who have run a workshop take part in briefing others and in sharing their experiences.

61 The quality of academic support given by tutors is appraised by students. If a tutor falls below the expected standard, the Programme Director talks through any problem areas with the tutor and discusses with them how teaching can be improved. After each workshop, the tutor is required to submit a report that gives them an opportunity to reflect on the experience and to think about how improvements could be made.

62 Cass receives a list of SUFE staff who are involved in delivering the EMBA China. A condition of programme approval was that the Business School Board of Studies should approve SUFE staff who would contribute to the programme. There is limited opportunity for staff development activities either centrally or locally for SUFE tutors. Members of the Programme Team told the audit team that staff development of SUFE was the responsibility of SUFE not the University. SUFE staff confirmed that SUFE has its own comprehensive staff development programme that includes sending staff overseas, training in teaching methods, and peer observation on every course. They also recognised the benefits of being involved with this programme.

63 Relevant learning materials developed to support each module are provided to SUFE staff ahead of their designated workshops to assist them with course presentation and delivery. All face-to-face workshop sessions, including those by SUFE, are appraised by students. To enhance further communications with SUFE academics, a post-workshop report is requested by Cass which also helps with monitoring and evaluation purposes.

64 SUFE staff provide expertise on theory and local case studies, in accordance with the Agreement. Although collaboration in supervision of projects is mentioned in the Agreement, staff and students who met the team reported that there had been no SUFE involvement in supervision. Students reported that there had been some joint delivery of modules for the first cohort, but not for the second. SUFE staff are keen to obtain University's agreement to their greater involvement in the delivery of the programme, especially so as to provide greater emphasis on 'Chinese' Business Administration. However it remains a matter for the University to reflect upon the level of partner involvement in delivery and upon the balance of Chinese and International Business Administration in the curriculum.

65 On the recommendation of the Visiting Appointments Committee of the Cass Board of Studies five SUFE staff who teach on the EMBA China have been appointed as honorary visiting staff of the University. Appointments are for three years, renewable, and appointees are allocated a sponsor. Honorary staff receive regular mail from the School, are invited to attend events and are asked for their comments on their role on an annual basis. Although the University's policy for honorary appointments states that 'the title is a considerable honour and constitutes an independent validation of the distinction of the holder in their profession by an external authority (the University) of high repute and perceived integrity', SUFE staff who met the audit team were unclear about the status or value of honorary visiting lecturers. The University may wish to more actively promote the advantages of the honorary appointment to partner staff.

66 In order to ensure that staff from SUFE who teach on the EMBA are aware of Cass's approach and expectations for teaching, learning and assessment, most of them have been given special briefings during week-long visits to Cass. Moreover, the Cass Programme Director meets with and briefs SUFE teaching staff during visits to Shanghai in order to

coordinate teaching. The audit team heard that SUFE staff who had attended the special briefings at Cass found them valuable for getting an introduction to the programme and for meeting the administrative staff.

67 During the audit the audit team met a number of both Cass and SUFE faculty involved in delivering the EMBA. Staff from both institutions were content with the staff development activities offered by their own institutions. In addition, they felt that involvement in the partnership added unique opportunities to work with new delivery methods that enhanced their teaching practices. The audit team concluded that procedures for staffing and staff development, as applied to this partnership, are effective.

Student admissions

68 As part of its management of standards, admission requirements for the EMBA are set by the University alone. The prospectus and programme specification list the requirements as a good university degree, or an appropriate professional qualification, or at least six years of relevant business experience, a minimum of three years managerial experience, post-graduation, either a minimum score of 550 in the Graduate Management Admissions test (GMAT) and a minimum score of 6.5 in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or a customised diagnostic test (English, numeracy and business aptitude) administered by Cass in China and a strong motivation and commitment to completing the EMBA as part of a cohort of off-campus students.

69 In 2003 there were 76 applicants of which 39 were accepted, and in 2004 there were 120 applicants of which 49 were accepted. To date, 39 per cent of students have been female. The application and admissions process is managed by Cass. Students normally apply directly to Cass, although the Bank applications were pre-screened by the Bank for eligibility, and the applications are forwarded to Cass who make the final decision as to whether an applicant should be accepted onto the programme. All offers are subject to face-to-face interviews

conducted by the Programme Director and Cass colleagues when visiting Shanghai, where interpersonal skills and English proficiency are also assessed before formal acceptance onto the programme. SUFE staff were involved in an advisory capacity with interviews for the first cohort of students, but were unable to tell the audit team as to why they were not invited to assist with interviews for the second cohort.

70 In the first two cohorts 85 per cent of successful applicants were Bank employees. These students are pre-selected for sponsorship by the Bank according to internal criteria before being recommended to apply to the course. The audit team learnt that for the second cohort the Bank decided to target more senior managers and this was the stimulus for reintroducing the customised diagnostic test as several senior managers did not have GMAT or IELTS at the required level. This test did, however, provide equivalence and fulfilled the standard entry requirements stated in the programme specification.

71 Students who met the audit team confirmed that entry requirements were clear and consistently applied. The team concluded that the applications and admissions processes for the EMBA reflect the *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education* and are effective in enabling the University to maintain control over the standard of applicant and from the evidence available to it that they are fairly applied.

Assurance of academic standards

Assessment of students

72 Students are assessed by coursework and examination for each module, and have to complete a Business Research Project. In line with the statement in the Agreement that the University 'shall have sole decision taking powers in relation to all academic matters' Cass is responsible for setting coursework and examination questions, moderation, conduct of examinations and providing feedback to

students on their assessed work. All assessments are undertaken in English. University assessment guidelines are clearly presented in the Validation Handbook. The EMBA Student Handbook contains relevant regulations including those related to plagiarism and the programme specification provides a brief overview of the assessment strategies.

73 Module leaders are responsible for setting coursework assignments and examination questions. These must be approved by the Programme Director. Module leaders ensure that assignments and examination papers are similar across programmes, thus providing comparability of standards. The audit team learnt that students in the first cohort identified that there needed to be a closer link between some module delivery and assessment when material was delivered by SUFE tutors but assessments were set by module leaders. Students and SUFE staff who met the team, however, confirmed that there is now closer liaison between visiting module leaders and SUFE staff. Coursework is submitted and marked online via CassLearn. Safeguards are in place to preserve the security of the process, including personal usernames and passwords, restricted access levels for students and tutors, University information technology (IT) security and backup procedures.

74 Feedback on assessed course work is also provided via CassLearn in line with guidelines developed by the programme for online feedback. The audit team heard from Cass faculty that these guidelines have been revised a number of times to improve the quality and amount of feedback. Cass faculty undertake internal moderation.

75 For reasons related to differences in programme schedule, students on the EMBA China take their examinations at a different time to the students studying the programme in London. The Commentary stated that in order to ensure the security of the examination process EMBA China students take a different paper which covers broadly the same subjects. All examinations are sat in Shanghai and invigilated by information technology University

staff in accordance with University regulations. As English is not their first language, students are allowed to use dictionaries in the examinations so that they are not unduly disadvantaged.

76 Joint Assessment Boards are generally held except where a key progression or completion point requires a separate one. This aids the comparison of performance on the UK and China degrees, as the marks for all students and the comments of examiners, both internal and external, can be considered together.

77 It was clear to the audit team that the University took great care in ensuring that the assessment processes for the EMBA China programme were in line with the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* and that given the reliance upon online assessment and feedback on assessed coursework, that it had developed rigorous procedures to ensure the security of the process. The use of similar assignments and exam papers, together with common internal and external examiners and assessment boards, ensures comparability of standards and aids comparison of performance across MBA programme. The audit team concluded that the assessment process, as applied to this partnership, is effective.

External examining

78 The external examiners for the EMBA China are the same as those for Cass's other MBA programmes. They are appointed by the University in accordance with the University Ordinances and Regulations. The Commentary stated that initially a separate external examiner was appointed for the EMBA China but, on reflection, it was decided that greater confidence could be placed in the standards of the degrees by receiving reports from external examiners who could compare performance of off-campus students with the performance of students on-campus in the UK.

79 Procedures for dealing with external examiners' reports are set out in the Academic Handbook. External examiners' reports are sent directly to the University. Academic

Development and Services logs receipt of the report, identifies any issues raised which require response, and forwards the report to the Secretary of the Board of Studies, who requests the Programme Director to prepare a response to any issues raised in the report. The Programme Director prepares a response detailing proposed action, timescales and responsibilities for the action. The Board of Studies considers the report and the response, and either approves the response or refers it back for the provision of further information. The Secretary of the Board of Studies writes to the external examiner stating the meeting of the Board at which their report was considered and, where applicable, enclosing a copy of the response. A copy of the letter and response is also sent to Academic Development and Services, which prepares an overview report which monitors compliance to the procedure and highlights common issues from external examiner reports. APPSC consider the overview report and makes recommendations in the light of the operation of the process for the consideration of external examiners' reports and common issues identified.

80 The audit team noted that external examiners have commented favourably on the standards of all MBA degrees, both in an absolute and a comparative sense. One external examiner reported that, in the previous year, he had highlighted that the 'critical' capacity of MBA students needed to be improved and in the most recent report he noted progress in this area. Another examiner praised the multi-subject block examinations on some MBA programmes, which helps reduce the piecemeal approach to the various subject areas and integrates various skills.

81 The audit team learnt that external examiners' reports may not be seen by all members of the programme team, but all issues relevant to individual staff are normally conveyed to these staff. Members of the programme team told the team that it is difficult to address some of the comments as they are mainly generic and not specifically aimed at a particular programme or module.

However, they felt that common external examiners across programmes was good for comparing standards.

82 The audit team learnt that external examiners' reports are not seen by SUFE staff. The Programme Director informed the team that reports contained no issues related to SUFE and that SUFE staff could read the summary on the internet if they desired. The audit team felt that because external examining is a key component of the quality assurance process, it would be beneficial for the partnership if SUFE staff were appraised of the system and reports.

83 The audit team concluded that arrangements for external examining, as applied to this partnership, reflect the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining* and are generally effective. The use of examiners for a suite of programmes provides a sound mechanism for comparing standards and performance under different modes of delivery. However, developmental benefits might be derived from engaging SUFE more fully in the external examining process.

Certificates and transcripts

84 The University is solely responsible for issuing the certificates and transcripts to students who successfully complete the EMBA China programme and the audit team saw copies of certificates and transcripts that were issued to the first cohort of students. The team were informed that the University was aware that neither document recorded the place of study and that this would be reviewed in time for the graduation of the next cohort.

Quality of information and support for students

Student information and support arrangements

85 The audit team had access to a range of recruitment and promotional material made available to students including the University's Postgraduate Prospectus, the Cass Business School Brochure, the EMBA China Prospectus

and the SUFE Prospectus and the Cass website. The three-way badging of the programme was evident on all the material. It was made clear that it was a University Award delivered in China.

86 All publicity material related to the EMBA China is approved by the Programme Director and School Marketing Manager. The University confirmed that it had staff who were fluent in Chinese and thus it could be confident of any material produced in Chinese.

87 Students met by the audit team said that they had learnt about the programme through various routes, including employer recommendation, from the internet and from colleagues. In each case, students were directed to the Cass website for authoritative information, and further information was provided by email or telephone contact with Cass. Students confirmed that publicity material provided before registration was accurate and complete.

88 The programme begins with a four-day induction workshop, which includes sessions about University regulations, administration, learning and assessment methods, online resources, team building, study skills and independent learning. Current and former students met by the audit team confirmed that the workshop provided a valuable introduction to the programme.

89 The EMBA China Student Handbook contains relevant information on the course structure, assessment regulations, attendance, cheating and plagiarism. Students told the audit team that they were totally satisfied with the information provided in the Handbook, which they found to be accurate and helpful. Students also told the team that they were made aware of the complaints and appeals processes through the Handbook and gave examples of one complaint and one appeal that had been dealt with satisfactorily in the first stages of the stated process, by local staff in China. The team learnt from Cass staff that there had not been any more extended complaint or appeal.

90 The audit team learnt that students can easily communicate with the programme team in the UK by CassLearn and can post anonymous questions/issues on it. Alternatively, students can email staff directly and the Programme Director cited several examples of when he had phoned students who required counselling or information. The Programme Director, through the SSLC, tries to encourage students to post open comments on CassLearn so that the whole class can benefit from the answers. Students confirmed that communication arrangements were effective and found CassLearn and email communications particularly useful for overcoming the time difference.

Student support arrangements

91 The academic and personal support arrangements for the EMBA China have been designed in recognition of the fact that students are studying part-time while usually continuing to work full-time, often in senior management roles. The Handbook states that staff at the EMBA Programme Office at Cass are responsible for providing academic support and advice regarding the programme; staff at the EMBA Office at IIF are responsible for local support and arrangements for the weekend workshops.

92 Academic support information is available via CassLearn and consists of a structured study timetable, supported by learning materials. Students have regular and frequent opportunities to talk to Cass staff, in particular visiting module tutors during the workshops, about any academic or personal problems they may be having. Moreover, when the tutors are not available locally during the module study period they are contracted to spend the equivalent of two hours per week on answering student queries via CassLearn. A member of the Cass support team is also available locally every three months when they visit to undertake exam invigilation. In addition the Cass Learning Support Officer regularly monitors CassLearn to ensure a prompt response from tutors and where necessary sends reminders to tutors. The

Programme Director regularly visits Shanghai and makes himself available to all students for one-to-one, face-to-face support. In this sense, he acts as a personal tutor for the cohort and is, on academic issues at least, a first port of call for them.

93 Bank staff at the EMBA office at IIF provide ongoing local support. The Associate Dean is responsible for local operational management in China, including oversight of teaching facilities and workshops. The Programme Officer is responsible for local programme administration and student support, including the organisation of weekend workshops which the audit team were told by students was especially valuable.

94 Private email and telephone communications are also encouraged at any time with both the Programme Director and the support teams in either London or Shanghai. On occasions when students encounter specific and urgent need for advice or counselling for example, relating to examination results and/or preparations for examination resits, programme team members have resorted to telephoning in order to speed up contacts and/or to strengthen the human contact element.

95 For the first two cohorts the Bank provided the teaching facilities, accommodation and catering both for students and visiting faculty, during the monthly weekend workshops and associated exams at its IIF on the outskirts of Shanghai. IIF's library has been boosted and updated as part of the programme set up for the benefit of the EMBA students. Students have access to a computer room at IIF which has about 40 computers supporting the programme. Internet access points are provided in student bedrooms for use during the residential courses. Students also have access to SUFE library facilities, although given the current location of workshops at IIF and the size of Shanghai, their campus has not been extensively utilised by the first two student cohorts. It is envisaged that under a new agreement covering the third cohort onwards, the operational base of the

programme will be relocated to SUFE's dedicated MBA campus in Shanghai. Students met by the audit team stated that they were very satisfied with the level of resources available in Shanghai, including those that had been accessed at SUFE.

96 Learning materials for each unit are provided through CassLearn (they can also be downloaded in PDF format) which was specifically developed for the EMBA. CassLearn contains study guides, appropriate readings, exercises and other self-assessment activities, case-studies, review questions and questions for group and online discussion, web links and internet resources, references and glossary. The audit team heard that CassLearn is now being used to support all MBA programmes to varying degrees. Students who met the team praised all aspects of CassLearn, especially as a source of information, as a means of rapid communication across time zones, and as a tool for self assessment. They found that CassLearn was valuable for self-study periods between workshops, when CassLearn was the equivalent of an interactive teacher.

97 In their meeting with students the audit team heard of the high level of satisfaction that they had for the information and support that was available to students from all three partners. The team was told that the information provided to students was comprehensive and accurate. Students found the arrangements for personal and academic support to be of a high quality, and the fact that it was often only available electronically was to some extent a benefit as they could access it when they needed to any time of the day. They also praised the level of academic support received during workshops. The audit team concluded that CassLearn was a positive feature of the link.

Student input into quality management

98 There are a number of formal and informal mechanisms by which student feedback is gathered. Students are asked to complete online questionnaires at the end of

each taught module. These include questions about the quality of learning materials and academic support in general (including workshop delivery). Students are also asked to complete induction, mid-programme and end of programme evaluations. These questionnaires have been revised in the light of experience a number of times. For instance, a new section on the module questionnaires dealing with self-assessment was added at a later stage to appraise students' own perception of their work and effort on each module. Submission rates of 95-100 per cent are regularly achieved. The audit team saw evidence that the questionnaires are carefully collated and analysed by the programme team and the results are fed into the APE.

99 In accordance with University regulations the SSLC meets regularly with the Programme Director and local staff. Student representatives are chosen by their peers and provide a cross-section of the student body by role and seniority, including non-Bank representatives. The role of student representatives is explained by the Programme Director at the first meeting. The meetings include discussion of issues arising in the questionnaires. The Programme Director also shares feedback outcomes with the academics concerned and discusses any lessons that may be drawn to improve future delivery. Minutes of the SSLC are approved by the representatives before being released to all students and tutors. Finalised minutes are used to inform the APE report.

100 Beyond the formal feedback mechanisms the audit team learnt about student satisfaction with responses to informal feedback given to academic staff. They cited a number of examples whereby the programme team had responded to informal feedback in advance of a matter being raised in either a questionnaire or an SSLC and the team considered this a positive feature of the programme.

101 The audit team had access to the analysis of recent questionnaires and read the minutes of some SSLC meetings and discussed the working of the SSLC with a number of current and former students. They heard from students

about a number of changes that had resulted from student feedback. These included the inclusion of more teamwork in general and a team building workshop within the Induction workshop, use of more local case-studies, better spacing of examinations, more information on the Business Research Project, increasing opportunities for networking with other MBA students and access to SUFE facilities. The team heard that feedback is always taken seriously and acted upon in a timely fashion. Students were impressed by the responsiveness of staff to student feedback, but also cited examples where suggestions were not acted upon if they might compromise standards or achievements.

102 It became clear to the audit team that students on the EMBA China programme have a range of formal and informal mechanisms to input into the quality assurance processes. The team saw and heard evidence of the timely responsiveness of the programme team to student suggestions, and considered this to be a positive feature of the provision.

Conclusion

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

- the holistic approach to the design of this professional development programme, its delivery and consequent student support, which thus enables the full engagement of its students (paragraph 7, 10, 30 and 96)
- the provision by all partners of appropriate staffing resources to support the programme (paragraphs 9, 60 and 65)
- the sound working relationship between three highly reputed partners (paragraphs 11-12 and 26)
- the use made of CassLearn in delivering and supporting the EMBA China programme (paragraphs 48, 59, 72, 74, 75, 91, and 97)
- the comparison of standards by the University across cognate programmes (paragraphs 51 and 77)

- the involvement of University staff in situ in the selection and admission processes (paragraph 69).
- the responsiveness of the Programme Team to student feedback (paragraph 102)

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

- revising its Partnership Policy to reflect practice by incorporating a formal requirement for validation-style review before approval in cases where higher risk is possible and formalising the need to evaluate local legislative and cultural requirements (paragraph 23 and 25).
- securing the full engagement of the local academic partner with the University's annual monitoring and periodic review processes, including the external examiner process (paragraphs 52, 56 and 82)
- developing this maturing partnership through the greater engagement of the local academic staff in the collaboration including clarifying their status as honorary University staff (paragraphs 64 and 65)

105 The University adheres to the *Code of practice*, except in relation to full transparency of the certificate and transcript, which the audit team heard was under review so as to ensure it met the expectations of the *Code*. The University's complete control of all aspects of standards and all quality assurance procedures contributes to the audit team's conclusion that the University's management of its overseas collaborative arrangements is generally effective.

106 The Commentary is overall an accurate description of the link. The link is regarded by the University as a pioneer and thus informs Cass and University practice in this area. It is therefore representative of the University's collaborative activity in the sense that it sets standards for and establishes mechanisms for that activity.

Appendix 1: Changes since the audit visit

The number of overseas partnerships has now increased to 27 of which 26 are partnerships.

In March 2006, subsequent to the Audit Team's visit to Cass, we received full five year unconditional accreditation for all Cass MBAs by the Association of MBAs (AMBA).

Appendix 2: Student numbers

	EMBA China 2003-05	EMBA China 2004-06
Start Date	1 February 2003	1 October 2004
Completion Date	28 April 2005	28 February 2007
Number of Students	39	47

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