



# **Review of UK transnational education in Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China): Glyndŵr University and Hong Kong Management Association (HKMA)**

**May 2018**

## **Executive summary**

Glyndŵr University (the University) had limited transnational education provision until recently, other than its partnership with the Hong Kong Management Association (HKMA). Currently three degrees are run in collaboration with HKMA: two business bachelor's degrees and an MBA. These programmes are registered in Hong Kong but not accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ).

A distinctive feature of all programmes is that they are taught in both English and Chinese (Cantonese). The University's arrangements for this bilingual provision are sound, based on a combination of processes to ensure equivalence and on bilingual staff in key roles. These include an Academic Link responsible for the operation of the programmes and external examiners who can ensure equivalence of assessment in English and Chinese.

As franchised programmes, both the content and assessment are in principle the same as in the UK. In practice there is some contextualisation of programme content, which is taught by experienced faculty, often with substantial professional experience. Admissions criteria are equivalent to those in the UK, though documented criteria for the MBA differed from those applied in practice.

In general, learning resources for English and Chinese programmes are equivalent, though with some areas where Chinese provision can be enhanced. Issues were identified regarding UK-centric programme specifications for which more global processes are recommended.

Mechanisms for ongoing assurance of academic standards and quality have been systematically implemented including annual monitoring and external examining. Actions have been taken within both the University and HKMA in response to stakeholder feedback, including that from Student Voice Forums.

Overall, the cooperation between Glyndŵr University and HKMA provides a distinctive bilingual educational experience that meets UK academic standards and requirements for the student experience.

## Introduction

1 Glyndŵr University's origins are in the North East Wales Institute of Higher Education (NEWI), which joined the University of Wales' federal structure in 2004 and engaged in some partnership activity within the University of Wales. In 2008 Glyndŵr University was established as an independent entity. From 2016, the institution adopted for trading purposes the name 'Wrexham Glyndŵr University', though its formal university title remains unchanged.

2 Until the 2016-17 academic year when a Pro Vice-Chancellor (Partnerships) was appointed, the University's focus was on the UK campus at Wrexham. International activities and partnership development were not a significant focus until recently. Hong Kong Management Association (HKMA) was the University's sole franchised international partner until January 2018, having been transferred from the University of Wales in 2008. The University now has 11 collaborative provision arrangements, of which seven are in the UK and six are international, with a total of 667 students.

3 The University's new International Strategy states that it 'seeks to be internationally engaged in teaching, research and enterprise' and will 'work with transnational partners in education, research and enterprise and enhance opportunities for outbound student mobility'. The international strategy has three priority areas: international institutional partnerships including TNE; international student recruitment; and student mobility.

4 HKMA was founded in 1960 as non-profit institution with a mission to deliver management education and training, much of which is part-time. HKMA has 12,000 individual members and delivers continuing professional development activities and conferences as well as degree programmes. HKMA sub-degree education includes advanced diploma and certificate programmes. Over 2,000 programmes are offered annually with more than 50,000 participants from over 1,000 organisations in Hong Kong, mainland China and other countries/regions.

5 HKMA offers a range of non-local degree programmes, many of which are awarded by UK universities. At bachelor's level, all TNE degree-awarding bodies are UK universities. At master's level, the degree-awarding bodies are from the UK, Australia, China, USA and Switzerland.

6 Two of the University's bachelor's programmes in the field of business and management are run in Hong Kong by HKMA. Current Hong Kong programmes are BA (Hons) Business and BA (Hons) Accounting & Finance. These programmes were re-named following a programme revalidation exercise. A part-time MBA (Master of Business Administration) is also offered. A distinctive feature of the University's programmes is that all are in both English and Chinese (Cantonese), offering students the choice of the language of instruction and assessment. HKMA and students saw these dual language UK degree programmes as distinctive and attractive in the local market.

7 The review was based on analysis of documentary evidence provided by the University together with meetings with staff and students of the University as well as senior representatives of HKMA.

## Developing, agreeing and managing arrangements for setting up and operating the link

8 The University has clear processes for the approval and management of international partnerships. The University is responsible for the quality and standards of all its academic awards. In parallel, HKMA operates its own processes for developing, agreeing and managing arrangements with UK and other non-local universities.

9 The University's procedures are specified in a handbook entitled 'Collaborative Provision: Working with Other HE Providers'. These make clear that the University is ultimately responsible for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, regardless of where these opportunities are delivered and who provides them. It was stated that current procedures have strengthened University level oversight of TNE provision. This includes an annual due diligence review.

10 In the context of this handbook, the HKMA programmes are 'franchised' provision. In such cases, Glyndŵr University has overall responsibility for quality and standards of provision; and the partner operates within Glyndŵr University policies and procedures. Overall strategy is set by the University's Board of Governors.

11 At the time of initial approval, the University's External Partnerships Scrutiny Group (EPSG) had delegated authority from the Vice Chancellor's Board for receiving and considering partnership proposals. The Group was responsible for considering and assessing the strategic, academic and business case, and the risk assessment for a proposal. EPSG also had strategic, financial and legal oversight of collaborative arrangements through the receipt and consideration of Annual Risk Management reports. The Vice Chancellor's Executive Team (VCET) have replaced EPSG for the consideration of partnership proposals.

12 The University's Academic Partnerships Committee recommends approval to Academic Board. The University's Academic Board has overall responsibility to approve delivery at new collaborative partner higher education providers, ensure the academic standards and quality of such provision, and approve new programmes with collaborative delivery. Academic Board are also responsible for making the final decision to terminate partnership arrangements on non-academic grounds.

13 Current approval and reapproval processes including areas such as due diligence checks and risk assessment are clearly specified in the Collaborative Provision: Working with Other HE Providers handbook. Termination processes are also defined. There was evidence of appropriate consideration and decision-making on the HKMA partnership.

14 Schools and programme leaders have responsibility for specific TNE provision. An Academic Link is responsible for liaison regarding all academic aspects of provision with staff in a partner organisation and ensuring that collaborative provision is delivered in accordance with the required quality and standards of the University. Given the bilingual nature of the HKMA programmes, this role is demanding as it requires both the general qualities of an Academic Link as well as the ability to work in both English and Cantonese. The responsibilities of the Academic Link are clearly specified. The review found that a **positive feature** was the role of the Academic Link in the delivery of a bilingual programme offering.

15 The University and HKMA have a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2013 and revised in August 2016 that covers the period to June 2018. This is a comprehensive contractual framework for the partnership, for example including a schedule of partner and University responsibilities.

16 HKMA has a range of internal committees and procedures related to programmes such as those of the University. These include inter-programme meetings that share experience across partners, industrial advisory meetings and an annual review.

## Quality assurance

### Academic standards

17 The University's Academic Regulations permit assessment in a language other than English or Welsh at partner institutions where bilingual delivery has been approved, such as HKMA. External examiners must be bilingual in such cases and assessments are recorded in both languages.

18 Programmes are registered appropriately in Hong Kong as non-local programmes but are not accredited by HKCAAVQ. Annual returns are made to the relevant Hong Kong government agency in line with this status.

19 As franchised programmes, the programme learning outcomes, syllabus and module specifications are essentially the same as in the UK. Some specific aspects of programme content are contextualised to Hong Kong while maintaining identical learning outcomes, assessments and external examining arrangements. Programmes operate within the University's general academic standards and processes.

20 Admission criteria are aligned with the UK using local equivalent entry qualifications where appropriate. In the case of the MBA, the review found that the stated admissions criteria differed from those in the 2015 Subject Benchmark Statement on *Master's Degrees in Business and Management*. In particular, the published criteria specified that admission was possible with either a suitable undergraduate degree (or equivalent) or at least two years' experience, whereas the Subject Benchmark Statement states that normally all applicants should have at least two years' experience. Staff responded that the criteria for prior experience used in the Subject Benchmark Statement were in fact those applied. This was confirmed in the annual Hong Kong registered programme returns.

21 The University is therefore **recommended** to review published admissions criteria for the MBA programme in the light of admissions practice and the Subject Benchmark Statement with respect to the requirements for relevant prior experience.

22 Applicants are required to have suitable English language capability for the programmes taught and assessed in English; this includes local Hong Kong qualifications or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). A minimum overall IELTS score of 6.0 is required for undergraduate study and 6.5 with 6.0 in each component for the MBA programme. Applicants not meeting these criteria can take the Chinese language version of a programme.

23 External examiner reports confirmed that the academic standards of the programme met UK threshold standards and were equivalent to those of the UK programme. Action had been taken in response to issues raised by external examiners.

24 The programmes were subject to the University's monitoring and review processes, as well as those in HKMA. These University processes had been undertaken regularly including consideration of external examiner reports and student feedback. Annual module reviews and an annual programme report are produced, the latter by the HKMA programme leader. Action plans and progress are recorded in the annual programme report.

## Assessment

25 Assessment arrangements are specified in a Protocol for Managing Provision at HKMA. In general, assessments are set by staff in the Wrexham (UK) campus rather than being contextualised to Hong Kong. After internal moderation and, where appropriate, external examiner approval, assessments are translated into Chinese and the translation confirmed by the external examiner. First and second marking is undertaken by HKMA with University staff resolving any differences.

26 Assessment Boards consider the results for HKMA and other students together, thereby contributing to ensuring that assessment was consistent across locations. In one case consideration of HKMA students was postponed due to insufficient attendance from those concerned with the Hong Kong programme, again demonstrating concern for fairness and consistency in assessment. While HKMA staff can in principle attend, in practice only the Academic Link participates.

27 External examiners are bilingual in English and Chinese as well as being appointed in line with the University's general requirements for external examiners. They are responsible for reviewing assessment briefs, examination papers and sample solutions, as well as reviewing samples of student work. Annual reports confirm that both English and Chinese assessment of students meets UK standards. One external examiner commented that those assessed in English appeared to obtain higher marks but that this reflected the relative quality of their work. University Assessment Boards are responsible for approving the assessment results and awards of the programmes.

28 The arrangements for assessment are considered to be sound and appropriate, with robust procedures for conducting assessment in both English and Chinese meeting the requirements of the University's Academic Regulations. The University's approach and processes that enable equivalent academic standards when delivering a programme in both English and Chinese is a **positive feature**.

## Quality of learning opportunities

29 Programme content and assessment is in principle the same as in the UK. It was recognised that in practice material needed to be contextualised, in part through different examples such as case studies but also recognising differences such as those in the taxation system. Teaching staff look to provide equivalent textbooks and readings where specific materials are not available in Chinese.

30 HKMA teaching staff are in general part-time adjunct faculty. Staff profiles indicate that staff have extensive professional and teaching experience as well as being qualified, typically at master's level for bachelor's programmes and doctoral level for the MBA. Students felt that staff brought both academic and professional experience that was relevant to their needs as well as being capable in English and Chinese. While part-time, teaching staff were seen as accessible and responsive by students. The quality and experience of the faculty who are able to teach programmes in two languages is a **positive feature**.

31 Peer observation of teaching was encouraged. Partner staff were invited to the University annual teaching and learning conference, although it was recognised that virtual communication such as webinars would be more effective given cost and time barriers. Staff reported that opportunities were available for staff development within HKMA, including opportunities to undertake doctoral study.

32 HKMA Programme Leaders are responsible for monitoring the overall operation and overseeing the quality and academic issues of the programmes. The University's Academic

Link is responsible for monitoring the delivery and quality assurance of the programmes and visits Hong Kong regularly. This was appreciated by both University and HKMA staff.

33 While the University is dependent on the quality of the Academic Link for the successful delivery of the programme, there were no formal succession plans or contingency plans in the event that the Academic Link was no longer available to work on the partnership. The University may wish to consider development of succession and contingency plans for the role of Academic Link.

34 Library resources include the electronic library of the University, access to several physical libraries in Hong Kong including those of HKMA and Li Ka-Shing College of Professional and Continuing Education, and (upon personal application) the Management Development Service Library of the Vocational Training Council. For Chinese language resources, the Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics electronic library is available. Students are aware of the range of library resources available.

35 HKMA provides support for academic skills beyond the programme. This includes writing workshops during the programme. Online resources are available on the University website to assist in academic skills such as writing and referencing. Students commented that while English language library resources were good, there were relative shortcomings in Chinese language learning resources, in particular those related to learning support, such as academic writing. As a result the University is **recommended** to enhance the range of Chinese language learning resources, for example on academic writing.

36 While the University's library and virtual learning environment (VLE) provided good support, both students and staff reported reliability issues with the VLE. Some recent improvement was reported. External examiner annual reports are placed on the VLE and available to students. However, students had not seen them and were not aware of their availability.

37 The University encourages student feedback through a number of mechanisms. One is Student Voice Forums that include student representatives and relevant programme faculty, another is survey feedback on modules. There was evidence of listening to student feedback and action being taken, for example in relation to breakdowns in the University's VLE, which affected students' ability to submit assessments on time. Other issues raised included the quality of facilities, for example air conditioning and Wi-Fi. Student representatives felt that Student Voice Forums were a useful channel for communication with HKMA and the University.

38 Processes for academic appeals and complaints are specified. In general, academic appeals are handled by the University and complaints by HKMA. Students were aware of how to find out about how to pursue such issues.

39 Students are given a one year Associate Membership of HKMA on admission to the programme, which includes complimentary and discounted access to management events and courses, access to networking events and specialist clubs as well as other HKMA member benefits. While the programmes have few external guest speakers, students indicated that they did not make use of the access to the range of talks and events that are made available through HKMA. The University could actively promote the availability of guest speakers and other benefits of the partnership with HKMA.

## Quality assurance

40 The University uses a range of quality assurance mechanisms in relation to its provision in Hong Kong including:

- a hierarchy of quality assurance committees for programme development, management and review of collaborative programmes
- external examiner system
- student feedback from module surveys and Student Voice Forums
- programme documentation including programme specifications
- annual monitoring reports for programmes
- periodic review, updating and reapproval of the programmes.

41 The programme specifications and other quality assurance documentation are generally of a good standard, covering relevant aspects of the programmes. However, there are a number of areas in which the programme specifications are not accurate in relation to the Hong Kong provision and appeared to be UK-specific. While the programme specifications provided to the review team included specific reference to Glyndŵr University London (GUL) and a Malaysia partner, there was no reference to Hong Kong.

42 In particular there were errors in programme specifications with respect to the language of instruction and assessment in Hong Kong. For example, the MBA programme specification stated that 'The programmes will be delivered through the medium of English. Students are entitled to submit assessments in the medium of Welsh' whereas the programmes were delivered and assessed in English and Chinese but not Welsh. Different provisions were given in the BA student handbook but again without reference to Chinese language.

43 The MBA programme specification also gave details of the UK programme team with no reference to Hong Kong, as well as to UK-specific student support. The BA programme specification gave UK-specific admissions requirements and referred to a blended learning approach of 'digital lectures...that students watch electronically before attending classes' that was not used in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong MBA programme handbook gave module level learning outcomes but not programme level ones as in the programme specification.

44 As a result, the University is **recommended** to review processes for the development and approval of programme specifications to ensure that definitive programme documentation is accurate in relation to international programme delivery.

45 The University has responded appropriately to external examiners' annual reports, indicating proposed actions on issues raised. Issues included the quality of feedback on assessed work: it was reported that this had subsequently been improved. The Learning and Teaching Quality Committee receive and review these external examiners' annual reports.

46 There was evidence of regular annual reporting both to Hong Kong as a registered non-local programme and to the University in the form of annual monitoring reports. These included an action plan and monitoring of its progress. The Academic Link compares marks across partners to monitor relative performance in Hong Kong.

## Information on higher education provision

47 The University states in its handbook on Collaborative Provision: Working with Other HE Providers that it has control over the accuracy of all information provided for students, and of any promotional material relating to programmes leading to its awards

through collaborative arrangements. In practice, both HKMA and the University (through the Academic Link) sign off material including that in Chinese.

48 Students are provided with relatively comprehensive and informative student handbooks although with information gaps in relation to programme-level learning outcomes and some repetition of information on referencing and plagiarism in the MBA student handbook. These handbooks are Hong Kong specific containing relevant contacts and forms. Students found the information in the handbooks useful.

49 Partner staff are provided with a Partner Staff Guide, which provides a wide range of relevant information on such areas as University regulations, policies and procedures; dealing with student issues such as complaints; assessment; extenuating circumstances and late submissions; monitoring and review of programmes; and contacts in the UK.

50 Information on the website and in brochures is provided in both English and Chinese. These provide appropriate information about the programmes including programme content, duration and admission requirements.

51 It was noted that both 'Glyndŵr University' and 'Wrexham Glyndŵr University' are used interchangeably. The University stated that the legal name of the institution (and therefore the wording on the degree certificate) is 'Glyndŵr University' while the name used for marketing purposes, mainly in the UK, is 'Wrexham Glyndŵr University'. While there was no likelihood of confusion with another university, the branding of the University was inconsistent even on a single webpage. In Chinese publicity, the Chinese name used was also not consistent, being either 'UK Glyndŵr University' [英國格林多大學] or 'Glyndŵr University' [格林多大學].

52 Sample degree certificates were in English and Welsh, with transcripts in English indicating that study was undertaken at HKMA and including the language of instruction and assessment.

## Conclusion

Glyndŵr University and the Hong Kong Management Association (HKMA) currently run three degrees in partnership. These programmes are registered in Hong Kong but not accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ). A distinctive feature of all programmes is that they are taught in both English and Chinese (Cantonese). The University's arrangements for this bilingual provision are sound, based on a combination of processes to ensure equivalence and on bilingual staff in key roles.

Mechanisms for ongoing assurance of academic standards and quality were systematically implemented including annual monitoring and external examining. Some improvements in relation to documentation of programmes that run in multiple locations were identified.

Overall, the cooperation between Glyndŵr University and HKMA provides a distinctive bilingual educational experience that meets UK academic standards and requirements for the student experience.

## Positive features

The following positive features are identified:

- the role of the Academic Link in the delivery of a bilingual programme offering (paragraph 14)
- the University's approach and processes that enable equivalent academic standards and quality when delivering a programme in both English and Chinese (paragraph 28)
- the quality and experience of the faculty who are able to teach programmes in two languages (paragraph 30).

## Recommendations

Glyndŵr University is recommended to take the following action:

- review published admissions criteria for the MBA programme in the light of admissions practice and the Subject Benchmark Statement with respect to the requirements for relevant prior experience (paragraph 21)
- review processes for the development and approval of programme specifications to ensure that definitive programme documentation is accurate in relation to international programme delivery (paragraph 44)
- enhance the range of Chinese language learning resources, for example on academic writing (paragraph 35).

### **Glyndŵr University's response to the review report**

Glyndŵr University is committed to the enhancement of the quality of its provision and welcomes this QAA report on its partnership arrangements with HKMA. The recommendations have helped us to identify areas where we will further enhance practice. We are very pleased to note the positive features identified by the Panel.

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