

Review of UK transnational education in China: London Metropolitan University and the Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine

November 2012

Executive summary

London Metropolitan University's (LondonMet) approach to partnership has developed over time and reflects a long-standing tradition within the institution of engagement with others, both in the UK and further afield. LondonMet is currently embarking on an evaluation of its collaborative portfolio and intends to expand off-campus provision through the development of a small number of new partnerships in targeted regions, and through increasing provision with existing partners in Europe and Asia.

LondonMet's partnership with the Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (SUTCM) dates back to March 2002 and delivers degree pathways leading to either the BSc Herbal Medicinal Science (LondonMet award), or a double award combining this LondonMet award with SUTCM's BSc Chinese Medicinal Science. These pathways link to a level 6 'top-up' award, which leads to the BSc (Hons) Herbal Medicinal Science award, completed either at LondonMet or SUTCM. The provision offered through the link is currently approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education until December 2017.

The programme delivered under this collaboration draws particular strength from the partners' shared understanding of the benefits of combining traditional Chinese medicine with modern Western medical knowledge and techniques. The effective exploitation of the parties' respective areas of expertise, and the development of curricula that seek to fuse these elements into an integrated whole, give rise to a student learning experience regarded by both institutions as unique.

The programme operates under leadership that is firmly committed to quality and future success. However, this positive feature brings with it a degree of over-reliance on the work of individuals, requiring LondonMet to consider succession planning, mitigation of the risks of excessive individual workloads, and the need for greater clarity about formal quality processes, with more extensive involvement from the wider teaching team.

Report

Introduction

1 London Metropolitan University (LondonMet) was formed in 2002 through the merger of London Guildhall University and the University of North London, both of which had been constituted as separate universities in 1992 and had origins dating from the nineteenth century. LondonMet has approximately 30,000 students, of whom approximately one quarter are postgraduates and one quarter are international students from over 160 countries.

2 LondonMet's Partnerships Strategy 2011-12 states that its approach to partnership has developed over time and reflects a longstanding tradition within the institution of engagement with others, both in the UK and further afield. As part of this strategy, LondonMet intends to expand off-campus provision by 7 per cent per year over the next three years, through the development of a small number of new partnerships in targeted regions, and through increasing provision with existing partners in Europe and Asia. At the same time, the Strategy commits LondonMet to conduct an evaluation of its current collaborative portfolio.

3 LondonMet was subject to an Institutional Audit by QAA in November 2010. The report commented on the University's collaborative arrangements and identified its integrative approach to developing and managing collaborative provision as a feature of good practice. The report noted that the University collaborates with 35 overseas and domestic partners in the delivery of some 140 programmes, ranging from certificate of higher education through to master's level.

4 LondonMet has an office in Beijing, which is staffed by full-time LondonMet employees and is responsible for its operations in China, Hong Kong and Mongolia. It has collaboration agreements with nine institutions in China, the most significant in terms of student numbers being that with the Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, which is the subject of this report.

5 The Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (SUTCM) was founded in 1956 as one of the first four colleges of traditional Chinese medicine in China. It is located in the Scientific Research and Education Zone, Zhanjiang High-tech Park, Pudong New Area, and is regulated by the Shanghai Education Committee. It has over 8,000 students, of whom just under 5,000 are studying on undergraduate or higher vocational programs. It was granted university status in 1993 and in 1999 it was evaluated as a 'National Excellent College of Undergraduate Education'.

6 LondonMet's partnership with SUTCM dates back to 2002. In February 2003 SUTCM gained a 'Certificate of Approval' from the Shanghai Education Committee to carry out long-term collaborative work. This was followed by the validation in July 2003, by LondonMet, of degree pathways leading to either the BSc Herbal Medicinal Science (LondonMet award), or a double award combining this LondonMet award with SUTCM's BSc Chinese Medicinal Science. These pathways were linked to LondonMet's own BSc (Hons) Herbal Medicinal Science degree course, validated in 2001. Students study eight LondonMet modules, six of these in the fourth and final year; the remainder of the programme comprises modules designed and delivered by SUTCM. LondonMet has now discontinued its own full award of BSc (Hons) Herbal Medicinal Science and regards completion of the levels 4 and 5 SUTCM modules as the entry requirement to a level 6 'top-up' leading to the BSc (Hons) Herbal Medicinal Science award, completed at LondonMet or SUTCM.

7 In 2008-09, the student intake at SUTCM was 92, including 60 students eligible for the double degree and the rest eligible only for the LondonMet degree; total student numbers were over 300. In 2010, 60 students completed their studies, including 19 who had transferred to London.

Part A: Set-up and operation

Establishing the link

8 LondonMet's Collaborative Taught Provision Manual (CTPM) 2010 sets out the stages that are normally completed in developing a collaborative partnership, from initial enquiry to running the course including: due diligence investigations, risk assessment, business case approval and approval of the collaborative provision.

9 Following initial contact, the Quality Enhancement Unit (QEU) initiates the due diligence process, on the basis of LondonMet's Institutional Approval Form completed by the prospective partner. The process comprises an assessment of the compatibility of the partner's educational objectives with those of LondonMet; its good standing, including external reports or assessments of the institution; financial information and audited accounts; and staffing information. If no major impediments are revealed, the QEU typically convenes a meeting of interested parties to discuss contractual, financial and operational matters, and the proposing department or faculty prepares a business case using LondonMet's template. The QEU completes a risk assessment, also using the University's template, addressing factors such as country of location; the prospective partner's legal status and funding; its prior experience of working with a UK partner; its role in delivery; and the language of assessment, together with any proposed mitigation measures. Before being progressed further, the proposals must be approved by the University's Business Development Group.

10 Approval of the collaborative provision is the principal means by which LondonMet assures itself that a partner organisation has capacity to provide an appropriate context for higher education learning. The process incorporates institutional and programme approval and entails a validation event, conducted by a panel with external membership, normally held at the partner. The panel considers specified institutional and programme-related matters, including quality assurance processes, inter-institutional liaison, marketing, management and operation of the link, resources, student recruitment, student experience, delivery, and staffing.

11 In reviewing the relevant documentation, the review team concluded that current arrangements for selecting a partner pay due attention to strategic alignment and to financial, legal and academic risk.

12 The current processes have developed since the link between LondonMet and SUTCM was first established in 2003. Preliminary discussions about academic links and possible research collaborations were held during a visit to LondonMet by a delegation from SUTCM in 2001. LondonMet established SUTCM as an 'equitable partner', after it fulfilled 'Approval' and 'Registration' requirements in place at that time. LondonMet also supported SUTCM in gaining a 'Certificate of Approval' from the Shanghai Education Committee in 2003 to carry out long-term collaborative work. One of the key projects was the development of the joint delivery of the BSc Herbal Medicinal Science, both institutions identifying research and academic links in the areas of structural chemistry and the cellular properties of herbal medicines. A validation event was held at SUTCM in July 2003, broadly in line with the processes outlined above. The approval panel recommended approval of SUTCM as an appropriate partner of the University and conditional approval of the collaboration for delivery

of the programmes (paragraphs 35-41). The provision offered through the link is currently approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education until December 2017.

13 Written agreements with a partner, as required by the CTPM, comprise the Institutional Memorandum of Agreement (IMoA) and its attendant document, the Course Level Agreement (CLA), which includes the financial settlement and the business schedule. Drafted by the QEU, the agreements must be approved by the University Secretary before signature by the Vice Chancellor or a designated nominee.

14 LondonMet has developed templates that take account of the relevant provisions of the UK Quality Code of Higher Education (the Quality Code). The IMoA template covers academic standards and quality assurance (LondonMet, as the awarding institution, has ultimate responsibility for academic standards and quality); academic regulations (LondonMet's regulations apply); external examiners (appointed by LondonMet); dispute resolution (governed by English law); and termination provisions. The CLA template addresses marketing and publicity; intellectual property; admissions; course documentation; quality assurance and course management; assessment; financial arrangements; and exclusivity, including restrictions on serial franchising by the partner institution.

15 An agreement between LondonMet and SUTCM covering 2008-13, which renewed the original agreement of 2003, was replaced by two 'cooperation agreements' in 2011. SUTCM was undergoing a review by the Shanghai Education Committee and needed arrangements extending beyond 2013. Covering the 10-year period from August 2011 to July 2021, the agreements were completed following renegotiations during a visit to SUTCM by LondonMet's Dean of the Faculty of Life Sciences and Computing. They establish arrangements relating to the SUTCM and LondonMet awards, respectively, and are governed by Chinese law, unlike the Memorandum of Agreement they replace, which was governed by English law. The agreements are not drafted within the University's template; LondonMet's policy acknowledges that, occasionally, a partnership will require a 'non-standard' agreement.

16 The 2011 agreements alone do not cover all the areas contained in LondonMet's IMoA and CLA templates, nor do they comprehensively address the matters relating to the drafting of collaborative agreements as set out in the Quality Code (*Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others*). In particular, they do not cover the security of intellectual property rights, the role of external examiners, and exclusivity. All these matters are covered in the attendant CLA (which relates to joint delivery by the parties leading either to the dual award or to the LondonMet award) and, together, the three agreements cover the areas set out in the University's IMoA and CLA templates, with some of the financial detail omitted. However, as the CLA governs the period from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2021, the period from 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2012 is covered only by the Co-operation Agreements. Moreover, at the review visit staff told the review team that the CLA had not been formally completed but was awaiting signature by SUTCM. The review team **recommends** that LondonMet review its processes for the completion of collaboration agreements to ensure that this occurs in a timely fashion and in accordance with the full extent of its stated requirements.

17 The (now replaced) 2008-13 agreement pre-dates the publication of the CTPM (2010). It is clearly drafted, sets out the responsibilities of the respective partners and, in content, closely matches the combined content of the current IMoA and CLA templates. The agreement provides for 'annual evaluation of the collaborative agreement and its operation in order to identify issues and make any necessary recommendations'. None of the reports arising from periodic review and annual monitoring identify any specific issues in this regard and the Strategies and Market Plan for China and Hong Kong 2010 reported that the 'partnership has worked well'.

Making the link work

Programme management

18 The CTPM sets out LondonMet's requirements for collaborative course management in considerable detail. Once course approval has been obtained, formal University contacts for the link are assigned: an Academic Liaison Tutor (ALT) from the faculty/department and an Institutional Liaison Officer (ILO) from the QEU. A Partner Course Leader (PCL) is appointed at the partner institution.

19 The ILO provides advice to course teams on LondonMet's quality management processes, receives the annual course monitoring report from the collaborative partner and provides updates on changes to LondonMet's regulations. The ALT is the main point of contact for all aspects of the course at LondonMet. The role involves quality management, communication and support; production of annual course reports and preparation for periodic review, in consultation with the PCL; management of the assessment process, including attending relevant Performance Enhancement Meetings and Subject Standards Boards; holding management, course team and course committee meetings; and communicating course changes. The PCL, the point of contact at the partner, is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of course management, organisation, delivery and assessment at the partner operate in accordance with the course documentation, the IMoA and the CLA. The role includes oversight of course delivery and resources; management of admissions and local assessment processes; notifying the ALT of staffing changes and seeking approval for new staff; communicating University policies, procedures and regulations to students; and obtaining student feedback.

20 The collaborative link with SUTCM is managed within the School of Human Sciences, Faculty of Life Sciences and Computing. Periodic reviews have reported positively on the development and operation of the link, describing it as 'exemplary' and commending the course teams on a high level of teamwork. Nevertheless, some operational issues have come to light in recent years. In 2011, the external examiner, while describing the management of the course as 'first rate', referred to incidents concerning examination security (paragraph 34) and commented that there was room to improve liaison between the institutions in this area; the 2012 periodic review panel recommended coordination between the course teams on the provision of feedback to students and the scheduling of the project.

21 The 2012 periodic review panel commented that the continued success of the link was in large part down to the teamwork of the designated Course Leader (SUTCM), and the Course Leader (LondonMet). From meetings with staff, the review team formed a similarly positive view of the course leadership and considered the course leadership's commitment to the quality of the student experience and to the future success of the programme to be a **positive feature** of the link.

22 Nevertheless, the team considered that a degree of over-reliance on the work of individuals, particularly the ALT, had been engendered, raising a significant risk to the operation of the link in terms of excessive individual workloads and the need for succession planning. The review team **recommends** that LondonMet consider ways in which these risks can be mitigated.

23 Course committees meet approximately once a year. While they are well attended by students, the review team observed from minutes that these meetings are not consistently well attended by teaching staff, and that there were no available records of other staff meetings or course team meetings.

24 The review team **recommends** that LondonMet consider ways in which greater involvement of teaching staff in quality assurance processes can be achieved, in particular with a view to generating a stronger sense of programme identity for both staff and students, and enhancing the student experience.

Student admissions and record keeping

25 In LondonMet's collaborative provision, the partner institution is normally responsible for recruitment. While not explicit about responsibility for admissions, the 2008-13 Memorandum of Agreement implied that responsibility lay with SUTCM; the 2011 Cooperation agreements explicitly make SUTCM responsible for recruiting and enrolling new students, undertaken in consultation with LondonMet's Beijing office.

26 Students with the highest grades in the Chinese universities' entrance examinations (gaokao) are eligible for the double degree, the planned and agreed quota of students being set originally at 30 and later increased to 60. Those achieving a lower standard, but still demonstrating considerable academic ability, are eligible only for the LondonMet degree. The 2008-13 agreement does not refer to admissions requirements, but the CLA confirms that the Chinese government sets these entry criteria. Students applying for the BSc (Hons) Herbal Medicinal Science must have achieved at least 60 per cent in the English part of the College Entrance Examination and progression to level 6 is subject to IELTS 6 English language proficiency.

27 Completed enrolment forms are forwarded to LondonMet's Academic Registry, which makes a full entry of the personal record. Responsibility for student record keeping, for subsequent uploading to the LondonMet online platform, lies with the ALT and the PCL. Following successful registration on the University's records system, students receive their identification card and gain access to the University's IT, email and other electronic resources. In 2011, the course committee reported on plans to address the length of time taken to issue ID cards to newly enrolled students and the difficulties for returning students in re-enrolling through 'e-vision': students whom the review team met were content with current processes.

Student induction and support (including handbooks)

28 Student induction, as described to the 2007 periodic review panel, includes an introduction to the course - both the SUTCM and LondonMet elements - together with the provision of a timetable, syllabus and course materials. In addition, LondonMet colleagues start every teaching visit with a briefing on the module and supply students with module booklets. Students who met the review team confirmed that they had received an induction, including sessions on how to use library resources and how to avoid plagiarism, and that they subsequently met LondonMet staff on teaching visits to SUTCM.

29 The CTPM states that students should be provided with a course handbook before or during their induction and that handbooks should be reviewed and updated annually. Students confirmed that they had received a course handbook. However, from the available documentation, the review team considered that existing handbooks required further development in order to provide students with full and comprehensive course information (paragraphs 44 and 60-61).

30 LondonMet modules are delivered, in English, by LondonMet lecturers over a two-week period, with input from SUTCM staff in practical and laboratory sessions. In recognition of the challenges of intensive delivery for students, e-learning materials have been developed to introduce syllabus content much earlier in the semester. Staff and students have raised concerns about the difficulty in accessing WebLearn, the LondonMet

intranet, as a result of slow broadband speeds. As it is not possible to send large files from the UK to SUTCM's intranet, LondonMet lecturers upload materials while at SUTCM. Additional learning support has been provided in other forms too: for instance, provision of the entire series of the LondonMet biochemical toxicology lectures on DVD for final year SUTCM students; and secondment of LondonMet staff to SUTCM, allowing for the extended delivery of one of the level 6 modules. The review team considered the additional learning support provided to students, in response to staff and student feedback, to be a **positive feature** of the programme.

31 As noted in paragraph 26, the entry requirements for both pathways include a specified level of English language proficiency. While both pathways incorporate English language modules in the first two years, students and staff have continued to call for the extension of English language support, especially in year three for Pathway 2 students, in preparation for study in the UK. Students progressing to study at LondonMet enrol on the University's pre-sessional courses once they have transferred to London, but the course team has stressed the need for a review of the configuration of academic (scientific) English support for students. The review team **recommends** that LondonMet progress such a review.

Student feedback systems and how cultural differences between UK and China are accommodated

32 The PCL is expected to obtain student feedback on each module and is encouraged to seek student feedback during the semester using other methods, such as meetings with student representatives. At the review visit, staff confirmed that module evaluation questionnaires were used and described action they had taken as a result of student feedback gathered in this way. The review team observed from minutes that annual course committee meetings include student representatives from different years and of both pathways, and that students participate fully and confidently in these meetings. Staff and students confirmed that the student representation system operated formally, through course committee, and also informally, through direct representation to individual members of the teaching staff. Student feedback and responses made are reported in annual monitoring. From meetings and from available documentation, the review team was able to verify that the student voice was heard and appropriate responses were made by the course team.

Administration of assessment

33 The ALT has responsibility for managing the overall assessment process, including dispatch of examination papers and courseworks to the partner; timely receipt of student scripts for marking; resolving assessment queries from the PCL with the Academic Registry; and attendance at relevant examination boards and Performance Enhancement Meetings at LondonMet. The PCL has responsibility for the local management of assessment and for ensuring that this operates in accordance with the course documentation, the IMoA and the CLA.

34 In 2011, the external examiner referred to an administrative error concerning examination security which would have had serious implications had it not been discovered, adding that similar difficulties had occurred before and that there was room to improve liaison between the institutions in this area. At the visit, staff reassured the review team that steps had been taken to ensure that similar issues do not arise in future.

Part B: Quality assurance

Academic standards and the quality of programmes

Programme approval

35 Students successfully completing Pathway 1 receive a dual award, defined by the CTPM as the culmination of a 'process by which the university and another awarding institution collectively provide courses leading to separate awards'. With respect to both pathways, the programmes are characterised by LondonMet as 'articulation arrangements', the University having agreed 'to recognise and grant specific credit' to specified SUTCM modules delivered at SUTCM in the first three years.

36 Articulation entails a mapping exercise to verify correspondence between the content and learning outcomes of external modules and those of a designated LondonMet level or modules. At the time of establishing the link, an extensive mapping of the curricula offered on the BSc (Hons) Chinese Medicinal Science at SUTCM and the BSc (Hons) Herbal Medicinal Science at LondonMet was undertaken. It was agreed that the course running at SUTCM had sufficient content and related learning outcomes to enable LondonMet to apply its accreditation of prior experiential learning process (APEL) and accredit 120 credits at level 4, 90 credits at level 5, and 30 credits at level 6 against its three-year BSc course. LondonMet would deliver the remaining 30 credits at level 5 and 90 credits at level 6 in order for students on both pathways to attain the award of BSc (Hons) Herbal Medicinal Science. Degree classification is determined on the basis of the LondonMet modules alone. The University has now discontinued its own full award of BSc (Hons) Herbal Medicinal Science and regards completion of the SUTCM modules as the entry requirement to a level 6 'top-up' that leads to the BSc (Hons) Herbal Medicinal Science award.

37 As described in the self-evaluation for the 2012 periodic review, the programme combines elements of western approaches to science and Chinese medicine, drawing on 'the science underpinning the development, production and application of pharmaceuticals', while at the same time capitalising on 'the discoveries that have been made in elucidating the complex mechanisms by which key constituents of Traditional Chinese Medicine decoctions exert their effects.' The review team considered the combination of western and Chinese medicine in curriculum design to be a **positive feature** of the programme.

38 As noted in paragraph 8, programme approval is integral to LondonMet's process for approval of collaborative provision and, for dual awards, entails a validation event normally held at the partner, conducted by a panel including external membership and focusing on matters including course management, resources, staffing, teaching and marketing.

39 The collaborative provision with LondonMet of BSc Chinese Medicinal Science/BSc Herbal Medicinal Science (Dual Award) and BSc Herbal Medicinal Science was approved at an event held at SUTCM in 2003, in accordance with this process. Approval was subject to a number of conditions, including confirmation of the allocation of teaching on LondonMet modules to SUTCM staff, and assurances on English language support for those staff and for students prior to entering the final year. An associated follow-up visit by members of the panel to inspect laboratory facilities took place in 2004, following SUTCM's move to new premises. The records make no specific reference to *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), subject benchmark statements or other reference points during the validation process, though the CTPM refers to the Academic Infrastructure, published by QAA, as an essential reference point for course design.

40 The course documents provided for validation were not available to the review team, but subsequent review documentation suggests that no programme specification was produced that was particular to the BSc (Hons) Herbal Medicinal Science delivered under the collaborative arrangement. The self-evaluation written for the 2012 periodic review of the BSc (Hons) Herbal Medicinal Science at SUTCM includes a course specification that relates only to level 6 and which is clearly designed for students studying at LondonMet. The self-evaluation document also provides tables setting out module delivery schedules for years one to four and the credits attached to the LondonMet modules.

41 There appears to be no single document that can be interpreted as a programme specification, describing the scope, coverage and assessment strategy of the collaborative programme and referring to relevant subject benchmark statements and the level of award, within the terms of the UK Quality Code (*Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others*). In this regard, LondonMet's expectation that, for dual awards, 'each institution needs to be clear as...to the 'wholeness' of the student experience and to make these matters clear to students...' does not appear to be met. The review team **recommends** that LondonMet produce a programme specification for the BSc Herbal Medicinal Science, within the terms of the UK Quality Code (*Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others*).

Programme reapproval

42 Collaborative courses are subject to periodic review and reapproval, normally after three years for new courses and thereafter every five years. The process is designed to ensure that the course team has critically appraised the curriculum and the success and subsequent employability of students, and involves external subject experts, past and present students, and employers.

43 The BSc (Hons) Herbal Medicinal Science (SUTCM) underwent periodic review in 2007 and 2012. The self-evaluation documents produced on each occasion by the course team provide full, analytical and evaluative commentary on aspects of the programme, including the management and operation of the link; learning, teaching and assessment; course monitoring; student feedback; resources; staff and staff development. Conducted by panels including an external advisor from the higher education sector, the review events were held at SUTCM, during which there were meetings with senior management teams from both institutions, the course team and students. The review reports affirm that the review process represents LondonMet's discharge of its responsibility as a degree-awarding authority, in line with the relevant provisions of the UK Quality Code.

44 The 2007 review made recommendations concerning information provided to students, teaching and learning, course framework, and regulations and resources. The 2012 self-evaluation records most of these matters as completed, with the notable exception of the recommendation that a course handbook be produced, to include specified information and to be made available to all students at the start of the course (paragraphs 29 and 60-61). In 2012, the panel's recommendations related to feedback to students, the timing of the provision of project titles to students, and staff development for SUTCM staff. Subsequent annual monitoring reports, which under LondonMet processes would be expected to provide responses, were not available at the time of the review.

45 The periodic review report of 2012 explicitly focused on the LondonMet modules, on the basis that LondonMet has discontinued its own full award of BSc (Hons) Herbal Medicinal Science and now regards completion of the SUTCM modules as the entry requirement for the level 6 'top-up'. In meetings at the review visit, staff explained that regular checks are made by LondonMet on any changes to the SUTCM modules and that there had been no significant changes to these modules since the original mapping was

undertaken. Additionally, SUTCM is responsible for notifying any changes to the curriculum, assessment or learning outcomes of its provision. Nonetheless, the review team considered that the need to ensure both the continued worth of the SUTCM modules in terms of LondonMet credit, and the coherence of the programme as a whole, required more formality of process, with fully documented outcomes.

46 The review team **recommends** that LondonMet introduce a more formal process for monitoring amendments to the SUTCM modules, to ensure the continued coherence of the programme as a whole.

47 During 2011-12 LondonMet undertook a review of its undergraduate provision, resulting in the modification of the modular framework, for implementation from September 2012. In the light of these changes, 'new' LondonMet modules were introduced. Although there were title changes to the modules, the learning outcomes remained the same and the module content and timing of delivery were substantially unchanged. Consequently, it was not considered necessary to undertake re-mapping against the SUTCM curriculum.

Programme monitoring

48 The PCL is expected to reflect on and review evidence and feedback relating to the course on an ongoing basis, referring any matters requiring immediate attention to the ALT and the partner course management team. Annual course performance evaluation requires the PCL and the ALT to confirm their compliance with University requirements and to evaluate course performance based on student performance data, student feedback and external examiner comment. The process is expected to lead to improvements in course delivery and the student experience overall. The completed University template is submitted to the relevant faculty/department for consideration within standard taught provision monitoring, and to the QEU, which prepares an overview report for the Academic Board.

49 SUTCM annual course performance evaluations over the three academic years to 2009-10 are presented in the LondonMet template. They provide data, information and accompanying analysis and commentary covering admissions, course performance, programme statistics and student performance, external examiners' comments, student feedback, staff feedback, and resources, including staffing. They identify strengths, weaknesses and issues to be referred to LondonMet and conclude with summary statements from the PCL and ALT on the operation of the link.

50 The evaluations generally provide evidence that appropriate responses are made to issues relating to learning, teaching and assessment; learning resources; and student support, as identified through the analysis of data, student feedback and external examiners' reports. Notable examples include the review and reduction of student assessment load; the rescheduling of LondonMet staff commitments at the University to allow them to manage delivery and student learning support at SUTCM more effectively; the permanent basing of a member of the course team from LondonMet at SUTCM; the extension of web-based provision; and mechanisms to mitigate the problem of slow broadband speeds (paragraph 30).

51 Although student performance across all four years is generally reported as 'high', the need for the extension of English language support for students at SUTCM, including support for academic (scientific) English, particularly in year three, continues to be raised in annual course evaluation. As noted in paragraph 31, the self-evaluation prepared for the 2012 periodic review calls for the configuration of academic English support to be reviewed 'to meet the demands of the teaching and learning that becomes more detailed as the

students negotiate the more advanced levels of the programme'. The issue was not referred to in the periodic review outcomes report of March 2012 and appears to remain unresolved (paragraph 31).

52 The review team concluded that the course leadership was effectively discharging its responsibilities with regard to the completion of annual course performance evaluation, as required by LondonMet, and that the process leads to improvements in course delivery and the student experience. Nonetheless, relevant meeting minutes did not suggest a systematic and formal annual review of the programme by the SUTCM course committee, and there was no evidence of formal records of management and course team meetings. In the light of these matters, the review team **recommends** that LondonMet introduce a more formal annual review of the programme at SUTCM.

53 Module performance data, including SUTCM results for the LondonMet modules (but not the SUTCM modules), are considered at the Undergraduate Performance Enhancement Meeting (UGPEM) for the School of Human Sciences; these are held twice annually and attended by the external examiner and the ALT. The systematic presentation of results facilitates comparison between student achievement on equivalent modules delivered at SUTCM and LondonMet. Comparative year-on-year data do not appear to be considered, so it is difficult to compare student achievement trends.

Staffing and staff development

54 Under former and current contractual arrangements, both parties are responsible for appointing appropriately qualified staff to deliver the programme. Appropriate qualifications include requisite competence in English so as to be able to deliver those parts of the programme derived from LondonMet and taught in English. The agreements also provide for LondonMet and SUTCM to collaborate on an appropriate programme of staff development to support the link, which might include curricular and pedagogic development or research exchanges and opportunities.

55 As noted in paragraph 30, LondonMet modules are delivered, in English, by LondonMet lecturers over a two-week period, with input from SUTCM staff in practical and laboratory sessions. SUTCM staff who demonstrate proficiency in English are selected to support the delivery of the LondonMet modules. Between 2004 and 2006, four members of SUTCM staff responsible for the delivery of modules at SUTCM spent extended periods of time at LondonMet, observing teaching of formal lectures, tutorials and practical classes associated with the delivery of material at SUTCM. Since then, there have been numerous visits to LondonMet by SUTCM teaching staff, as part of a LondonMet strategy to encourage SUTCM staff to enhance their input into the delivery of the LondonMet modules, and to include elements of teaching in English in the SUTCM modules. The review team considered the staff development opportunities provided to SUTCM teaching staff through visits to LondonMet to be a **positive feature** of the link.

Assessment and certification of awards

56 Although the current institutional agreements are silent as to the assessment regulations governing the programme, the CTPM provides for all collaborative provision to be regulated, as far as possible, according to LondonMet's standard assessment regulations and procedures. The Memorandum of Agreement 2008 implied that LondonMet and SUTCM regulations applied to the LondonMet and SUTCM modules, respectively, and, at the visit, staff confirmed this to be the position. The LondonMet assessment regulations were set out in the LondonMet course handbooks viewed by the review team (paragraphs 60-61). Assessment briefs and examination papers are set, marked and moderated by LondonMet

staff, with SUTCM input into the assessment of the project, undertaken during a marking visit to SUTCM by a team of LondonMet staff.

57 LondonMet appoints one external examiner to cover the LondonMet modules delivered as part of this collaborative provision. External examiner reports are considered fully by the ALT and the PCL in their annual course performance evaluation reports (paragraphs 49-50), the comments disseminated to module leaders, and a formal response prepared by the Associate Dean, Faculty of Life Sciences and Computing. External examiner reports are also considered at the biannual UGPEM of the School of Human Sciences, which considers all modules in the School (paragraph 53). Specific issues relating to the delivery and assessment of modules by SUTCM are carefully considered and recorded in the minutes. Subject Standards Boards are held at LondonMet.

58 Both the former and current institutional agreements provide that the wording on award certificates shall follow normal LondonMet conventions and shall refer to the existence of a transcript, and that the transcript shall record that the award is 'taught in association with SUTCM'. In viewing the sample documentation available to it, the review team noted that the certificate does not refer to the existence of a transcript and that the specified wording is not used in the transcript, but rather the delivering institution is named as the 'University of Shanghai'. The review team considered this information to be potentially misleading and **recommends** that LondonMet review the information contained in certificates and transcripts to ensure that this complies fully with LondonMet requirements and that any risk of confusion is eliminated.

Part C: Information

Publicity and marketing

59 Ultimate responsibility for approving publicity and marketing materials lies with the LondonMet Director of Marketing, Communications and Fundraising, advised by the ILO for the provision concerned. SUTCM is responsible for arranging course marketing and publicity, in consultation with LondonMet's Beijing office; the initial content of the template materials is submitted to LondonMet for approval via the Faculty of Life Sciences and Computing. Subsequent approval of publicity materials from the Director of Marketing is required only if there are significant amendments to the content.

Student handbooks

60 As noted in paragraph 29, the CTPM requires that students be provided with course handbooks before or during induction and that these be reviewed and updated annually. The Periodic Review of March 2007 recommended that the course team provide students with a course handbook at the start of the course, containing information on academic structure and content; administrative support and contact details; the regulations; any preparatory materials relating to the LondonMet modules; and on the relationship between both institutions. At the review visit, students confirmed that they had received a course handbook and seemed satisfied with the course information provided. However, in considering the handbooks available to it, for 2005-06, 2010 and 2011-12 (in draft only), the review team formed the view that these were either inappropriate or under-developed. The 2005-06 handbook and draft 2011-12 handbook related to the course as delivered at LondonMet and were written for home and EU students; the 2010 handbook, produced by SUTCM, did not fully and comprehensively cover the matters recommended by the 2007 Periodic Review.

61 The review team **recommends** that LondonMet review student handbooks and implement processes for their regular review and updating, to ensure that students are provided with appropriate, comprehensive and current information throughout their programme.

Student progression to the UK

62 In the 2011-12 session, 18 students took their final year in London, many of whom were Pathway 1 students who elected to do so. In the current year, the impact of the UK Border Agency's (UKBA) decision to withdraw LondonMet's license to receive international students has been felt, with a small number of SUTCM students being affected. At the visit, the review team learned from staff of measures that had been put in place to mitigate the effects of the decision. These included the provision of information and support for students and parents by the Beijing office; additional final-year teaching support provided at SUTCM from visiting LondonMet lecturers; and the option for students to spend a shorter period of six months at LondonMet under visitor-visa arrangements. Unfortunately, the review team did not have the opportunity to meet students directly affected by the situation in the current year, but nevertheless concluded that LondonMet had taken appropriate action to minimise the adverse impact of the UKBA decision on students.

Conclusion

Positive features

The following positive features of the partnership are identified:

- the commitment of the programme leadership to the quality of the student experience and to the future success of the programme (paragraphs 20-21)
- the additional learning support provided to students, in response to staff and student feedback (paragraph 30)
- the combination of western and Chinese medicine in curriculum design, drawing on the areas of expertise of each of the partners (paragraph 37)
- the staff development opportunities provided to SUTCM teaching staff through visits to LondonMet (paragraph 55).

Recommendations

LondonMet is recommended to take the following action:

- review its processes for the completion of collaboration agreements to ensure that this occurs in a timely fashion and in accordance with the full extent of its stated requirements (paragraphs 15-16)
- consider ways in which the risk of over-reliance on individuals in the management and operation of the link can be mitigated (paragraphs 21-22)
- consider ways in which greater involvement of teaching staff in quality assurance processes can be achieved, in particular with a view to generating a stronger sense of programme identity for both staff and students, and enhancing the student experience (paragraphs 23-24)
- progress a review of the configuration of academic (scientific) English support for students, especially in year three of the programme (paragraphs 31 and 51)
- produce a programme specification for the BSc Herbal Medicinal Science, within the terms of the Quality Code, *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others* (paragraphs 40-41)

- introduce a more formal process for monitoring amendments to the SUTCM modules, to ensure the continued coherence of the programme as a whole (paragraphs 45-46)
- introduce a more formal annual review of the programme at SUTCM (paragraph 52)
- review the information contained in certificates and transcripts to ensure that this complies fully with LondonMet requirements and that any risk of confusion is eliminated (paragraph 58)
- review student handbooks and implement processes for their regular review and updating, to ensure that students are provided with appropriate, comprehensive and current information throughout their programme (paragraphs 60-61).

Glossary

Academic Infrastructure The core guidance developed and maintained by QAA in partnership with the UK higher education community and used by QAA and higher education providers until 2011-12 for quality assurance of UK higher education. It has since been replaced by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (**Quality Code**).

accreditation of prior learning (APL) The identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement that occurred at some time in the past (perhaps as the result of a previous course, self-directed study, or active experience), which is taken into account when admitting a student to a programme of study.

articulation arrangement A process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advanced standing to a subsequent part or year of a programme of a degree-awarding body. Arrangements, which are subject to formal agreements between the parties, normally involve credit accumulation and transfer schemes. Read more in the glossary of *Chapter B10: Managing higher education provision with others* of the Quality Code.

C9 League A group of nine major research universities in China, established in 2009.

CET The College English Test, a national 'English as a foreign language test' in China.

CFCRS Initialism for Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools, denoting cooperation between foreign and Chinese educational institutions in order to establish educational institutions or educational programmes. The activities of CFCRS are governed by regulations introduced in 2003.

Code of practice A core element of the **Academic Infrastructure** (now superseded by the **Quality Code**).

collaborative provision or **collaborative arrangement** A term used to describe how institutions work together to provide higher education, including learning opportunities, student support, and assessment, resulting in a qualification from one or more awarding institutions.

comprehensive university A university in China that typically offers a full rather than a specialised curriculum, which includes a wide range of disciplines such as liberal arts, social sciences, science, technical and industrial studies.

dazhuan A three-year tertiary education diploma in China.

due diligence Enquiries relating to the governance, ethos, status, capacity, reputation and general suitability of a potential delivery organisation or support provider to satisfy the requirements of a degree-awarding body for an arrangement to deliver learning opportunities.

flying faculty An arrangement whereby a programme is delivered by visiting staff from the UK institution. Support for students may be provided by local staff. Also known as 'fly-in fly-out faculty'.

gaokao National higher education entrance examination in China.

IELTS International English Language Testing System, an international standardised English test.

kaoyan Postgraduate degree entrance examination in China.

post-experience education A postgraduate programme that typically requires students, as a condition of entry, to have substantial and appropriate graduate-level work experience, in addition to an undergraduate degree; a programme of this nature is designed to draw on students' experience and practice.

pre-experience education A postgraduate programme that typically does not explicitly require students to have work experience, and is designed to be equally accessible to recent graduates and those who have some relevant experience.

Project 211 A Chinese government programme, initiated in 1995, that is aimed at strengthening institutions of higher education and key disciplinary areas as a national priority for the twenty-first century. The '21' and '1' within 211 refer to the 'twenty-first' century and 'one' hundred universities, respectively. To be included in the programme, universities had to meet scientific and technical standards and offer advanced degree programmes. It includes the **Project 985** universities.

Project 985 A project to promote the development of world-class universities in China, which was initiated in May 1998 and named after the date: year '98', month '5'. Much of its funding is devoted to academic exchanges whereby Chinese academics participate in conferences abroad and foreign lecturers visit China. It includes the **C9 League** universities.

QS World University Rankings Annual university rankings published by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS).

Quality Code Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet.

TOEFL Test Of English as a Foreign Language, an English test by the Educational Testing Service.

London Metropolitan University's response to the review report

'We are happy to see that the report endorses our approach to collaborative activity - a combination of genuine partnership, innovative curriculum design and a quality student experience. We are particularly pleased that the leadership and student support invested by the course team has been recognised, as this is a particular strength of our most successful collaborative partnerships. The report will be considered at both Faculty and University levels, at the Faculty and University Undergraduate and Postgraduate committees. The recommendations made by the audit team will further support the development and enhancement of our provision at SUTCM and, where applicable, elsewhere.'

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