



# **Audit of overseas provision**

**University of London International Programmes and the  
Singapore Institute of Management**

**January 2011**

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## Introduction

1 This report considers the collaborative arrangement between the University of London International Programmes and the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM University; SIM), Singapore.

## The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

2 The primary responsibility for academic standards and quality in UK higher education rests with individual universities and colleges. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) checks how well they meet their responsibilities, identifying good practice and making recommendations for improvement. QAA also publishes guidelines to help institutions develop effective systems to ensure students have high quality experiences.

3 Many universities and colleges in the UK offer their higher education programmes to students wishing to study outside the UK. This is a significant and growing area of activity: data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency indicates that over 408,000 students were studying for UK higher education awards entirely outside the UK in the 2009-10 academic year, either at overseas campuses directly run by UK institutions or through collaborative arrangements that UK institutions have made with foreign partners. QAA reviews both collaborative arrangements and programmes delivered on overseas campuses through a process called Audit of overseas provision. Audits are conducted country by country and in 2010-11 we conducted an Audit of overseas provision in Singapore. The purpose of the audit was to provide information on the way in which a group of UK universities and colleges were maintaining academic standards and the quality of education in their provision in Singapore. The reports on the individual audits will be used in the preparation of an overview report.

## The audit process for overseas collaborative links

4 In November 2009 QAA invited all UK higher education institutions to provide information about their provision in Singapore. On the basis of the information returned, QAA selected for audit visits 10 UK institutions with provision in that country. These institutions produced briefing papers describing the way in which their provision (or subsets of their provision) in Singapore operated and commenting on the effectiveness of the means by which they assured quality and standards. In addition, each institution was asked to make reference to the extent to which the provision was representative of its procedures and practice in all its overseas activity. Institutions were also invited to make reference to the ways in which their arrangements met the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, particularly *Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, originally published by QAA in 2004. An 'amplified' version of Section 2 was published by QAA in October 2010.

5 Audit teams visited each of the 10 UK institutions to discuss their provision in Singapore between September and November 2010. The same teams visited Singapore in January 2011 to meet some of the staff responsible for managing and delivering the provision, and to meet students. The audit of the University of London International Programmes was coordinated for QAA by Mr D Greenaway, Assistant Director, Reviews Group. The audit team comprised Professor P Maher and Professor A Holmes (auditors), with Mr D Greenaway acting as audit secretary. QAA is particularly grateful to the UK institutions and their partners in Singapore for the willing cooperation that they provided to the team.

## **The context of collaborative provision with partners in Singapore**

6 In Singapore, responsibility for higher education resides with the Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education. The Higher Education Division oversees the provision of tertiary and technical education as well as registration of private schools, including foreign providers. The Singapore higher education landscape currently comprises four publicly-funded autonomous universities, a private institution offering publicly-subsidised part-time degree programmes, five polytechnics, an institute of technical education, an institute of technology, two arts institutions, several foreign universities' branch campuses, and a number of private education institutions.

7 In September 2009 the Singapore parliament passed the Private Education Act to strengthen the regulatory framework for the private education sector. Under this Act, the Ministry of Education has established an independent statutory board, the Council for Private Education, with the legislative power to implement and enforce the new regulatory framework. The new regulatory regime overseen by the Council for Private Education includes a strengthened registration framework called the Enhanced Registration Framework, and a quality certification scheme called EduTrust.

8 The Enhanced Registration Framework spells out the strengthened legal requirements in the areas of corporate governance, provision of quality services, student protection and information transparency that all private education institutions operating in or from Singapore must meet. While private education institutions were previously required to obtain one-time registration with the Ministry of Education and could be de-registered only under extreme circumstances, the Private Education Act has introduced a renewable validity period for registration with the Council for Private Education, which can range from one year up to six years, and has provided the Council with the powers to impose a range of graduated penalties on errant private education institutions, including suspension, nonrenewal or revocation of registration or EduTrust certification.

9 EduTrust is a voluntary certification scheme which provides a trust mark of quality. It replaces the previous CaseTrust for Education scheme, which was mainly focused on protection of fees paid by students, adding a number of student welfare and academic standards for all students, whether local or overseas, as well as soundness of finances and school administration requirements. As with CaseTrust, EduTrust is mandatory for private education institutions wishing to enrol overseas students. EduTrust certification is one of the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority's prerequisites for the issue of a Student's Pass. Further information on higher education in Singapore is contained in the overview report.

## Section 1: The background to the collaborative link

### Nature of the link

10 The link is between University of London International Programmes (formerly known as the University of London External System) and the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM).

11 The University of London (the University) has a long tradition of offering opportunities to external students worldwide to study for and gain awards through its External System, which was renamed International Programmes in August 2010. In 2010 there were approximately 50,000 students registered with International Programmes, of whom nearly 12,000 are domiciled in Singapore.

12 SIM is a large provider of private tertiary and professional training in Singapore. It was founded in 1964 as a membership society under the Singapore Economic Development Board to develop business management skills. It now has over 33,000 corporate and individual members, and three divisions: SIM University, SIM Professional Development and SIM Global Education. The latter, which offers degree programmes from a range of overseas universities and institutions, is the University of London International Programme's link; the agreement is with the Singapore Institute of Management Pte Ltd. SIM has comprehensive campus facilities and was among the first private educational institutions to be registered under the Enhanced Registration Framework (ERF). It was awarded EduTrust certification in May 2010 following a submission in which staff at the University and the lead colleges were closely involved.

13 The link between SIM and the University's External System started in 1985. The External System's delivery model was attractive because it encompassed both full-time and part-time students and enabled SIM students in Singapore with diploma qualifications to top these up to degree level. Subsequently, the Diploma in Economics was developed as an access route for students without traditional degree-level entry requirements; this was offered at SIM and other overseas institutions.

14 The relationship between International Programmes and SIM has grown to the point where SIM is now supporting the largest single group of International Programmes students in the world. In 2009-10 SIM had 8,653 students on a total of 20 programmes: 13 BScs, six Diplomas for Graduates and the Diploma in Economics. All but one of these are in the Economics, Management, Finance and Social Sciences (EMFSS) programme of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), referred to as the 'lead college' for EMFSS. Goldsmiths College is the lead college for the remaining BSc in Computing and Information Systems (CIS). At the time of the audit visit, SIM estimated that over 9,000 of its students were studying University of London programmes.

15 SIM is one of 72 institutions worldwide and six in Singapore that had, at the time of the audit visit been recognised as providers of additional tuition and support for students of University of London International Programmes. Under the recently developed Institutions Policy Framework, which recognises institutions that meet a set of specific quality criteria, SIM has provisionally been awarded the higher category of Affiliate Centre in recognition of its long history as a partner. Notwithstanding the length and magnitude of SIM's relationship with the University, the link is generally representative of the University's arrangements with Affiliate institutions that it recognises as providing support for its International Programmes students.

## The UK institution's approach to overseas collaborative provision

16 The mission of the University of London International Programmes is 'to provide worldwide access to the internationally-renowned programmes and awards of the University of London and its Colleges.' The University's long-standing approach to its international programmes is in many ways unique in UK higher education. Since 1858 it has provided opportunities for students across the world to study for and gain awards of the University of London without having to attend one of the University's constituent colleges. Its traditional role has been as a registering and awarding body, relying on its examination process to assure the standards of its external degrees in line with its academic regulations which state that 'Candidates granted degrees shall have attained the same academic standard irrespective of mode or place of study or examination'. Institutions such as SIM provide local support, but the University retains full responsibility for academic standards, admissions decisions and examinations.

17 Students can opt to study at a distance independently of any local institution or register with an institution that provides additional teaching support. The University sees these teaching institutions as playing an important role both in helping students to succeed in their studies and in promoting and increasing access to the University's programmes. However, until recently the University claimed what the Briefing Paper described as 'a limited relationship with these third-party teaching institutions'. In commenting on this approach, the 2005 QAA Institutional audit report recommended that the External System 'develop agreements with the third-party institutions listed by the University of London to ensure that the interests of the University of London and its students are adequately protected'. Around the same time the University's External System Institutions Review Group (IRG) was reviewing relationships with third-party institutions and considering future policy directions. These developments and subsequent structural, leadership and rebranding changes in the External System led eventually to the launch of a new Institutions Policy Framework in June 2009.

### Institutions Policy Framework

18 The stated aims of the Institutions Policy Framework (IPF) are to:

- identify educational institutions who offer a quality experience for University of London External students
- provide students with better information regarding their choice of institution and type of programme
- create closer links between the University, Lead Colleges and recognised centres
- facilitate the relationship with recognised centres to enhance the External student experience.

19 The IPF recognises the important role of the institutions and formalises the basis of their relationship with the University through a recognition framework. If institutions meet specified quality criteria they can be classified as either an Affiliate Centre or a Registered Centre. These two levels of recognition are defined as follows:

- Affiliate Centre - an institution must demonstrate a sustained commitment to developing high standards in respect of the teaching, support and administration.
- Registered Centre - an institution must have acceptable standards for the purpose of supporting students of the University of London International Programmes in preparing for their examinations.

20 Seventy-two institutions were provisionally allocated to the IPF as recognised centres, of which 21, including SIM, were classified as Affiliate Centres and 51 as Registered Centres.

21 These classifications are subject to the processes of annual monitoring and periodic review that were introduced with the IPF as components of a new Institutions Quality Assurance Framework (IQAF). A publicly available website lists all the recognised institutions with hyperlinks to their own websites.

22 SIM senior managers who met the audit team welcomed both the change of name and the introduction of the IPF. 'External system', with its connotations of differences from the UK equivalent, was not helpful in Singapore's higher education context; while classification of what had previously been an undifferentiated group of institutions allowed SIM to distinguish itself by achieving the higher affiliate status. This was a position they were confident that they would retain given their record in supporting students and their experience of both internal and external quality assurance procedures, not least the very rigorous scrutiny by Singapore's Council for Private Education (CPE) in achieving EduTrust status.

### **Strategic approach**

23 The principal guiding strategy for International Programmes is the Strategic Plan 2009-2012 which sets out the vision 'of a world in which a life-changing high quality university education is available to all who will benefit' and reiterates the mission to 'provide worldwide access to the internationally-renowned programmes and awards of the University of London and its Colleges'. Under the aim to 'enhance the learning experience and achievement of our students' the Plan states that 'For a number of years the External System has been on a journey from being an "exam" provider to offering complete programmes of education'.

24 The audit team questioned senior staff about that journey and its ultimate destination and was told that while 70 per cent of students seek extra support from independent institutions, International Programme's mission still focused on the 'independent learner' and enriching support for all students through, for example, the development of resources delivered through the virtual learning environment (VLE). However, there is tension between adding additional support features, which could increase costs and complexity, and the strong commitment of International Programmes to widening participation. There was also potential tension between the development of the IQAF and the provision of more resources and services to improve institutional capabilities and the University's wish neither to interfere in the management of autonomous institutions nor to increase their dependency. Senior managers at SIM did not view the requirements of the IPF and IQAF as problematic citing their experience in, and expectation of, setting and meeting quality assurance requirements.

25 Under another aim of planned growth the University has an important strategic initiative in its 'Business Transformation Programme' to produce an integrated and holistic set of systems, including implementation of a new management information system and portal, and a review of business processes.

### **Management structures**

26 The central academic and administrative arm of International Programmes, the University of London International Academy was formally set up by the University of London's Board of Trustees as a Central Academic Body and is governed by a Board and related committees reporting to the University of London Collegiate Council. The

International Academy collaborates with 12 of the University's colleges to offer the flexible and distance-learning programmes that are delivered as International Programmes. The International Academy Board is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and determines strategic direction, monitors performance, and approves the annual budget and accounts. The Board has a Finance Committee and an Academic Committee; the latter has a number of sub-committees, including the Institutions Sub-Committee (ISC) and the Quality Assurance and Student Lifecycle Sub-Committee (QASL). International Academy is led by the Dean of the University of London International Programmes and has five directorates, of which Corporate Performance and Quality (CPQ) is responsible for quality assurance and Global Networks and Communities (GNC) is responsible for maintaining and expanding the network of teaching institutions and communities of students and alumni. There are different management structures for the various groups of staff who contribute to International Programmes: staff of the central University who work within the University of London International Programmes are assigned to the International Academy while staff of the lead colleges are managed within their individual autonomous colleges. Collectively they are described as 'staff at the University and the lead colleges'.

### **Accreditation, approval and recognition**

27 University of London awards are recognised by the Association of Certified Chartered Accountants (ACCA), Institute of Certified Public Accountants in Singapore (ICPAS), Institute of Financial Services (*ifs*), CPA (Australia) and universities within the UK who accept graduates for master's programmes, often with scholarships.

### **Effectiveness of policies and procedures underpinning the management of the link**

28 University of London External System/International Programmes has undergone considerable change in the last five years, including renaming and rebranding, and designation as one of the University's Central Academic Bodies. The appointment of the new Dean and other senior colleagues and the establishment in 2007-08 of an External System (now International Academy) Board and raft of sub-committees accelerated the change agenda which had been set out in the 2006 report of the Vice-Chancellor's Review of the External System and, in relation to policy towards third-party institutions, recommended by the 2005 QAA Institutional audit report.

29 The subsequent Strategic Plan for 2009-12 succinctly and clearly sets out International Academy's aims with widening participation still of paramount importance, a view that was reinforced to the audit team by staff at the University and the lead colleges, some of whom had a long history of dedication and commitment to widening opportunities to higher education overseas. A major development in institutional links as exemplified by that with SIM has been the introduction of the new IPF which recognises for the first time the need to introduce a recognition arrangement, classification system and associated quality framework for all those autonomous institutions that support International Programmes students around the world, thereby responding to the recommendation of the 2005 QAA Institutional audit report. This development was welcomed by SIM as a means of demonstrating the quality of its student support and achieving the higher level of recognition.

30 The audit team recognised that the implementation of the IPF and IQAF represented a major undertaking for the University, given the numbers and geographical spread of its recognised centres, and a significant move along the journey alluded to in the Strategic Plan from exam provider to offering complete programmes of education. While the University recognised that it was too early to judge how effective the new IPF would be, the

team took the view that the University's proactive approach to its overseas recognition arrangements was both timely and appropriate.

## **Section 2: Arrangements for establishing the link**

### **Selecting and approving the partner organisation**

31 The relationship with SIM predates the University's current arrangements for selecting and approving recognised centres by over 20 years. Prior to the introduction of the IPF, there were in general no formal arrangements with institutions other than those such as 'Permission to Teach' (PTT) which applied to specific programmes like the Diploma in Economics, an access route for non-traditional entrants. PTT status involved inspection and subsequent regular visits by the lead college, which at SIM was LSE. In other respects the External System had no engagement in recommending institutions to prospective overseas students.

32 Under the new IPF arrangements, institutions with which International Programmes had a pre-existing relationship were provisionally allocated to either affiliate centre or registered centre status or were not admitted to the framework at that point. New institutions wishing to enter the framework apply for admission and, if accepted, enter a 'candidate phase', during which they receive a range of support from International Programmes, including access to study materials and the appropriate VLE, and marketing support, and must demonstrate that they can successfully support students. To gain recognition, institutions would then have to successfully undertake an entrance process that would include submission of a self-evaluation document and a site visit by a University team as specified in the Institution Periodic Review Handbook. In applying for recognition, a candidate institution confirms that it will abide by the terms and conditions in the University of London External System agreement with candidate institutions and recognised centres, which is the agreement governing this arrangement.

33 There are four possible outcomes of the process: a successful application, and recognition as either an affiliate or registered centre; a postponed application; or an unsuccessful application. The audit team was told that for a new institution to be added to the IPF both the lead college(s), whose programmes were to be offered, and the International Academy would have to agree that they were suitable candidates. PTT arrangements still continue for the Diploma in Economics; thus an institution may be designated as an affiliate centre but would still have to separately acquire PTT if it wished to offer the Diploma.

34 The audit team was told that since the introduction of the IPF and the IQAF, major activities had been the provisional classification of institutions followed by a programme of visits that started in spring 2010 to conduct institution periodic reviews (see below) with the aim of completing reviews of all the provisionally recognised institutions within three years. The periodic review of SIM is scheduled for the autumn of 2011. Once the initial round of periodic reviews have been completed the time between reviews is expected to vary between three and seven years, the length of that period depending on the outcomes of the previous review and whether the institution is an affiliate or registered centre, with the latter expected to have more frequent reviews.

### **Local accreditation requirements**

35 In Singapore, the private education sector is regulated by the Council for Private Education which administers the mandatory Enhanced Registration Framework (ERF), and the voluntary EduTrust certification scheme. The latter is intended to distinguish higher

quality institutions in Singapore's private education industry, but any institution wishing to offer placements for international students who require a Student's Pass from the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority (ICA) needs to be EduTrust-certified, a status which SIM has acquired. Senior managers at SIM told the audit team that colleagues from the University had been very supportive in providing SIM with necessary information, testifying to the high level of trust that had developed during their long association, and to which senior staff at the University and the lead colleges had also alluded. The audit team noted the University's and lead colleges' long-term development of a mutually supportive relationship with SIM.

### **Effectiveness of procedures for selecting and approving the partner organisation**

36 The 25-year link with SIM long predates the University's current arrangements in the IPF for approving institutions for recognition. The IPF was introduced in June 2009 and the initial periodic reviews started in February 2010. It is therefore too early to judge the effectiveness of these new procedures for selecting and approving partner organisations. The audit team was told by staff at the University and the lead colleges who had played key roles in the development of the IPF and/or its early implementation that the process was being refined in the light of experience and that it was clear that institutions needed more information and support. Senior managers at SIM were less concerned on this score, welcomed the introduction of the IPF and felt that the institution's own procedures and experience of a range of quality assurance processes would allow them to cope with the requirements of periodic review and of annual monitoring. The team took the view that while the IPF and IQAF were still in development, the frameworks were a significant step forward in meeting the recommendation of the 2005 QAA Institutional audit report that the University should 'develop agreements with the third-party institutions listed by the University of London to ensure that the interests of the University of London and its students are adequately protected'.

### **Programme approval**

37 The arrangements for programme approval are set out in International Programmes' key quality assurance document, the Quality Framework. One or more lead colleges and the International Academy work together to develop new programmes which have to be approved through the college's normal quality assurance processes and procedures as well as through the International Academy's committee structure. Parallel approval of a business plan is also required.

38 Detailed programme specifications for the EMFSS and CIS programmes supported by SIM are set out in Programme Specification and Regulations 2010-11 booklets, which are supplied to all students of the programmes and are also downloadable from the International Academy website.

39 The audit team enquired about the comparability of the external courses offered at SIM with their namesakes offered within the colleges. The team was told that Goldsmiths computing courses were the same wherever offered, while for LSE's EMFSS programme, courses which were originally the same had diverged to some extent; this was put down to the slower rate of change that was required in the external programmes because of the longer periods of registration of some external students. In addition, internal students had an element of assessed coursework, while for external students assessment was sometimes wholly based on unseen exams.

40 LSE's External Programme Board had recently requested a review of academic standards and, in particular, the comparability between LSE courses offered externally with those offered internally. The review, coordinated by the Academic Registrar and involving three external examiners, reached the general conclusion, subject to some specific reservations, that the academic standards, assessment practices and marking standards of EMFSS units were broadly comparable with those of LSE's internal courses.

41 The EMFSS and CIS programmes for which SIM offers additional support are well established. In the audit team's view the combination of the lead colleges' quality assurance processes and the International Programmes Quality Framework is a robust and effective approach to programme approval.

## **Written agreements with the partner organisation**

42 With the introduction of the IPF, the University also introduced a new approach to agreements with institutions. The audit team was told that, previously, there had been a range of memoranda of agreement with different institutions, but the intention was that all institutions would in future be subject to a single standard agreement in which the institution agrees to abide by the University's terms and conditions. The comprehensive agreement includes, among other things, an explanation of the process, benefits and obligations of becoming a recognised centre and a disclaimer and indemnity section in which the institution acknowledges that it is 'responsible for the standards and quality of the tuition and support and other services which it provides to its students'. A Code for advertising and promotional materials is included as an appendix to the agreement.

43 The agreement includes a statement that all centres must 'Clearly indicate that the centre has sole responsibility for the quality of tuition and support which it provides. A centre shall not describe or claim that the University of London External System or a constituent college of the University of London guarantees the quality of the teaching, services or financial stability of the centre.' The audit team contrasted that statement with an FAQs section on the International Programmes website about institutions which in answer to the questions 'Is [the institution] institution a recognised provider by the University of London International Programmes?' says 'We officially recognise institutions that offer study support to students of the University of London International Programmes within our quality assurance framework, so you can rely on the standards of the teaching, support and administration that you will receive.' The team agreed that this statement implies that the University is accepting some level of responsibility for the quality of the study support available to students at recognised centres. In the team's view this represented ambiguity in the University's position, which could be a source of confusion, and should be clarified.

## **Section 3: Academic standards and the quality of programmes**

### **Day-to-day management**

44 There are three sets of management roles in the University of London associated with SIM: academic and enhancement matters are generally the province of the two lead colleges, the LSE and Goldsmiths College, while International Academy staff are primarily concerned with the administration of the student lifecycle, quality assurance matters and, with staff of the lead colleges, business development.

45 At LSE, the EMFSS Programme Director is in frequent contact with SIM and regularly visits Singapore throughout the year. The Programme Director has particular

responsibility for institutions, such as SIM, which have PTT status and visits them regularly; the reports of those visits, which identify good practice, any concerns and areas where further work is needed, are considered by the EMFSS Programme Board. While the Programme Director is primarily concerned with overarching learning and teaching issues and the relationships with institutions, specific programme liaison is the role of academic coordinators who at certain times in the academic cycle, for example during the admissions period, are in almost daily contact with SIM. At Goldsmiths, there are a Course Director and Deputy Course Director for the CIS programme, who also arrange regular visits to SIM and are supported by an administrator.

46 In the International Academy the Corporate Performance and Quality Directorate (CPQD) includes a programme manager for each academic programme dealing primarily with regulatory and quality issues. The CPQD is also responsible for implementing the new quality processes of the IQAF: annual monitoring and periodic review. The other International Academy team that interacts with institutions is the Global Networks and Communities Directorate (GNCD) which has a business development role.

47 There are strong links established over many years between senior managers at Singapore Institute of Management Pte Ltd and their counterparts at the University and the designated Head of University London Programmes who heads an administrative team of programme executives for day-to-day administration and liaison with the International Academy and the lead colleges. The appointment of Academic Head for University of London International Programmes is considered by SIM to be a critical role. The audit team noted the evidently close working relationships between a range of staff at the University and lead colleges and at SIM.

### **Management of student records and data on progression and achievement**

48 Students are registered with the University, which maintains student records. Because the decisions made by students whether or not to opt for additional support at an institution are outside the University's control, it relies on institutions' own records to find out how many and which students are taking up that support option. SIM supplied that information to the University in the first round of annual monitoring for 2008-09. The report of the University's 2009 Periodic Programme Review of EMFSS noted a concern that the limited functionality of the Management Information System (MIS) then being employed within External and Internal Student Administration prevented sufficient analysis of student progression to support the programme's approach to widening participation. A new MIS has now been introduced and the University expects to improve its ability to monitor student progression as this system beds in and as data from institutions' annual monitoring become more informative and to be able in time to conduct trend analyses. However, a change in failure rates will be monitored and investigated; programmes set pass thresholds and the lead colleges will investigate if these are not met. Staff at SIM involved in exchanging data with the University felt that it was too early to judge whether the University's new MIS would further facilitate data sharing. The audit team encourages the University to use the opportunity provided by the embedding of the new MIS to increase the scope of student progress monitoring and analysis.

### **Student support arrangements**

49 All students, including those who elect to remain as independent learners receive support from the lead colleges through their course materials and associated resources, which may include the Student Handbook, the Strategies for success study skills handbook, independent reading and, increasingly, the resources provided through the student portal, The portal gives access to a range of online resources, including the virtual learning

environment (VLE), the Online Library and email. There are also other enrichment channels such as the LSE External Study Blog and a range of International Programmes' resources on YouTube.

50 The LSE VLE, which supports the EMFSS programme, contains some course materials and study guides but also has a growing range of other resources such as study skills materials; past examination papers and examiners' commentaries; subject guides; reading lists with direct links to essential reading; video recordings and tutorials with LSE academics; recorded lectures and self-test quizzes. Discussion forums are also available.

51 Another optional form of support is the annual study weekend for EMFSS students organised by LSE at its main campus. This event is aimed at helping students with examination preparation and technique and in 2010 attracted nearly 300 participants.

52 Students who opt to register with SIM for support receive an additional programme of face-to-face teaching also intended to help them be better prepared for the University's examinations. The type of support package will vary from one institution to another, but at SIM may include lectures or tutorials organised around topics in the lead college's study guides, formative in-class tests and assignments, revision workshops and preliminary examinations plus access to library and IT resources. SIM aims to provide what it describes as a holistic and dynamic educational experience which, in addition to academic support, includes a wide range of services, activities and opportunities aimed at personal, professional and career development. Students at SIM attested to the importance of the total support package and student experience when deciding to register with SIM, a decision often based on word-of-mouth recommendation from other students and/or the reputation of SIM as a long-established and well-known institution.

53 The colleges provide course and other resource materials to support institutions in designing their support programmes but do not specify what that programme should be. LSE is, however, more prescriptive in relation to PTT status to support the Diploma in Economics where there are guidelines on such matters as the minimum amount of teaching time per unit of study and attendance requirements for students. SIM associate lecturers whom the audit team met reported on the usefulness and quality of the colleges' resource materials.

## **Student representation and feedback**

54 The Briefing Paper makes it clear that in Singapore 'the culture of representation is significantly different from within the UK'. There is no direct equivalent at SIM to a Staff Student Liaison Committee. There is, however, a University of London Student Representative Council (SIM-UOL SRC) whose function is primarily social in promoting what it describes as a 'vibrant and holistic campus experience'. Students whom the audit team met at SIM felt that there would be no difficulty for them in raising any issues that concerned them, citing SIM's Student Helpdesk as their first point of contact and one with a track record of producing rapid and effective responses. The University of London Students' Union has been proactive recently in attempting to build stronger links with International Programmes and to ensure that the external student voice is heard. As part of this process the Student President of the Students' Union visited Singapore to participate in a graduation ceremony and to meet graduates, alumni and representatives of the SIM-UOL SRC.

55 The audit team heard that feedback from students is obtained through many different routes, both formal and informal. Informal approaches include liaison between the programme directors and academic coordinators at International Programmes and SIM, visits by academics to SIM, monitoring the information on social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook, drawing together any comments, feedback from the external study

weekend at LSE, and a VLE discussion forum. Additionally, programme directors regularly meet students and correspond with them through email and on the VLE.

56 A formal mechanism is the online external undergraduate student experience survey which includes questions on students' experience of support from institutions. The audit team heard that there was a particularly high response rate from Singapore-based students, who comprised 56 per cent of the total respondents. The various strands of student feedback are brought together and considered through the college-based process of Annual Programme and Planning Review (APPR) with the reports also being considered by the Quality Assurance and Student Lifecycle Sub-Committee. The team heard that an example of student views resulting in a change of practice was requests for enhanced feedback on examinations leading to the production of examiners' commentaries which give generic advice on answering exam questions.

57 SIM seeks its own evaluations by students of various aspects of the course and its support package, including the associate lecturers and SIM services, using both structured surveys and the student portal through which students may provide feedback at any time. Students seemed in no doubt that there were multiple channels available to them to express their views.

58 The University recognises that some of its International Programmes students may associate more closely with the local institution where they study, and is taking steps to increase students' sense of belonging to the University: one example of this is issuing each student with their own University of London email account. There is also a growing focus on alumni, with over 18,000 graduates registered with the Alumni Association. In general, students whom the audit team met felt that they were associated with both SIM and the University, and did not seem to think that their student identity was an issue.

### **Effectiveness of day-to-day management**

59 The University has well-established and effective arrangements for day-to-day management of its relationship with SIM both through its clear lines of International Academy administrative liaison and through the academic links established by the lead colleges. The University had been limited by its previous MIS in its ability to analyse fully the progression of its students at different institutions, but the installation of a new MIS and the collection of student data through the new annual monitoring process provide the opportunity for more effective analysis and resultant action. There are cultural factors which limit the effectiveness of UK models for student representation in Singapore, but the multiple informal and formal channels for student feedback which both the University and SIM uses help to ensure that the student voice is being heard and acted upon.

### **Arrangements for monitoring and review**

60 There are two distinct sets of monitoring and review processes operating in University of London International Programmes:

- those that apply to the academic programmes and include Annual Programme and Planning Review, Programme Periodic Review and subject reviews (where these exist). Responsibility for these is set out in the quality schedule of the contract.
- those that are part of the IQAF apply to the independent institutions and are administered by the International Academy.

61 The former are considered by QASL, the latter by ISC, and the two sets are brought together at the International Academy Academic Committee (IAAC).

62 In addition and complementary to the above, occasional thematic reviews provide a horizontal view of a particular theme across the range of International Programmes; for example a review of external examining which is discussed below.

### **Annual review of programmes**

63 Each international academic programme is subject to a process of Annual Programme and Planning Review (APPR) and leading to an Annual Programme Report which is considered by the QASL sub-committee. The report is in two sections: Section A deals with quality and standards, includes the external examiners' reports and responses to them, and is publicly available; Section B deals with business and operational matters, marketing and the strategic direction of the programme and is available on request. The Section A reports of the EMFSS and CIS programmes that the audit team saw were commendably comprehensive and evaluative with effective oversight maintained by QASL. Programme teams also annually review and, if necessary, revise programme specifications: the versions for the current and previous four academic years are published on the International Programmes website.

### **Annual monitoring in the IQAF**

64 According to the information booklet on the IQAF aimed at candidate institutions and recognised centres, 'the aim of the IAM is to monitor ongoing progress by the recognised centre through consideration of a completed report form, which will capture information with a particular focus on student performance'. The booklet goes on to say that 'the monitoring exercise will consider qualitative information pertaining to the recognised centre's organisation and administration, and the student experience, including changes to resources and facilities'. The longer term aim is that successive rounds of annual monitoring will feed into the periodic review process.

65 In the first round of annual monitoring, institutions were asked to supply information on the results of those students that were registered with them in sufficient detail so that it could be correlated with and verified against the University's own records. This would provide initial data for an ongoing analysis of student performance at recognised centres, which was seen as an essential benchmark for supporting students. Institutions were also requested to supply information about academic and administrative staffing provision.

66 The initial contribution to annual monitoring by SIM that was available to the audit team consisted of a summary report of institution registration statistics and a large collection of data sheets relating to individual students.

### **Effectiveness of annual monitoring procedures**

67 From its meeting with senior staff and from additional documentation on annual monitoring made available to it, the audit team was able to ascertain that the first round of institutional annual monitoring had provided the University with some useful information, including that the majority of students attending recognised centres had performed at or above the performance thresholds stipulated by Goldsmiths and the LSE. While recognising that SIM and the lead colleges together review the past year's results, there were several areas in which the process needed further development. These included the lack of responses from some institutions and some discrepancies between figures submitted by institutions and those drawn from the University's own database. University and lead college staff whom the team met emphasised the need to balance the University's and lead colleges'

needs with what can reasonably be expected of institutions and to avoid imposing oppressive requirements.

68 The Corporate Performance and Quality Directorate has recognised the imperfections in the process and the need to get institutions to engage more fully with students' results, and intends to refine the process for the second round. Those institutions that failed to respond at all to the annual monitoring request will be required to do so within a given time in line with the written agreement. The audit team agreed with the University's assessment that the process of annual monitoring needed further development. In particular, the team felt that a more analytical approach would be needed if the process was to fulfil the aspirations of the IQAF for qualitative information pertaining to the student experience and to provide a useful input to the institution review cycle, where it should be both feeding into periodic review and a means of monitoring review outcomes. The team encourages the University to continue to develop the annual monitoring process for institutions so that it will more fully meet the expectations of the IQAF and provide a stronger foundation for periodic review of institutions.

69 SIM staff who had been involved in coordinating SIM's response to the first round of annual monitoring expected it to be an evolving process and were confident that they would be able to meet the University's requirements. They believed that their own systems, experience of internal quality assurance and commitment to continual improvement would facilitate the process.

### **Programme periodic review**

70 Academic programmes offered by International Programmes are subject to periodic review, either through a college-based process, as will be the case for Goldsmiths CIS programme in the 2010-11 academic year, or through a CPQ centrally administered review, as was carried out for LSE's EMFSS programme in May 2009.

71 To ensure a degree of parity between the college-led and CPQ-led periodic review processes, and that the International Academy's requirements and objectives are met, the committees have agreed a set of key outcomes that all such processes must achieve.

72 The EMFSS review was conducted by a panel that included three members external to the University of London, advising from respectively the perspectives of the academic subject; a professional, statutory and regulatory body; and distance education. In a comprehensive and largely positive report which commended the team for 'maintaining appropriate academic standards and quality in terms of assessment processes and procedures, the curriculum and content, and course materials', the review panel also made a number of recommendations, one of which related to the *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) (see paragraph 74).

73 The audit team took the view that the University's arrangements for periodic review of its international programme, while varying in their locus - college-based or CPQ-based - were designed to be equivalent in outcomes and from the example of the EMFSS review were both comprehensive and robust.

### **Alignment of EMFSS Diplomas with the FHEQ**

74 The EMFSS review panel had noted that the EMFSS Diplomas consist of the equivalent of one year's study at FHEQ level 4 and should therefore be classified within the FHEQ as Certificates of Higher Education. The EMFSS external team responded that 'it did not share the view that current title of the undergraduate Diploma programmes may lead to

confusion'. The EMFSS external team also averred that the diplomas had been established for many years and were understood in the markets where they operated; the continued use of the title 'diploma' was endorsed by the LSE's External Programme Board.

75 The audit team asked senior staff at SIM about the status of the term 'Certificate' in Singapore and were informed that it would not be considered as an appropriate outcome for those students who were currently studying the Diploma in Economics. Taking these views into account and considering the long history and important role of the Diploma in Economics in widening participation in higher education in Singapore and other overseas countries, and the rigorous standards required of institutions supporting it through the PTT system, the team recognised that a forced change in designation of the award could have a deleterious effect on recruitment. However, the team noted that by not giving the programme the appropriate classification for its FHEQ level, the University was not fully aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*. The team recommends that the University keeps the matter under review, to ensure that the distinction between the level of study of the Diploma in Economics and a Diploma of Higher Education is clearly and prominently explained. It further recommends that the University reconsiders the nomenclature as it develops a credit framework for International Programmes.

### **Institution periodic review**

76 The University's handbook, Institution Periodic Review, describes the process as one that 'will not only assure us that the institution in question has been given the appropriate status at all times by the University, but that the institution has also established a two-way process with the London based activities in delivering our study programmes'. The handbook goes on to say that 'results will further help students to make an informed choice about where they wish to study'.

77 The process of Institution Periodic Review has three elements:

- i production of a self-evaluation document by the institution
- ii visit by a small review panel of staff from London
- iii reporting and feedback from the International Programmes committee structure.

78 The report of the outcomes of the process will confirm the status of the institution in the Institutions Policy Framework and, where necessary, set any conditions that have to be fulfilled to be followed up through annual monitoring.

79 The audit team was told that 17 institutions had been included in the first round of reviews, starting in the spring of 2010, and that the visiting teams had learned a lot from the process, including institutions' need for more information and support while they were preparing for review. Modifications were now planned in the light of this experience. The team also heard that a few institutions had been removed from their provisional recognition status as the result of review, although they could still apply to re-enter the IPF as candidates for recognition.

80 The visit to SIM has been scheduled for the autumn of 2011. Senior staff whom the audit team met felt that they did have enough information from the University and sufficient prior experience to allow them to understand and prepare adequately for the periodic review process. The team advises the University to ensure that institutions that were provisionally allocated a recognition status are given a timely opportunity to demonstrate the appropriateness of that classification.

## **Effectiveness of the periodic review of institutions**

81 The periodic review of independent teaching institutions, many of which previously had no formal relationship with the University, is a considerable change of practice and one which is still at a relatively early stage of development, with many institutions like SIM still to undergo their first periodic review. Once fully developed, the annual monitoring exercise will inform periodic review. While noting the immaturity of the process, the audit team took the view that the University had taken a commendably major step in designing an institutional recognition process that had periodic review as a central feature and that was sufficiently robust to effect changes in the provisional recognition statuses to which some institutions had been assigned. The team wished to encourage the University to continue to develop the process drawing on its experience of the early rounds of review.

## **Staffing and staff development**

### **Staff appointments at SIM**

82 Academic programmes are designed and produced by staff of the lead colleges, who receive their staff development in-house. The role of SIM teaching staff is to facilitate the learning of students and to prepare them for examination. Staff who support the EMFSS and CIS programmes are appointed by SIM following a rigorous selection procedure. The CVs of applicants whom SIM wishes to appoint for the Diploma in Economics and the CIS programmes are sent to the University for endorsement. Many SIM staff are practitioners in their own fields who hold part-time teaching contracts, a deliberate policy to ensure workplace relevance. SIM has its own developmental framework for teaching staff. New appointees to UoL programmes are prepared for their role at SIM by a programme of orientation on the University's programme and since 2010 staff may also be enrolled on a joint teaching certificate programme with Singapore's National Institute of Education. SIM also operates a mentoring system which includes classroom observation and from 2011 has introduced a Teaching Excellence award scheme. Additional staff development opportunities are provided by the University, both by the regular visits to SIM by academics from London and by other resources, such as the commendably comprehensive and supportive Lecturers' Handbook produced by the LSE.

### **Effectiveness of procedures for staffing and staff development**

83 The University is aware of the stringent requirements for teaching staff appointments now set for Singapore private education providers by the CPE and is informed by SIM about the appointment of staff who support its programmes through SIM's provision of CVs. The University provides a range of resources to support development of staff of institutions that are supporting its programmes. SIM has its own development framework which utilises the University's resources, with academic staff particularly appreciating the course materials, the Lecturers' Handbook, Strategies for success, and access to the VLE. In terms of face-to-face contact, lecturers found the yearly revision workshops delivered by staff from London very helpful. The audit team took the view that the University had appropriate information about teaching staff at SIM and provided a range of useful and well-used resources for staff development.

## **Student admissions**

84 Course-specific entrance requirements, which include English language proficiency, are clearly set out in the information available to applicants. They are based on UK GCSE/GCE O levels and A levels but many other qualifications are accepted; an annually updated list of these is available on the International Programmes website. A Special

Admissions Panel considers the applications of those who do not automatically meet academic qualification requirements. Decisions on exemptions from some units in the EMFSS programme are made by academics at LSE. Students who may not have the qualifications required to enter the EMFSS degree programme can enrol on the Diploma in Economics, from which they can proceed to register for the degree if they are successful.

85 The International Academy deals with over 16,000 applications a year, of which about 10,000 are processed directly in London. The remainder are dealt with by two external agencies, with sample checks conducted by admissions staff in London who also deal with any problematic applications. One of these agencies is the Regional Language Centre (RELC) in Singapore, which also acts as an examination centre. Major factors which increase the complexity of the admissions process are the wide range of qualifications which applicants present, applications for accreditation of prior learning and the need to verify documentation.

86 SIM's role in admissions is to collect completed University applications from those of its students who were felt capable of studying on either the EMFSS or CIS programmes and send them in bulk to London. However, as part of its approach to reducing waiting times for applicants the University has conducted a pilot project at SIM to see if selected affiliate centres could play a wider role in the admissions process. During 2010, staff from the International Academy Admissions Office spent two weeks at SIM processing applications and verifying documentation in an attempt to speed up the process for applicants and to test the feasibility of the verification process being conducted at SIM and other affiliate centres. The audit team was told that the pilot remained to be fully evaluated but the initial results had been very promising. The team also heard that the implementation of the University's new MIS would allow students to apply online, part of a business transformation that would give students and potential students increasing ownership of the key business transactions that they have with the University. Administrative staff at SIM told the team that the admissions pilot had been a success from their viewpoint, although any repeat of it would be better placed later in the academic year, and that they could now act as verifiers for certificates presented by applicants. SIM students that the team met had found no difficulty with the application process.

### **Effectiveness of the applications and admissions process**

87 The University provides clear information and guidance to potential students on entrance requirements and the admissions process. The audit team noted the University's proactive but measured approach to enhancing its admissions service by trying to reduce turnaround times for applicants, devolving some document verification duties to SIM and developing online application procedures.

### **Assessment requirements**

88 The primary means of assessment on the University's international programmes is the unseen examination, as it has been throughout the history of the University's external degrees. In the programmes supported by SIM, assessment of most of the degree courses in the EMFSS programme is by examination only, although a few also have coursework. For CIS, assessment is by unseen examinations but also by coursework and, at level 6, project reports. In general, lead colleges do not provide student-specific formative feedback on coursework, but CIS lecturers do provide feedback on some assessments while EMFSS is introducing more self-assessment activities and examiners' commentaries do provide generic feedback on the previous year's exam performance. The assessment process is clearly explained in the programme-specific student handbooks. As part of the SIM support package, students can gauge their progress from class-based tests, formatively assessed

assignments and a form of preliminary examination. The LSE also facilitates revision workshops at SIM.

89 There is a single examination centre in Singapore at RELC, to which students wishing to sit an examination pay a fee. Examinations for the same course are held simultaneously around the world, apart from at some centres which are allowed a slightly earlier start time. The University issues instructions to examination centres about the conduct and security of its examinations but does not have formal contracts with them. It does, however, employ external auditors to audit examination centres across the world on a regular basis and produce an annual report, which is considered within the International Programmes committee structure.

90 All examination scripts are sent to London for marking and moderation. When first markers are PhD students, who are also graduate teaching assistants, they are paired with an experienced second examiner. Chief examiners, who also moderate as second markers, are mainly drawn from full-time staff of the lead college. For courses with more than 300 students, or where the pool of examiners is larger than two, there are standardisation meetings of markers which reflect the rules concerning standardisation.

91 After each year's examinations the Chief Examiners produce examiners' commentaries to help students understand how the syllabus for each unit is examined, the kinds of questions that will be asked and the quality of answers the examiners expect. They also indicate some of the common mistakes students have made in the past and provide information on any significant changes to examination format for the following year.

### **Effectiveness of the assessment process**

92 The University has historically relied on unseen examinations to guarantee that external students are being judged by the same standards as their peers on campus in London. This was still seen as an important principle and senior staff at the University and the lead colleges whom the audit team met see this as an effective means of preventing academic misconduct. This, and the costs and difficulties of providing feedback on coursework, mean that assessment that counts towards the award is summative with little formative function, although in the CIS programme, where coursework is compulsory in all except the mathematics units, Goldsmiths lecturers do provide feedback on assessment, a set of which goes to the local lecturer to use appropriately. Students registered with SIM obtain feedback on their performance throughout the year through locally provided assessment but recognise that this does not count in any way towards the University's assessment score. Some, but not all, students whom the team met commented unfavourably on the weight placed on the final examination and the subsequent lack of feedback on performance and the absence of reward for their work throughout the year, which they believed a greater component of summative continuous assessment would provide. The lead colleges are taking some steps to provide formative feedback, for example, through activities incorporated into course materials, online resources and examiners' commentaries. The audit team would encourage the continuation of this trend wherever possible.

### **External examining**

93 External examiners are nominated by lead colleges according to their policy and procedures and appointed by the University to programmes. No distinction is made between different geographical locations to ensure comparability of standards. There are therefore no external examiners with a specific remit for students in Singapore. Intercollegiate examiners, who are members of the academic staff of a college of the University, are also appointed to

ensure that the standards of external programmes are comparable with those of internal programmes.

94 External examiners' reports are considered by both the lead college, which concentrates on academic issues, and the International Academy, which considers administrative matters. They are not shared directly with the supporting institutions but the reports and responses to them are reproduced in full in the APPR reports which are publicly available on the International Academy website. External examiners are invited to attend the relevant APPR meeting where the report is discussed. Each APPR report is considered in detail by the QASL and reported on at the IAAC.

95 A thematic review of the external examiner process was conducted in December 2009, with a survey of external examiners as one of its sources of evidence. The review panel concluded that 'overall the External Examiner process was fit for purpose and compliant, with effective administrative support and robust systems in place'. The panel made a number of recommendations in relation to external examiners, which included condensing, simplifying and avoiding college and International Academy duplication in the information that they receive, increasing opportunities for their training, support and mentoring, and strengthening compliance with some precepts of the *Code of practice*.

### **Effectiveness of arrangements for external examining**

96 The audit team concluded that the University had a generally robust, reflective and open approach to external examining, which was deliberately organised so as not to distinguish between different cohorts of students to ensure comparability of standards. As the University develops its IQAF and MIS, and therefore its capacity to monitor the performance of students for different locations and modes of support, it may wish to consider whether its external examiners could contribute more significantly to the comparative analysis of student performance.

### **Certificates and transcripts**

97 All diplomas, diploma supplements and transcripts are issued centrally through the University. The degree certificate does not refer to the mode of study. The diploma supplement records the mode of study as 'external study'.

## **Section 4: Information**

### **Student information**

98 The main sources of information for prospective students are the SIM and International Programmes websites, the prospectus and Open Days at SIM.

99 For registered students the University provides a wide range of information sources. These include:

- the programme-specific Student Handbook
- the course materials and subject guide
- the Programme Specification and Regulations 2010-11 booklets for each programme
- examiners' commentaries
- study skills materials such as Strategies for success and the VLE-based course 'Improving your reading and information skills' (IRIS).

100 The variety and quality of these materials were appreciated by both students and staff at SIM.

101 Procedures for student discipline, academic appeals and student complaints are divided between the University and SIM depending on the situation involved. Disciplinary matters relating to SIM are dealt with by SIM's procedures while matters affecting the University's regulations are dealt with in London. Students whom the audit team met were in no doubt that any issues they raised would either be dealt with directly by SIM, most probably by the Student Helpdesk, or would be passed on to the appropriate person at the University.

## **Publicity and marketing**

102 The agreement with candidate institutions and recognised centres has as an appendix a detailed 'code for advertising and promotional materials' which covers all materials produced in print or other media that directly or indirectly relate to the University of London, its colleges and/or programmes and requires candidate institutions and recognised centres 'to advertise services in a responsible and professional manner.' As part of that agreement institutions are required to forward drafts of all materials to the International Academy for comment and written approval prior to publication or use. Among its many provisions the agreement also specifies how the University of London logo can and cannot be used. Staff at SIM were fully conversant with the University's requirements and had sound processes in place to meet them.

## **Section 5: Student progression to the UK**

103 Other than with Goldsmiths, there are no formal arrangements for students registered with International Programmes and studying at SIM to transfer directly to on-campus study in London. Goldsmiths has arrangements for transfer to the College and any student who passes their level and applies by the deadline will be given a place at the next level, provided enough places are available that year. The LSE's Lecturers' Handbook does ask institution lecturers to convey the message that LSE welcomes applications from external students wishing to transfer to the second year of an undergraduate programme at LSE while making it clear that applications must be made via UCAS. The University's Briefing Paper cited examples of students who had been accepted at both undergraduate and master's level into UK higher education institutions and elsewhere.

## **Conclusion**

104 In considering the partnership, the audit team identified the following positive features:

- the development by the University of its relationship with its overseas partners through the Institutions Policy Framework (paragraph 22)
- the commitment and dedication of staff from the LSE, Goldsmiths College and the International Academy to facilitating wider participation and to maintaining and developing overseas partnerships (paragraph 29)
- the University's proactive approach to changes in the structure and governance of the External System and its rebranding as International Programmes (paragraph 30)
- the University's long-term development of a mutually supportive relationship with SIM (paragraph 35)

- the continuing development of online resources for students of the EMFSS programme (paragraphs 38, 41, 50, 63 and 73)
- written resources including Strategies for success and the Lecturer's Handbook (paragraphs 49, 53, 83 and 99)
- the comprehensive coverage of the International Programmes website (paragraphs 63, 84 and 98)

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

- refine the Institutions Policy Framework's criteria for recognition in order to clarify further the distinction between affiliate and registered status (paragraph 36)
- remove any ambiguity in the University's position regarding responsibility for the quality of the study support available to students at recognised centres (paragraph 43)
- use the opportunity provided by the embedding of the new management information system to increase the scope of student progress monitoring and analysis (paragraph 48)
- continue to develop the annual monitoring process for institutions so that it will more fully meet the expectations of the IQAF and provide a stronger foundation for periodic review of institutions (paragraph 68)
- keep under review the alignment of undergraduate diplomas with *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) (paragraph 75)
- ensure that institutions that were provisionally allocated a recognition status are given a timely opportunity to demonstrate the appropriateness of that classification (paragraph 80)
- continue to develop opportunities for formative assessment and feedback to illustrate to students the University's expectations for summative assessment and to provide guidance on their academic progression (paragraph 92).

106 The University of London International Programmes is in many ways a unique system of delivering higher education both overseas and in the UK. It is also a system in change as the University and lead colleges enhance its support for students, both through its development of online resources and through its new recognition framework for the worldwide network of supporting institutions. Because of the International Programmes' commitment to widening participation, and therefore to maintaining fees at affordable levels, the development of this support is viewed as a balance between enhancing students' learning opportunities and controlling the costs and complexity of learning for students and of recognition for institutions.

107 In these circumstances, the audit team noted that some of the terminology used in the Code of Practice has different connotations in International Programmes: for example, the first round of annual monitoring in the IQAF consisted of the institution providing a limited range of quantitative data without any accompanying analysis. The team noted that this was the University's first step in developing a quality assurance framework in which monitoring would feed into a more rigorous periodic review process and be a means of subsequently monitoring review outcomes. In the team's view in order to fully align itself with the *Code of practice*, published by QAA, the University should continue the development of its IQAF and should also review the anomalous positioning of the undergraduate diplomas in relation to the FHEQ.

108 The audit team noted the high quality of the Briefing Paper, the informative range of accompanying documentation, and the helpful set of additional printed and electronic

## Audit of overseas provision: Singapore

material that was made available to it during the visit to the University. The team confirms the University's view of the link, as set out in its Briefing Paper, and the effectiveness of its management of overseas collaborative arrangements in general.

## Appendix A

### **University of London International Programme's response to QAA's report on its collaboration with the Singapore Institute of Management**

The University of London International Programmes welcomes the features of good practice and constructive matters for further consideration identified by the audit team.

Since the production of the Audit Briefing Paper by the University of London International Programmes in the autumn of 2010, the University of London has removed from its academic regulations the clause quoted within the QAA overseas audit report which states: 'Candidates granted degrees shall have attained the same academic standard irrespective of mode or place of study or examination'.

However, the principle that the University of London degree is of the same standard remains through practice and assurance activities which support comparability of standards. These include the use of University of London College-based academics as examiners, external examiners with insight into the performance of college-based students, comparability studies and alignment of syllabus and assessment with internal provision wherever possible.

With regard to the matters for further consideration contained within the Overseas audit report: The ambiguity identified within the QAA overseas audit report regarding responsibility for the quality of study available to students at recognised centres was corrected immediately by updating the website.

The University continues to review the alignment of the undergraduate diplomas with *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). However, it should be noted that the programme specifications already clearly identifies the level as a FHEQ4 qualification. The Singapore Institute of Management supports the continued use of the term 'Diploma' which is well understood in the Singapore market and other jurisdictions. The nomenclature of 'certificate' has a different meaning and is unlikely to be well received in Singapore.

## Appendix B

### Student numbers for 2010-11

Diploma in Economics	962
BSc Accounting and Finance	2,312
BSc Accounting with Law	4
BSc Banking and Finance	2,380
BSc Business	1,553
BSc Computing and Information Systems	230
BSc Economics	91
BSc Economics and Finance	697
BSc Economics and Management	545
BSc Information Systems and Management	150
BSc Management	534
BSc Management with Law	9
BSc Mathematics and Economics	246
LLB	9
Diploma for Graduates in Banking	1
Diploma for Graduates in Economics	7
Diploma for Graduates in Finance	6
Diploma for Graduates in Information Systems	1
Diploma for Graduates in International Development	1
Diploma for Graduates in Management	9

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