

UK – EAST ASIA FORUM
JOINT QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TRANSNATIOAL EDUCATION
22 OCTOBER 2018, KUALA LUMPUR

UK – EAST ASIA

**JOINT QUALITY ASSURANCE IN
TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION**

THE WAY FORWARD

COMMENTS FROM A PANEL OF EXPERTS

**SHARING AND DISCUSSION FROM INDUSTRY
LEADERS**

BACKGROUND

On 22 October 2018, the British Council brought together nearly 40 quality assurance agencies and decision makers from the UK, Hong Kong, Australia, Malaysia, China, the UAE, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore and Indonesia to share and discuss ways forward for joint quality assurance in transnational education (TNE) between the UK and East Asia.

They included the following panel of experts:

- Matt Durnin, British Council Global Head of Research and Consultancy
- Concepcion V. Pijano, Member, EU-Share Expert
- Dato' Dr Rahmah Mohamed, CEO, Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA)
- Dr Adlai Castigador, Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA)
- Dr Edizon Fermin, Miriam College, Philippines
- Jakkrapong Panyapoontragool, Bureau of Higher Education Standards and Quality, Office of the Higher Education Commission, Thailand
- Ruixin Lyu, China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Centre (CDGDC)
- Dr Fabrizio Trifiro, International Manager, Quality Assurance Agency
- Rob Fearnside and Clara Chong, Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ)
- Nitesh Sughani, Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), UAE
- Brandon Lee, SkillsFuture Singapore

The coming together of this group is the first step toward building trust around TNE across the region. Importantly, it also gives impetus for the British Council to establish an East Asia TNE Advisory Group to best-support the UK sector.

FOREWORD

TNE is of growing importance in East Asia – enrolments in the region have tripled since 2007. In a world where intraregional student mobility is growing rapidly it is good news demand for joint degrees here is strong. In this context interagency cooperation is very important to prepare us well for the future in higher education.

From a UK perspective, TNE is growing faster than direct student recruitment to the UK. In Malaysia, the UK is the leader with more than 80 TNE partnerships and 5 UK campuses with various models. A few countries account for the majority of enrolments – Malaysia, China, Hong Kong and Singapore. Others like Thailand, the Philippines and even Myanmar are rapidly increasing their TNE offers.

We know TNE brings benefits – that a strong focus on joint delivery and ownership will lead to quality improvements. There is a direct relationship between TNE and the level of a country's internationalisation where increasing capacity creates opportunities for mobility, exchange and joint degrees. There is also opportunity for expansion and internal review, as well as for growth in curriculum development and partnerships through TNE.

But, what are key challenges of quality assurance for TNE in East Asia? How could country agencies work together? Could there be scope for developing common standards for TNE provision?

These and many other questions were explored in the session and are addressed in this report.

UK TNE LANDSCAPE IN EAST ASIA

Where has collaboration come from?
Where do we *hope* it is going?

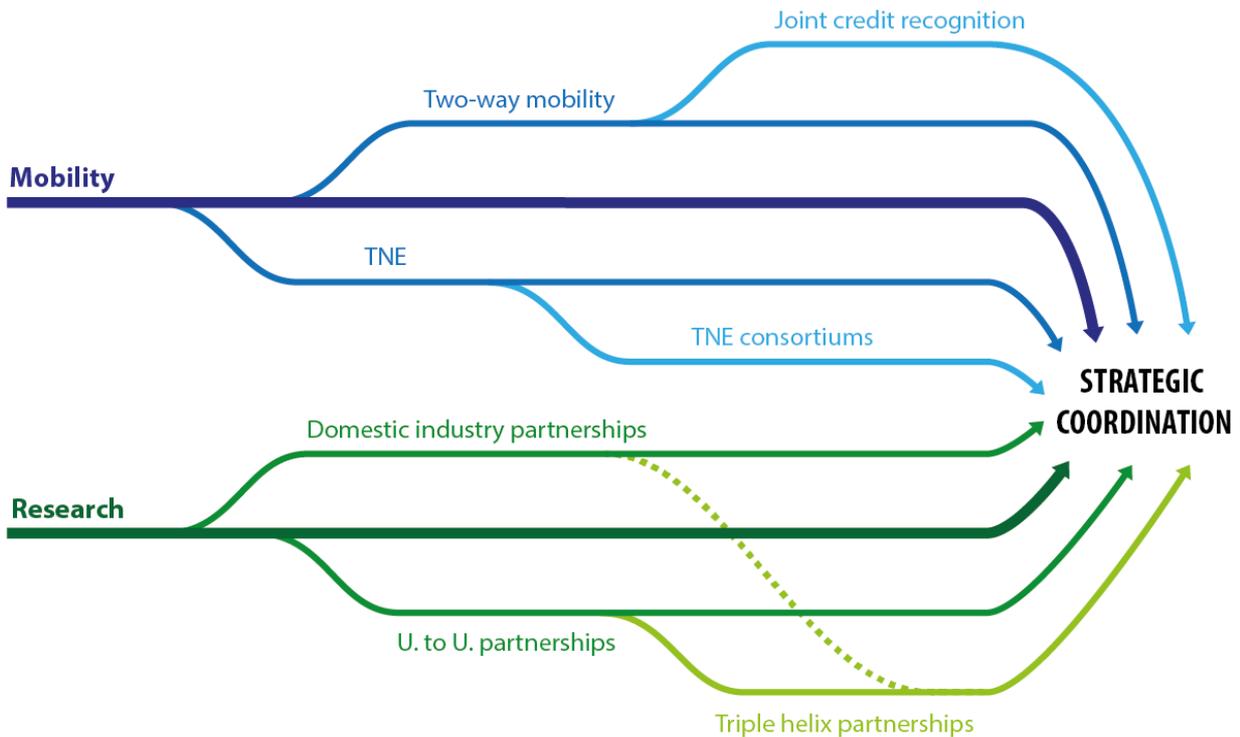
Matt Durnin began the session by setting the scene for TNE in East Asia.

“Transnational education is moving east. The next phase will see regions that were very outward focused starting to look inward. We’ll see much more integration – not just political, but natural economic integration which will see the rising and best universities in East Asia being global institutions,” he said.

Research is also shifting east. Research paper distribution in 1996 saw a clear US/EU dominance, but from 2015 onwards we see China and India coming onto the map.

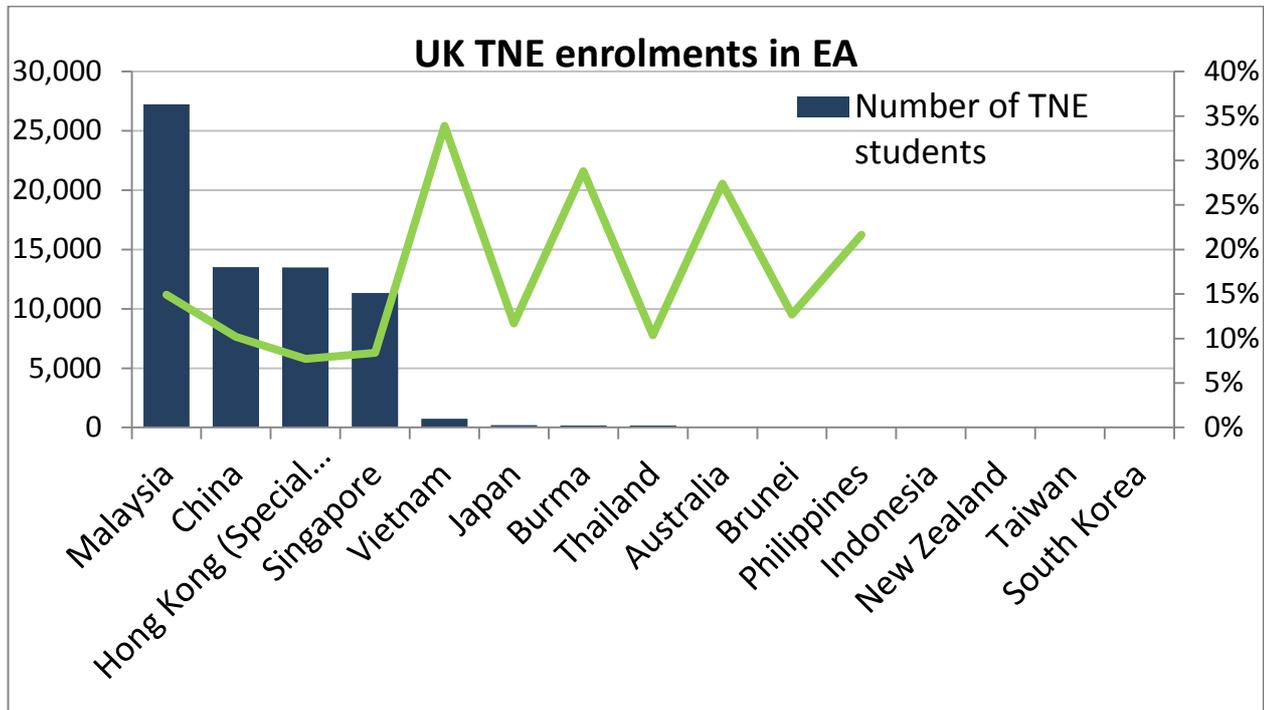
But what will the operating model be to address this? The traditional one has been an east-west transfer of education mobility. Will that begin to erode? Matt says yes, it will.

He proposed the below:



UK TNE activity clustered in 4 EA markets

Malaysia, China, Hong King and Singapore hold the lion’s share of UK TNE activity in the region.



But while 2010 – 2013 saw rapid growth in approvals of programmes, changes in the regulatory environment since then have slowed it. Ministries of Education have become much more discerning in evaluating and the higher cost of delivery has made foreign partners more cautious.

So there is an issue of sustainability – can foreign partners bring in enough revenue to support the maintenance and growth of programmes?

Focus on Thailand

Thailand stands out as a market where there has been a lot of growth. There are currently around 80 TNE programmes in Thailand – doubled in the last 10 years. The major players are China for undergraduate, Japan with postgraduate, the US in third place, then the UK, and Australia trailing.

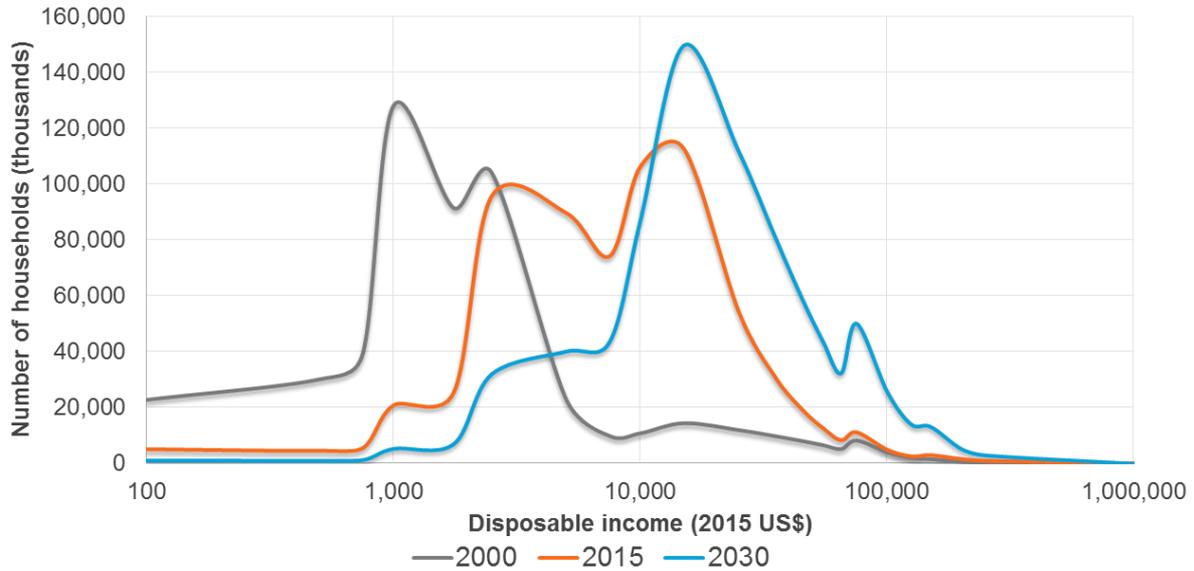
The UK has been revisiting the idea of branch campuses in Thailand. We put out [this report](#) on preferred locations. With a keen focus on development the Thai government could offer exemptions on taxes on research and teaching equipment for example, or exempt stamp duty on land transfers.

“There could also be preferential policies on TNE programmes that do not constitute branch campuses – something UK universities are watching closely,” Matt said.

The new middle class

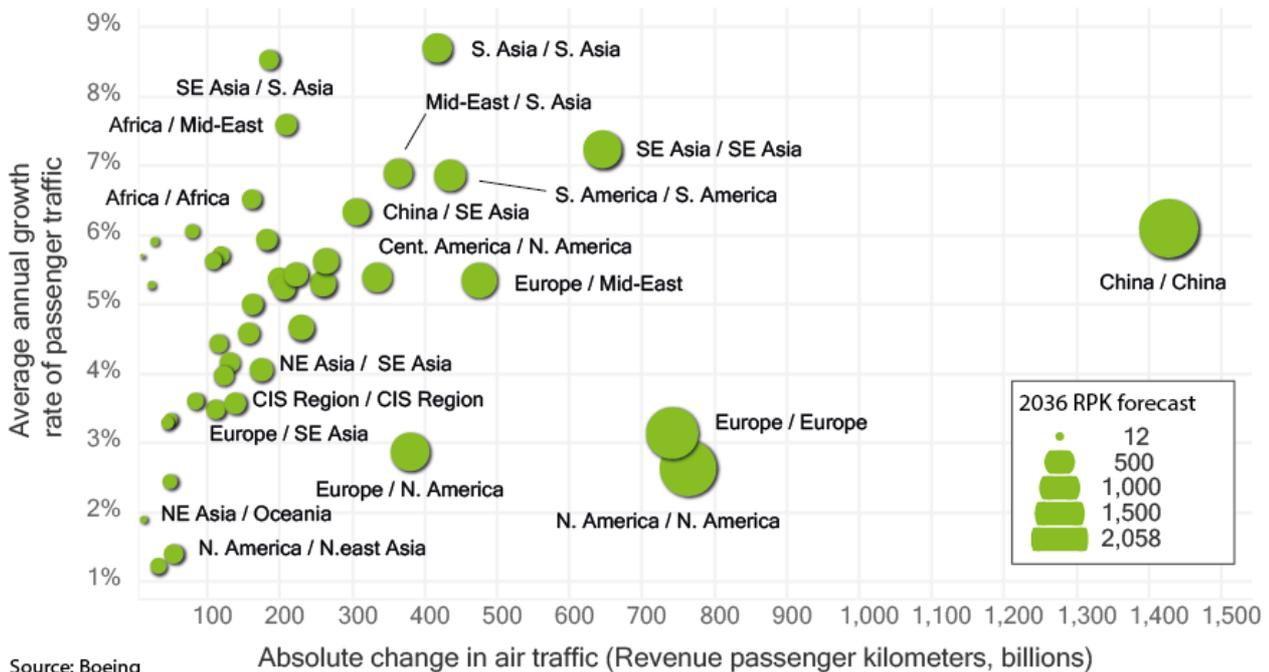
The new middle class in East Asia, which is considered an annual disposable income of more than USD10,000, has risen dramatically in the past 15 years. The next 15 years will show an even more dramatic transition into the middle class. This means considerably more wealth to spend on education.

Income distribution in East Asia



Mobility and interconnectivity

“While the first phase of globalisation was about connecting distant supplier markets to consumer markets, the second phase will focus on building the regional links that were passed over in the first phase. Air traffic forecasts hint as to how this will play out,” Matt explained.



“This is also a predictor of where people go for holiday, business, or study,” he pointed out.

Questions for the future

Matt concluded his session with questions for the future. Do the current frameworks support mutual benefit? What is the depth of partnerships? Is TNE still primarily an avenue to outbound mobility?

PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES IN QUALITY ASSURANCE OF TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION

Building trust

EU Share is a joint initiative between the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Its objective is to support ASEAN in building a stronger, more effective regional higher education system with an Erasmus-like scholarship scheme at its core and with robust regional frameworks for quality assurance and recognition of qualifications, as well as a credit transfer system.

Concepcion V. Pijano told the group:

“We are supporting ASEAN to build a more effective higher education system drawing on European experience. At the centre of it all is the building of trust – not only strengthening domestic arrangements.

“We’re not just driving policy in a single direction, we’re exploring synergies. We’re all on the same page now, headed toward a common higher education space.”

Inspiring quality in Malaysia

Malaysia wants to nurture the talent of the future and is working on an inclusive masterplan.

Dato’ Dr Rahmah Mohamed told the group:

“We are focused on the next generation of students who will be at our doorstep. You have to go with where employability will be and the growth of transnational education will take on this dimension.

“We are looking at knowledge rather than infrastructure.”

The standards now in Malaysia are for mainstream education and the focus is on harmonisation but the future is different – it will be prescribed by the types of students.

“We want quality, flexible learning. Kids may be home-schooled, they may be entrepreneurs – how do you as a quality assurance agency address that? We need a fluid environment,” she added.

From toddlers to adolescence in the Philippines

Accreditation in the Philippines is a private, voluntary initiative. However, the country does want to be a part of what others in the world are doing and its standards are sensitive to global and ASEAN ones.

“We believe that without inputs and processes we will never be able to deliver outcomes,” Dr. Adlai Castigador told the group.

“We are working in close coordination with the British Council in Manila to implement TNE in the Philippines,” added Dr Edizon Fermin.

“Malaysia may be the star neighbor but we are way past infancy. We are a toddler. We’re trying to make meaningful steps to add value and make an impact.”

Three publications have already been done for this purpose – on how to incentivize foreign investment in partnerships, opportunities and challenges, and the internationalisation of education in the Philippines.

There is also collaborative work being done between the Philippines government and the British Council on the joint development of niche programmes in TNE. Areas include meteorology, precision agriculture, innovation and data analytics. Currently, 11 universities are participating in a grant scheme incubated in 2016-17. It began sending students this year, in 2018.

Unfortunately, one recurring issue relative to engagement with UK partners is quality assurance.

“In the Philippines we’re used to doing it at program level, looking at degree standards,” Dr Ferin explains. *“The UK wants institutional quality assurance systems. It has caused a delay but we are making progress.”*

EU Share is prompting the Philippines to create institutional and national quality assurance.

“We would like to connect TNE to special economic zones in the Philippines, in capacity-building industries. Our next goal is to progress from toddlers to adolescence.”

A Thai example

The Thai qualification framework aims to promote a culture of quality each university and so guarantee the graduate standard of each program and level.

“We seek to give autonomy to each program to self-monitor and control the graduate quality that conforms with the learning outcomes,” Jakkrapong Panyapoontragool told the group. *“We also want to deregulate for better process of strengthening and competent educational management,”* he added.

In Thailand, higher education institutions must conduct self-assessments in accordance with indicators and internal quality assurance criteria every year at the program, faculty and institution levels.

There is an online system that acts as the central database for quality assurance. Universities must report the results of their internal assessment on it, made available to the public.

An inspection of educational quality is also done at least once every three years. The results are reported to the institutions, as well as the public once more.

China’s ‘triple helix’

Universities are central to the Chinese government’s innovation policies and it has injected huge resources into improving the quality of teaching and research, and raising the number of Chinese research institutions in the global top 100. With this in mind, the Chinese government is actively encouraging its universities to collaborate with leading institutions worldwide. As a result, economic and technological progress is being pursued through a ‘triple helix’ of collaboration between government, industry, and universities.

“Our aim with the Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS) is to introduce high-level education resources into China and promote the development of Chinese education institutions,” Ruixin Lyu told the group.

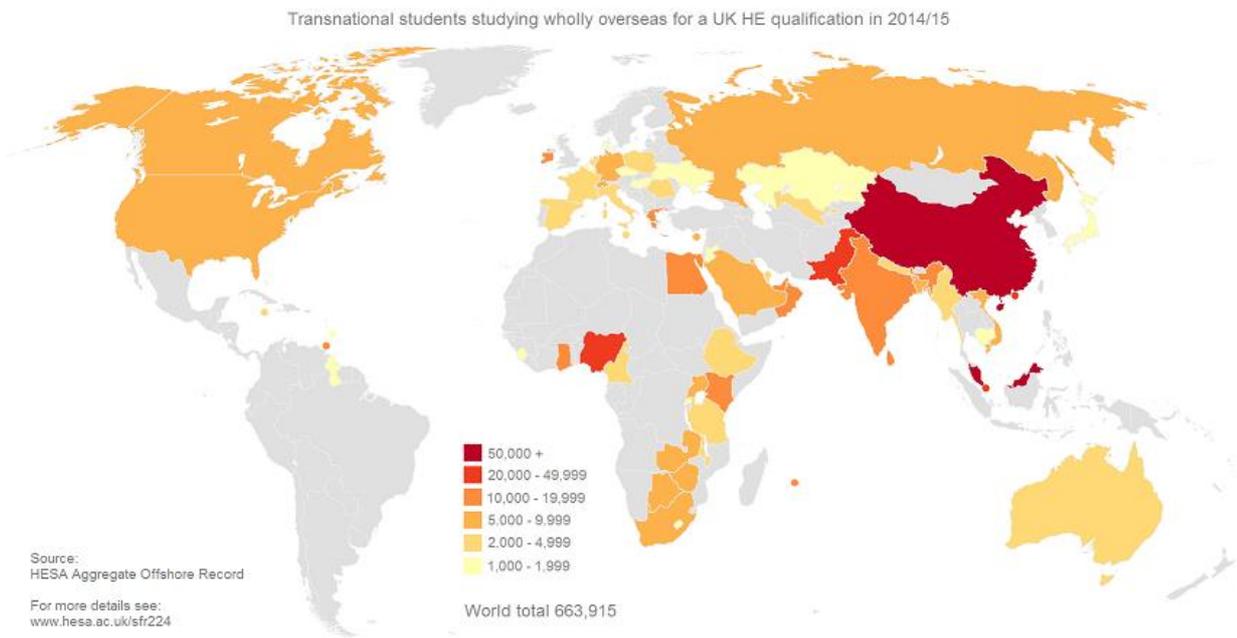
The CFCRS evaluates the management standard and quality of institutions and programmes at bachelor degree level and above. It is organised by the Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges within the Chinese Ministry of Education, and implemented by the China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Centre (CDGDC). It started a pilot evaluation in 2009, and was formalised in 2013. To date, CDGDC has completed the evaluation on 726 CFCRS programmes and institutions, involving about 260 Chinese schools and more than 350 foreign schools from over 20 countries and regions.

OVERVIEW OF UK QUALITY ASSURANCE

Dr Fabrizio Trifiro opened this section by commenting *“We can’t underestimate the importance of TNE. Quality assurance of TNE is not easy – there are numerous challenges. We must ensure that our approach continues to be valued and trusted internationally.”*

The Quality Assurance Agency For Higher Education (QAA) in the UK’s mission is to to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education wherever it is delivered. It develops reference points setting out expectations for UK higher education providers (*The UK Quality Code for Higher Education*). As well as undertakes institutional peer-reviews to check higher education providers meet those expectations.

Over 80% of UK universities are involved in some form of TNE, delivered all over the world:



Here is a snapshot of UK TNE in 2016-17:

709,323 TNE students:

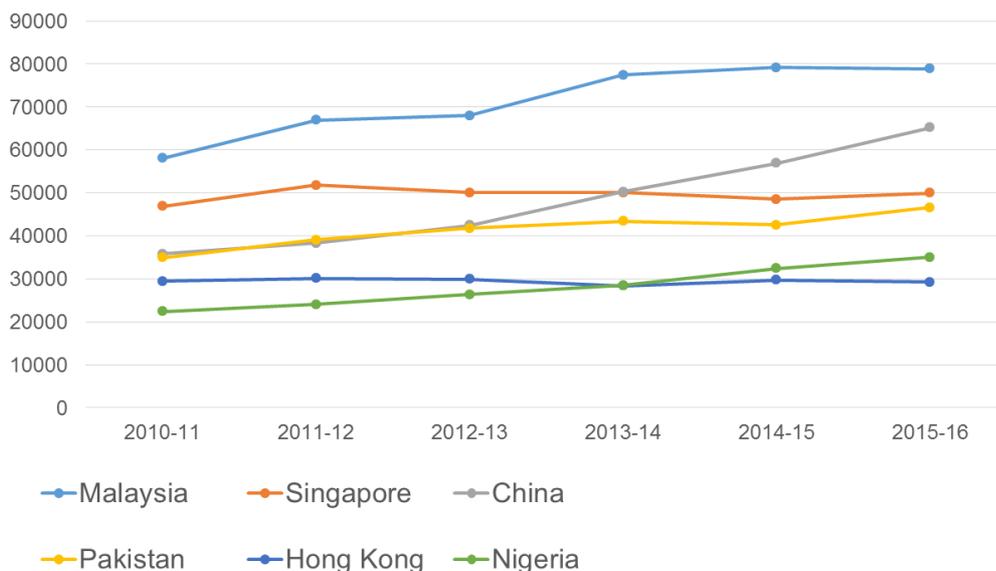
77,388 studying within the European Union (EU)

631,935 outside the EU

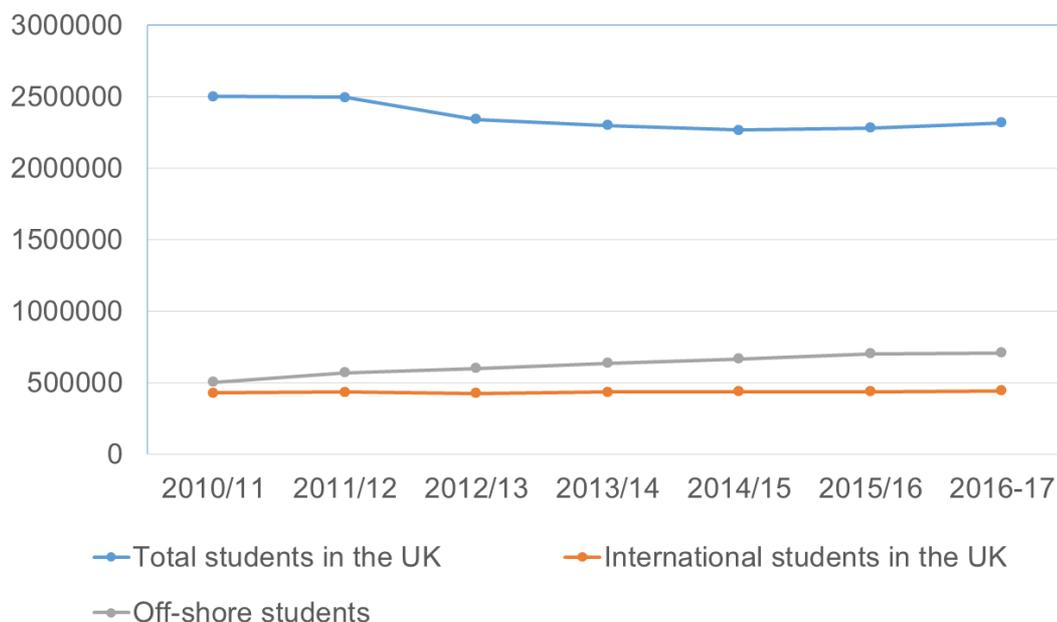
| Top 10 countries for UK TNE (2016-17 student numbers) | |
|---|--------------------|
| i) | Malaysia (74,180) |
| ii) | China (70,240) |
| iii) | Singapore (48,290) |
| iv) | Pakistan (43,870) |
| v) | Nigeria (32,925) |
| vi) | Hong Kong (27,390) |
| vii) | Sri Lanka (24,480) |
| viii) | Oman (21,250) |
| ix) | Egypt (21,695) |
| x) | UAE (17,750) |

Source of data: HESA (2016-17)

The top 5 host countries are:



And TNE is the main area of growth:



Rethinking things

TNE Review is carried out on a country-by-country basis. The agency regularly seeks to cooperate with host country agencies to avoid regulatory gaps and overlaps.

QAA is currently consulting with the UK higher education sector to develop proposals for future approaches to TNE review which:

- meets national policy developments (e.g. a metrics driven outcomes focused approach)
- and, continues to be valued and trusted internationally

BEST PRACTICE IN JOINT COLLABORATION AND TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION

Dr Trifiro closed his section by saying “QAAs should share information about their systems and cross-border providers, with a view to facilitating mutual understanding and building mutual trust.”

“They should seek to coordinate and cooperate in their review activity of cross-border higher education, with a view to avoiding regulatory gaps and duplication of efforts, and to lessening the regulatory burdens on providers.”

He then introduced the below best practice examples of joint collaboration in transnational education.

Friends in Hong Kong

Hong Kong started TNE (which they call non-local programmes) in 2009. Now, there are more than 1000 with around 75% from the UK, close to 15% of which are accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ).

The HKCAAVQ is an independent statutory body to promote, enhance and maintain quality of post-secondary, vocational and professional education and training in Hong Kong.

One of the strategies to achieve its strategic plan is to collaborate with partner quality assurance bodies on the conduct of HKCAAVQ accreditation services.

So, HKCAAVQ and QAA did a pilot joint exercise in the first half of 2018.

The key aspects of this joint exercise were:

| | |
|--|--|
| Panel formation | Two QAA reviewers acted as both HKCAAVQ panel members (including acting as Chair) and QAA reviewers. |
| Information submission before the site visit | QAA reviewers used information gathered through HKCAAVQ accreditation exercise to inform the QAA TNE review Additional information had been submitted to QAA exclusively for the QAA TNE Review and Case Study purpose. |
| Collection of evidence | Single site visit to collect data for two quality assurance exercises. |
| Outcomes | Separate reports issued by HKCAAVQ and QAA with reference to the relevant standards and criteria. |

The two agencies found they were same but different:

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Commonalities | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guiding principles 2. Process 3. Quality standards |
| Differences | <p><u>Focus</u> HKCAAVQ accreditation focused on the program level while TNE Review focuses on institutional aspects</p> <p><u>Outcome</u> HKCAAVQ with a definite outcome QAA TNE identifying best practices</p> |

Although a steep learning curve, the benefits were clear with QAA commenting *“Through HKCAAVQ’s peer review panels and the use of the HKQF, QAA can confidently rely on HKCAAVQ’s accreditation decisions for UK TNE provision in Hong Kong.”*

Source: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (2018), Country Report: Hong Kong

“We have to be strategic about who we work with. Meetings like this are vital in building trust. We can’t forget that although we’re communicating with each other, we need to communicate with operators, too,” said Rob Fearnside.

“Don’t look for differences – they can be worked out. Look for commonalities,” Clara Chong added.

Informal networks in Dubai

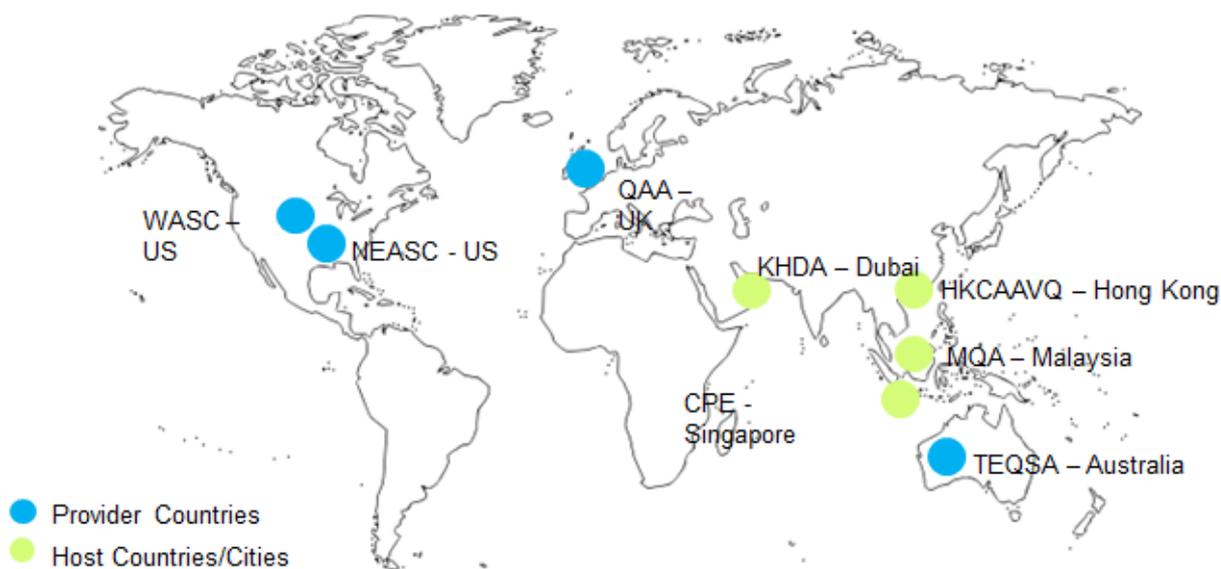
Nitesh Sughani is the Director of University Quality Assurance for the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) in Dubai. Their focus is on positivity, well-being, and success to make progress in life. The authority’s vision is for life-long learning.

Why is TNE important to them? There are 33 branch campuses in Dubai – located in “free zones” dedicated to education.

“We have had a quality assurance unit for 10 years now. Basically, we accept international accreditations already gained. We don’t re-accredit,” explained Nitesh.

So partnerships are extremely important to them.

They set up an informal network called the *Quality Beyond Boundaries Group* in 2014. Its core members are main branch campus home-countries:



The group’s principles are to connect, communicate and collaborate.

“It took a few years to build trust but now we are a strong resource together,” concluded Nitesh.

|  Connect |  Communicate |  Collaborate |
|---|---|--|
| ... to develop a zone of mutual understanding and trust among QBBG members. | ... to stakeholders about quality assurance of QBBG and implications of QBBG. | ... on the quality assurance processes. |
| Expected outcomes would be: | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased understanding and trust • Sharing information • Better understanding of quality issues • Up-to-date data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mutual understanding, trust and collaboration • Student mobility and the passporting of degrees • Contribution to the economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased effectiveness • Lessening the regulatory burden • Removal of regulatory gaps |

Student engagement

Dubai and the KHDA also place considerable importance on the student experience and have a number of measures in place to gauge this.

They learned:

- Strong affiliation with UK higher education brand
- Overall levels of satisfaction with quality of academic programmes, staff, resources, and support
- Students value an international award that increases mobility
- Students want to increase employability chances by taking internships and work placements while studying

SkillsFuture Singapore

TNE is delivered primarily through local providers in Singapore, registered as private education institutions (PEIs). Almost 60% of these are from the UK. The majority of TNE students are in business and administration type courses with almost 70% of them local.

SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) was established in 2016 as a statutory board under the Ministry of Education in Singapore to drive and coordinate the implementation of a national SkillsFuture movement.

It aims to:

- Promote a culture of lifelong learning through pursuit of skills mastery
- Strengthen the ecosystem of quality education and training in Singapore

“Providers need to be innovative in how they give experience to their students – will it produce the same outcomes as at the home campus?” Brandon Lee said.

“Resources can constrain the types of delivery so from a regulator’s point of view it’s really important we work together. This way issues that occur on the ground can be communicated back so improvements can be made,” he added.

Like KHDA, SSG are also invested in the experience of their TNE students and coordinate regular feedback sessions to monitor their satisfaction.

'QUALITY ASSURANCE' IN THE EYES OF TNE STUDENTS

This session provided a platform for young people to express their thoughts on quality assurance in transnational education. They discussed challenges and ways to ensure their voices are heard in future programming decision shaping TNE policies.

Moderator:

Jazreel Goh is the Director Education and Sports for the British Council in China. She has worked in various organisations in Malaysia, Australia, and Hong Kong in international education consultancy and executive search, as well as in intellectual property licensing.

Student and graduate speakers:

Eizaz Azhar is the General Manager of Special Projects for the Halal Industry Development Corporation. He studied business administration at the Asia School of Business. Eizaz didn't complete high school and has run businesses for 13 years. He believes in character and passion.

Rhupashree Magandiran read law at University of London (External Programme), from which she graduated with a Second Class Honours (Upper Division) before completing her Certificate in Legal Practice. She has won multiple awards in law as well as public speaking.

Ajeetpall Singh Amrick Singh is a second-year student at the University of Nottingham Malaysia in education. He participates actively in a wide range of pursuits both and outside of the university from being on the organising committee for a major national conference to marketing for a dance club.

Puteri Elissa Denney is in her final year at the University of Nottingham Malaysia in international communications, film and television. She has also studied at the university's campuses in the UK and China. Elissa is involved in a number of societies and performances within the university.

Abdul Mubin Mohd Hanafiah is in his third year at Heriot-Watt University Malaysia in civil engineering. He is president of the Heriot-Watt University Malaysia Students Association (HWUMSA). He is also an advocate for the non-profit organisation "Teach for Malaysia". Mubin was a top 10 contestant in the annual Maybank Go Ahead Challenge, a global business competition that had over 10,000 applicants.

Here is a snapshot of the discussion.

A premium in humanity

Q: When you were choosing TNE what did you consider?

A: Eizaz – "I left school at 14 but have run businesses for 13 years. I took all that experience and applied at the Asia School of Business because they were looking for a non-conventional candidate. They wanted to know what have you DONE, what impact have you made? They said I was worthy of being among them. The university chose me. IQ and EQ important, I add AQ – how adaptable are you? The school took that into consideration."

A: Mubin – "For me it was what differentiates the university. Heriot-Watt had a global outlook. There was opportunity to go abroad. We are more connected than ever today and chances are you will work with people from outside your home-country. I wanted a quality education and a chance to develop into a mature person adaptable to global culture."

A: Rhupa – "I always wanted to do law. The two leading colleges in Kuala Lumpur are Advance Tertiary College (ATC) or Brickfields Asia College (BAC). I chose BAC with its connection to the University of

London. The fact I could do a London degree in KL really attracted me.”

A: Elissa – “It was family. My older and younger brothers as well as cousins studied at the University of Nottingham. I was also swayed by its rankings.”

A: Ajeet – “I looked at rankings too, but also opportunities. I wanted to be able to experience things on a larger scale. Being research-driven was important, and having a lot of projects.”

Q: Were your expectations met?

Q: Were you expecting your lecturers to be from the UK or US?

A: Majority, yes.

A: Eizaz – “Half of them were from the US, some from Brazil, some Italy, some flown in.”

A: Rhupa – “I didn’t expect it. They didn’t promise but we did have visiting lecturers and that was a pleasant surprise.”

Were you looking for a similar experience to the UK or US? What were your expectations?

A: Mubin – “What surprised me most about TNE was the student representation in the university. Not only here in Malaysia but at the campuses back in the UK as well. I sat in upper level university senate meetings to drive a better student experience in Malaysia. It was amazing. Heriot-Watt gave such a value to student voice – it blew me away. I thought I’d just ‘get my degree’ but there was so much more.”

A: Ajeet – “If you look and try there are opportunities for you. Look at us here at this forum today. The exposure you get for interaction is great.”

Q: Learning resources like library, tools etc. What is your experience at your university?

A: Elissa – “Nottingham, excellent.”

A: Mubin – “You expect books at a library but Heriot-Watt has everything online and it’s huge. You don’t have to buy textbooks and you can access pretty much anything as a student.”

A: Eizaz – “I agree. Also in the form of resources that came from our faculty like research papers, lecturers’ knowledge etc. A very good value-add to understand the subject matter.”

Q: There’s a lot of development in TNE in East Asia – also has a hub to recruit students from neighbouring countries. What advice would you give them on how to attract students like you?

A: Eizaz – “Their customer-base is a broad and diverse audience. My class also had Americans, Brazilians and Danes. There can be a mismatch of expectations – really tricky. You have to take that into consideration.”

A: Mubin – “Speaking from president of a student association perspective, local contextualisation is important. A UK education is seen as a quality education but it needs to tie it back to the local setting. It also needs to be flexible and easy for students to move between campuses.”

A: Rhupa – “Law is different. I sometimes felt local lecturers did not understand as well as those from overseas. The quality of lecturers is really important.”

A: Elissa – “Opportunity for exchange and being able to go to partner universities really helps to tie together education and adaptability.”

A: Ajeet – “A lot of students find the MPU subjects* unnecessary (others concur). Most of us do it for the sake of getting it over and done with because it’s a requirement. I think it would ease universities to have

some sort of international or standard systems so it's not too complicated and standard throughout."

A: Mubin – "The quality of teaching for the MPU subjects* wasn't good. At Heriot-Watt we are trying to blend them into a program called Empower to make it at least more meaningful. So you'd graduate with a transcript of things you did. Like activities, membership of clubs etc."

*Mata Pelajaran Pengajian Umum (MPU, English: General Education Subjects which are a pre-university qualification of general studies for private universities in Malaysia)

Q: What do you see as quality?

A: Mubin – "It's crucial that you have students in the conversation about student experience. In decision-making, leadership, roll out, everything. Even if you are doing work behind the scenes, the students don't know. Clear communication and representation is key."

A: Ajeet – "An annual forum where the faculty is present among students would be good. This way communication is direct. Sometimes student associations can't convey everything. It would also encourage cross-curricular projects where multiple departments work together."

A: Eizaz – "Quality of character – this person also becomes an ambassador. Not enough focus is given to this because it's so subjective and difficult to judge."

Q: In the future there might be "buffet education" where you learn only what you want to learn. What do you want us to put as a standard for the future around this?

A: Mubin – "What is there beyond the academics? We need to be able to find out what makes people successful. Like grit. If you have grit you will survive. We need to try and create an environment to enhance the soft-skills of the students: grit, global outlook – to create a better global citizen."

A: Eizaz – "I'll add passion. Let's say someone has been studying statistics online for free and acing it – we should let them in. Talent is being developed right under our noses at an astonishing rate that we don't know of. When it knocks on a university's door, they need to be prepared to accept it."

Closing remarks from Jazreel Goh:

"The premium is in humanity – adaptability, global outlook and not being driven by processes and systems but rather what really matters for our younger generations. I am proud of these young Malaysians who will lead this country's future."

DISCUSSION

The session closed with an open discussion amongst all participants moderated by Susan Milner, British Council Director Education for East Asia.

Areas of discussion were:

- What are key challenges of quality assurance process for TNE programmes?
- How could country agencies work together to avoid unnecessary regulatory gaps?
- How can country agencies work together to support the growth of quality and relevant TNE provision, and safeguard the TNE student experience?
- What are the key obstacles to undertaking joint-review activity with other agencies and/or recognising other agencies' quality assurance decisions?
- Could there be scope for developing common standards for TNE provision?

Highlights of the discussion were:

What are key challenges of quality assurance process for TNE programmes?

It can be home verses host. We need engagement and understanding to overcome this. It shouldn't just be a 'tick-box' exercise but a value-add in really doing it.

We should be involving our students in the process. This in turn demonstrates we are actually doing it rather than just talking about

How do we define quality? There are so many different agencies, partners and providers. We need a mutual understanding of what quality means first.

There are also cultural differences, regulatory gaps between countries and different climates of quality assurance agencies to consider.

What about national agenda verses international development agenda? Who eventually owns the output if a country drives it? Policies are also usually behind the curve. Things happen in an industry then the policy reacts to it. We need to be more proactive and keep an ear to the ground

Finally, to establish the connectivity of student experience we need to be clear on the difference in education systems. I.e. Mandatory verses voluntary distinction (as well as the legal implications of this).

How could country agencies work together to avoid unnecessary regulatory gaps?

How can country agencies work together to support the growth of quality and relevant TNE provision, and safeguard the TNE student experience?

The building of trust and respect is key. We heard the word 'rely' used quite freely amongst the various quality assurance agencies – "We rely on such-and-such country to have these processes". Everyone has needs specific to their country but if we are going to truly global we need to go ahead and take that leap of faith to really work collaboratively.

Again, get our students involved. Here we are, well out of university age saying this is the right thing to do – but students are better than us. We need to facilitate them rather than dictate them. We need to pass the baton around and develop proper trust rather than just pay lip service. Move beyond the MOU (of Understanding) and actually implement stuff. We loved Dubai's MOA (of Action).

We'd like to see yearly seminars and comparative studies between countries.

Do we really understand how each other runs quality assurance? We need to. This means alignment of priorities of all stakeholders – from policy makers to institutions and students.

It's not just the agencies; we should include the institutions as well.

Let's at least have learning outcomes agreed – say get 80% agreed and standardised as accepted by the other body, then we just have to address add-ons.

What are the key obstacles to undertaking joint-review activity with other agencies and/or recognising other agencies' quality assurance decisions?

Could there be scope for developing common standards for TNE provision?

There is a disconnect between national assurance bodies and accreditors. Each can be seen as 'just another player' to deal with. A shorter win could be gained by removing this.

We need a framework for comparison to achieve understanding.

Local legislation can get in the way. We could accept common standards in the future. There is different experience in demand on quality assurance in different countries. There are different levels of sophistication. The carrot is the elimination of duplication, reducing cost and streamlining.

Commitment is also an obstacle. We need to work together from start to finish. Money, time and differences in culture and competency levels can be a struggle, too.

We think we can/could develop common standards but who will dictate the scope? There needs to be some sort of mandate agreement, like a treaty at governmental level to facilitate this.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the group agreed on the need to move forward in closer collaboration with one another. It is clear that TNE is becoming more and more important in East Asia and to harness its true potential quality assurance needs to be a joint exercise. Trust emerged as key in this.

Susan Milner brought the session to a close reinforcing that *“TNE is of growing importance in East Asia”*. *“Being here today, despite multiple challenges is a first sign of trust,”* she added.

Jazreel Goh announced that the British Council will be creating a UK – East Asia TNE Advisory Group. *“It’s a key priority for us, and a major step. We want the group to be structured for mutual benefit, informed by market insight. We all want high quality outcomes to boost capacity and encourage innovation. We want clarity on regulations and sustainability to ensure we are developing talent for the future,”* she said.

In summary, recommendations to move toward joint quality assurance in transnational education between the UK and East Asia include:

- Student engagement to stay ahead of the curve
- Common standards supported at government level
- Building of trust and understanding through networks, seminars and/or joint pilot programmes
- Frameworks for comparison of and clarity on the various systems and processes in place
- A clear, mutual definition of quality