The Open University

Validating for UK awards in a transnational context

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Overview

- What is CVU?
- My own perspective and institutional context (OU)
- Reflection on

- what makes transnational HE partnership a worthwhile endeavour
- What I have learned over 20 years (on the radar and off the radar issues)

Overview

- Director, OU Validation
- Council of Validating Universities (CVU)
- From my own experience - the benefits and the challenges involved in trans-national partnerships
- Expectations and values
- Mutual advantage and shared risk
- Standing next to each other with pride or with embarrassment (reputation)
- Mutual respect, honesty, well-founded trust
- ‘Quality time’
- ‘Marry in haste, repent at leisure’

Quality in Partnership

Council of Validating Universities

- CVU is a membership organisation.

  All **degree-awarding institutions** in the UK are eligible for full membership
- **Institutions and organisations** which already have at least one programme of higher education **validated** to lead to a UK HE award are eligible for associate membership
- Only UK body to specialise exclusively in good practice and standards for ‘collaborative provision’, a community of practice.
- www.cvu.ac.uk

CVU

CVU is a networking organisation offering opportunities for members to learn about, and contribute to discussion on, topics of interest to collaborative provision via:

- annual conference
- national seminars and workshops
- contributions to discussion and consultation on national policy affecting collaborative provision
- Handbook for Practitioners
- annual survey of number of students on collaborative programmes leading to awards of validating universities
- Website www.cvu.ac.uk
- research projects

OU Validation: Approved Institutions (AIs)

- There are currently 29 approved institutions (AIs)
- Of the 29 AIs, 22 are in the UK and 7 are overseas
- Of the 7 overseas, 5 are in the rest of Europe, 1 is in the Middle East (The Arab OU, which operates in 7 countries, with plans to expand to 9 countries) and 1 is in Asia (Singapore)

Students and conferments

- We have conferred over 117,000 validated awards to date
- Over 35,000 students are currently registered for OU-Validated Awards (93% at undergraduate level, 3.5% at postgraduate level & 2.5% on Foundation Degree programmes)
- Figure has increased from less than 10,000 in 2001-02

Contribution to the OU Mission

- Validation contributes to the University's international network of key strategic partnerships
- Widening participation: E.g., around half of Arab OU students are women who would otherwise have limited opportunities to access higher education
- Employer engagement: E.g. our German partners offer OU validated programmes for Bosch, IBM and Mercedes

Why TNE?

OU mission and ethos

Internationalisation

Diversifying income

There is a market demand and a need

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The OU in a global market

The OU has students and works in partnership in the following countries and regions.

- Austria
- Belgium
- Brazil
- Bulgaria
- Canada
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Ethiopia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hong Kong
- Hungary
- India
- Ireland
- Italy
- Luxembourg
- Middle East (7 countries)
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Portugal
- Romania
- Russia
- Singapore
- Slovak Republic
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- United Kingdom

Quality in Partnership

Kinds of collaborative provision, sources of ‘received wisdom’

- QAA audit reports; Quality Code; CVU and CVU Handbook
- Broad typology ‘franchise’, ‘validation’, ‘articulation’ but also many hybrid models
- In all kinds of CP – ie where an award is made – the awarding university is ultimately and unambiguously responsible for quality and standards
- Important distinctions that relate to the relationship and ‘ownership’ of programmes and students
- Organisations who seek a partnership with a UK university value the currency and recognition that a UK award brings but do not always have a clear understanding of the common framework and expectations that are so integral to it

Some common challenges of TNE

- Pedagogical/ learning-culture related issues in relation to the distinctive character of UK honours degrees
- Regulation and legal issues (rise of private providers)
- Funding/ fees related issues
- The necessity of robust due diligence and audit of administrative infrastructure

Relationship management

- Expectations and values
- Mutual advantage and shared risk
- Standing next to each other with pride or with embarrassment
- Mutual respect, honesty, well-founded trust
- ‘Quality time’
- ‘Marry in haste, repent at leisure’

Conclusion

- managing difference
- OU and AOU
- Transactional and Transformational partnerships
- current challenges and the future
- missed opportunities in our institutions