PROVIDING A UK IFP EXPERIENCE IN MALAYSIA: SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

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June 2019
2010, opportunity arises, decisions made
2012, first staff, temporary office
2013, first 11 students (foundation only)
2016, new building complete
2017~, growing student numbers
SO, WE JUST DELIVER WHAT WE’VE GOT IN A NEW LOCATION, RIGHT?

Not that simple.

• Malaysian Education Ministry needs to permit programmes, demanding particular specifications
  – vs –

• UK home campus expectations: follow UK standards, follow UK policies & procedures
  – vs –

• Desire, or need, to develop locally:
  • deliver to the ‘local market’
  • meet expectations of locally-employed staff.

Examples:
• naming the programme (cannot be ‘IFP’)
• 11-11-8 term structure to 14-14-14 term structure
• adjusting total teaching hours to make credit conversions work
• fees must be lower; quality must be the same
• local ‘competitive’ salaries or ‘expat’ salaries?
• teaching & learning not valued as highly: staff may leave to further their careers by doing research
• employment, visa or tax laws restricting or discouraging non-Malaysian staff
• marketing approaches may be unknown or seem inappropriate to UK staff
• etc.
MALAYSIA: A RAPIDLY-CHANGING ‘MARKET’

The Growth of Malaysian Universities

WHO ARE THE STUDENTS?

- Around 200 students a year, almost all Malaysian, mostly from Johor, most 17 years old.

WHO ARE THE LECTURERS?

- All Malaysians
- A few with direct experience of UK universities
WHAT’S THE SAME?

modules (the curriculum)

standards (difficulty of materials, assessment setting and marking)

progression rules onto undergraduate degrees

external examining

personal tutorial system, welfare support, procedures for absence/misconduct/underperforming/etc.

team-building, fun and social activities
## WHAT’S DIFFERENT?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of Reading UK</th>
<th>University of Reading Malaysia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nearly 100 years old; IFP since 1985</td>
<td>New</td>
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<tr>
<td>Most staff British</td>
<td>Most staff Malaysian</td>
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<td>A public UK university, answerable to the Office for Students, etc.</td>
<td>A ‘private Malaysian university’, regulated by the Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>IFP is ‘niche’ – low profile at the university compared to other activities</td>
<td>Highly dependent on IFP: the majority of students come through this route.</td>
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<td>UK international fees</td>
<td>Less than ¼ of UK international fees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students from many different countries</td>
<td>Most students Malaysian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students live far away from home</td>
<td>Most students live with parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visa issues are key</td>
<td>Visa issues less important</td>
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</table>
AND, PERHAPS THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE...

**Perception** of what the institution is, and who the competitors are. Rankings/reputation are not the main attraction. Far more important:

- fee level & discounts;
- location;
- job prospects.
1. Maintaining the ethos and quality of the UK programme on the Malaysia programme

2. Compliance to Ministry of Education’s QA requirements, and employment laws

3. Do not assume UK-based staff understand the context! Develop and maintain UK links

**WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT?**

**Success?**

1. YES
2. YES
3. YES (needs further work)

It all takes a lot of time and effort, but well worth it. Need continual support for Malaysia staff during the early years. Need to involve UK-based staff. Communication is key!!
## A MODEL: UK IFP IN MALAYSIA

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Don’t compromise ...</th>
<th>Be flexible and open minded with ...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality, brand, promises in marketing</td>
<td>Marketing methods</td>
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<td>Ministry QA requirements</td>
<td>Interpretation of requirements</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>be creative</em></td>
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<td>Commitment to excellent teaching</td>
<td>Expectations of staff skills and experience</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>provide plenty of staff development</em></td>
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<td>Ethos (academic integrity, inclusivity, fairness)</td>
<td>Cultural considerations</td>
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<td><em>avoid being too prescriptive</em></td>
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<td>Level/difficulty</td>
<td>Expectations of student engagement</td>
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<td><em>provide plenty of support but nurture independence</em></td>
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<td>Standard-keeping between campuses</td>
<td>UK staff who have less invested in the Malaysia campus</td>
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<td><em>spend plenty of time building and maintaining relationships and understanding</em></td>
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Are branch campuses withering?

Overseas branch campuses have mushroomed in the past two decades, but with the risks larger than initially assumed and the returns less certain, stories of abandoned ventures have begun to mount. Ellie Bothwell asks whether the model still has a future.

June 20, 2019
By Ellie Bothwell  Twitter: @elliebothwell

When Christopher Hill left the UK in 2008 to take up a role as director of the graduate school at the University of
Chapter three: Higher education

**Recommendation 3.8**

We recommend withdrawing financial support for foundation years attached to degree courses after an appropriate notice period. Exemptions for specific courses such as Medicine may be granted by the OfS.
WE NEED TO KEEP ON ADAPTING TO WHATEVER SCENARIO!

Remember, the students make it all worth it