

## UKIBC Case Study

# LEEDS CITY COLLEGE

### Description of Institution

On 1 April 2009 Park Lane College Leeds merged with Leeds Thomas Danby College and Leeds College of Technology to form the Leeds City College. As one of the top colleges in the UK, LCC offers vocational education and training, academic and professional courses to over 65,000 students from 16 years of age upwards. In addition the College provides programme and learning solutions that are driven by employer and industry need. The merged College offers a very wide range of programmes from basic skills to Foundation Degree (ie from Entry Level to Level 4). Students follow programmes that use a range of attendance models including full-time, part-time and distance learning; these programmes also use a range of learning styles including classroom-based, blended-learning and work-based assessments. As an international College students are welcomed from over 20 countries. LCC is a member of the Regional University Network operated by Leeds Metropolitan University who validate the College's Foundation Degree provision and is fully compliant with QAA standards. Recent Inspectors have commented: "The College's approach to meeting the needs and interests of learners is outstanding and it has very effective links with a wide range of external organisations. It is very responsive to the needs of employers."

### Current projects/partners/interest in India

Under the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI) Professional and Technical Skills development strand, Leeds City College has established a growing partnership with the National Insurance Academy in Pune. Staff from both partner organisations have visited India and the UK, accompanied by senior employer representatives from the Insurance industries in both countries (HSBC in the UK and the Life Insurance Corporation and General Insurance Corporation of India). Meetings with employers during both visits proved useful in the longer term in as much as they provided the NIA with an overview of the financial services in the UK and introduced the UK team to senior industry contacts in India. These meetings have led to College-wide discussions on future project ideas, eg development of distance learning packages to support the insurance industry in India; e-learning provision for insurance agents.

In October 2009 Leeds City College will host a visit to the UK by six MBA students from the NIA and, through a supported work placement in a relevant organisation, the students will gain experience of the UK insurance sector in action. The work placement will be underpinned by a programme of seminars, guest speakers, industry visits to further expand and develop the students' knowledge and skills. The Programme will prepare the students for the first Unit of a CII Certificate qualification. Additional to the programme will be a cultural awareness strand which will enhance the student's general understanding of the UK.

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## Potential areas of interest/nature of offer to India

Leeds City College is keen to develop in the insurance and financial services sectors in India, promoting distance and e-learning. One of LCC's strengths is its employer responsive strategy and the success and growth of work-based learning programmes; experience has shown that employer engagement is vital to the development of transnational delivery.

In addition, it has become increasingly apparent that there are also opportunities to capitalise on the College's strengths in delivering vocational education and training in India. For example, there is an emerging service sector in India; the recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai have heightened the security presence with large numbers of security personnel now employed by companies, hotels etc; a growing construction industry requiring a skilled and trained workforce. This highlights the potential for offering vocational training solutions in these sectors as well as the opportunity, for example, to replicate the skills academy model in India, in a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier city such as Pune

## Engagement with the Indian market

Leeds City College has found the British Council / LCCI CET funding vital in the development of its links with the NIA. Funding for vocational education and training in the UK is very much targeted at the 16 – 19 age range and transnational developments, which can hugely enhance the opportunities offered to staff and students at the College, as well as enable the development of income generating activities, need to be funded initially from external sources. The UKIERI funding covers the *actual* costs of in-country visits (visas, travel, subsistence, accommodation and insurance)- funding which is not available from the standing College budgets and this is therefore vital as seed-corn funding to support transnational developments. As with most overseas work, actual face to face contact with prospective partners and organisations is vital to the success of projects.

In addition, Leeds City College is now a member of the UKIBC and has participated in several in-country briefings (or sent UKIERI Steering Group members to participate in such seminars). The College has also attended UKTI briefings and is looking at the possibilities of OMIS research to support future marketing strategies in the sub-continent.

## Barriers to Entering the Indian market

There have been issues during the course of the UKIERI programme when cultural differences have caused difficulties in progressing the project. However, the learning curve by both parties has been welcomed and progress is being maintained.

The distance between the two markets is an actual physical barrier – Leeds City College is currently reviewing its Video Conferencing facility in order to enable continuing face-to-face communications between partner organisations having undertaken initial visits. As mentioned earlier, the costs of travel, whilst not onerous, can be a stumbling block in the development of relationships with distant countries and financial support, even if limited to travel costs etc, is vital. As a public sector and funded organisation the College

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is reliant to a large extent on obtaining funding to undertake international work. This is limiting in that there is not necessarily access to monies for exploratory work prior to any initiatives, however organisations such as UKIBC, UKTI are able to assist in the process.

There is a growing understanding of vocational education and training in the Indian market and a growing understanding of how this can be used to increase their current growth. British Council / LCCI CET support is crucial if UK FE / HE organisations are to continue to be involved in awareness raising.

## **Solutions/best practice**

Leeds City College has found that membership of the UKIBC has made a substantial contribution to the College's ability to develop in the Indian market. We have learned the importance of understanding how the market works and the differences in approach both culturally and in the business world.

In addition, sharing information between other UK organisations who have worked in this market has improved the College's development ability – it is generally felt that we will not learn from the mistakes of others, but we will certainly listen to what they have to say and make our own mistakes!