

## Evaluation of the UK-Russia BRIDGE Programme: Final Report

24 May 2010





## Executive Summary

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1. This is the final report on the evaluation of the UK-Russia BRIDGE Higher Education Partnership Programme – known simply as BRIDGE. It is based upon desk research and fieldwork conducted in the period September 2009 to February 2010.

### **Introduction**

2. The aims of the BRIDGE programme are set out in the figure below.

#### Aims of the BRIDGE programme

- To increase collaborative effort between Russian and UK universities by means of joint programme development leading to dual degrees or other mutually recognised academic qualifications
- To develop a model of university partnership brokering and dual degree development that will be replicable across other countries
- To extend the reach and availability of UK awards to Russian students
- To develop a community of innovators in Russia and the UK
- To facilitate a change in Russian higher education leading to a more outcomes-based, learner-centres, interactive and accountable system
- To provide learning points for UK and Russian higher education management
- To progress change in Russia's systems as they follow the Bologna process.

*Source: DIUS, December 2008*

3. BRIDGE was delivered in various phases over the period 2004 to 2008. It was delivered on behalf of the UK Government by the British Council, which provided a programme of support to UK and Russian institutions in the form of workshops and individual guidance.
4. BRIDGE supported the development of dual awards, and also research collaboration projects. The overall target for the programme was the creation of 55 UK-Russia partnerships – a target that was reached and, indeed, exceeded. According to British Council documentation, a total of **58 partnerships** were created (of which 44 were dual awards and 14 were research projects).
5. The creation and deployment of a UK-Russia Expert Group – to provide advice to applicants and recommend proposals for approval – worked extremely well. It is an approach that can be recommended for any similar future initiatives.

### **Achievements**

6. The programme succeeded in its objective of involving institutions from across Russia, not just in Moscow and St Petersburg. This was largely thanks to the efforts of the British Council's team in Russia, who spent considerable time raising awareness of BRIDGE and supporting potential applicants.
7. Despite the various barriers that partnerships faced (the time and bureaucracy involved in travel between the UK and Russia, the transfer of money between countries, communication, the hurdle of validation, etc), a high proportion of projects were successful.

8. **Nearly half of Russian dual award projects say their course has been validated in the UK and accredited in Russia.** A further seven awards are reported to have been validated in the UK only, and a further three courses have been accredited in Russia only. (Interestingly, UK institutions report a higher number of courses validated and accredited on both sides; it is not clear why this should be the case.)
9. Amongst the dual award projects responding to our survey, Russian partners report that **more than half of the courses developed under BRIDGE have been delivered in Russia for at least one year already.** A further three courses are being delivered for the first time in 2009-10, and yet a further four may be delivered in the future. Only in three cases did the Russian partner report that the course had not been delivered and that there were no plans for this to happen. This is an extremely positive finding.
10. Three quarters of UK institutions report that their BRIDGE partnership is still ‘alive’ (i.e. they are actively continuing to work with their Russian partner on dual awards and/or research), and a further 13% report that they may resurrect their partnership in the future. Only 11% of UK institutions say that they have no plans to work with their Russian partner in the future.
11. There are some very fruitful research collaboration projects whose stories deserve to be told and which can be acclaimed as particular successes under BRIDGE. At least **53 research papers have been published** (with more in the pipeline) across the 14 research projects. Several tangible outputs have also resulted from research collaboration. One project in lifestyle enhancement and mobile telemedicine, for example, has led to the development of a prototype device that measures blood pressure and pulse rate without the patient having to visit their GP (further details are summarised in section 7 of the main report).
12. BRIDGE has helped Russian HEIs align themselves more closely with the Bologna Process. Some Russian institutions have adopted the UK approach to teaching and assessment – not just in BRIDGE courses, but in other areas of their provision. Staff development has been a particular benefit for Russian and UK institutions. Other institutional benefits have taken the form of spin-off activities including European funded projects and new research collaboration.

### ***Participants’ views***

13. Taking into account the British Council’s figures and our own evaluation findings, we estimate that around 800 Russian participants have enrolled on BRIDGE courses to date.
14. Students / participants on BRIDGE courses express a very high level of satisfaction with the UK approach to teaching and assessment. They particularly appreciate the interactive style and practical orientation of the teaching, the equality and dialogue between tutors and students, the transparency of the assessment system, and the greater independence that they experience.
15. In the minority of instances where students express some disappointment, this most often relates to the lack of teaching input by British tutors in Russia and the lack of work experience in courses part-delivered in the UK.

16. Course participants generally feel that the value of their course lies not so much in the certificate itself (UK qualifications are widely felt to be under-appreciated by employers in Russia) but in the skills, knowledge and experience that they have gained.

### **Challenges**

17. Particular challenges for dual award projects include:
- lack of experience in market research on the part of many Russian institutions (both in terms of gauging employer demand prior to course development, and in marketing courses to students once courses were ready for delivery)
  - low numbers of students recruited in Russia, and high fees required by the UK partner, resulting in some courses being withdrawn on the UK side
  - in a minority of cases, a perception on the Russian side that the UK partner's approach was dominated by the need to make a profit rather than genuinely to work in partnership.
18. The lack of engagement in BRIDGE by the Russian Government was a disappointment to stakeholders and to institutions in Russia. However, this did not act as a barrier to the successful implementation of the programme: Russian HEIs (as in the UK) have a high degree of autonomy.

### **Summary of Russian experience**

19. BRIDGE is regarded by the participating Russian universities in a very positive light, because:
- the programme set out to benefit institutions across the whole of Russia, not just Moscow and St Petersburg
  - it did not seek to impose UK courses / approaches upon Russia; rather, it required Russian institutions to work as equal partners in developing entirely new courses that would suit Russian needs
  - the UK approach to teaching and assessment (student-focused; more inter-active; more time spent on self-directed study than attending lectures; outcomes-based approach; etc) is increasingly highly regarded, and BRIDGE has acted as a catalyst to help Russian HEIs promulgate this approach
  - it provided sufficient funding to enable courses to get off the ground, but more importantly, it enabled institutions to access the expertise that they needed.
20. Amongst students and participants, there is a very wide awareness of the UK (and European) approach to teaching and assessment in higher education. People who have participated in BRIDGE courses appreciate the outcomes-based approach, with its focus on self study and the opportunity to debate issues with their tutors and with each other.

21. The economic crisis has affected Russia as much as the rest of Europe, and this has had an impact upon the take-up of BRIDGE dual awards in Russia. It is very hard for Russian students to find the money to pay for such courses, and low take-up means that some courses have had to be withdrawn. However, the latent demand for British degrees in Russia is certainly large in the longer term.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

22. BRIDGE has been a success, meeting most of its targets and resulting in a high degree of satisfaction amongst institutions and students.
23. In terms of programme delivery, the use of an Expert Group was a winning formula. Less successful was the decision to make funding directly available only to UK institutions, which then had to transfer money to Russia. Although this decision was based on reasonable grounds of transparency and accountability, in practice it caused untold problems for many partners. In future, an alternative approach would be to establish a small management function in Russia in order to distribute funding within the country (such an approach has previously been used for UK-Russia education projects by the British Council in Russia, with very few problems).
24. Considering the size of the Russian market in terms of potential student numbers (i.e. potential for future income generation), the BRIDGE investment may come to be regarded as very small compared to the eventual reward. However, the most successful partnerships have arisen where the UK partner understands that this investment will be long term. By contrast, in projects involving UK institutions that expected an immediate financial return, partnerships have been less fruitful. UK institutions should bear in mind the wider aims of the internationalisation agenda, rather than being driven by the need to make a short-term profit.
25. Due largely to the cessation of British Council activities in Russia, the aim of creating a 'community of innovators' did not come to fruition. Some universities have continued to maintain links, but the wider BRIDGE community has not been able to sustain itself of its own accord and would benefit from a central co-ordinator whose remit includes (for example) developing and maintaining an electronic forum through which BRIDGE institutions might communicate. There is great demand amongst Russian institutions for such a community to be supported.
26. As a result of this evaluation we conclude that some form of successor programme to BRIDGE – again delivered on a Russia-wide basis - would be welcomed in both countries and should be encouraged.
27. Finally, we would like to place on record our gratitude to the many stakeholders, institutional representatives and individual students who participated in this evaluation. We would also like to thank City University London for generously inviting us to attend the graduation ceremony of its first cohort of BRIDGE students in 2010.

# 1: Introduction

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## Introduction

- 1.1 This is the final report on the evaluation of the UK-Russia BRIDGE Higher Education Partnership Programme – known simply as BRIDGE. It is based upon desk research and fieldwork conducted in the period September 2009 to February 2010.
- 1.2 The research has generated a wealth of feedback from institutions and participants – much more than we anticipated. We are extremely grateful to everyone who contributed to the evaluation.
- 1.3 For reference, the aims of the BRIDGE programme are set out in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1: Aims of the BRIDGE programme

- To increase collaborative effort between Russian and UK universities by means of joint programme development leading to dual degrees or other mutually recognised academic qualifications
- To develop a model of university partnership brokering and dual degree development that will be replicable across other countries
- To extend the reach and availability of UK awards to Russian students
- To develop a community of innovators in Russia and the UK
- To facilitate a change in Russian higher education leading to a more outcomes-based, learner-centres, interactive and accountable system
- To provide learning points for UK and Russian higher education management
- To progress change in Russia's systems as they follow the Bologna process.

Source: DIUS, December 2008

## Evaluation aims and objectives

- 1.4 The overarching purpose of the evaluation is to assess:
  - the contribution of BRIDGE to promote co-operation in higher education and to facilitate the creation of partnerships between universities in the two countries through the development of joint / dual awards, research collaboration and co-operation projects
  - the contribution of BRIDGE partnerships for providing learning points for developing UK HE partnerships with Russia
  - the contribution of BRIDGE to the changes within Russian HEIs, with particular reference to the Bologna Process
  - the sustainability of university to university partnerships once funding ceased, and the longer term impact of the programme
  - whether the programme provided value for money

- to provide recommendations on possible future activity and the potential of BRIDGE and the individual partnerships under the programme as partnership models for other countries, and whether there is now sufficient capacity in Russia to develop university partnerships without the aid of a UK funded programme.
- 1.5 (The evaluation relates only to partnerships involving English institutions. Only one Scottish HEI was funded separately by the Scottish Government. The devolved administrations in Wales and Northern Ireland did not contribute funding to BRIDGE so there were no projects from those countries (although some interest was expressed from Welsh institutions). However, BRIDGE was not specifically intended to be an England-only programme, and throughout this report we refer to the UK rather than England.)

## Structure of report

- 1.6 The report is set out as follows:
- in Section 2 we provide some brief background detail about the BRIDGE programme and the context in which it came about
  - in Section 3 we look at the way in which the programme was structured and how it was delivered
  - we then start to present the key findings from our primary research, starting in Section 4 with a look at some of the issues surrounding institutional partnership and motivation;
  - this is followed in Section 5 by a more detailed look at the experience of individual institutions that participated in the development of dual awards: the way in which courses were developed; the barriers that were encountered along the way; and some of the lessons learned
  - in Section 6 we take a look at the perceptions of students / participants of BRIDGE courses, which was identified to us at the start as an important focus of the evaluation
  - in Section 7 we explore some of the issues surrounding the research collaboration projects
  - this is followed in Section 8 by a summary of outputs and impacts arising from the programme as a whole
  - in Section 9 we consider the relevance and influence of BRIDGE in the UK
  - finally, in Section 10, we present our conclusions and recommendations.
- 1.7 We have illustrated the main body of the report with a number of photographs that were taken during the course of the evaluation in 2009-10, to illustrate the fact that many BRIDGE partnerships are alive and well. We have also included several Annexes. Annex A describes our evaluation research methodology; Annex B contains the questionnaires used in our interviews and surveys; Annex C lists the institutions and stakeholders in the UK and in



Russia who took part in this evaluation. Finally, Annex D contains a list of all BRIDGE projects.

## **Acknowledgement**

- 1.8 We would like to place on record our gratitude to the many institutional representatives and individual students who participated in this evaluation. Our evaluation team was welcomed with great warmth by institutions and stakeholders during our fieldwork in Russia, and we are extremely grateful for their high level of engagement in the evaluation.
- 1.9 We would also like to thank City University London for generously inviting us to attend the graduation ceremony of its first cohort of BRIDGE students in 2010.

## 2: Background and context

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### Background

- 2.1 During President Putin's state visit to the UK in June 2003, the Russian President and Prime Minister Blair issued a joint statement that said, "The United Kingdom and the Russian Federation believe education and promoting understanding of other cultures play a major part in securing sustained economic growth and achieving tolerance, peace, stability and better understanding between nations."
- 2.2 The following month, Charles Clarke (UK Secretary of State for Education and Skills) and Vladimir Filippov (Minister of Education for the Russian Federation) signed a statement of intent on "Russian-UK Partnerships in Higher Education". This expressed the intention to promote co-operation in higher education and to facilitate the creation of partnerships between universities in the two countries. A key aim of these partnerships was to develop dual award programmes which would then form the basis for further collaboration. The BRIDGE project was set up to facilitate this development.
- 2.3 The project was funded by the then Department for Education and Skills (now part of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, or BIS) for a four year period up to March 2008. The funding reflected the British Government's view that relations with Russia were important and that Russia would become a significant partner of the UK as its economy developed and it left behind the difficulties of political and economic transition. As part of these developments, strong educational links were seen as important to the UK but it was recognised that benefits to British institutions would largely come in the long term. Without Government support from BRIDGE and other projects, links would be slow to develop: BRIDGE aimed to accelerate the process.
- 2.4 The overall aim of the project was to develop lasting partnerships between higher education institutions in the two nations. The intention was to achieve genuine mutuality, whereby each partner derived benefits from the other, not a one-sided relationship where courses were franchised or know-how passed on at a price. Achieving a partnership of mutuality was a factor when bids were considered for funding.
- 2.5 BRIDGE recognised that many British institutions would have a limited understanding and knowledge of Russian higher education. An important part of the project was to help institutions gain knowledge and understanding and to provide active support in helping them find suitable Russian partners. The project also aimed to ensure that institutions with experience of working in Russia passed on the benefit of that experience to those for whom Russia was relatively unknown.

### What is a dual award?

- 2.6 The statement of intent signed by the two ministers saw the development of dual degree programmes as a key aim of the project. These are programmes which carry awards from both partners, appropriate to their national systems and subject to their own validation and

accreditation procedures. The awards do not necessarily have to be the same. Thus, a programme resulting in a British Masters may receive a postgraduate diploma from the Russian partner.

- 2.7 The advantage of this duality is that the qualification is recognised and understandable to employers inside and outside Russia. There was some concern amongst Russian stakeholders that programmes should not solely be taken by students wishing to work outside Russia, and hence the ability to award a Russian qualification was important to them.

## The scope of the programme

- 2.8 In order to establish the scope of BRIDGE, a baseline report was commissioned in 2004 that outlined the state of the higher education system in Russia and the environment in which Russian HEIs were operating. The report, which set out the main trends in higher and post graduate professional education and the regulatory framework for higher education in Russia, was able to provide guidance on the potential audience / market for BRIDGE and the type and level of degrees that would be of most relevance in Russia.
- 2.9 In the first year of the programme applications were invited from existing UK-Russian partnerships, with the intention that they could share their experience with new partnerships in subsequent years. Most existing British partnerships at the time the programme started were with institutions in the Moscow and St Petersburg areas. An aim of the BRIDGE project was to involve institutions throughout the whole of Russia, and achieving this was also a factor in assessing bids for funding in subsequent years.
- 2.10 From Year 2, BRIDGE encouraged institutions with little or no experience of collaborative work in Russia to develop partnerships. To assist this, funding was available not only for full Masters and undergraduate programmes but also for postgraduate level short courses for continuing professional development (CPD). These had to carry an award or involve the formal awarding of CATS credits (credit accumulation and transfer scheme). They could be free-standing or part of an eventual Masters degree programme. The aim was to allow partnerships to develop on a small scale and to allow easy exit opportunities if the partnership was not working out as planned or alternatively to move on to develop larger scale programmes.
- 2.11 BRIDGE was intended to provide pump prime or seedcorn funding, not to cover the full costs associated with the development and delivery of degrees. The programme was experimental in nature: little was known about the opportunities and challenges which would be faced by UK-Russia partnerships developing dual awards.
- 2.12 Only programmes delivered entirely or almost entirely in Russia were considered for funding.

## The Russian Higher Education system and the Bologna Process

- 2.13 The BRIDGE Project Steering Committee recognised that developing dual awards would present difficulties for partners from both countries. Fundamental differences in educational philosophies were a factor. UK courses are based on reaching pre-determined outcomes, whereas in Russia they are determined by hours of study undertaken. Assessment methods are

also different, with Russian staff and students unused to independent learning or assessment by analytical essays.

2.14 The first BRIDGE Steering Committee meeting, held at the British Council in London in March 2004, included a presentation on the salient differences between the two higher education systems. These were described<sup>1</sup> as follows:

- different philosophies behind Masters degrees – in the UK students often seek this degree to acquire qualifications in a new field, which does not fit with the Russian system where it is seen as further specialisation
- degree structures are very different. The model favoured in Russia is a four-plus-two or a five-year model; a three-year degree programme is considered as one of reduced value, hence the question – will it be possible to transplant the British model into Russia?
- there are twice as many obligatory attendance hours in Russia compared to the UK, which may pose problems.
- student-centred environment in the UK as opposed to teacher-oriented one in Russia.
- staff-student relations are much more democratic in the UK.
- differences in assessment patterns - project work, group work, exams in the UK and oral exams in Russia.

2.15 Finding a “fit” between the two systems presented obvious challenges. Russia had, however, joined the Bologna process and there was (and remains) a commitment at government and institutional level to modernising curricula and methods of teaching and learning. One of the aims of BRIDGE was to assist this development.

2.16 The Russian higher education system is currently undergoing a period of change. At the time of writing there are approximately one thousand HEIs in Russia, of which approximately 600 are designated ‘state universities’ (i.e. state funded) and 400 are state-accredited but not state-funded. Those in the latter group often have several affiliates, which increases the total number of institutions. In addition to this there are many private universities, which are neither funded nor accredited by the state, but are licensed. In total, it is estimated that there are approximately 3,000 institutions offering some form of higher education. The Russian Ministry is keen to reduce the number of higher education institutions. Ideally it would prefer the total number to be around 200, though this may not be easy to achieve.

2.17 The Russian Government has awarded significant grants to HEIs to help them develop into ‘federal universities’. The first two federal universities were announced in 2007, in the South and in Siberia. In October 2009 President Medvedev announced the creation of five more federal universities: the North, Kazan, Urals, North East and Far East. There is likely to be a long process of mergers while further federal universities are created from combinations of existing institutions. In addition, there will be regional universities and also municipal universities in the large cities. There will continue to be private universities too, but they may

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes from first Steering Committee meeting, London, 22 March 2004 – British Council

have to go through a process of re-accreditation. Many smaller, weaker institutions will eventually cease to exist. Meanwhile, twelve universities were recently designated 'national research universities', i.e. institutions with a particularly strong research base.

- 2.18 In line with the Bologna process and the increasing internationalisation of universities, many Russian higher education institutions have commenced the transition to a system similar to that of Britain and based on the features of the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Figure 2-1: The Bologna process

The Bologna Process aims to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010, in which students can choose from a wide and transparent range of high quality courses and benefit from smooth recognition procedures.

The three priorities of the Bologna process are:

- introduction of the three cycle system (bachelor / master / doctorate);
- quality assurance; and
- recognition of qualifications and periods of study.

The aim of the EHEA is to facilitate mobility, increase employability and strengthen Europe's attractiveness and competitiveness.

Source: [www.ec.europa.eu](http://www.ec.europa.eu)

- 2.19 A major element of Russian higher education has traditionally been the specialist Diploma. The Diploma is now being phased out, and from next year it will be replaced by Masters degrees (this was supposed to have already happened, but has been postponed several times). During our fieldwork in Russia we heard from institutions that some employers are nervous about this fundamental change, as they do not fully understand the value of a Masters compared to a Diploma. However, it is clear that the Bologna Process has started to permeate.
- 2.20 As institutions within a signatory country to the Bologna Process, Russian HEIs have had to meet the demands of integration through their own development of quality assurance guidelines. There has been no single national initiative in Russia that is assisting Russian institutions to meet this agenda. Part of the aim of BRIDGE was to fill this gap.

## 3: Programme structure and delivery

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- 3.1 In this section we describe the way in which the BRIDGE programme was managed and delivered, and its associated targets and funding.

### Programme infrastructure

#### **Steering Committee**

- 3.2 A Steering Committee including officials and appropriate specialists from both Russia and the United Kingdom was established to advise on the design of a strategic plan for the implementation of the programme. The National Training Foundation (Russia) and the British Council were nominated as executive bodies, in the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom respectively, to provide support to the development of the programme.
- 3.3 An internal evaluation of BRIDGE<sup>2</sup> conducted by the Expert Group concluded that the value of the Steering Committee was limited. It was a large body and it only met annually. As a result, it did not get closely involved with the programme and needed to have had more contact with the Expert Group to be better engaged in the progress of BRIDGE. The attendance of the Russian Government diminished over time and senior figures were increasingly represented by nominees. Nonetheless, the programme could not have operated without the Steering Committee, which fulfilled an essential political role in facilitating a forum for discussion and buy-in from stakeholders in both countries.

#### **Expert Group**

- 3.4 It was decided at a very early stage – prior to the first Steering Committee meeting – that a separate Expert Group would be set up to deal with operational issues. The Expert Group would report to the Steering Committee, and its remit would be as outlined in Figure 3-1 (below).
- 3.5 The Steering Committee originally envisaged that the Expert Group should consist of two UK and two Russian experts. In practice the membership of the group had some fluidity: there came to be three, rather than two, experts on each side and an additional member was recruited on the Russian side when the Science & Technology strand of the programme was introduced. On occasion a member of the Expert Group would attend the Steering Committee in their capacity as external adviser to the Committee, but they did not have voting or decision making rights.
- 3.6 The Expert Group played a crucial advisory role during the application process. The programme received a much higher number of expressions of interest from Russian than from UK institutions, but the Expert Group was keen to ensure that these would be serious bids leading to fruitful partnerships: as a result, a fairly high number of ‘doubtful’ expressions of interest from the Russian side were sifted out by the Group at an early stage. Although the

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<sup>2</sup> Expert Group BRIDGE Review, April 2008

number of UK expressions of interest was lower in volume, they were more serious in intent: in year one of BRIDGE, in England, the conversion rate from expression of interest to the submission of an eligible application was 88%. As a proportion of the English HE sector, the volume of expressions of interest received from England was comparable to that received from Russian HEIs, demonstrating a high level of interest on the UK side.

Figure 3-1: Remit and responsibilities of Expert Group

Acting within the framework established by the Steering Committee, the Expert Group will be responsible for:

- Defining partnership criteria and eligibility criteria
- Preparing bid guidelines and application forms
- Selecting successful bids and presenting these bids to the Steering Committee for their ratification
- Setting monitoring and evaluation measures to be applied to the successful partnerships
- Determining how impact will be measured and partnerships will be evaluated

In broad terms, the HEI bids will be judged against the following criteria:

1. Partnership Management
  - Shows clear management principles and scope for the operation of the partnership
  - Sets clear objectives, targets and measures for the partnership
  - Ensures buy-in at key levels within HEIs
2. Finance
  - Demonstrates viable financial models for partnership and programme development
  - Shows clear need for pump-prime funding to allow the partnership activity to commence
3. Programme Content
  - Addresses sector needs
  - Gives evidence of fit-to-market
4. Quality Assurance and Legislation
  - Demonstrates compatibility with UK systems
  - Compliance with RU and UK legislation
  - Has all agreements formally in place

Source: British Council

## Programme strands

- 3.7 The programme was delivered in various phases, or strands. Below (drawing on committee papers from the British Council) we outline the key elements of each strand.
- 3.8 BRIDGE 1 was restricted to universities that had experience of working with each other. Funding was for Masters courses and was released in March 2005. As these projects reflected the established pattern of British /Russian partnerships, five of the nine Russian partners were in St Petersburg or Moscow, and four of the courses were in Business Studies – a big area of growth at that time.
- 3.9 BRIDGE 2 encouraged applications from institutions with no experience of UK / Russia partnerships, institutions outside St Petersburg and Moscow and for subject areas other than Business<sup>3</sup>. Funding was open to CPD and Bachelor degree course proposals as well as Masters awards. An additional round of funding in autumn 2005 also encouraged CPD applications to assist in repositioning BRIDGE towards CPD awards. BRIDGE 2 saw more terminated projects than other rounds, which may be partly explained by the fact that this was

<sup>3</sup> Year 1 of the project had resulted in a high proportion of MBA programmes receiving funding and the Steering Committee wanted to see a broader subject base for the BRIDGE project. While proposals from the areas of business were not precluded, preference was given to other subject areas.

the first year of funding for partners who had not worked together before receiving BRIDGE funds.

- 3.10 BRIDGE 3 funded 13 projects: nine CPD awards, three Masters and one Bachelor programme. Russian partners outside Moscow and St Petersburg were involved in seven of these partnerships. The range of subjects continued to be broad, covering business studies, management, design and one each in environmental science, engineering, education, and translation.
- 3.11 In the original project plan, BRIDGE 4 was to cover CPD awards only. However, investigations by the BRIDGE Russia project manager working with a Russian expert identified some barriers to CPD awards, so Masters programmes were also funded under Round 4. The number of applications was the highest for any funding round. However, BRIDGE 4 proposals tended to be weaker than those for previous funding rounds and to include fewer new institutions. The view of the British Council at the time was that this might indicate that BRIDGE in its original form had come to a natural conclusion, although it might also reflect external circumstances such as the political situation at the time.
- 3.12 BRIDGE 4 funded two Masters and five CPD projects.

### **Science and Technology**

- 3.13 The BRIDGE Science and Technology strand, delivered over the two years 2006-07 and 2007-08, funded a total of five dual award programmes (two Masters and three CPD projects) and 15 research collaborations. The communications strategy and methods for the Science and Technology strand followed the same pattern as the main BRIDGE programme. In addition, in the UK calls for proposals were advertised by the Research Councils, via their mailbases. British Council Science supported dissemination to their science communities in UK. The Science Team in Moscow also used their networks to disseminate information about the Science and Technology strand.
- 3.14 The main capacity-building event of 2007, a Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) workshop in March 2007, was funded from Science and Technology funds. This was a three-day workshop delivered by the QAA to Russian BRIDGE project managers. It was based on the QAA's training for peer institutional auditors, adapted for the BRIDGE audience. Eleven Russian project managers and expert group members attended the workshop. Five of the participants were involved in research collaboration projects.
- 3.15 The total amount of BRIDGE funding awarded to projects under the Science and Technology strand (including dual awards and research collaboration projects) was £617,662<sup>4</sup>.

### **Funding**

- 3.16 BRIDGE funding was awarded on the following conditions:

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<sup>4</sup> Paper 2, BRIDGE Science & Technology – British Council



- it had to be used to support the development of dual award programmes. All modes of delivery were acceptable, including distance learning and e-learning. At least 70% of course delivery had to take place in Russia
- programmes had to carry appropriate Russian and British qualifications or credits (degrees, diplomas, certificates, CATS credits)
- courses could be taught solely by staff from the Russian partner or jointly with British staff. Where teaching was not shared, students had to have regular contact with British staff
- teaching and assessment could be in either Russian or English, or both. Institutions were responsible for addressing all quality assurance issues
- funding was only be used for developmental costs, defined as:
  - staff development costs (excluding salaries or fees to staff) in agreeing the curriculum, staff training, developing quality assurance systems and in monitoring the success of the course. BRIDGE covered the travel and accommodation costs involved. It was expected that staff development costs would make up most of the bid
  - translation of curriculum material
  - purchase of software, books and journals relevant to partnership development.

3.17 Teaching and administration costs, and costs involved in achieving validation, were not eligible for funding.

3.18 All funds were allocated to the British partners, who were responsible for accounting for expenditure in both countries. This feature of the programme led to significant problems for some partnerships, and we refer to it again later.

3.19 The total funding awarded to all projects was just under £2 million.

## Programme targets

3.20 The overall target for the programme was the creation of 55 university UK-Russia partnership ventures.

3.21 Under the main programme (i.e. excluding the Science & Technology strand) the following targets were set:

- at least five completed dual awards at Masters level, and, where proposed by partner institutions, Bachelor programmes
- at least 15 Masters courses leading to dual awards to be half way through appropriate development and validation procedures

- at least 20 fully developed courses delivering qualifications or CPD at postgraduate level.

3.22 For the Science & Technology strand, the following targets were set:

- at least 5 full award programmes for delivery to students in Russia
- at least 5 CPD programmes developed for delivery to students in Russia
- at least 16 new research links established.

## Support to HEIs and stakeholders

3.23 A full programme of support to institutions in the UK and Russia, and to stakeholders in both countries, was developed and delivered by the British Council. It comprised three main activities, described briefly below.

### **Workshops**

3.24 Workshops were held in both countries throughout the duration of the programme, for several purposes:

- to act as awareness-raising seminars<sup>5</sup>
- to guide HEIs through the application process, in both countries
- to enable successful HEIs to meet during the course of project development and delivery, to share experience and good practice.

3.25 Feedback from participants on all events was very positive. While more participants attended pre-bid workshops from Russia than the UK, the conversion rate from interest to application was significantly higher from UK participants.

### **Capacity-building**

3.26 Some other capacity-building events were also delivered, including study visits to the UK for the Rectors of Russian universities.

### **BRIDGE website**

3.27 Two versions of a BRIDGE website were created (for the UK and for Russia) which would serve over the lifespan of the project and be developed over a number of stages:

- Stage 1 was to provide the basic brokering function and present introductory details of institutions and information around the types of partnerships they were seeking - launched in November 2004

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<sup>5</sup> For example, an awareness raising seminar was held during the BC Education UK exhibition in Moscow for a mixed audience of UK and Russian HEIs. This took advantage of the BC organised Education UK exhibition in Moscow. The seminar proved an excellent opportunity for those Russian universities who did not have a partner in place to establish direct links with their counterparts in the UK.

- Stage 2 was to contain more detailed information for the BRIDGE community around procedures for partnering, frameworks (qualifications frameworks, quality frameworks, etc) - launched in November 2004
- Stage 3 was to contain information on the lessons learned, provide a databank of possible links to experts, together with information from conferences and capacity building events – launched in 2005.

3.28 The website was intended to support one of the aims of the programme,

*to develop a community of innovators in Russia and UK, providing a platform for them to come together to develop internationally recognised collaborative courses and mechanisms for the dissemination of experience and best practice.*

## 4: Institutional and partnership issues

4.1 In this section we look at:

- institutions' rationale for participating in BRIDGE, and the level to which projects secured institutional 'buy-in'
- how partnerships were formed, and what challenges they faced
- the support provided to institutions
- funding issues.

### Institutional motivation and rationale

4.2 Given that institutions were likely to be motivated by different factors depending upon whether they were looking to develop dual award or research projects, we examine their motivation separately in sections 5 and 7 of this report.

4.3 In this section, however, we look at the place of BRIDGE projects across the whole programme within institutions' overall strategies.

4.4 From the start, the Expert Group was aware that projects were less likely to succeed if they were not supported at a high level, and if the institution as a whole had nothing to gain from BRIDGE. In our evaluation research, therefore, we asked HEIs to say whether the BRIDGE project was part of a wider institutional strategy.

Table 4-1: Was the BRIDGE project part of a strategy or a wider development plan in your institution?

<b>UK responses</b>	<b>Dual award projects</b>	<b>Research projects</b>	<b>Total</b>
a) Yes, it was part of a clear strategy	20 (63%)	5 (42%)	25 (57%)
b) It was linked to some other initiatives in our institution	10 (31%)	2 (16%)	12 (27%)
c) No, it was a one-off project	2 (6%)	5 (42%)	7 (16%)
<i>Total UK projects responding</i>	<i>32 (100%)</i>	<i>12 (100%)</i>	<i>44 (100%)</i>
<b>Russian responses</b>	<b>Dual award projects</b>	<b>Research projects</b>	<b>Total</b>
a) Yes, it was part of a clear strategy	32 (100%)	7 (78%)	39 (95%)
b) It was linked to some other initiatives in our institution	-	1 (11%)	1 (2%)
c) No, it was a one-off project	-	1 (11%)	1 (2%)
<i>Total Russian projects responding</i>	<i>32 (100%)</i>	<i>9 (100%)</i>	<i>41 (100%)</i>

Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs

4.5 As we can see from Table 4-1, Russian institutions were significantly more likely than their UK partners to be pursuing BRIDGE as part of a clear institutional strategy. However, it is clear from UK HEIs' more detailed responses that, even if Russia was not specifically referenced in their wider strategy, it was nevertheless understood within their institution that such projects had value and should be pursued.

- 4.6 On both sides, research projects were less likely than dual award projects to be participating in BRIDGE as part of a wider institutional strategy. Research projects were often based upon existing personal links between staff in the two institutions. We encountered one example of a ‘maverick’ research project:

*It would be better if a partnership was founded not because of a private initiative - it does not work. What happened was that one of our postgraduate students (he was preparing his doctoral dissertation) found the announcement about BRIDGE and somehow got engaged with this university in the UK. I don't know exactly what was happening but he was not doing what he was supposed to do in the UK and he was about to miss the deadline for his dissertation so he had to return back to Russia and we had to find him another topic for his dissertation and help to do it in a rush. [Russian HEI]*

- 4.7 We also asked UK respondents to indicate whether partnership with Russia was a part of their institutional strategy at the present time. Five institutions that answered b) or c) in Table 4-1 – that is, where the BRIDGE project had not been part of a wider strategy - reported that, since BRIDGE, partnership with Russia was now specifically included in some form of institutional development plan. In the words of one UK institution,

*Initially it was only continuation of a trend to develop stronger relationships with Eastern European countries. BRIDGE has opened up new opportunities there.*

- 4.8 Conversely, three institutions for which the Russian partnership had been part of their institutional strategy reported that, since BRIDGE, partnership with Russia was no longer part of their strategy. In one case this was due to an incoming Vice-Chancellor deciding that working with Russia was ‘too much like hard work’, bringing great personal disappointment to the UK project manager and causing huge offence to the Russian HEI (we heard at first hand from the Russian partners about how disrespectfully they were treated during a visit to the UK).

## Partnership issues

### ***How partners found each other***

- 4.9 The first strand of BRIDGE was restricted to universities that had prior experience of working together – that is, existing UK-Russia partnerships. Subsequent strands of the programme sought to engage a wider range of institutions, with no requirement for them to have previous experience in UK-Russia partnership.
- 4.10 As we have mentioned, the support structures set up by the British Council included a number of events to promote BRIDGE to institutions in both countries, plus a website (versions in English and Russian) that would, amongst other things, assist in the process of brokering new partnerships.
- 4.11 The British Council, and by extension the Expert Group, had a role in introducing potential partners to each other, but we have not found any evidence of what might be termed ‘forced’ partnerships – indeed, this would have been quite counter-productive. Partners found each

other in various ways, and for various reasons. In many cases there were informal links between individual staff, which BRIDGE was able to formalise and develop. In some cases, an institution would make a direct approach to a university in the partner country because it appeared to have a strong shared interest or a strong reputation in a particular field.

### **Communication**

- 4.12 As might be expected, communication between UK and Russian partners was not always problem-free. The language barrier was an obvious challenge, though on the whole partnerships appeared to overcome this with comparative ease.
- 4.13 In our interviews and survey of HEIs we heard numerous grumbles about partners being poor communicators, leaving emails unanswered for weeks at a time or never being available by telephone. UK partners appeared to feel that this was a particularly Russian problem; however, we encountered an equal number of complaints on the Russian side about British partners not communicating regularly.

### **Financial arrangements**

- 4.14 A major source of frustration and inconvenience for all concerned was that BRIDGE funding was allocated to the UK partners – despite the fact that a large proportion of the overall expense was incurred on the Russian side. The decision to do this was taken on the reasonable grounds of transparency and accountability, but in practice it caused many problems for partnerships.
- 4.15 The following summary of the various financial obstacles, and suggested solutions, was drawn up by project managers at a workshop in 2007. It neatly summarises all the issues we ourselves heard about during our interviews with UK and Russian project managers.

Figure 4-1: Financial problems encountered by partnerships

#### **Obstacles arising from UK University finance departments**

- UK partnership managers obliged to advance large project costs from their personal resources, followed by long delays/disputes over reimbursement
- UK universities unwilling to make cash payments to Russian staff for tickets and other costs incurred in travelling to the UK
- UK universities insisting on bank transfer payments to Russian institutions/partners which are then subsequently lost or disputed
- Requiring formal receipts for all items of expenditure, when receipting for everyday items (e.g. taxis) is a rarity in Russia.

#### **Solutions included**

- the use of project or other credit cards to advance purchase on-line tickets for partners which could then be collected in Russia
- the use of cash advances where large expenditures are expected
- pro-forma receipts which can be stamped by partner institutions
- use of cash machines in Russia to avoid carrying large sums of cash
- transfer payments to accounts held in countries other than Russia (common for interpreters and translators)
- exchange of staff from the finance departments to facilitate mutual understanding.

Source: British Council note from project managers' workshop, October 2007

- 4.16 It is widely recognised that project management and accounting systems are less developed in Russia, and no doubt the sponsor organisation felt it was less risky to ask the UK partners to account for all project expenditure. However, British Council Russia had already had several years' experience of managing other, smaller scale UK-Russia education projects, and in

those cases money had been allocated directly to the Russian partner – with apparently few associated problems.

- 4.17 Generally there were few complaints about the allocation of funding, although one UK institution commented that,

*the money should have been more equally divided. [Our institution] has been open and shared our intellectual property, validated the courses, etc but yet most of the money has been dedicated for the Russian partners. We could have used some money to purchase another laptop for teaching and managing the collaboration.*

### **Travel**

- 4.18 Travel between the UK and Moscow / St Petersburg is relatively cheap and quick. Clearly, the same cannot be said for travel between the UK and Vladivostok. The decision to make sure that BRIDGE attracted institutions from across the whole of Russia was, we believe, a wise one – but it did create inevitable challenges for particular projects.
- 4.19 A further problem was the difficulties experienced by Russian staff in securing visas to travel to the UK. This could be the subject of a report in its own right, but it has already been well documented in British Council reports and minutes, and for the purposes of this report we will simply mention it in passing.

### **Support**

- 4.20 In our interviews and surveys we found a strong consensus amongst UK and Russian institutions that the support structures set up by the British Council were effective, as illustrated by the following comments:

*The support from the British Council, especially British Council in the UK has been instrumental in making our BRIDGE projects successful. I believe the whole BRIDGE programme was excellently managed by the British Council. Perhaps it could have done even better with a more generous allocation of resources. [UK HEI]*

*The programme was very well structured and delivered. The application form was well designed: all the questions were absolutely relevant, simple and precise - and therefore easy to answer. The whole process was very well organised, and we only had to wait a month or so to hear the result of our bid. The Bridge website was very informative; it provided everything you could want - guidance, application forms, advice, etc - and there was always someone helpful at the end of the phone in the British Council if you needed them. [Russian HEI]*

- 4.21 In particular, we heard that the project managers' workshops in the UK and Russia were an important and useful means of sharing experience. These workshops played a vital role in reassuring project managers that the difficulties they were facing – whether in terms of course validation or transferring money – were common to many other institutions too.

## Funding

### **Level of financial support**

- 4.22 The maximum award for an individual project was £58,000 over three years, and the minimum was £15,000 for one year, for a CPD course. Funding was intended as pump prime or seedcorn funding.
- 4.23 We asked UK institutions to comment on whether the level of funding allocated to them was sufficient to achieve their objectives.

Table 4-2: With regard to the level of funding, please indicate which of the following statements you agree with the most closely

	Dual award	Research	Total
More than enough to meet our objectives	0	0	0
Just about sufficient to meet our objectives	32 (94%)	11 (85%)	43 (91%)
Not enough to meet our objectives	2 (6%)	2 (15%)	4 (9%)
<i>Total UK project responses</i>	<i>34 (100%)</i>	<i>13 (100%)</i>	<i>47 (100%)</i>

Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs

- 4.24 The strong consensus amongst projects was that the funding available was ‘just about enough’ to meet their objectives. Only a small minority of projects reported that the level of funding was insufficient to do what they set out to achieve, and research projects were more likely to feel this.
- 4.25 Perhaps not surprisingly, no institution reported that the level of funding had been ‘more than enough’. However, it is worth noting that a small number of projects had to return some of their funds to the British Council as they had not been able to spend them during the project lifetime. This was not necessarily due to the partnership being unsuccessful. In one case, the UK institution had devoted significantly more staff time to the project than was warranted by the level of funding, but had not incurred enough eligible expenditure under the terms of the programme.

Table 4-3: Did the level of BRIDGE funding constrain your partnership in any way?

	Dual award	Research	Total
Yes, a lot	0	1	1
Yes, slightly	13	2	15
No, not really	19	9	28
<i>Total UK project responses</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>44</i>

Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs

- 4.26 We asked UK respondents to identify whether the level of funding had constrained their project in any way (Table 4-3, above). Of all 44 projects that responded, only one (a research project) felt that ‘a lot’ of constraint was put upon the partnership as a result of insufficient funding.
- 4.27 In Figure 4-2 (below) we present some of their more detailed responses. The majority of comments relate to what was, and what was not, regarded as eligible expenditure. In this context staff time, resources and equipment were identified as some of the key areas where it would have been helpful to have had additional funding support.



Figure 4-2: Did the level of BRIDGE funding constrain your partnership in any way?

**Sample responses from UK projects**

*Dual award projects:*

- One constraint was the fact that funding did not release staff time. It would have been beneficial to have been able to spend more time with our Russian colleagues in developing closer connectivity and understanding.
- Student registration fees are not allowed to be charged to the BRIDGE budget so they had to be paid from the UK university's own budgets. The project was useful to establish the project and relationships, despite the fact that staff time is not paid for.
- The problem wasn't so much the amount of funding (we actually handed back £10K at the end of the project) but the way you were allowed to spend it. In particular, you weren't allowed to use it to cover staff time, which is what we really needed. The criteria for spending the grant were too strict, we would have liked more flexibility.
- The money was directed towards travel, meetings and curriculum development but we did not have that much money left for supporting the infrastructure there, so no money for buying books for the library or to do more staff development. We could have used more time on staff development on learning and teaching approaches.
- Because we decided that we would make it a success, we added to it so we were not constrained by the budget given by BRIDGE. However, the small amount of funding made us think about future projects and the level of funding we require if we want to make them work.
- With more funding, the staff from UK could have jointly spent more time to explore the local market and explore ways of exploiting the market there.
- The project could have been of higher academic quality – e.g. could have been a Masters course, not a one year CPD course, had there been more money.
- The Russian partners probably put more time and effort than we did, judging by the number of people they had working on this, so they were investing in it themselves to make sure they got all that they needed.
- It would have been better if BRIDGE funding could also have contributed to student fees and maintenance costs.

*Research projects:*

- We managed to develop good research with very competent and energetic Russian colleagues and a lasting collaboration. Of course the funding level could always have been higher but it was possible to collaborate and publish within the level of funding awarded.
- We managed but it was at times difficult to run a research project without a budget for equipment (equipment purchase was not allowed under the terms of the grant).
- It was better than nothing! But the partners agreed from the start that the research project was so interesting that we would both invest our own resources in it in addition to the BRIDGE funding. BRIDGE paid for exchange visits, but we bought the necessary hardware / equipment ourselves.
- Because of the consumables expenses [not covered by BRIDGE], we designed less ambitious experiments.
- The limited BRIDGE funding was alleviated by strong corporate support following the BRIDGE project period. However, this cannot be always expected to be available and sustainable for all projects and partners involved.

*Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs*

4.28 In our meetings with Russian institutions we heard comments that echoed some of those expressed by the UK partners. However, Russian partners were generally less concerned about the lack of funding to cover staff time (Russian educational staff are used to putting in long hours of personal time in order to see projects through), and more concerned about the lack of funding to cover student fees. Of course, it was never the intention that BRIDGE should act as some kind of 'scholarship' fund to pay for students' fees - its role was to fund the development of courses and get them to delivery stage – but this was a source of regret to several partnerships.

## 5: Dual awards: the experience of HEIs

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### Introduction

5.1 In this section we explore:

- institutions' motivation for participating in BRIDGE, and the extent to which projects received support from senior management
- the process of developing and validating courses (including initial assessment of demand, how UK and Russian partners worked together on curriculum development, and what obstacles were encountered)
- the tangible results arising from BRIDGE (including courses up and running, spin-off activities and new approaches to teaching and assessment).

5.2 This section relates specifically to dual award partnerships, which were likely to face different circumstances and challenges to those faced by research projects (whose experience is described in section 7).

Figure 5-1: St Petersburg State Polytechnical University



Source: SQW

### Motivation and institutional buy-in

5.3 We asked UK and Russian projects to provide an indication of why they decided to participate in the BRIDGE programme. Their views are presented in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1: What made your institution decide to participate in BRIDGE?

Factor	Count (UK)	Count (Russian)
To access funding	22 (65%)	17 (50%)
Gain higher profile/reputation for our institution	22 (65%)	28 (82%)
Access new markets	20 (59%)	N/A
Provide development opportunities for staff	17 (50%)	26 (76%)
Learn more about Russian / UK education system	16 (47%)	21 (62%)
Recruit new students	15 (44%)	29 (85%)
Develop subject areas that are new to Russian higher education	14 (41%)	21 (62%)
Gain experience in collaborative partnerships	14 (41%)	23 (68%)
Pursue research agenda	12 (35%)	13 (38%)
Other	12 (35%)	8 (24%)
Response to student demand	8 (24%)	N/A
Income generation	8 (24%)	13 (38%)
Be able to provide students with transferable qualifications	N/A	27 (79%)
Gain useful experience to help more forwards within Bologna Process	N/A	27 (79%)
<i>Total dual award projects responding</i>	<i>N = 34</i>	<i>N = 34</i>

Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs

Figure 5-2: St Petersburg State University of Technology & Design



Source: SQW

- 5.4 There are some interesting variations in motivating factors between the UK and Russia. On the UK side, the main motivating factors concerned access to funding and gaining a higher institutional reputation. On the Russian side, the recruitment of new students was the most frequently cited motivation, followed by institutional reputation.
- 5.5 The opportunity for staff development figured more highly in Russian HEIs' decision to take part than on the UK side. Likewise, Russian HEIs were more likely than their UK partners to be motivated by gaining experience in collaborative partnerships. UK institutions were more likely to have considerable experience of developing other collaborative provision, both in the UK or internationally.
- 5.6 The members of the Expert Group, when advising projects during the bid development stage, were conscious of the need to ensure that projects received support at the highest level. Members of the group recognised that projects had less chance of being self-sustaining if institutional support was not secured.
- 5.7 During our research we asked project leaders on both sides to say whether their project had received active support from their senior management.

Table 5-2: Was the BRIDGE project actively supported by the senior management of your institution?

Support for dual award projects	UK HEIs	Russian HEIs
Yes, it was actively supported at a high level all the way through the project	25 (76%)	23 (70%)
It was supported at a high level at the beginning of the project, but this support was not maintained throughout	2 (6%)	10 (30%)
It received some support from senior managers	6 (18%)	0
No, it was not actively supported	0	0
Other	0	0
<i>Total dual award projects responding</i>	<i>N = 33</i>	<i>N = 33</i>

Source: SQW

- 5.8 As we can see from Table 5-2 above, a high level of senior management buy-in was secured across the programme. Interestingly, Russian staff were more likely than their UK partners to see this high level support tailing off as projects progressed. This was generally due to the arrival, mid-way through the project, of a new (less supportive) Rector or senior management team in the Russian university. Similar circumstances occurred on the UK side.
- 5.9 One UK respondent noted with some regret the lack of institutional support received:

*Ideally I would have liked to have more overt high level support. For example, we visited another UK BRIDGE institution where this kind of support was evident: the VC came to speak to the group, they had Russian students and Russian speaking staff there greeting their visitors, they had brochures of previous links to Russia - so altogether, it was very obvious that they were taking it seriously. I could have asked for more support and made it more high profile within our university, but in the tightening financial climate I was worried that I would attract more attention in terms of having to justify my use of time on the project. [UK HEI]*

## Course development

### ***Understanding the demand***

- 5.10 An important part of course development is understanding whether there is demand for it, both amongst potential students and potential employers of those students. There is little point in developing a course without such understanding. Many UK education institutions are well experienced in assessing employer demand, but it is a relatively new concept in Russia where the supply-side economy held sway for so long.
- 5.11 We asked UK and Russian partners to say whether at the start of their venture they were confident of employer demand for the new course. We did not obtain many paired responses, but in Table 5-3 we present those that we did receive.

Table 5-3: Would you say you had a good understanding, at the start of the project, of the market for your course amongst employers in the UK and Russia - i.e. were you confident that there was demand for the course? [Sample of paired responses]

<b>Project</b>	<b>Response from Russian partner</b>	<b>Response from UK partner</b>
CPD Product Design & Innovation	Yes there was [evidence of demand]. When we first contacted them, we had no proof of demand so we surveyed students and industry about the potential demand for courses. The results we received were more positive than expected and showed even greater demand than we initially hoped for. We also talked to regional authorities. Our program of additional professional education is relevant up to now and we are going to include it in the academic process of our Corporate Institute.	At first we were not sure if there was demand as our experience was based on the heavy industries of Ukraine which are actually quite different. In Russia it was more about high technology industries like specialised glass equipment and automotive. But there seemed to be good demand based on the surveys that our Russian partner did. The results were positive and it was perceived well. On the first course we had a large proportion of pupils who were from outside the University, so mainly from companies.
MSc Fire Safety for Oil & Gas Industry	Yes, we approached oil and gas companies and received letters of support from them.	Yes the course was developed to meet existing demand. This became evidence through the contact they had with their partner as well as the industry in the area.
CPD Business Management	Yes, many businesses in our city are orientated to international markets, so the course was going to be on demand. Moreover, we approached our colleagues from Vladivostok and Khabarovsk universities, and they said there might be interest in their cities as well.	There was demand from some employers and there is evidence of that. However, the economic situation has played to it and the isolation of the place means that it is dependent on very local demand. Once this disappears, there is little ability to expand and exploit other neighbouring areas.
MBA	This course was started on the initiative of our senior management. It was a fashionable idea in early 2000 to open business schools, offer MBAs, etc. There is very little demand from employers. For most of students it is their personal individual initiative; they've heard about the programme or talked to students from the first cohort. Some students work for international companies (6 of 26), for them it's slightly different as their bosses are interested in their professional development	The Russian partner is located in the third most prosperous region due to oil, so they have large companies (TNKBP, Gazprom etc) who know the value of MBAs and what it brings to them. In other areas the need might be less evident for the businesses
MA English Language Teaching	Yes, there was a great demand for EL teachers in 2006. Unfortunately, because of the [economic] crisis the situation has changed dramatically, all schools are staffed now.	We relied on our Russian partner's assessment and they believed their assessment was realistic. It is likely that once they have graduates from the course it will be easier to market the course locally and having the MA title will also help for employers to be more interested.

Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs

- 5.12 The majority of UK institutions were reliant upon their Russian partner having a good understanding of local employer demand for the new courses. Russian HEIs often had a good understanding of what they thought the demand *ought* to be for their course, but in many cases this was not borne out in reality. There were several examples of projects where employer demand was clear, but students were not interested in enrolling.
- 5.13 Labour market analysis is still a comparatively new concept for the Russian education system. One Russian institution noted that they were taking this forward in a new project following on from BRIDGE:

*Our TEMPUS project is focused on researching mechanisms of co-operation between universities and the labour market and how universities can adjust their work in order to meet labour market demands; how to overcome the demographic situation (lack of students) - and this project incorporates the results of our BRIDGE project. [Russian regional HEI]*

- 5.14 We asked Russian HEIs to tell us whether they had established better links with industry as a result of their BRIDGE experience. There were some disappointments, as illustrated in the following examples:

*We were trying to engage business, make contacts; but it turned out that business was not ready for this programme. In the regions they know very little about MBAs. Moreover, businesses are not interested in improving the professional qualifications of their staff. This is why we have had problems with enrolment. However, I believe that the involvement of business is important and we should keep trying. [Russian regional HEI]*

*We tried but it was a disappointing experience. They were not interested, although we had expected they would be. Businesses do not understand the meaning of this programme, they are very practical. They see only the short-term disadvantages - they will have to allow their staff to spend some time on the course, etc - and they cannot see the potential long-term profit and advantages. Perhaps this is our fault - we don't know how to sell these products. We do not have real marketing skills; and these are special skills. All our students were individuals who wanted the course for themselves; we had no one sent by an employer. [Russian regional HEI]*

- 5.15 Others have been more successful, as indicated by these responses from three separate HEIs in the regions:

*The target group for this course is people who are already in employment, and this has been a catalyst for the development of closer relationships with business. The students/participants themselves have involved local businesses in round table discussions as part of their course [Russian regional HEI]*

*We have founded a Consortium for Regional Innovation Development Support. The Consortium consists of 10 leading industries in the region and our university. We have signed an agreement on strategic partnership. We have taken some steps to jointly improve the quality of education in order to meet employers' requirements. We have also been building bilateral relations between the university and industries; we do it by creating research-and-production centres (two have been already created, the third is being created). [Russian regional HEI]*

*Together with Avtopribor Ltd we have created an internal corporate training centre where we train specialists for them with the active participation of Avtopribor staff as trainers. [Russian regional HEI]*

### **How were courses designed?**

- 5.16 As the British Council's interim evaluation report<sup>6</sup> described, the creation of new Masters courses carrying awards from each partner proved to be particularly challenging. It involved developing curricula by beginning with defining outcomes - something unfamiliar to many Russian institutions - and using assessment methods that measure whether these outcomes had been achieved, again a new concept for most Russian institutions. All of this required considerable academic staff time in understanding the philosophies of their partner's educational system and in developing the course. This often came at a significant cost, which had generally not been anticipated by the institution and had to be funded from institutions' own resources. Dual awards also required a substantial input from administrative staff, particularly on the UK side from those carrying out institutional quality assurance procedures. Many Russian partners encountered for the first time the quality assurance practices of their UK partners. In the words of the interim evaluation<sup>7</sup>, the UK systems often seemed "over-elaborate, inflexible and cumbersome".
- 5.17 The methods employed by partnerships when developing dual awards tended to follow similar lines: two-way study visits for staff between the two countries, including the delivery of workshops on particular themes and the opportunity to observe classes taking place; provision of UK quality assurance materials to act as guides or templates; and regular contact in between visits. Some examples of UK responses are given in Figure 5-3, to provide a flavour of the kind of co-operation that took place during the development process.

Figure 5-3: Please describe how you worked with your partner institution to develop the course

#### **Sample responses from UK HEIs:**

- There were meetings on both sides and visits in both directions. The main strategy was talking about the curriculum and talking about the employment side and what it is that they need in Russia to satisfy the market need for professional designers. We did a lot of staff development relating to assessment design and teaching. We then had additional communication via email to gradually develop the course content. Resource planning was also a major activity. Our Russian partners came over to look at resources in the UK and then established the scale of their resource needs. They also had discussions with administrative staff to understand how administration and registration etc is handled. As a result, on their return they started arranging a library and employed someone to take care of it. Our Russian partners had also recently moved into a new building so we worked with them to figure out what should be there, what kind of health and safety issues needed to be looked at.
- A team of five Russian staff visited us for a month; they received training, got to understand the library and other resources, came to staff meetings, observed teaching and assessment, learned about QA and validation, etc. Also a team of our staff visited Russia to deliver familiarisation sessions. Everything was disseminated within the institution. We also provided a wealth of documentation (policies, module specifications, etc) to help the Russians design their own course. All of this was provided in English, as the Russian team members spoke excellent English and language barriers were not a problem.
- Exploratory visit first, then structured visits in both directions for the purposes of observation and familiarisation. Workshops were delivered by our academic staff, Academic Office, Quality Assurance people, etc. Materials (e.g. QA guidelines, module guidance, etc) were provided. All of this was done in English – no language problems on the Russian side.
- There were several visits by administrators from the Russian partner institutions, those concerned with the practical aspects of programme management and quality assurance. They had presentations and discussions with their equivalents in our institution. As a result they got to know not only our institution but also extended their professional knowledge about UK experience of the kinds of systems that they were now themselves implementing. In other words, the secret was to involve the relevant University bureaucrats from the beginning, and in a positive way enabling early identification and solution of potential problems.

Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs

<sup>6</sup> British Council (April 2008), Interim Review of the BRIDGE project

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

- 5.18 In Russia we encountered a good example of maximising staff development opportunities during the project development phase. Urals State University of Economics (USUE) was the only Russian BRIDGE institution to have three projects, each with a different UK partner. USUE ensured that whenever a representative from any of the three UK institutions came to deliver a workshop or masterclass, this was made available to all USUE staff participating in any of the three projects. In this way they gained maximum value for money from BRIDGE, as learning and experience were shared across all three projects, and over a period of years all staff in USUE received some form of development thanks to BRIDGE. USUE has embedded all the various competences that staff have gained during the development of the programme.

Figure 5-4: Urals State University of Economics, Yekaterinburg



Source: SQW

### **Masters and CPD courses**

- 5.19 Initially, the expectation had been that many partnerships would begin with CPD projects and then develop the course into a full award when the partnership was established. In the event, this was rare.
- 5.20 To provide some examples, the University of Leicester and Herzen State Pedagogical University began with a CPD course in BRIDGE 2. The course was worth one-third of a British Masters course. They then applied for funding in BRIDGE 3 to develop this into a full Masters. The University of Northampton and Moscow State Aviation Technology University also received funding from BRIDGE 2 for a CPD course worth two-thirds of a British Masters and then applied to BRIDGE 4 for funding to upgrade it to a full Masters. The reverse happened with one project where the partners began with a full award course and then developed spin-off CPD courses. In this instance, the University of Hertfordshire and the British School of Art and Design were funded in BRIDGE 2 to develop a Bachelors degree in design and then were funded in BRIDGE 3 for a CPD project.



- 5.21 Most CPD courses are, however, “stand alone” and are not being developed into Masters programmes. Some have a postgraduate award, for example Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma, while others lead to a certificate of course completion which has a credit value based on the amount of study involved.

## What were the barriers

- 5.22 Our interviews and surveys have confirmed the findings of the internal evaluation that was completed by the Expert Group<sup>8</sup>. A number of challenges, which in some cases were insuperable, faced BRIDGE projects. In particular, there were problems with:

- quality assurance and validation processes - several partnerships had difficulty in meeting the demands of two different validation and accreditation systems
- recruitment for BRIDGE courses: problems with realistic assessment of demand, setting of realistic fee levels and with marketing meant that many courses did not reach original targets for recruitment
- financial management, including reaching agreement over division of fee income, setting realistic fee levels and transfer of funds to Russia.

- 5.23 Below we look at some of these issues in more detail.

### **Quality assurance and validation**

- 5.24 The concept of validation does not exist in Russia, where instead courses have to be ‘accredited’ by the Ministry of Education. From the Russian side, the accreditation of BRIDGE courses was relatively straightforward: the Ministry of Education regulations define courses in terms of content and study hours, and the Ministry confirms that these requirements are being met when the course begins.
- 5.25 From the British side, things are more complicated. For most institutions, validation is in two parts: course validation and institutional validation. The institution itself approves the course proposal and this is relatively straightforward. The British members of the BRIDGE project teams were familiar with the process; they prepared the relevant documentation and steered it through the institution’s approval process.
- 5.26 Institutional validation in the UK is, however, more complex. The validation is for the British institution to satisfy itself that the Russian partner is able and competent to deliver a course carrying an award from the British institution to the standards that British partner would apply to itself. The procedures for most institutions (if not all) closely follow the code of practice produced by the UK’s Quality Assurance Agency and involve the production of detailed supporting documentation and a formal visit by the British partner to the Russian institution, after which the British institution will decide whether to approve the Russian partner.
- 5.27 One Russian project leader commented on the difficulty in conceptualising the UK approach:

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<sup>8</sup> British Council (April 2008), Interim Review of the BRIDGE project

*The UK quality assurance system is like a chain: if you take one link away, it falls apart. The Russian mentality doesn't allow people here to understand how that can be so! [Russian regional HEI ]*

- 5.28 For the British partner, the institutional validation is a major hurdle which must be cleared. Partnerships which involve an overseas partner delivering a course carrying a British qualification and with little or no input from the British partner are seen as potentially high risk, and the British institution will want to be sure that its approval procedures have been properly followed.
- 5.29 As the internal evaluation report indicated<sup>9</sup>, this emphasis on validation under the British approach had an effect on some projects:
- since the Russian partners were unfamiliar with the process, time had to be spent by the partners in preparing the documentation and preparing the Russian staff for the audit visit. In some cases, this involved holding 'dress rehearsals'
  - in some partnerships, the time involved affected the completion of course design. Delays in completing validation also had a knock-on effect with marketing, since the British award could not be guaranteed for the course until validation was satisfactorily completed
  - there is some anecdotal evidence that Russian partners felt insulted that validation was necessary
  - one Russian institution had to undergo separate validation by two British partners, each validation covering a great deal of the same ground.

### **Marketing and recruitment**

- 5.30 Marketing courses to students, setting course fees and recruiting students have been a major area of weakness for many BRIDGE projects.
- 5.31 Several projects have been terminated because of marketing difficulties and others are dependent on sponsors being found. The need for sponsorship is important for courses aimed at students working in the public sector, who will be unable to afford viable course fees. (There are several examples of private sector sponsorship being found to support individual students, generally in science and technology courses.) Some projects that did not rely on sponsorship have had to restructure the finances for their course, when it became apparent that the original projected course fees were too expensive for the intended student market.
- 5.32 Here we return to the issue of the reliability of the market projections undertaken by the projects. This was largely done by the Russian partner and it is something that the British partner usually had to take on trust. With hindsight, it is clear that the British institutions, which generally have more marketing experience, should have become more closely involved in both their Russian partners' market research and in the development of marketing plans. This would also have given the British partners a better idea of what level of fees would be realistic for each region. As things have transpired, the setting of fee levels should be the joint

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<sup>9</sup> British Council (April 2008), Interim Review of the BRIDGE project

decision of both partners; the imposition of fee levels on the Russian partner has caused huge problems for many projects.

5.33 A UK project managers' workshop facilitated by the British Council in 2007 noted that,

*Those present thought it essential to get early agreement about the overall price that the Russian partners would be expected to pay. There was however a very wide variation between UK universities in their approach to covering costs, with at one extreme finance departments demanding full cost recovery plus profits, which would often then lead to unviable recruitment for the new programmes, and at the other an almost pro bono approach relying on the goodwill, commitment and interest of UK staff and their departments, but better recruitment and relationships.*

5.34 Attendees at the workshop summarised the various challenges, and some possible solutions, as set out in Figure 5-5.

Figure 5-5: Marketing and recruitment

<p><b>Challenges:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaching a break-even point, i.e. enrolling sufficient numbers at a fee the market can bear</li> <li>• Language, where parts of the course will be delivered in English</li> <li>• For programmes aimed at the public sector or other sectors where potential students will not be able to pay for themselves, raising sponsorship from employers</li> <li>• Need seed corn funding until the course is established</li> <li>• May only be able to recruit fewer than target numbers for the first year, and so run into problems with the finance office</li> </ul> <p><b>Suggested solutions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep fees as low as possible for the first cohort. For the next cohort, the course will be easier to market. It will be seen as real and credible and there will be more interest and trust.</li> <li>• As with all potential problems, gain goodwill of institutions early on in project</li> <li>• Helps if the partnership is running a critical mass of programmes</li> <li>• Help Russian partners e.g. the design team in UK can help to design leaflets, if possible help with cost of marketing too</li> <li>• Public lectures or a mini lecture series offered by UK partners. This also depends on good marketing and organisation in Russia – the BC might be able to help</li> <li>• Use networks, employers organisations etc to raise profile of project</li> <li>• Marketing open days</li> <li>• Press advertisements</li> <li>• Highlight the advantages of the course to students, if possible e.g. better job prospects, more international mobility</li> </ul>
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Source: British Council minute from UK project managers' meeting on 30 October 2007

5.35 The project managers at the workshop concluded that,

*the best marketing is through alumni. If the course is good, marketing will be much easier once the first cohort has graduated. This means persuading institutions to accept lower fees for the first cohort.*

5.36 Our interviews with Russian institutions and students/participants found that a recommendation from a BRIDGE alumnus was indeed an effective means of marketing, and many such recommendations were converted into actual recruitment.

5.37 We were interested to find out what Russian institutions had learned about marketing as a result of their experience. Some sample responses are highlighted in Figure 5-6.

Figure 5-6: Have you developed new marketing strategies to promote your course/s to students and employers?

Sample responses from HEIs in Sochi, Tyumen, Penza and two in Yekaterinburg [presented in no particular order]:

- We were very actively using publications in the professional press (i.e. journals such as Director, National Business, etc); hotline on regional TV; we held an Open Day for our programme (as opposed to a general Open Day for the whole university).
- Marketing strategies include informing interested people (senior students, graduates, industries) through various mass-media (newspapers, radio, TV) as well as through relevant organisations (Commodity Producers and Employers Association, Chamber of Commerce, In-Service Training Institute, etc).
- We have published brochures, we created flyers and presentations. Unfortunately, we did not have special money for a promotional campaign; our senior managers didn't release any funds for this.
- This kind of course needs to be marketed in a different way from other similar courses. Yekaterinburg is comparatively rich for a regional city, but the market has been 'spoiled' - there is a wealth of high profile, well-advertised courses on offer but the quality of most of them are very poor. Top quality courses such as the BRIDGE Masters degree will need to be carefully marketed to ensure that employers understand their value.
- Advertising in popular mass-media does not have any effect. In order to promote our university to the market we organised a special meeting at the City Administration premises (a very prestigious venue) and invited businesses, and several people expressed their willingness to enrol. But then the fee for the course was set too high, and the economic crisis hit, so in the end none of them enrolled.

Source: SQW interviews and survey of institutions

- 5.38 We found in our interviews that Russian HEIs' approach to the marketing of Masters courses relies primarily on promoting these to undergraduate students who are already enrolled within the institution: a very high reliance upon the 'captive audience' of existing students appears to be the norm. There appears to be very little tradition or experience of marketing such courses more widely. We found very little evidence of BRIDGE succeeding in breaking down this mindset.

### **Language issues**

- 5.39 The BRIDGE Steering Committee had been clear that use of the English language should not necessarily be a barrier to the successful development and delivery of courses, and that the QAA's guidelines did not preclude courses being delivered and assessed in Russian. However, the British Council's own review of BRIDGE identified the use of the English language as a potential barrier for partnerships, particularly the extent to which the British institutions would require teaching and assessment to be in English in order to comply with their quality assurance procedures.
- 5.40 In the event, this issue was resolved by most projects. In the case of dual award courses, many British universities were prepared to accept all teaching and assessment in Russian, relying on the use of bi-lingual external examiners and samples of work translated into English to assure quality. Most of the other British institutions are accepting teaching in Russian and assessment in English.
- 5.41 However, several UK institutions insisted to their Russian partners that the language of instruction and assessment must be English. One such institution commented as follows:

*English language has been an issue. The programme is assessed in English, and staff development to improve Russian teachers' language skills has taken place. However, staff were generally not confident in speaking English, so discussions were protracted due to the need for translation. Initial difficulty in explaining QA mechanisms effectively.*

*Another point made was about the coursework not always being presented in English. We have been firm with our partner that coursework has to be done in English, as that is in the terms of the validation, but it seems like last year some of the essay work had not been in English. When we were visiting there, the students asked whether could write their assignments in Russian and then translate them, but we tried to emphasise that this is not what the course is about. This issue is probably just due to shyness rather than lack of skills. We have had discussion about including IELTS tests as part of the course selection criteria but this is not possible at the moment as the BC office in St Petersburg is now closed. However, the teaching that we have witnessed has been impressive in terms of the level of English they use. There was one unplanned visit by a UK colleague to a lecture, and they were really impressed. [UK HEI]*

- 5.42 As a broad generalisation, in Moscow and St Petersburg there is a very high proportion of English-speaking students and teaching staff. This is not the case in other regions of Russia, where many BRIDGE projects struggled due to their inability to find tutors to deliver courses in English.
- 5.43 In our own research we found indications that the recruitment to some courses has been affected by the levels of English needed.

## Teaching and assessment

- 5.44 The UK approach to teaching and assessment is entirely different from the traditional Russian approach. The UK approach is closer to Bologna requirements, and BRIDGE courses reflected a move in this direction. We asked Russian HEIs to describe what changes they had made to their teaching and assessment as a result of their BRIDGE experience. The following examples are illustrative of the responses:

*There are changes in the assessment of students as well as in the principles and practice of teaching of foreign languages. In particular, we learned from our partners, and then introduced, one-to-one teaching which is recorded, and students are able to observe their own teaching behaviour. It is very useful for them - they can observe and analyse. One of our teaching staff has started using it in her own course. Another important change is a move away from oral exams to written tests and essays, and principles and criteria for their assessment. [Russian regional HEI]*

*British assessment is done on a scale which didn't exist in Russia; this UK approach is more transparent, and we have now introduced it - and our Russian teachers like it. Also, the UK lecturers gave seminars to Russian staff on how to make classes more interactive (including icebreaker games, etc); some of this has now been introduced. There is now more emphasis on independent study; until now Russian students haven't been used to reading and doing their own learning at home. [Russian HEI, St Petersburg]*

*We started using more actively innovative teaching methods (simulation, case study, live projects). We have been paying more attention to practical side of teaching/training. We started using work books, and for many of our teaching staff it was a completely new experience. [Russian regional HEI]*

- 5.45 Many projects have had to reduce the planned teaching input from the British partner. This is for financial reasons because of the costs involved in bringing staff to Russia. British input is now largely through distance learning, or through guest lectures when staff are visiting Russia for quality assurance reasons. The scaling down of British teaching involvement places a greater burden on the Russian teaching staff and has made staff induction a key part of course planning. Many projects have brought Russian staff to the UK to observe teaching and assessment methods (see Figure 5-7 for an illustrative example).

Figure 5-7: What changes have you made to your teaching and assessment as a result of BRIDGE?

'Our staff who visited the UK and observed our partner institution's style of teaching have adopted various aspects of their style. One particular example is the use of case studies. The Russian teachers have brought this approach into their teaching; they have learned how to develop a case study and how to get students to work on it, what questions to ask, etc. It was also useful to see how the UK teachers behaved in class, and how the students reacted with each other: for example, sometimes debates would arise between students, and the UK teacher would put them together to argue their respective case. The Russian staff also learned a lot about making presentations, and how best to use PowerPoint - i.e. not just cramming slides with endless text, but including pictures and other visual aids to make a point and to engage the audience rather than bore them. The Russian teachers also liked the idea of students having to complete a 'learning diary', whereby they have to summarise and analyse their experience from classes throughout the duration of a module; they liked it because it makes the student concentrate more in classes (because they have to note their observations afterwards), and it makes them think hard all the way through the course, not just before the exam. In our partner institution the learning diary carries a lot of weight - it comprises 50% of marks - but this would not be admissible in the Russian system of assessment. Nonetheless the Russian teachers are planning to introduce the concept of the learning diary, which may constitute, say, 20% of the marks. It's important to note that visitors from our UK partner institution also learned from observing the Russian teaching style; the learning in the BRIDGE partnership wasn't just one-way. The UK staff were impressed by the Russian students, whom they found to be intellectually curious and not afraid of expressing themselves.'

Source: SQW interview with Russian HEI, Moscow

Figure 5-8: Finance Academy, Moscow



Source: SQW

## Lessons learned

- 5.46 We asked project managers to identify what they might do differently if they were to be involved in a similar project in the future. Some sample responses are set out in Figure 5-9.

Figure 5-9: What would you do differently? (Dual award projects)

Sample of **UK** responses:

- It may be appropriate, as has been done with other programmes, that any future programme is run both in the partner institution, and in UK. This would facilitate student exchanges and strengthen relationships.
- We would establish proper due diligence in the beginning. Their Central Quality Unit has now incorporated this to their processes and they now prepare a full commercial business case before go into the validation stage of the collaboration.
- Recruitment of English speaking students. Charging higher fees although it would be necessary to check what others are charging. Reassurance that the colleagues in the Russian institution have computers so they can keep in touch regularly by email and also that they have a similar communication culture.
- Start working on the legal agreement earlier in the process.
- We would be likely to pick a larger partner city which is less costly to access. Our partner's city is small and isolated, and very costly to access. Their small internal market is a problem and since people from outside cannot access the courses easily either (long journeys for students), the market potential was very limited. It is very costly to access from the UK (10 hrs flight from Moscow).
- We would engage with our university partner at a more institutional, rather than individual, level.
- Get both sides to discuss their expectations at a much earlier stage, and look more closely at the implications of the UK validation system, etc.
- Provide more support for market research.
- Make sure there is a much better match of objectives and expectations between the two institutions before any work commences. b) Ensure that the senior management of the partner institution know about the project and are supportive.
- We would place more expectation on the partner institution doing more market research at the beginning.
- I understand that the financial side is important for the University but I believe they should forgo profits for the sake of making the partnership work.

Sample of **Russian** responses:

- We would be more persistent about our own goals and priorities while negotiating with British partners. We would also be more attentive and thoughtful when considering proposals of British partners. Some forms of work we implemented more under pressure from our British colleagues than by our own will, but with the passing of time we have realised the advantages of these approaches and are using them actively now.
- Both parties should confirm at the outset, and in writing, the precise conditions and actions on both sides, so that everyone is clear. A big problem in this project was to do with changes of staff on the UK side, and also changes in the financial conditions they imposed. All of this, plus the fact that we didn't manage to recruit as many students as anticipated, led to the failure of the project. In Russia, state-funded universities don't have to worry about making a profit, unlike most UK institutions; unfortunately in this case the British partner was only interested in making a profit.
- We discussed modules (including methods of assessment) well in advance; but we didn't discuss in advance the criteria for assessment (for example, criteria for assessment of essays), and we had to do it during the process. Next time we will discuss criteria of assessment in advance as well.
- More active partnerships with industry; the involvement of professional marketing experts; wider links with international partners.
- We would be more careful about our choice of partner.
- More attention to the details of planning a project – focus on outcomes from the start. Careful selection and briefing of participants to go on study visits etc (perhaps make this a competitive selection process so it's transparent and doesn't offend anyone).
- I would not be such an optimist about enrolment - it was the biggest disappointment and the biggest problem.
- a) Persuade our senior management of the importance of a properly considered marketing campaign. b) Give more thought to contractual conditions with the British partner regarding the number of students to be recruited. c) Increase the number of specialists to deliver training.
- Greater analysis of the needs/interests of the target group.
- The first experience was faultless, and we would like to keep this programme at the same level. Some minor changes to suggest: a) Invite more British trainers to run the course in Moscow; b) Use knowledge and skills of our own staff; engage those who was trained at the UK university in running seminars in Moscow; c) Increase duration of the training.
- a) Selection of project team members should be more careful (motivation, written terms of reference, written agreement); b) Better market research; another target audience (we have chosen wrong target audience) or different programme for this audience; c) Find motivation for owners/senior managers for companies as at the moment they don't want to invest in professional development of their staff.

Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs

- 5.47 The importance of concluding a formal agreement between partner institutions was noted by several of our consultees – particularly by those who had not done so, and later wished that they had. In the words of one Russian institution:

*If we were to take part in this kind of initiative in the future we would make sure we signed an official agreement with our UK partner. We didn't do this in BRIDGE because the UK project manager didn't think it was necessary. However, now he has left, and we think that if we'd had a proper agreement it would have helped us to continue and complete the programme. At the moment we cannot provide our students with a British certificate, and this is disappointing. [Russian regional HEI]*

- 5.48 Finally, it is worth noting that although BRIDGE has ended, there is still interest in Russia in developing new dual awards with UK institutions. At the time of writing this report, for example, the UK Higher Education International Unit has just published in its monthly newsletter<sup>10</sup> a request from the Institute of Economics and Industrial Enterprise Management (IEIEM) in Moscow to find a UK partner with which to develop a dual award in steel or metallurgy enterprise management. Also, during our fieldwork in Russia we heard from one institution that the Centre for Family Medicine<sup>11</sup> (a fertility clinic in Yekaterinburg) is particularly keen to find a UK institution to help them develop a fully accredited dual award for the professional development of their medical staff. The clinic's local university, which participated in BRIDGE, has offered to provide what support it can if a British partner can be found. These are just two examples that we have chanced upon; there are likely to be many more.
- 5.49 While BRIDGE was in operation such expressions of interest could have been immediately channelled in the appropriate direction, but in the absence of the programme – and with the British Council no longer having a strong presence in Russia – many potential new projects may never get off the ground.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.international.ac.uk/resources/International%20Focus%20issue%2055.14.04.10.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.cfm.ru/eng/index.php?main=main>



## 6: Dual awards: the experience of students

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### Introduction

- 6.1 A note from the final project managers' workshop, delivered by the British Council in Manchester in June 2008, noted:

*Participants felt that there has been much discussion on issues such as validation, marketing and partnership management, but we need to know more about the academic dimension [including] how Russian students' experience can inform the UK on how foreign students outside the UK adapt to UK teaching methods [and] what led to successful teaching and learning..*

- 6.2 We have tried to focus on some of these issues in our research with students and participants of BRIDGE courses.

- 6.3 In this section we look at:

- a brief profile of the students and participants who responded to our online survey, and their motivation for enrolling on BRIDGE courses
- course participants' views on the differences in teaching and assessment methodologies between the UK and Russia, including what they liked and disliked
- their views on the advantages (and disadvantages) of studying for a dual award
- participants' general satisfaction with BRIDGE courses.

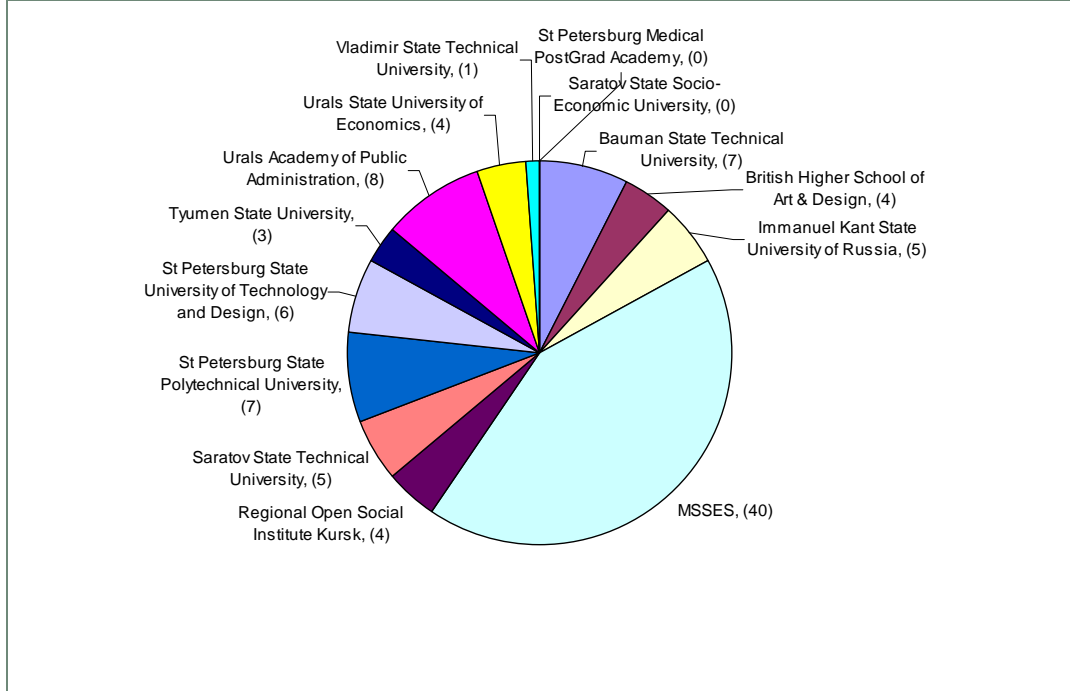
### Profile of respondents

- 6.4 Russian HEIs were able to provide us with the email addresses of participants from 14 BRIDGE projects. Students and participants from a total of twelve BRIDGE courses responded to the survey (there was no return from two projects, where the pool of email addresses available to us was very small).

- 6.5 Our electronic survey of students garnered 94 responses out of a possible 413 – a response rate of 23% (which is considered good for a survey of this kind).

- 6.6 As highlighted in Figure 6-1, there was a high proportion of responses from the Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences. However, when citing responses from students / participants throughout this report we have taken care to ensure that all institutions are represented.

Figure 6-1: Which Russian university is jointly certifying your course?



Source: SQW survey of BRIDGE students

- 6.7 A key point to note is that 80 per cent of student respondents who are participating or have participated in one of the courses have done so while in employment. In contrast to this, the majority of students from the British Higher School of Design, St Petersburg State Polytechnical University and St Petersburg State University of Technology and Design were full time students while studying their course (75%, 71% and 83% respectively).

### Motivation

- 6.8 We asked why respondents decided to study this particular course, and not a Russian course that already existed. Some sample responses are provided in Figure 6-2.

Figure 6-2: Why did you decide to take this course in particular (rather than another course that is not validated by a British university)?

**Sample responses:**

- The course gives you the right to gain a recognised, international higher education. Today's designers need to have knowledge of business, marketing, management, merchandising and visual merchandising. A Masters degree gives you further professional development and the chance to get to know interesting people from the world of haute couture. Studying gives you the opportunity to exchange knowledge with colleagues and to demonstrate your work. Joining a Masters programme was linked to studying English; the course facilitated communication with foreign students and familiarisation with the culture and fashion of their country.
- a) Lack of similar programmes in Russia (educational policy and management is a unique programme for Russia); b) the status, qualifications and experience of the teachers who delivered the course - they are well known experts in the field of education, professors, and authors of witty and topical research and publications; c) the prestige of the institution; d) opportunity to study on a grant.
- The programme made it possible to gain a European Masters degree that was of interest to me, without having to leave the country.
- Because there was an opportunity to obtain two degrees at the same time. Managers of the programme emphasised that this programme had been created especially for senior managers and those staff who wanted to improve the quality of management in their companies. The programme was also going to look at real cases to solve real problems which can be faced while managing companies.
- It was appropriate to my profession.
- The programme contents suited my professional interests exactly, and I was also interested in the organisation of the study process (which is completely different to usual Russian universities).
- I chose the MBA programme because it was the only official MBA programme in our region. I did not want to study distantly in another region. My choice of the dual (as opposite to just Russian) programme was determined by my wish to receive a degree from a foreign university, in a belief that such a degree will be regarded more highly in Russia and abroad than a degree received just from my local University (MBA-programmes there are not yet regarded seriously in Russia because they are very new).
- Because this programme is one of a kind, and I'd heard good feedback.
- Because of the high credibility, and the real examples of colleagues who had already done the course (the growth in their analytical skills became evident during the first year they studied).

Source: SQW electronic survey of BRIDGE participants

## Differences in teaching and assessment methodologies

- 6.9 We went on to ask respondents how the UK style of teaching and assessment differs from what they are used to – and what participants think of it.
- 6.10 First we asked students to tell us the main differences in the way the course was *taught*, compared to the usual Russian style of teaching. A sample of responses to this question is provided in Figure 6-3.

Figure 6-3: What are the main differences in the way the course was taught, compared to the usual style of teaching in Russia?

**Sample responses:**

- Large amount of independent study and research compared to Russian universities
- The focus was on the practical application of knowledge, whereas in Russian courses theoretical knowledge still predominates. The course also gives you analytical skills, while Russian courses are more concerned with the completion of tasks
- a) Classes are strongly focused on dialogue between tutor and student, whereas Russian teaching staff are more inclined to give lectures; b) The form of teaching (evening classes), the high proportion of adults (who generally have families/children). I had to constantly find free time. Personally, I had to change my job in order to get enough time to study. As a rule, only young people attend classes at university; c) Relations between tutors and students on the British programme were more formalised; they were set out more effectively, with rules and criteria. Despite the tutors' friendly tone, in order to get good marks you have to meet a lot of demands.
- Feedback from tutors during lectures; a larger amount of independent preparation of each subject area; the use

- of methods that aren't standard in Russia, e.g. studying/working in groups, guest lecturers/experts, etc
- [In British universities] students do a lot of independent reading and writing. In Russian universities students do a lot of listening and repeating what they have heard.
  - Discussion in small groups, preparation and delivery of presentations, absence of mandatory lectures, clear setting out of tasks for each class, huge library resources
  - More independence given to students in the choice of study and research, and in the delivery of material. Classes are constructed to give ensure the active involvement of student and teacher. Teaching is combined with practical professional activity. Lots of practical work
  - The programme differs in the way it is constructed. The most important thing for me is the increased level of independence the student has, the move away from mass lectures, the individualisation of the study process
  - The course is based mostly on solving practical tasks, and not on theoretical study. Theory and practical skills that you get as a result of the BRIDGE course are mostly taken from real life in the daily management of companies
  - The programme is fully oriented towards independent research by students. As a result the training becomes your own intellectual property, which you don't get in other Russian universities

Source: SQW electronic survey of BRIDGE participants

6.11 One of the themes that emerged from our e-survey and from our meetings with Russian BRIDGE participants is how much they value the different kind of relationship they have with their British tutors. A recent report<sup>12</sup> on international student experience found that UK universities generally outperform the international competition in those aspects of experience that concern relationships with academic staff. This very positive finding has been echoed by our evaluation of BRIDGE.

Figure 6-4: Graduates of MA Publishing (Moscow State University of the Printing Arts / Oxford Brookes University)



Source: SQW, December 2009

6.12 Next we asked students to describe the differences in the way the course was *assessed*, compared to the usual style of assessment in Russia. Responses tended to be characterised by

<sup>12</sup> UK Higher Education International Unit (March 2010), *A UK guide to enhancing the international student experience*

words such as ‘objective’, and ‘transparent’. Some typical responses are highlighted in Figure 6-5.

Figure 6-5: Student survey: What are the main differences in the way the course was assessed, compared to the usual style of assessment in Russia?

**Sample responses:**

- The assessment process differs radically in being much more objective, more formalised, more clear and transparent, thanks to: a) clear setting out of the aims and tasks of the course right at the start, and b) clear criteria and indicators, descriptions of how the subject will be assessed in each part of the course, and also understandable requirements for each type of work
- More in-depth work when writing essays, plus your work is assessed three times (by your own tutor, someone else from within the department, and an external tutor)
- The assessment system is very transparent; you always have to go through a self-assessment stage after you get your results, there is always a process of clarification about the mark you were awarded
- Assessment sheets contain detailed comments from the assessors, which means that assessment becomes a development mechanism
- Assessment took the form of an exchange of opinion. You present your own work and defend your course projects in the form of a presentation in English. There are no marks as such, which is good, because then participants don't feel that they're divided into 'strong' and 'weak'
- The fact that there is a second check (when another tutor looks at your work and confirms, or not, the mark that the previous assessor gave it). Russian students' results depend on the assessment of a single tutor, the course leader
- Marks for work that you do throughout the course are more important than the final mark.

Source: SQW electronic survey of BRIDGE participants

6.13 We then asked course participants to identify what they liked best about the way their course was taught and assessed. The responses to this question showed that participants had appreciated the UK approach, and they were able to provide us some pertinent reflections (Figure 6-6).

Figure 6-6: Student survey: What did you like best about the way the course was taught and assessed?

**Sample responses:**

- I learned not just knowledge, but how to obtain, analyse and use that knowledge
- The solidarity between tutors and students, there were no barriers. The level of co-operation is different [in the UK]
- The process of dialogue during the teaching. Tutors aren't dogmatic; they just point you in the right direction. The development of analytical skills and logical thought
- The chance to put crazy ideas into practice
- Independence
- That I can express myself and my own thoughts, instead of just repeating someone else's thoughts
- Three-part assessment (work is assessed by two Russian tutors and one British). I really liked the ritual of the graduation ceremony. I'll never see the like of this again, and I'll never forget it. It was just fantastic!! A lovely library, I've not seen one like that before
- Studying on this programme has significantly broadened my outlook, and helped me to sketch out my future in more detail
- The way the start of the course is organised (distribution of student handbooks, list of literature and electronic materials, suggestions about which books to read). The opportunity to study materials independently, to search for other sources to use in assignments. The chance to self-assess your work
- Thanks to the small size of the groups, the education process was much more effective, individualised, specialised
- The opportunity to write drafts, and to get written comments from the tutor explaining the mark you've been given
- The way that students and tutors cooperated
- The practical nature of the course

Source: SQW electronic survey of BRIDGE participants

6.14 In view of the issues surrounding English language as a validation issue, we asked students to tell us what proportion of their course was taught and assessed in English. Respondents from

five BRIDGE courses said that the majority (more than 50%) of their course was taught and assessed in English (Figure 6-7).

Figure 6-7: Language of tuition and assessment

Majority of teaching and assessment (at least 50%) is in Russian	Majority of teaching and assessment (at least 50%) is in English
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moscow School of Social &amp; Economic Sciences</li> <li>• Saratov State Technical University</li> <li>• St Petersburg State University of Technology and Design</li> <li>• Tyumen State University</li> <li>• Urals Academy of Public Administration</li> <li>• Urals State University of Economics</li> <li>• Vladimir State Technical University</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bauman State Technical University</li> <li>• British Higher School of Art &amp; Design</li> <li>• Immanuel Kant State University of Russia</li> <li>• Regional Open Social Institute Kursk</li> <li>• St Petersburg State Polytechnical University</li> </ul>

Source: SQW online survey of BRIDGE participants

- 6.15 Where respondents from a course received the majority of teaching in the English Language, the majority of assessment also tended to be in English.
- 6.16 The majority of respondents (84%) said that less than 50 per cent of their course was taught by British tutors, with 30 per cent responding that they had no British tutors.
- 6.17 Students of courses jointly certified by the Russian Bauman State Technical University and British Higher School of Art and Design were slightly different; with 43 per cent and 75 per cent of students respectively saying that about 50 per cent of their course was taught by British tutors, and a further 43 per cent and 25 per cent of students stating that 51-99 per cent of their course was assessed by British tutors.
- 6.18 Teaching input from UK tutors – or rather, the lack of it – was cited by many survey respondents as being a disappointing feature of their BRIDGE course.

Figure 6-8: BRIDGE students at St Petersburg State University of Technology and Design (MA in Fashion Design and Merchandising with De Montfort University)



Source: SQW, December 2009

### **Russian institutions' perceptions of student response to UK approaches**

- 6.19 In addition to surveying the students directly, we also asked Russian HEI representatives for their proxy views on how their students had reacted to the different teaching and assessment methodology. The great majority confirmed that their students had welcomed the new approach. A sample of responses is provided below.

Figure 6-9: How would you describe your students' reaction to the different (outcomes based) teaching and assessment methodology?

#### **Sample responses from Russian HEIs:**

- It was new for them (especially the fact that all modules at the end had written assessment; and video recording of their lessons) but they found it interesting. They were enthusiastic and positive.
- Very positive; they welcome it - in fact, we have been promoting it as an advantage!
- As a rule, active methods of teaching which imply much greater autonomy on the part of the learner have gained a very positive reaction from students. The same can be said about essays in spite of the fact that our students lack experience in written communication, especially at the beginning of the course. We must note, though, that our institution had been using interactive methods of teaching before the start of BRIDGE programme, and our students were expecting it, having been informed by the comments of previous years' students.
- Students' reaction to the competence-oriented approach to teaching and assessment has been positive
- They haven't been used to such system and it was difficult for them in the beginning; although we had explained to them what to expect. But they have no choice and had to accept it. One of 6 students left because it was too hard.

Source: SQW interviews and survey of Russian HEIs

### **Advantages (and disadvantages) of studying a dual award**

- 6.20 We asked participants to comment on the advantages, and/or disadvantages, of studying a dual award.

Figure 6-10: Participants of MA Corporate Policy and Finance (Urals State University of Economics / Nottingham Trent University)



Source: SQW, December 2009

- 6.21 We received an interesting mix of responses to this question. By contrast to their responses regarding the UK style of teaching and assessment, which were almost universally appreciative, the question of whether a dual award brought them advantages did not always garner a positive response.

Figure 6 -11: Do you think that you have gained any particular advantages as a result of participating in the course?

**Sample of positive responses:**

- Three years after my programme finished I am earning 10 times more than I was, and now I work in a large international organisation.
- Yes, the programme has increased my professional knowledge. I also think that getting a British diploma will improve my competitiveness in the labour market in the future.
- Yes, The knowledge I gained during my studies is unique in our region and will really help me in my work.
- Yes, first of all professional status at work. Also, more significantly, the new skills and way of thinking that I gained during my studies.
- Yes, undoubtedly. I communicate with people who were previously inaccessible to me, I talk to them in the same language. I benefit from the trust of my managers. I receive advantageous business proposals. I am considerably more effective in my work.
- Yes, I've gained invaluable experience and knowledge which are helping me to become a professional; I've become more competitive, my self-esteem has increased.
- Yes, there are advantages. Compared with technical education, the economic side was explored in detail. Another advantage was an opportunity to share your own experience of solving a problem at work, and to learn how colleagues were solving the same problem, and to compare their approach with your own.
- Yes, because even if you stay in the same job, your work becomes innovative, and the newly gained competencies and large arsenal of your own projects created during the course facilitate a qualitative improvement in your research. ICT-competence gained and the habit of producing final results (in the form of written essays) will positively distinguish such an employee.
- Yes, I have a real chance of becoming an international specialist and creating a future [for myself].
- Unequivocally yes. It has had an impact on my salary and my professional development prospects.
- I think that it makes students more able to cope with problems, and prepares them for work.



**Sample of negative responses:**

- It does not have decisive significance when applying for a job and sometimes even plays a negative role because there is an information vacuum in this area, it does not give any bonuses even if one gets a job.
- When I finished the course I thought there would be advantages. But at the moment I can't say for sure.
- No. In my view, employers in our country aren't interested in whether young employees have this kind of diploma; they're only concerned with whether they have a higher education in general.
- Only in the knowledge gained. The document/certificate itself doesn't bring any advantages.

Source: SQW survey of BRIDGE participants

6.22 Many participants feel that a UK dual award will give them a competitive advantage when they look for a job. Significantly, however, it is clear that in the view of many participants, employers in Russia do not necessarily see the advantage of a recruit having a degree validated by a UK university.

6.23 We also specifically asked students if they thought there were any particular disadvantages in participating in a course that is jointly validated by a UK university. The majority of respondents replied 'No', but it is useful to look at some of the other responses (Figure 6-12).

Figure 6-12: Do you think there are any particular disadvantages in participating in a course that is jointly validated by a UK university?

- Yes. The majority of my classmates left their jobs after they finished the programme. They were no longer able, and no longer wanted, to work in a place where their new knowledge and skills didn't lead to reward or progression.
- No, but British diplomas don't mean anything special to employers; [UK qualifications] don't align with the Russian Masters degree. But it's not about this, it's about gaining skills and knowledge.
- Unfortunately Russian employers in the field of education are extremely sceptical about diplomas from foreign universities.

Source: SQW survey of BRIDGE participants

6.24 The overall feedback on this issue highlights that students are studying BRIDGE courses for the inherent value of the course, rather than simply to obtain a certificate that can be shown to employers. The content of these courses, the way they are delivered, and the personal impact on the individual participant seem to be more important than the qualification itself. This is an interesting, and positive, finding.

## General satisfaction

6.25 We asked students to let us know whether, overall, they were satisfied with their course. Sixty-seven per cent of student respondents were pleased with the course, while only 7 per cent were disappointed. Twenty-five per cent of respondents (23) were not yet sure whether the course had met their expectations at the time of the survey.

6.26 We asked respondents to say how they thought the course might be improved in the future. In Figure 6-13 we summarise the discussion that took place at one focus group of Russian students.

Figure 6-13: How might the course be improved?

**In terms of the quality of teaching and learning experience:**

- improve the level of English amongst lecturers and tutors in Russia
- ensure that lectures in Russia are more accessible and held more regularly
- ensure the lecture notes given in Russia are available to the students outside the lectures (internet or other way)
- produce better defined courses in the Russian HEI and make sure the requirements for passing them are clear – clarity on the requirements of the courses (what they can and should do in their practical work) – In UK this is dealt with better and the requirements are clear
- the UK HEI could better tailor its courses and lectures for each year group (as is the case in Russia) rather than simply reeling off the same process with each cohort
- in the first year, one of the Russian lecturers did not have a course developed before the it started and he was making it up as he went along
- put in place more stringent admissions tests for those wishing to enter the programme (e.g. interviews).

**In terms of making the final award more attractive to employers:**

- have more meetings set up with potential employers, e.g. employer presentations both in Russia and the UK
- include all of the modules they have studied in Russia in the degree transcript. Currently the transcript only shows the number of credits. In the job application processes in the UK, students have to provide evidence of the studies they have had in Russia, but the format of the current transcript provides no evidence of this.

Source: SQW focus group with students and graduates of MSc in Computer and Information Engineering

Figure 6-14: Russian students from Penza State University / City University London( MSc in Computer and Information Engineering) at their graduation ceremony at the Guildhall in London, February 2010



Source: SQW

6.27 The lack of opportunity for work experience was highlighted by some of our BRIDGE participants, and more widely by international students in the UK, as an area of some dissatisfaction. According to i-graduate<sup>13</sup>, about 80% of all international students in the UK rate the availability of work experience as important or very important, but only 66% are satisfied with this aspect of their course. This seems to be echoed in BRIDGE.

<sup>13</sup> i-graduate, March 2010, *A UK Guide to Enhancing the International Student Experience*

- 6.28 Clearly the issue of UK work experience is more relevant to those courses that are (part)-delivered in the UK – which represents only a minority of BRIDGE courses. For these students, the desire for work experience is also related to the need to make money to help cover living expenses. In our meetings with such students, we heard that they were disappointed that they should have to take ‘menial’ work (e.g. as waiters or bar staff) to help see them through, and that they expected to receive help finding work that was relevant to their studies.

## Alumni networking

- 6.29 We did not specifically ask BRIDGE participants whether they would be interested in maintaining contact with their institution or with each other, but there may be some merit in bringing institutional and British Council alumni networking together in a more focused way. As Sir Drummond Bone noted in his report on internationalisation of HE,

*Alumni networks run by individual universities usually support fundraising and recruitment, but also increasingly support networks to benefit former students in their careers, and indirectly the marketing of lifelong learning. The British Council also separately runs events for UK alumni overseas. Unfortunately the key word here is ‘separately’. There could be much to be gained for the UK in focusing alumni activity around particular disciplines or career paths. This would also I believe be greatly appreciated by the alumni themselves.<sup>14</sup>*

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<sup>14</sup> Professor Sir Drummond Bone (2008), *Internationalisation of HE: a ten year view*

## 7: Research collaboration projects

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### Introduction

- 7.1 The rationale for funding research collaboration projects under the BRIDGE programme was set out in a Steering Committee paper presented in 2006<sup>15</sup>, as follows:

*From experience of working with BRIDGE Russia / UK collaborative programme delivery partnerships, it is apparent that a key motivation to forming these bilateral partnerships is the desire to develop long term research links across the partnership. BRIDGE, in its existing format of only funding joint and dual awards, automatically restricts participation from many UK Higher Education Institutions. By broadening the scope of BRIDGE, we are able to provide opportunities for research intensive HEIs to participate.*

- 7.2 It was agreed that applications would be invited from Russian and UK institutions undertaking research in Science & Technology subject areas. Proposals would be invited to develop joint research projects that will ultimately be able to apply for grants. The principles for the application of this funding were that:

- the funding would be seedcorn and would facilitate mobility across Russia and UK with the aim of initiating/strengthening research links.
- the funding should also be viewed as providing some of the groundwork to act as leverage for research teams to access more substantial funding sources.

- 7.3 Institutions applying from the UK were to have a high research rating in the identified discipline and to be a recognised centre of excellence. The Russian counterpart was to be identified from HE institutions and Centres of Research.

- 7.4 The activities likely to obtain support included developing research capabilities, support for training for teachers, post-doctoral researchers and academic staff who have been invited to deliver papers at international meetings, taking up attachments as visiting fellows, developing joint research programmes or other programmes of academic or educational collaboration.

- 7.5 It was intended that the funding should support projects from academics with demonstrated capability in their individual disciplines, working in renowned and quality institutions in Russia and UK, and that it should result in tangible, measurable benefit to both institutions in Russia and UK

- 7.6 The total BRIDGE funding allocated to research collaboration projects was £448,662<sup>16</sup>.

### **Range of projects**

- 7.7 BRIDGE funded a total of 14 research collaboration projects, listed in Figure 7-1.

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<sup>15</sup> British Council (2006), BRIDGE Steering Committee paper

<sup>16</sup> British Council, Paper 2, BRIDGE Science & Technology

Figure 7-1: Research collaboration projects funded by BRIDGE

- Advanced Fluid Power Systems
- Advanced manufacturing and modelling of the next generation of nanocomposite materials/coatings
- Complex nanoclusters & multilayered heterosystems made of ferromagnetic metals deposited on semiconductor surfaces
- Fabrication and exploration of multifunctional microcontainers with remote controlling properties
- Femtosecond laser technologies and applications
- Functional food development from traditional fermented milks
- Head Motion Detection for Positron Emission Tomography (PET)
- High performance and long life time activator valves based on smart alloys
- High performance carbon-based heterostructures for nanotechnology: properties and applications (NANOCARBON)
- Imaging Scanning
- Keeping it cool: building a long-term partnership for climate change research in the arctic and northern regions
- Magnetic field tomography (MFT) based on Magnetoencephalography (MEG) for Medical imaging
- Medical innovations in diagnostics using an advanced virtual reality stroke rehabilitation device
- Participatory monitoring of Saiga antelope population ecology
- Quantum-sized effects in magnetic nanocontacts
- Self- learning medical expert system for lifestyle enhancement based on biofeedback and microcell wireless technologies

Source: British Council

- 7.8 Evaluation interviews took place, by telephone, with six Russian and six British institutions. Other research collaboration projects received a copy of our questionnaire for self-completion. Of the 14 research collaboration projects funded by BRIDGE, 13 of the British and nine of the Russian partners have taken part in our research.

## Key evaluation findings

### **Motivation for research collaboration**

- 7.9 In designing the questionnaire for research collaboration projects we took note of a report for Universities UK in 2008<sup>17</sup> looking at international research collaborative activity in the UK, which included an overview of the drivers of such collaboration. It cited a set of drivers posited by a Canadian university as a summary of generic motivating factors (see Figure 7-2).

<sup>17</sup> Universities UK (2008), "International research collaboration: opportunities for the UK higher education sector"

Figure 7-2: Why we pursue international research collaboration

- Different perspectives promote knowledge
- Capacity-building without cost
- Research funding
- To develop solutions that resonate around the world
- Graduate student recruitment
- Reputation

Source: Presentation by Craig Klafter, Associate Vice President International, University of British Columbia, to a Universities UK seminar, London, November 2007

7.10 We decided it would be interesting to utilise this list in our survey of BRIDGE research projects, to explore the extent to which they resonated with BRIDGE participants.

7.11 In Table 7-1 we set out the various factors that motivated these projects, listed in order of frequency of citing on the UK side.

Table 7-1: Please indicate up to 5 main factors that motivated your research collaboration

Factor	Count (UK)	Count (Russian)
To gain access to research funding	11 (85%)	5 (56%)
To build research capacity	10 (77%)	2 (22%)
To enhance the reputation of our institution	8 (62%)	6 (67%)
To get research data published in international / Western journals	8 (62%)	5 (56%)
To gain different perspectives in order to promote knowledge	8 (62%)	7 (78%)
To improve the recruitment of graduate students	5 (38%)	4 (44%)
To develop solutions that resonate around the world	5 (38%)	5 (56%)
Other	3 (23%)	4 (44%)
<i>Total no. projects responding</i>	<i>N = 13</i>	<i>N = 9</i>

Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs

7.12 It is interesting to note the slightly different profile of responses between UK and Russian institutions. For UK partners the most commonly cited motivating factors were ‘to build research capacity’ and ‘to gain access to research funding’. These, however, were much less important to Russian institutions: indeed, ‘building research capacity’ was the least significant motivating factor on the Russian side. For Russian academics, ‘gaining different perspectives’ was the strongest motivating factor for participating in BRIDGE.

## Results

7.13 The overall target of 16 research collaborations was not quite reached. This may be because of the size of the funding, combined with the perception (expressed to the British Council by one grant holder) that Russia-UK research collaboration had been established for many years. This might have meant that the level of pump-priming funding offered by BRIDGE was not seen as necessary.

- 7.14 However, final reports received by the British Council in 2008-09 suggested that BRIDGE research collaborations had been highly successful. Our own research confirms this impression. We summarise the results of some of the projects in Figure 7-3.
- 7.15 All 14 research projects led to the publication of research papers. Based on information we have received from projects' reports to the British Council and from our own research, we know that **at least 53 papers have been published** – and many more are in the pipeline.

Figure 7-3: Results of BRIDGE research collaboration

**Sample responses from UK institutions:**

- I think BRIDGE should be given credit for an extremely successful collaboration with Russia that we have built using BRIDGE as a first step. More than 15 papers have been published in the leading international journals including such high impact journals as Physical Review Letters and Nature Photonics. We have successful training of our students using Russian experts. Some educational programs have been improved due to this collaboration. Russian partners on many occasions express their very positive opinion about the BRIDGE programme.
- We have applied for Royal Society grants and visits to and from Vladivostok have taken place since the Bridge grant closed. The University of Vladivostok is important to the development of our research activities.
- The exchange student who spent one year with us during the BRIDGE project is now registered with Middlesex University to continue his PhD and is funded by us. His external supervisor is the Russian partner from the BRIDGE project. We also submitted a further (unsuccessful) application for funding for a project that involved staff from both institutions and are actively discussing other potential research collaborations. A joint research paper is to be presented at a conference in February.
- We have an ongoing research and conservation relationship through our work with the Saiga Conservation Alliance and are actively pursuing funding to continue the work started with BRIDGE (one grant proposal under consideration, 2 in preparation).
- We are working very actively together; BRIDGE has been a real catalyst. Not only has the research collaboration continuing (it has resulted in a prototype which is receiving great interest from companies such as O2), but it has led to students from Moscow coming to Lancaster to do PhDs (one already there, one starting in March).

**Sample responses from Russian institutions:**

- We have overcome some barriers because nanotechnology is a very new and sensitive area, and countries tend to keep their results to themselves; we managed to do joint research and to prepare a joint publication.
- We have obtained reliable data on anti-pathogenic, anti-cancer and probiotic properties of Russian traditional fermented milks - kefir and ayran. This has become a platform for further research carried out after the project finished.
- We achieved even more than we expected: the prototype we developed is actually now being used, which we hadn't anticipated.

Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs

- 7.16 Some partnerships, such as the University of Sheffield and Tomsk Polytechnical University, continue to develop:

*Our research project (Advanced manufacturing and modelling of the next generation of nanocomposite materials/coatings) was successful, and has produced four publications to date. The work helped bring about greater understanding about the issues in the field and it may lead to the development of a joint MSc, which would allow students to spend a year in each institution. This has not been taken forward this year, as we have been busy with other MSc applications, but is likely to go ahead next year. There are also plans for further research collaboration, with funding applications being submitted to EPSRC and FP7.*

- 7.17 Another research collaboration case study is highlighted below.

Figure 7 -4: Research project case study: 'Self-learning medical expert system for lifestyle enhancement based on biofeedback and microcell wireless technologies' - University of Lancaster and Moscow State Lomonosov University

This project involved researchers from two completely different disciplines: Communication Systems (Engineering) and Pharmacology. It was based on the fact that the general population is getting older, and more people are living longer. This puts stress on medical resources, and the health care workforce will need to expand enormously to cope with demand. The solution lies in enabling elderly people to look after themselves at home rather than going into nursing homes.

The idea behind the research project was to develop a device to allow people to monitor their blood pressure, pulse rate, etc by attaching it to their finger; this device would connect (using wireless technology) via a mobile phone to a large, central computer, which in turn would connect to hospitals, General Practitioners, etc. The system will send out text messages reminding people to take their drugs, keep their doctor's appointments, etc. GPs will be able to check their patients' conditions over time. The idea itself is not entirely new - people have been talking about it for a while - but the aim was to actually build a working prototype and test it. The prototype is with the Russian project leader in Moscow. The device measures the oxygen in the blood, and the user's pulse rate. Industry is keen on the idea and has investigated the prototype; indeed, O2 displayed it at a global congress in Barcelona last year. At the congress, the Russian project leader himself demonstrated the prototype to HRH the Duke of York, who was impressed when his assistant back in England was able to read the Duke's pulse rate from her own mobile phone.

The project has achieved more than the partners imagined it would: it has actually created a prototype that looks likely to be taken up by industry, it has led to an entirely new subject discipline, 'Assisted Living' being created within the UK project leader's department, and it has led to students from Moscow coming to Lancaster to do PhDs.

Source: SQW interviews with HEIs

Figure 7-5: Professor Oleg Medvedev of Moscow State University (second right) demonstrates the prototype developed with Lancaster University to HRH Duke of York (centre), at an international symposium in Barcelona in 2008



Source: Professor Garik Markarian, University of Lancaster



## Success factors

- 7.18 We asked the leaders of research collaboration projects in the light of their BRIDGE experience to identify the most important factors in creating successful international research collaborations.

Figure 7-6: After your experience of BRIDGE, what would you say are the most important factors in creating successful international research collaborations?

Sample responses from **Russian** HEIs:

- To make up a detailed plan with control points from both sides. To define research area, especially in the beginning; to describe precisely who is doing what; which equipment and software will be used, how human resources will be used. To monitor the research and to finalise the report and prepare publications. Both sides should support each other in all respects - human, intellectual, technical. For example, for our research in the UK our researchers had a technician who was with them all the time they needed him.
- Reliable partner abroad. Some work already done/initial results achieved (better if in collaboration). Previous experience in international co-operation. Recognition for results already achieved in the field. Access to partner's resources (intellectual, informational and technical).

Sample responses from **UK** HEIs:

- The opportunity for partners to meet and work together on a number of occasions, thereby forming good relationships on both professional and personal levels. This provides the basis for lasting friendships and hence future collaborations.
- Difficult to answer as this depends on the countries. From a research perspective, working with an institution with strong research interest in similar areas and world class name and quality of research is key. In other words, it is important to look at a partner who is compatible in both academic research areas and research excellence.

Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs

- 7.19 We also asked research collaboration projects to identify what they might do differently, with hindsight (Figure 7-7).

Figure 7-7: What would you do differently?

Responses from **Russian** HEIs:

- Upon completion of the project I would have submitted another application - this time for a dual award project. We planned to start dual awards programme with our partner in September but they were restructuring and our collaboration was not high on the list of their priorities.
- I would pay more attention to the educational aspect of the project; for example, I would get British colleagues to deliver demonstration lectures.
- It would be better if a partnership was not founded on a private initiative - it does not work.
- I would envisage more active engagement of young researchers in the project. In our project they had limited opportunities to meet each other and talk (once during our visit to Lancaster and the second time at our international congress in St Petersburg). In the future I would suggest organising internships - with at least one month in the UK for our researchers and one month in Moscow for UK researchers; to help them gain working experience in another country.
- I would give more detailed consideration to the plan of work.
- We would insist on English language training of the PhD students that are going to stay in UK for the research work.
- I would organise an international seminar to disseminate results of the project.

Responses from **UK** HEIs:

- More staff would be involved from both sides to widen the areas of collaborative work.
- The institution would act more confidently in pursuing international collaborations with Russia as experience has been gained.
- Would try to make sure that more young researchers were involved on both sides. Important to give young researchers the opportunity for exchange visits, to work collaboratively on an international basis.
- We hope the senior management might be more supportive. The Vice Chancellor's office turned down an offer to meet the VC of our partner university.
- Put more effort into language training for visiting students.
- Would ensure that we matched the research experience of the students coming to visit with the areas that we would expect them to work on. The time is limited on the exchanges and hence we should have been more specific about what we wanted the students to be working on before they came. It is not a negative point but just something that could make the project more effective.

Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs

- 7.20 A number of research projects stressed the value of research-teaching links. Several institutions felt strongly that research should be integrated with learning and teaching, rather than being the exclusive preserve of senior academics. Indeed this approach has been increasingly recognised as a priority for UK higher education and is actively supported by the Higher Education Academy, which promotes the view that "universities need to set as a mission goal the improvement of the nexus between research and teaching. ....The aim is to increase the circumstances in which teaching and research have occasion to meet"<sup>18</sup>.
- 7.21 The successful project between Imperial College London and Kalmykia State University, 'Participatory monitoring of saiga antelope population ecology', is an example of this approach. Here, two British Masters students conducted fieldwork in Kalmykia with their Russian counterparts, followed by a visit to the UK by the Kalmykian students to carry out joint analysis of data. In their final report to the British Council, project leaders concluded that:
- We feel that our project demonstrates the value of simultaneous investment in both research and training within a higher education setting, and specifically in the training of postgraduate students; the broader co-benefits of doing this are substantial.*
- 7.22 The two UK students subsequently published their Masters theses, which are available on Imperial's website<sup>19</sup>.
- 7.23 As with Imperial, the Lancaster-Moscow partnership also placed great importance upon the involvement of younger postgraduate students in their BRIDGE project.

Figure 7-8: PhD student, Miss Anna Zvikhachevskaya, received the "Best Student Paper Award" during the IET Assisted Living International Symposium, which was held in London, Savoy Place, April 2009. The attached photo shows Professor Garik Markarian giving the award to Anna on behalf of the IET



Source: Professor Garik Markarian, 2010

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/teachingandresearch>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.iccs.org.uk/thesis/consci/msc08-o'neill,helen.pdf> and <http://www.iccs.org.uk/thesis/consci/msc08-whitebread.elisabeth.pdf>

7.24 In their final report to the British Council, project leaders noted:

*Undoubtedly, the project created a unique opportunity for staff development at both institutions. More specifically, young researchers from both Moscow and Lancaster had the chance to attend and present their results at the leading international symposia, which will certainly affect and enhance their plans for future research.*

7.25 Several other projects made the same point that younger researchers in particular had benefited from exposure to international research and subsequent participation in conferences and symposia. For example, the University of Sheffield and the Russian State Hydrometeorological University ('Keeping it cool: building a long term partnership for climate change research in the Arctic and northern regions') noted in their final report that:

*Students who took part in the project were awarded Achieving Scholarship Letters/Certificates signed by both partners to mark their active involvement and probably to help them in their future scientific career. All Russian students acknowledged that the project led to a further increase of their interest in scientific careers in climate change research due to an excellent mixture of research presentations and guest lectures at the workshops. For some of them, it was their first ever opportunity and a challenge to present their work internationally.*

7.26 The involvement of students and the links between research and teaching were also a feature of the collaboration between Aston University and the Russian Academy of Sciences ('Femtosecond laser technologies and applications'):

*One of the greatest advantages of BRIDGE over other schemes was that it enabled the engagement of a wider group of students rather than just a few experts. The programme also allowed for longer visits. This is important, as with students there is a need to have some time to adjust to the new environment, whilst the expert visits can be carried out in shorter timescales. In the case of the BRIDGE collaboration these two things were managed correctly: we were able to get a larger group of students to come and they were able to stay long enough to adjust and for there to be a meaningful and effective exchange of knowledge. As a result of the collaboration we were able to produce 15 publications, some of which were in very high impact journals. We also produced around 17 conference papers, plus one patent resulting from some of the technology development we did. The students benefited from expertise in the laboratory and the project even enhanced our teaching: some of our Photonics courses have been adjusted following discussions with the Russian lecturers and professors. Moreover, although it might be a complete coincidence, all the UK students involved in the BRIDGE project got new jobs after the collaboration. They were all employed by industry or leading research groups.*

7.27 The majority of research projects commented that they experienced problems with language barriers, which often made communication over the practical aspects of the research activities quite difficult in the initial stages. Generally these problems were overcome, but with hindsight many UK institutions felt that prior English language training for Russian PhD students should have been specifically factored into their project. This was a particular lesson learned.

### **Looking ahead**

- 7.28 President Medvedev's modernisation agenda for Russia, as set out in an address to the Federal Assembly in November 2009<sup>20</sup>, includes a specific intention to 'establish a comfortable environment in Russia for world-class research and development'. His comments may be of interest to UK institutions with an interest in research collaboration with Russia: he talks of 'establishing effective mechanisms [...] for attracting to Russia foreign scientists of repute', and goes on to say that: 'We should simplify the rules for recognising degrees and diplomas awarded by the world's leading universities, and also the rules for hiring the foreign specialists we need. Such people should receive their visas swiftly and for a long period. It is we who have an interest in bringing them to Russia rather than the other way round.'
- 7.29 Russia is clearly open to research collaboration with other countries, and BRIDGE may have laid some good foundations on which UK institutions can build. It is interesting to note that the partnership between Aston University and the Russian Academy of Sciences, whose initial research collaboration was funded by BRIDGE, is now receiving financial support from the Russian Ministry of Education and Science.

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<sup>20</sup> [http://eng.kremlin.ru/speeches/2009/11/12/1321\\_type70029type82912\\_222702.shtml](http://eng.kremlin.ru/speeches/2009/11/12/1321_type70029type82912_222702.shtml)

## 8: BRIDGE: outputs and impacts

- 8.1 In this section we look at some of the quantitative outputs from BRIDGE and discuss the impact of the programme on individuals, institutions and the wider higher education sector in Russia.

### Programme outputs

#### **Number of projects still 'alive' (sustainability)**

- 8.2 It was an important aim of the BRIDGE programme not to create short-term projects, but to encourage the development of long-term, sustainable partnerships between UK and Russian institutions.
- 8.3 As highlighted in Table 8-1, three quarters of partnerships remain active, and a further 13% of partnerships are maintaining their links and may resurrect their plans for dual awards or research in the future. Overall, research collaboration partnerships appear to be slightly more sustainable than dual award projects.

Table 8-1: Now that BRIDGE funding has ended, are you continuing to work with your Russian partner on dual awards or research?

	Dual award	Research	Total
We are still actively working together on dual awards or research	25 (74%)	10 (77%)	35 (74%)
We are not currently engaged in such activity, but we may do so in the future	3 (9%)	3 (23%)	6 (13%)
We are not currently engaged in such activity and have no plans to do so in the future	5 (15%)	0	5 (11%)
Not sure	1 (3%)	0	1 (2%)
<i>Total UK projects responding</i>	<i>34 (100%)</i>	<i>13 (100%)</i>	<i>47 (100%)</i>

Source: SQW interviews and survey of UK HEIs

- 8.4 One of the findings from our research is the emerging 'cross-over' activity. Many dual award partnerships have not only continued, but have also led to the development of new research collaboration. Likewise, several research collaboration partnerships have identified that it would be useful to complement research with the development of new courses.

#### **Number of fully accredited courses**

- 8.5 We asked Russian dual award projects to say whether their course had been fully validated in the UK and accredited in Russia. As shown in Table 8-2, of the 27 Russian projects responding to this question, 44% had achieved this status.

**Table 8-2: Has your BRIDGE course been fully validated in the UK and accredited in Russia?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>
Validated/accredited in both UK and Russia	12 (44%)
Accredited in Russia only	3 (11%)
Validated in UK only	7 (26%)
No, neither	5 (19%)
<i>Total responses from Russian HEIs</i>	<i>27 (100%)</i>

*Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs*

- 8.6 Rather disconcertingly, we found that the responses from UK and Russian partners did not tally. Of the 24 ‘paired’ responses that we received (i.e. from the British and the Russian partner in the same project), only in 16 cases did both partners give the same answer. Of the 34 UK institutions that responded to the same question, almost two thirds (22 projects) reported that the course had been validated in the UK and accredited in Russia.
- 8.7 It is strange that partners do not have a common understanding of the status of their BRIDGE course, and this may warrant further investigation.
- 8.8 We were also keen to find out how many BRIDGE courses were actually being delivered at the time of our research (Table 8-3).

**Table 8-3: Is the course being delivered in Russia?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Number of responses</b>
Yes, the course has been delivered for at least one year already	14 (52%)
Yes, the course is being delivered this year for the first time	3 (11%)
No, course has not been delivered yet, but it may in future	4 (15%)
No, course has not been delivered and there are no plans for this to happen	3 (11%)
Other	3 (11%)
<i>Total responses from Russian HEIs</i>	<i>27 (100%)</i>

*Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs*

- 8.9 A total of 17 out of 27 projects that responded to the question are delivering their BRIDGE course this year. The three projects that responded ‘Other’ explained that their course had been offered in the past, but was not running at the moment due to insufficient numbers enrolling – which was generally attributed to the economic downturn.
- 8.10 It is unfortunate that not all of the 34 dual award projects that participated in the evaluation answered this particular question, as it would have been preferable to know precisely how many courses are being delivered. However, even if the eight projects that did not answer this question are not delivering their BRIDGE course, this still means that 17 out of 34 (i.e. 50 per cent) of courses are being delivered at the time of writing. This is a higher proportion than we

expected to find given the various challenges that institutions faced, and we believe it represents an extremely positive result.

**Number of students enrolled**

- 8.11 We asked Russian respondents whose courses were up and running to tell us how many students had enrolled on the course so far. Not all projects were able to provide a figure, but we know from our own survey that:
- at least 151 Russian students are enrolled on BRIDGE courses in the current academic year
  - at least 390 Russian students have already completed BRIDGE courses in previous years.
- 8.12 The true figure is certain to be higher than this. The British Council’s own survey of projects in early 2009 found that 669 students had enrolled on BRIDGE courses.
- 8.13 Taking into account the British Council figures and the findings from our own, more recent, research, we feel it is fair to estimate that **around 800 Russian participants** have enrolled on BRIDGE courses to date.

**Did the programme achieve its targets?**

- 8.14 The British Council’s internal evaluation of BRIDGE in early 2009 reported on progress against targets. This is summarised below.

Table 8-4: Outputs against targets (at March 2009)

Target	Achieved
<b>Main BRIDGE contract</b>	
At least five completed dual awards at Masters level, and, where proposed by partner institutions to arrange for and launch fully developed Bachelors programmes	4 (2 Masters and 2 Bachelors)
At least 15 Masters courses leading to dual awards halfway through appropriate development and validation procedures	17
At least 20 fully developed courses delivering qualifications or CPD at postgraduate level.	17
<b>Science &amp; Technology Strand</b>	
At least 5 Full Award programmes are in train for delivery to students in Russia	2
At least 5 CPD programmes are being developed for delivery to students in Russia	3
At least 16 new research links established	15

Source: Evaluation Statistics to March 2009, British Council

- 8.15 Our own research broadly confirms these findings, although we can report that the first target – of five completed dual awards at Masters or Bachelors level in the main BRIDGE programme – has now been reached. These five awards are:

- MEd Education Management
  - BA Fashion Design & Merchandising
  - MA Corporate Policy & Finance
  - MSc Computer & Information Engineering
  - MA Public Administration.
- 8.16 Given the various challenges inherent in a programme such as BRIDGE, this is a very positive finding.
- 8.17 Science & Technology projects did not come forward in the numbers originally expected: while the target number of research collaborations was reached, only a very small number of dual award projects were developed and the targets for Masters and CPD awards were not reached.

## Impacts

- 8.18 In addition to the quantifiable outputs generated by the programme, it is important to look at the wider impacts of BRIDGE – many of which cannot be quantified. We consider these impacts at three levels: individual students/participants; institutions; and, more widely, at national level in Russia.

### ***At student level***

- 8.19 Students were the final, but in fact the most important, beneficiary of BRIDGE. It was an important part of our brief to find out what students thought of their courses, with a view to recommending how dual awards might be further developed in the future.
- 8.20 We were gratified by the response to our survey of participants, which generated a wealth of valuable feedback. It must be said, first of all, that the tone of this feedback was almost universally positive, and that only a very small minority of respondents were disappointed with their experience.
- 8.21 The key benefits to individual students have come from:
- learning the value of independent study (as opposed to simply taking notes at lectures), which encourages a more enquiring mind
  - acquiring analytical skills, which has particular relevance to those who are already in employment and can put their skills to immediate, practical use in the workplace
  - knowing that their skills and knowledge have been assessed in an objective and transparent way
  - taking part in a more interactive approach to learning, which facilitates the sharing of ideas



- in being able to communicate as equals with their tutors, and realising that it is not only permissible, but right, to express their own opinions within an area of study.
- 8.22 Where the impact on individual participants may be less pronounced relates to the value placed on the dual award by Russian employers. Several students commented that employers in Russia are not interested in their recruits having western qualifications. We heard one or two isolated examples of participants whose salaries had increased significantly since they took the course, but in general the benefits that have been gained from studying BRIDGE courses are largely felt to be gains in personal knowledge, skills and experience rather than a tangible improvement in job prospects or salary. (As an aside, it would be interesting to conduct a survey of employers in Russia to find out whether students' negative perceptions of the value of a dual award are based on fact.)

### **At institutional level**

- 8.23 BRIDGE was always intended to be a partnership of equals between UK and Russian institutions. It was clear from the start that courses must be developed jointly by the partners. This was not a 'franchise' model, where UK institutions simply handed over to their Russian counterparts some off-the-peg courses. Nonetheless, it is undoubtedly the case that at institutional level, Russia gained more from BRIDGE than the UK.
- 8.24 One of the greatest impacts that BRIDGE has made at institutional level in Russia is in terms of staff development. Individual staff benefited enormously from the exchange of professional experience with British colleagues and the chance to obtain a first-hand understanding of the UK education system.
- 8.25 Our research has shown that BRIDGE has certainly helped institutions to align themselves more closely with the Bologna Process (see Figure 8-1).

Figure 8-1: Has BRIDGE helped you to move forward within the Bologna Process

#### **Sample responses from Russian HEIs:**

- Contacts with British universities allowed us to understand better not only the trends of Bologna process but also its contradictions. We have been convinced once again that although the Anglo-Saxon model is the closest to the Bologna mission and better than other models in meeting the educational needs of the information society, there is also a risk of its transformation in the course of the process, which the British educational community sees as a threat to quality and effectiveness. The opportunity to consider Bologna from multiple perspectives allows people to understand better the essential changes that Russia needs to make, and to formulate priorities and risks more precisely.
- We have started using a system of credits and developed our curricula accordingly. When assessing our own programmes we use both the Russian system (academic hours) and the equivalent of credit points. Active development of Masters programmes with partner universities (Innovative Management with Budo, Norway; and Management with Strasbourg).
- We have come to understand this in more detail. Thanks to BRIDGE we were also invited to other conferences about Bologna, so we've been learning a lot. Other departments within our institution in fact already offer Bachelors and Masters degrees - but until BRIDGE, this type of course was not welcomed by our school of Public Administration (which preferred to stick to the traditional Russian system of specialist courses). The Russian Ministry of Education does not seem to have made its mind up yet about whether to get rid of specialist courses; it was supposed to happen this year, but it keeps being delayed. It's very difficult for HEIs to know what they should be doing. If the Russian Government does decide that specialist diplomas should be dropped and Bachelors/Masters introduced, it will result in much greater demand for these courses. Employers haven't yet grasped Bologna - they are resistant to Bachelors, they don't understand what level it is, or what skills they can expect of Bachelors graduates.

Source: SQW interviews and survey of HEIs

- 8.26 A lone voice responded rather tersely in our survey: ‘No. I am against the Bologna process’.
- 8.27 Other benefits to institutions have taken the form of spin-off activities. These include European funding bids and new research collaboration.
- 8.28 There are one or two aspects in which BRIDGE experience at institutional level fell somewhat short:
- it was only at a late stage that the lack of effective employer research became apparent. With hindsight, many projects would have benefited from putting more resource into this. However, at the start of the programme, neither Russian HEIs nor their UK partners appreciated exactly how inexperienced Russian universities are at conducting employer research
  - Russian HEIs did not receive sufficient support from their UK colleagues in marketing courses to potential students. Although there are examples of UK HEIs helping their partners to design brochures and websites, the lack of a systematic approach to marketing is clear. The majority of Russian HEIs rely on promoting post-graduate courses to their existing undergraduates, and have very little conception of reaching a wider audience. Low recruitment to BRIDGE courses in 2008-09 has been blamed largely on the economic crisis in Russia, but in fact unsophisticated marketing techniques are perhaps equally to blame.

#### ***At national level in Russia***

- 8.29 Despite the high level origins of the programme (a meeting between Prime Minister Blair and President Putin), this did not translate into a high level of engagement on the part of the Russian Ministry of Education. However, during our consultations in Russia it became clear that the Russian higher education sector has (as in the UK) a high level of autonomy. While it is naturally desirable to secure Ministerial approval for programmes such as BRIDGE, this does not preclude the sector from pursuing initiatives that it perceives to be important. Often, groupings of institutions will come together to take forward a particular agenda – just as in the UK.
- 8.30 During this evaluation we were not able to secure an interview with a representative from the Russian Ministry of Education, and we are therefore unable to ascertain for ourselves whether the Ministry perceives any impact arising from BRIDGE at national level in Russia. However, at the final workshop for British and Russian project managers, where a Russian ministerial official was present, the following note was made<sup>21</sup>:

*Contributions to the workshop suggested that BRIDGE has had impact at all levels, from ministerial to student, within Russia. BRIDGE dual awards are important for reform of HE in Russia, leading to change from within as part of the Bologna process. BRIDGE has been a tool for the introduction of Bologna in Russia from the bottom up... The Russian ministerial official in charge of HE policy said that through BRIDGE Britain has had more influence than any other country on the Bologna process in Russia.*

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<sup>21</sup> Note from BRIDGE project managers’ workshop, British Council Manchester, June 2008

- 8.31 From our own research, furthermore, we have some evidence of impact at national level. One particularly pro-active, Moscow-based institution told us that:

*The experience which we gained from BRIDGE is now being put to use in our work at interregional planning educational committees (40-50 universities). These committees are created around subject areas and their task is to help in developing new educational standards. New standards will be much closer to British ones as they will be competence-based.*

- 8.32 One important point to note is the geographical spread of BRIDGE projects: from Kaliningrad in the west to Vladivostok in the east; and from St Petersburg in the north to Sochi in the south. The majority of successful partnerships were located in Moscow and St Petersburg, but just under half were located in other regions. This has been an important element of BRIDGE. If (like other previous programmes) funding had been concentrated solely in the two largest cities, the chances of moving Russia's entire national higher education system forward within the Bologna Process would have been significantly reduced. If a BRIDGE-type programme were ever to be repeated, it would be eminently sensible to ensure that it was again Russia-wide and not restricted to the two main cities.
- 8.33 Meanwhile, there is very little evidence to suggest that BRIDGE has had any impact on the UK's higher education system. Nonetheless, the UK experience of validating dual awards will inform other developments and filter through to national level over the longer term. In particular, the varying way in which individual UK institutions interpret QAA validation guidelines is an issue that is receiving further attention at national level as the sector continues its deliberations about further changes to the current quality assurance framework (QAF).

### **Community of innovators?**

- 8.34 One of the objectives of BRIDGE was that it would create a 'community of innovators' in Russia, who would be at the cutting edge of higher education reform in Russia.
- 8.35 At the final workshop for UK and Russian project managers, held in Manchester in June 2008, participants expressed their strong desire to see some form of BRIDGE 'association' formed to ensure that participating HEIs continued to maintain links and continue to share their experience. Sadly, these good intentions were to suffer as a result of the British Council's travails in Russia: following the closure of British Council offices and the departure of key personnel, there was no one left who could have coordinated this, and no funding to resource a network.
- 8.36 Nonetheless, the most pro-active Russian institutions have endeavoured to maintain the momentum established by BRIDGE, and to continue pressing forward with educational reform. One institution in Moscow told us:

*We have been maintaining contacts with many BRIDGE universities as well as with some universities which for some reason did not participate in the programme (either applied too late or did not get support). In the case of BRIDGE universities we are interested in the implementation of their programmes and their influence on other universities' programmes, and also some political decisions which the BRIDGE community might influence. For example, one of the barriers is the current pay system*

*which does not include any compensation for teachers' work with students' essays or for tutoring, which make a significant part of British teachers' workload. These problems cannot be solved by just one university; they need to be addressed by the whole higher education community. At the recent conference on export of education services organised by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science (where several BRIDGE universities were present) we discussed barriers which prevent the internationalisation of Russian education, and the position of participants was expressed in the resolution sent to the Ministry of Education and Science. As for universities which wanted to introduce similar programmes, our institution organises consultations for them on all aspects of quality assurance and enhancement in HE, on competence based education as well as on different formats of educational process to ensure contemporary quality education.*

## 9: Relevance and influence of BRIDGE in UK

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- 9.1 Much of the focus of this report has been on the experience of Russian institutions and students, and the impact that BRIDGE has had upon them. Russia was perhaps the prime beneficiary of BRIDGE, but UK institutions have benefited from the programme in various ways.
- 9.2 In this section we give more consideration to the broader relevance of BRIDGE in the UK, and any influence (actual or potential) that it may have had at institutional and sectoral level.

### Features of collaborative provision in HE

- 9.3 The majority of UK higher education institutions have experience in a range of collaborative provision. Much of this is UK-based, through collaborative arrangements with employers, further education colleges and other bodies – but a lot of it involves overseas provision.
- 9.4 Any collaborative provision involves a certain amount of risk. We know from other work<sup>22</sup> that the major risks associated with collaborative arrangements are reputational, and relate to the overall quality of provision; other key risks are financial (particularly in relation to working with new partners), spatial and cultural. In the context of BRIDGE, where partnership arrangements involved some distant locations, a foreign language and a different educational culture, these risks are self evident.
- 9.5 In such an environment it is not at all surprising that UK BRIDGE partners took the validation process very seriously. This was potentially a huge barrier to the successful implementation of BRIDGE, but in practice it was one that was eventually overcome in many cases – albeit after considerable hard work on both sides.
- 9.6 Examples of good practice<sup>23</sup> in collaborative arrangements include the building of effective and equitable relationships between HEIs and partners at all levels of the institution, including senior management, quality assurance professionals and academic and institutional link tutors. We have found that the most successful UK BRIDGE institutions are those which have adopted this institution-wide approach.
- 9.7 Good practice in collaborative provision also involves staff development, whereby an institution and its partners come together on activities such as shared conferences, workshops and review days. Such activities are not necessarily practicable for BRIDGE partnerships, particularly now that funding has ended, but the most successful partnerships may benefit from investing in occasional joint events over the longer term.
- 9.8 The Quality Assurance Framework for higher education in the UK is currently under review, and there has been consultation about introducing a more risk-based approach to quality assurance, while also ensuring that the needs of public accountability are met. As we noted in

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<sup>22</sup> SQW report to the Quality Assurance Framework Review Group (April 2008), Assessing the impact of reviews of collaborative arrangements on higher education institutions

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

a recent publication<sup>24</sup>, the notion of a continuum of risk needs to be developed; we concluded that risks should be assessed on an individual partnership basis rather than assuming that certain types of collaborative arrangements may be inherently more, or less, risky. A risk-based approach may also, ironically, lead to UK HEIs becoming more risk averse and withdrawing from innovative collaborative provision (such as BRIDGE-type activity) at a time when other HE policy drivers are encouraging new ways of working. It would of course be highly disappointing if UK institutions' investment of time and resources in BRIDGE were not allowed to develop further.

## Internationalisation versus international recruitment

- 9.9 A significant part of the feedback we received from Russian institutions focused on the motivation of their UK partner, and the perception that some UK institutions saw BRIDGE primarily as a quick way of exploiting a new recruitment market.
- 9.10 The UK ranks second in the world in the number of international students it attracts<sup>25</sup> and its position in terms of international postgraduate students is very strong. UK higher education is perceived internationally as being high quality and worth paying for. This position is underpinned by the Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI2), launched in 2006, a five-year strategy which aims to secure the UK's position as a leader in international education and sustain the growth of UK international education delivered in the UK and overseas. Russia is one of the priority markets of PMI2.
- 9.11 Importantly, PMI2 recognises that, 'international student recruitment to the UK is an important element within the strategy, but our ability to attract students increasingly depends on our reputation in the international arena. Not only is this about the quality and value of our education, it is also about the contribution we make globally and the strength of the partnerships we build'. Also, although international recruitment represents a major source of income for the UK HE sector, a recent report points out that, 'there should be no presumption that such success can somehow automatically continue, nor that the competitive mindset can itself continue to serve the UK well<sup>26</sup>'.
- 9.12 There have been signs from BRIDGE that some UK institutions may not be seeing 'the big picture'. International recruitment is not the same as internationalisation, an agenda that dominates much of the discussion around HE at the moment – but a small minority of UK BRIDGE institutions may have lost sight of the distinction.
- 9.13 The key argument from Professor Sir Drummond Bone's report, *Internationalisation of HE: A Ten Year View*, seems to underline the negative feedback from some (by no means all) Russian institutions about their UK partner. The report notes that,

*both to avoid instability in the recruitment market and to best promote the interests of the UK at large, its universities and their students, universities should focus their international efforts on a long term programme of internationalisation and avoid the temptation of short-term mass*

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.sqw.co.uk/file\\_download/188](http://www.sqw.co.uk/file_download/188)

<sup>25</sup> OBHE/Kingston University report for the Higher Education Europe Unit and Higher Education International Unit (April 2009), *UK Universities and Europe: competition and internationalisation*

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

*recruitment to traditional study in the UK [...] The main problem with the UK is a perception that our universities are solely interested in international students as a source of revenue [...] If collaborative and long-term partnerships are the engine of growth as opposed to aggressive selling, growth is likely to be both more gentle, and more stable, and inside the UK universities' overall institutional strategy rather than appearing as a financial target for recruitment offices.<sup>27</sup>*

9.14 The best BRIDGE partnerships are those which have understood this point. Indeed the real benefits from those partnerships may not be seen until several years from now. Some BRIDGE courses have failed to be delivered because the UK partner could not make a profit from them; but persistence in the longer term may pay off. Individual project leaders often struggled to persuade their senior management of this point. For example, as cited earlier in this report, one UK project leader told us: "I understand that the financial side is important for the University but I believe they should forgo profits for the sake of making the partnership work."

9.15 In the words of a recent report from the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (OBHE) and Kingston University,

*UK universities need to build mutually beneficial relationships in all areas of internationalisation – beyond the apparent bottom line of international student recruitment. Competition from other European countries for international undergraduate and masters students is a reality but a continued emphasis on this aspect of internationalisation may blind the UK and its universities to the proposition that maintaining competitive advantage already increasingly lies in a collaborative agenda<sup>28</sup>*

9.16 This report also noted that this proposition is understood by several other European countries (in particular, Germany the Netherlands and Sweden are developing collaborative partnerships, within and outside Europe, that are based on mutual gain rather than financial returns), and suggests that 'the proposition takes on even more importance as a source of resilience against the anticipated adverse economic circumstances of the next five years'.

9.17 The same report makes an explicit recommendation that:

*UK universities should establish small cross-sector consortia to develop and implement internationalisation strategies. UK universities can learn from their Dutch counterparts, some of which formally collaborate in international recruitment and other activities. This strengthens their internationalisation agendas<sup>29</sup>.*

9.18 Is this something that UK BRIDGE institutions might wish to pursue, with a view to exploring the potential of the Russian market together over the longer term?

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<sup>27</sup> Professor Sir Drummond Bone (2008), *Internationalisation of HE: a ten year view*

<sup>28</sup> OBHE/Kingston University report for the Higher Education Europe Unit and Higher Education International Unit (April 2009), *UK Universities and Europe: competition and internationalisation*

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

## Attracting high quality students

- 9.19 In our interviews and visits to institutions, it has become clear that the quality of Russian students has been a pleasant surprise to many UK institutions. We believe it is worth drawing attention to this, as it underlines the potential importance of Russia in terms of future recruitment.
- 9.20 The OBHE report<sup>30</sup> notes that many European universities are developing recruitment strategies that not only focus on attracting more international students, but also on how to attract and select high quality students (for example through aptitude testing) and how to ensure that the top students are retained once recruited. Some institutions offer scholarships for high-achieving international students and/or those from specific target countries. Other institutions offer free tuition for the following year to the top three per cent of students. This helps to ensure retention of the top students and encourages them not only to work hard but to remain at the institution.
- 9.21 UK institutions may wish to bear this in mind when developing ideas for scholarship schemes. The lack of scholarship opportunities has been a barrier to recruitment in many BRIDGE courses.

## Learning from BRIDGE

- 9.22 Several initiatives with similar aims and objectives have been introduced during the period since BRIDGE was launched in 2004. It is interesting to look at whether learning from BRIDGE has influenced these in any way.
- 9.23 The most directly comparable initiative is the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI), a five year initiative from 2006-11, which aims to create a 'step change' in educational relations between India and the UK so that in the longer term the two countries become each other's partner of choice in education. Funding was available to UK and Indian institutions to facilitate the development and delivery of UK degrees and professional qualifications in India through institutional partnerships. As in BRIDGE, two categories of awards were given: full awards, where a partnership developed a full Masters or Bachelor level degree, and short awards where partnerships developed CPD courses.
- 9.24 The British Council, which has managed both programmes, feels that BRIDGE (established two years prior to UKIERI) provided some useful learning points for the India programme. Some notable learning points include:
- providing resources upfront, to recognise how resource-intensive the initial development stages of projects can be
  - making sure the right people are engaged (including Pro-Vice-Chancellors in universities, and policy representatives at national level)
  - the benefits of concentrating on developing links with one particular country, as opposed to multi-lateral partnerships.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid



- 9.25 The British Council has also found some of this learning to be useful in the context of the PMI2 initiative (like UKIERI, a five year initiative from 2006 to 2011).
- 9.26 Another stakeholder noted during our consultations that the BRIDGE Steering Committee provided some useful learning for the subsequent operation of the UKIERI steering group, which they perceived to be more engaged and better organised than the BRIDGE steering committee.
- 9.27 It is probably misleading to make direct comparisons between BRIDGE and UKIERI, since the latter is a much larger initiative. However, the BRIDGE experience does seem to have demonstrated the usefulness of locating collaborative partnerships/activity within a wider framework.

## 10: Conclusions and recommendations

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### Conclusions

- 10.1 The brief for this evaluation required us to report on: ‘lessons to be learned from the BRIDGE programme for stakeholders – what worked well, what didn’t – with specific interest in the Expert Group approach’. Specifically, we were tasked with addressing the following issues:
- the contribution of BRIDGE to promote co-operation in higher education and to facilitate the creation of partnerships between universities in the two countries through the development of joint / dual awards, research collaboration and co-operation projects
  - the contribution of BRIDGE partnerships for providing learning points for developing UK HE partnerships with Russia
  - the contribution of BRIDGE to the changes within Russian HEIs, with particular reference to the Bologna Process
  - the sustainability of University to University partnerships once funding ceased, and the longer term impact of the programme
  - whether the programme provided value for money
  - to provide recommendations on possible future activity and the potential of BRIDGE and the individual partnerships under the programme as partnership models for other countries, and whether there is now sufficient capacity in Russia to develop university partnerships without the aid of a UK funded programme.
- 10.2 Here we present our conclusions and recommendations.

#### ***Contribution of BRIDGE to promote co-operation in higher education and to facilitate the creation of partnerships between universities in the two countries***

- 10.3 The role of BRIDGE in stimulating UK-Russia partnerships is second to none. Many of these partnerships would never have existed in the absence of BRIDGE, and very few of the dual awards would have emerged.
- 10.4 The level of engagement on the part of the Russian Government was not significant. However, despite the political troubles between the two countries and the virtual cessation of the British Council’s activities in Russia, BRIDGE partnerships have continued to develop and thrive – albeit without the British Council coordination function that would have made this process even easier.
- 10.5 There was some concern amongst Russian stakeholders that programmes should not solely be taken by students wishing to work outside Russia, and hence the ability to award a Russian qualification was important to them. The purpose was not to encourage large numbers of Russian students to study in the UK (although it was recognised that this may be a by-product

of BRIDGE to some extent), but to enable them to remain in their home country while studying for a UK award. Our survey of students confirmed that they valued this opportunity to stay in Russia while gaining a UK qualification.

**Contribution of BRIDGE partnerships for providing learning points for developing UK HE partnerships with Russia**

10.6 Some of the major learning points for the future development of UK-Russia partnerships are summarised below.

- Most importantly, UK institutions should be aware that expecting a short-term profit from such ventures is a mistake: the development of dual awards requires significant time and resources, and any reward (in the form of student fee income) can only be expected in the longer term. Institutions must approach such partnerships in the right spirit: there must be a genuine commitment to the partner country, and to the development of particular subject disciplines in that country. The most successful projects are those led by institutions that regard Russia as an integral part of their institutional strategy, so that the imperative to turn a quick profit does not dominate the relationship. In the current climate, and with public funding to UK universities being cut, this is not easy to achieve. Nonetheless, the potential future market – the sheer volume of Russian students who might be recruited – is huge. Institutions with sufficient strategic vision will benefit in the longer term.
- The role played by the Expert Group in the successful delivery of BRIDGE should not be under-estimated. It is highly unlikely that the success rate of partnerships would have been so high in the absence of this group. Its success lay partly in the way that its individual members ‘gelled’: there was a genuine meeting of minds between the UK and Russian experts, and the consistency of membership throughout the duration of the programme was of great benefit to its operation. The developmental role that the group took on was greater than had been originally envisaged at the start of the initiative, as the need for ‘hand-holding’ became clear. Institutions that submitted initial expressions of interest in BRIDGE required advice and guidance to ensure that they were actually equipped to progress to actual project status. In particular, the Expert Group was crucial in persuading bidders that they must secure the support of senior managers for their proposals. As we have seen, projects that failed to secure this institutional support were often doomed to failure; there would have been more such cases, were it not for the Expert Group. Members of the Group also played a crucial role in supporting projects through difficult stages in their development. Again, many more projects would have failed at various stages (notably when negotiating course fees and student recruitment, and also at validation stage) were it not for the support and practical advice from members of the Expert Group.
- Many partnerships under-estimated the importance of effective employer research. Some courses were developed in the expectation that there would be employer demand, and this subsequently proved to be not the case.
- Many partnerships also failed to conduct effective marketing to potential students. Too many Russian HEIs focused their marketing efforts on the ‘captive audience’

already studying in their institution, and failed to consider marketing to students in other institutions or indeed in other cities. Too few UK HEIs realised that the marketing of education in Russia is still lacking in sophistication, and that additional support and advice would be required by their partners. Even if this had been understood, it is unlikely that the level of funding available to partnerships would have allowed much to have been done: efforts were concentrated primarily on course development and validation, and marketing was not regarded as a priority. Many BRIDGE courses that were previously up and running have now been withdrawn due to insufficient numbers being recruited. This is blamed largely on the current economic downturn, but poor marketing may be equally at fault.

- In terms of programme delivery, a major source of frustration and inconvenience for many partnerships related to financial management. The decision to allocate funds to the UK partners only caused huge problems, particularly surrounding the transfer of money to Russia – where a large proportion of expenditure was incurred. This approach to financial management may have been taken for good reasons (for the sake of better accounting and transparency), but we believe a more effective approach would have been to set up a small management team within the British Council in Russia who would have taken responsibility for allocating funds to the Russian partners. This method had already been used for several years by British Council Russia in its UK-Russian education projects, and to our knowledge it was successful. This approach may have meant an addition to BRIDGE programme delivery costs, but our view is that it would have been more effective. It would also have been welcomed as an illustration that BRIDGE was genuinely meant to be a ‘partnership of equals’.

### ***Contribution of BRIDGE to the changes within Russian HEIs, with particular reference to the Bologna Process***

- 10.7 It is impossible to quantify the impact that BRIDGE has had in terms of bringing deep-rooted change to Russian institutions or its higher education sector more generally. However, it is possible to talk with some confidence about the influence that BRIDGE has had at institutional level and more widely.
- 10.8 In earlier sections of this report we have highlighted many examples and anecdotes from our consultations with Russian HEIs that illustrate the changes wrought in individual institutions as a result of BRIDGE. Some of these changes can be summarised as follows:
- the introduction of new approaches to teaching: classes are more inter-active; case studies are used; CPD students are encouraged to bring in examples of live situations from their working lives; tutors increasingly do small group work
  - the introduction of new assessment approaches: from oral exams to written tests and essays; from five-point assessment scales to marks out of one hundred; use of clear criteria at the outset
  - the use of credits (UK) alongside academic hours (Russia)

- significant development in staff understanding – both amongst academics and senior managers – leading to greater alignment with Bologna.
- 10.9 A crucial aspect of BRIDGE was that, unlike several other programmes in Russia, it specifically set out to engage Russian institutions outside of the main population centres of Moscow and St Petersburg. These two main cities have no shortage of HEIs, some of which are internationally renowned for the quality of their educational provision and their research. HEIs in these two cities have benefited from several external funding programmes in recent years, including bilateral programmes with European countries, and as a result are not only well acquainted with Bologna requirements but are also well on the road to integration into the European Higher Education Area. Prior to BRIDGE, there had been little opportunity for regional institutions to gain the same benefits. This has now been redressed to some extent – although the comparatively small programme budget meant that only a small proportion of HEIs could be involved.

***Sustainability of University to University partnerships once funding ceased, and the longer term impact of the programme***

- 10.10 As we have seen, there is not only a high rate of survival amongst BRIDGE partnerships, but in many cases also a development of the partnership: dual award projects are now also collaborating on new research (and vice versa); and spin-off projects have been developed (often in the form of European funding bids).
- 10.11 Research collaboration projects are slightly more likely to be sustainable over the longer term.

***Value for money***

- 10.12 In considering whether the results from BRIDGE represent good value for money, there are two aspects to consider: the funding given to institutions; and the cost of managing the programme.
- 10.13 The total amount of funding allocated to each partnership was comparatively modest, considering the enormous amount of work involved in developing and validating dual awards and, for some, the sizeable travel costs between the UK and distant parts of Russia. As such, the programme represents good value for the sums invested.
- 10.14 Considering the size of the Russian market in terms of potential student numbers (i.e. potential for income generation), the BRIDGE investment may come to be regarded as very small compared to the eventual reward. However, the most successful partnerships have arisen where the UK partner understands that this investment will be long term. By contrast, in projects involving UK institutions that expected an immediate financial return, partnerships have been less fruitful.
- 10.15 We have not examined the management costs of the programme in detail. We would, however, draw attention to the very high level of satisfaction expressed by institutions across England and Russia in the way that BRIDGE was delivered by the British Council. The workshops for project managers that were delivered in both countries were highly valued by participants, and Russian HEIs have been particularly appreciative of the time and effort put into the programme by the staff of British Council Russia, particularly Alexander Mishin.

- 10.16 The role of the Expert Group is perceived to have been crucial to the successes that have been achieved, and the cost of resourcing this group is perceived by all stakeholders to have been a worthwhile investment.

Table 10-1: Achievement of BRIDGE aims

BRIDGE aim	Achieved?
To increase collaborative effort between Russian and UK universities by means of joint programme development leading to dual degrees or other mutually recognised academic qualifications	Achieved to a great extent.
To develop a model of university partnership brokering and dual degree development that will be replicable across other countries	Achieved to a considerable extent. The experience gained in developing dual awards through BRIDGE will be providing important lessons for similar developments in other countries.
To extend the reach and availability of UK awards to Russian students	Achieved, and across a wide variety of subject disciplines – but hampered by Russian partners’ failure to market courses to students outside their own institution.
To develop a community of innovators in Russia and the UK	Not achieved, largely due to the cessation of British Council activities in Russia and the lack of capacity to provide co-ordination to take this forward. There is desire amongst Russian institutions to see this happen and some informal networking is continuing.
To facilitate a change in Russian higher education leading to a more outcomes-based, learner-centred, interactive and accountable system	Achieved to a significant degree in the institutions whose partnerships fully progressed.
To provide learning points for UK and Russian higher education management	Achieved, with evidence collated during this evaluation.
To progress change in Russia’s systems as they follow the Bologna process.	Achieved in part. There is evidence that participation in BRIDGE has assisted Russian HEIs in better understanding the Bologna approach.

Source: SQW

## Recommendations

- 10.17 Given that BRIDGE was a fixed-term programme, and that continuation of its funding was never envisaged, it is not the role of this evaluation to make specific recommendations about future funding. A few observations, however, may be made.
- 10.18 On the subject of funding, we were unable to secure a consultation with a representative of the Russian Ministry of Education but our consultations with institutions and stakeholders in Russia lead us to believe it is unlikely the Russian Government would fund a similar initiative in the foreseeable future (although we note that it is funding some research collaboration that was initiated under BRIDGE). Neither do there appear to be any specific plans on the UK side, at the time of writing this report, to fund a successor to BRIDGE. However, it is to be hoped that the improvement in relations between the two countries over the last twelve months, coupled with the positive outcomes from BRIDGE recorded in this report, may eventually lead to some form of successor programme being introduced. **We believe that there would be demand for this, and we would encourage the development of a Russia-wide successor programme that builds upon the experience of BRIDGE.** Regardless of whether large-scale funding will ever be sourced for a similar programme in the future, there is significant experience from BRIDGE which is worth taking forward.

- 10.19 Our key recommendation arising from this evaluation is that serious consideration should be given to the provision of some focused, follow-on support. Huge efforts and resources – personal and institutional, as much as financial - were invested in the BRIDGE projects. It would do justice to these efforts to provide projects with continued support in some form. In particular, every effort should be made to maintain a community of BRIDGE institutions if at all possible. There is a small core group of pro-active institutions in Russia that are endeavouring to maintain links and push forward with a shared agenda, but many personal links between Russian projects have been lost. We found during our research that many participants would love to stay in touch with each other and continue to share experience, but do not know how to go about this now that the British Council coordination role has ceased.
- 10.20 We understand that British Council Russia is considering the possibility of hosting a workshop with some of the Russian BRIDGE partners. At the time of our consultations this was under preliminary consideration and we do not have any details of what form such an event might take. However, we would strongly support any efforts that British Council Russia can make to nurture the ‘community of innovators’ that was originally envisaged under BRIDGE.
- 10.21 This sense of community might also be further extended via the development of a specific British Council BRIDGE alumni network through which participants could stay in touch with one another and also continue to have contact with the UK institutions involved.

## **Annex A: Research methodology**

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A.1 Our evaluation methodology comprised the following strands:

- desk based research
- interviews with key stakeholders in the UK and Russia
- interviews with representatives from UK HEIs
- interviews with representatives from Russian HEIs
- survey of UK and Russian HEIs
- electronic survey of Russian students and alumni of BRIDGE courses
- focus groups with Russian students.

### **Desk based research**

A.2 We were provided with a large amount of useful background information by the British Council. This comprised:

- Partnerships' funding application forms
- List of all partnerships funded
- Minutes from Steering Committee meetings
- Notes from project manager workshops
- Internal reports on BRIDGE
- Other miscellaneous documentation.

A.3 This information was very useful in helping us to understand the programme and develop our research tools.

### **Interviews with stakeholders**

A.4 To ensure that we had a full understanding of the context and operating environment of BRIDGE we attempted to speak to all members of the Steering Committee and the expert group, and as many other key stakeholders as possible. The feedback from these interviews helped us to design our research tools.

A.5 In Russia these interviews were carried out face to face by our evaluation team. UK interviews were undertaken using a combination of face to face and telephone interviews.

A.6 A full list of institutions that participated in the evaluation is provided in Annex C.



## Interviews with participating institutions

- A.7 Our intention was for the evaluation to secure the participation of all BRIDGE partners. It was agreed at the start of the evaluation that we would conduct interviews with half of all the partnerships that went ahead under BRIDGE, and that the remaining half would be asked to participate in the evaluation by self-completion questionnaires.
- A.8 Interviews with UK institutions were carried out using a mixture of telephone and face to face interviews.
- A.9 Given the wide geographical dispersion of projects across Russia (a country of ten contiguous time zones, plus Kaliningrad on the Baltic Sea) it was neither feasible nor cost-effective to consider visiting all of them in person. By way of compromise, it was agreed that we would cluster our face to face interviews in three cities: Moscow, St Petersburg in western Russia, and Yekaterinburg in the Urals. We visited 11 institutions, which between them delivered a total of 18 BRIDGE projects. Consultees are listed in Annex C.
- A.10 The remainder of interviews with Russian institutions were carried out by telephone. Telephone interviews were undertaken by our Moscow-based associate consultant.
- A.11 In the end, we secured the participation of 45 Russian partners and 48 UK partners (from a potential total of 58 on each side). We consider this to be a very good achievement. The non-responses were generally due to key personnel having moved on and/or contact details being unavailable. There were a small number of individuals on both sides who did not respond to our invitation, despite repeated requests.

### **Research tools**

- A.12 Using the findings from our desk based research and interviews with stakeholders, we drafted the research tools for the main body of our research. These drafts were circulated, in English and in Russian, to all members of the Steering Committee and expert group. A small number of amendments were made in the light of feedback received.
- A.13 It was decided that the same questionnaire be used in our interviews and in the self-completion survey, to enable us to secure read-across of findings across the whole programme. However, in our interviews we were able to obtain a much richer and deeper set of feedback in addition to the 'tick-box' responses.
- A.14 The questionnaires for UK and Russian institutions were almost identical, with a small number of country-specific questions.
- A.15 Annex B contains the two questionnaires. We have provided them in English only, though the Russian versions are available if required.

## Focus groups with students

- A.16 When we visited institutions in Russia, we asked if they could also arrange for us to conduct a focus group with some of their BRIDGE students. We are grateful to the five institutions that were able to set up such meetings for us. In most cases participants were somewhat pushed

for time, and the meetings were not as in-depth as we might have preferred. Nevertheless, we met with a representative sample of students: some were young people undertaking full time dual awards, while others were participants of CPD courses who were already in employment.

- A.17 In addition to these meetings in Russia, we were also able to convene a focus group of Russian students at City University in London. A group of six students from St Petersburg State Polytechnical University and Penza State University, who were studying the UK-based part of their MSc in Computer and Information Engineering, made time to meet us in February 2010. Some of these students were in fact alumni who had graduated with their dual award the previous week; others had just started the London-based element of their course.
- A.18 The names of the students and participants who met with us are listed at Annex C. We are extremely grateful to them for taking the time to talk to us.

### Survey of students / participants

- A.19 We gave due consideration to the appropriate way of eliciting the views of participating Russian students, and decided that the most appropriate and cost-effective way to do this is by electronic survey (we ruled out postal and telephone surveys for reasons of cost, time and practicalities/logistics).
- A.20 Whilst electronic survey was our preferred approach, it was not without its risks. First, we were reliant upon institutions to provide us with the names and email addresses of individual learners. Our ability to conduct the survey was affected not only by their goodwill and willingness to assist us, but also on any legal considerations regarding the exchange of personal data.
- A.21 We contacted all Russian BRIDGE institutions, explained that we were planning to conduct an electronic survey of participants, and asked them to provide students' email addresses if they could. We made it clear that the survey would be anonymous, and that we required only students' email addresses (not their names, postal addresses or any other personal information).
- A.22 In the event, a total of 14 Russian institutions were willing and able to provide the email addresses of students who were currently and / or had already completed BRIDGE courses. Other institutions either did not hold this information, or did not respond to our requests. Only in one case did an institution say it felt unable to offer us the contact details for reasons of confidentiality.
- A.23 We used the on-line survey tool Key Survey, which operates in different languages. Given the nature of the programme we might have expected learners to be able to respond to the BRIDGE survey in English; however, to maximise the response rate and elicit a higher quality of response we decided to conduct the survey entirely in Russian. (Responses were translated back into English by members of our evaluation team.)
- A.24 From a total pool of 413 participants, we received responses from 94 people. This is a response rate of 23%, which we consider to be very good for a survey of this kind. The breakdown of response across the 14 institutions is set out below. As can be seen, there is a

large proportion of responses from one institution (Moscow School of Social & Economic Sciences) and no responses from two institutions.

Table 2: Which Russian university is jointly certifying your course?

Name of Russian institution	Survey Respondents		Survey Invitees	Response Rate
	Number	%	Number	%
Bauman State Technical University	7	7.4%	20	35.0%
British Higher School of Art & Design	4	4.3%	43	9.3%
Immanuel Kant State University of Russia	5	5.3%	9	55.6%
Moscow School of Social & Economic Sciences	40	42.6%	201	19.9%
Regional Open Social Institute Kursk	4	4.3%	13	30.8%
Saratov State Technical University	5	5.3%	13	38.5%
St Petersburg State Polytechnical University	7	7.4%	16	43.8%
St Petersburg State University of Technology & Design	6	6.4%	20	30.0%
Tyumen State University	3	3.2%	22	13.6%
Urals Academy of Public Administration	8	8.5%	23	34.8%
Urals State University of Economics	4	4.3%	15	26.7%
Vladimir State Technical University	1	1.1%	10	10.0%
Saratov State Socio-Economic University	0	0.0%	6	0.0%
St Petersburg Medical PostGrad Academy	0	0.0%	2	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>22.8%</b>

Source: SQW survey of BRIDGE participants

- A.25 It is important to note that the 94 respondents did not simply take the easy option of only answering the ‘tick-box’ questions: they took the time and trouble to give considered responses to the open questions, which has given us a huge wealth of feedback upon which to draw. We are very grateful to all 94 people who took the trouble to participate in the survey.
- A.26 Throughout the main body of report, when quoting comments from the student survey we have taken care to ensure that respondents from all twelve institutions are represented.

## **Annex B: Evaluation research tools**

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- B.1 In this Annex we provide the questionnaires that were used in our interviews with, and survey of, participating institutions in the UK and in Russia. The two questionnaires are almost exactly the same, though with a few country-specific differences.
- B.2 We also include the questionnaire used in our electronic survey of students.
- B.3 Questionnaires were produced in English and in Russian. We have provided only the English versions here, but the Russian versions can be provided upon request.

## Questionnaire for UK HEIs

Note: all institutions to answer Part A, plus *either* Part B or C

### Part A: Core questions for all projects

#### **Introductory section (to be completed by the evaluation team)**

Name of institution	
Name of Russian partner institution	
Name of project	
strand (1, 2, etc)	
Dual award / research	
Name of interviewee	
Date of interview / name of interviewer	

#### **Institutional background and motivation**

A1	<b>What made your institution decide to participate in BRIDGE? (tick all that apply)</b>	
	a) Gain higher profile / reputation for our institution	
	b) Recruit new students	
	c) Access new markets	
	d) Response to student demand	
	e) Provide development opportunities for staff	
	f) Learn more about the Russian education system	
	g) To access funding	
	h) Pursue research agenda	
	i) Develop subject areas that are new to Russian higher education	
	j) Income generation	
	k) Gain experience in collaborative partnerships	
	l) Other (please describe)	

A2	<b>Was the BRIDGE project actively supported by the senior management of your institution?</b> <i>(tick one)</i>	
	a) Yes, it was actively supported at a high level all the way through the project	
	b) It was supported at a high level at the beginning of the project, but this support was not maintained throughout	
	c) It received some support from senior managers	
	d) No, it was not actively supported at a high level	
	Comments:	

A3	<b>Was the BRIDGE project part of a strategy or a wider development plan in your institution?</b> <i>(tick one)</i>	
	a) Yes, it was part of a clear strategy <i>(e.g. to develop international partnerships)</i>	
	b) It was linked to some other initiatives in our institution	
	c) No, it was a 'one-off' project	
	d) Not sure	
	e) Other (please describe)	

A4	<b>Is partnership with Russia now included in your institutional strategy?</b> <i>(tick one)</i>	
	a) Yes, it is explicitly referenced in our institutional strategy	
	b) Not explicitly, but we plan to develop partnerships with Russia	
	c) No, it is not included in our strategy, and we have no plans for further partnerships with Russia	
	d) Not sure	
	e) Other (please describe)	

**Partnership issues**

A5	<b>How did you select your Russian partner for this project? (tick any that apply)</b>	
	a) We had worked with them before and we wanted to continue / develop our partnership	
	b) We chose a partner with a strong reputation	
	c) There were some personal links between staff in both institutions	
	d) Not sure	
	e) Other (please describe)	
	<i>Any comments:</i>	

A6	<b>If the BRIDGE programme had not existed, would you still have looked for a Russian partner institution to work with? (please tick one)</b>	
	a) Yes	
	b) Maybe	
	c) No	
	<i>Any comments:</i>	

A7	<b>Have you developed links or maintained contact with any other UK institutions that took part in BRIDGE? Would you say that there is a ‘community’ of BRIDGE institutions? If so, have you gained any benefits from this? Please discuss.</b>	

A8	<b>Now that BRIDGE funding has ended, are you continuing to work with your partner institution on dual awards or research? (Please tick one)</b>	
	a) Yes, we are still actively working together on dual awards / research	
	b) We are not currently engaged in such activity, but we may do so in the future	
	c) We are not currently engaged in such activity and have no plans to do so in future	
	d) Not sure	
	<i>Please provide further details if you can</i>	

A9	<b>If your partnership is no longer active, can you say why? Please tick any that apply</b>	
	a) Our institution can not find funding to continue to resource the partnership	
	b) Staff have moved on (in the Russian institution)	
	c) Staff have moved on (in our institution)	
	d) Other institutional issues (please describe)	
	e) Too difficult to overcome differences in educational / methodological outlook	
	f) Too difficult to overcome cultural differences	
	g) External political reasons (e.g. British Council status in Russia)	
	h) Other (please describe)	
	i) Not applicable, partnership is active	
	<i>Please discuss your answer in more detail:</i>	

**Support and funding**

A10	<b>What kind of external support did you receive, and from whom (e.g. British Council in Moscow and/or the UK)? How could the support have been improved?</b>	

A11	<b>With regard to funding, please indicate which one of the following statements you agree with most closely Please tick one</b>	
	a) The level of financial support provided by the BRIDGE programme was more than sufficient for us to achieve our aims	
	b) The level of financial support provided by the BRIDGE programme was just about sufficient for us to achieve our aims	
	c) The level of financial support provided by the BRIDGE programme was not sufficient for us to achieve our aims	
	<i>Please discuss your answer in more detail:</i>	



A12	<b>Did the level of BRIDGE funding constrain your partnership in any way?</b> <i>(Please select one)</i>	
	a) Yes, a lot	
	b) Yes, slightly	
	c) No, not really	
<i>If yes, please describe what kind of constraints you faced (for example, were there particular activities that you were unable to deliver due to insufficient funding?)</i>		

A13	<b>If the level of BRIDGE funding had been lower, would you still have embarked upon your partnership?</b> <i>Please tick one</i>	
	a) Yes	
	b) Maybe	
	c) No	
<i>Please expand upon your answer if you can</i>		

**Results of BRIDGE**

A14	Please say how strongly you agree with each of the following statements.  <b>As a result of BRIDGE:</b>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a)	<b>We understand more about the Russian higher education system</b>					
b)	<b>We have made some changes to some of our systems (e.g. quality assurance, financial / legal processes, etc)</b>  Please describe:					
c)	<b>What we have learned from our Russian partner has been useful to our institution and/or our staff</b>  Please describe:					
d)	<b>There have been some changes to our organisational culture</b> [ <i>for example, better relationships between senior management and academics; better culture of collaboration, more creativity, etc</i> ]  Please describe:					
e)	<b>We have developed closer relationships with industry</b> [ <i>for example, businesses becoming involved in curriculum development; businesses more interested in employing our graduates, etc</i> ]  Please describe:					
f)	<b>We have developed new marketing strategies to promote our course/s to students and employers</b>  Any comments or examples:					
g)	<b>Our institution is more willing to engage in partnerships with other countries than it was before</b>  Any comments or examples:					
h)	<b>BRIDGE has acted as a stepping stone or catalyst for further international activities</b>  Any comments or examples:					
j)	<b>Other result of BRIDGE</b> (please describe)  					

**Lessons learned**

A15	<b>On the whole how would you rate your experience of BRIDGE on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent)?</b>				
	1	2	3	4	5

A16	<b>If you were to be involved in a similar project in the future, what (if anything) would your institution do differently?</b>

A17	<b>If you were to be involved in a similar programme in the future, what (if anything) would you like the Russian partner to do differently?</b>

A18	<b>What have been the greatest challenges for your project?</b>

A19	<b>What have been the greatest rewards?</b>

A20	<b>If BRIDGE (or a similar programme) were to be repeated in the future, would you like to suggest any changes/improvements to the way it is delivered?</b>

Part B: Questions for dual award projects only

**Course/curriculum development and validation**

B1	<b>Please describe how you worked with your partner institution to develop the course (to help them to define outcomes, etc)</b> (e.g. did you deliver any workshops in the UK or in Russia; did you provide your partner with written material describing how to do it; etc)

B2	<b>What were the greatest barriers to be overcome in jointly developing and validating your course? How did you overcome these?</b>

B3	<b>Was your Russian partner willing to adapt any of its own systems (e.g. financial, legal, quality assurance) in order to make the project work?</b> (Please give example/s)

B4	<b>And was your institution also willing and able to be flexible?</b> (Please give example/s)

B5	<b>Has the course been fully validated and accredited in the UK and Russia?</b> (Tick one)	
	a) Yes, validated by us and accredited in Russia	
	b) Validated in UK only	
	c) Accredited in Russia only	
	d) No, not validated or accredited by either side	
	If not yet validated / accredited, please say whether there are plans to do so	

**Students**

B6	<b>When you first started the project, how did you know that there was a demand for it from Russian students? (e.g. did your Russian partner do any local market research?)</b>

B7	<b>Is the BRIDGE course being delivered to students in Russia?</b> (Please tick one)	
	a) Yes, the course is being delivered this year for the first time	
	b) Yes, the course has been delivered for at least one year already	
	c) No, the course has not been delivered yet, but it will in the future	
	d) No, the course has not been delivered and there are no plans for this to happen	
	e) Not sure	
	f) Other (please describe)	

B8	<b>Is the BRIDGE course being delivered to students in the UK?</b> (Please tick one)	
	a) Yes, the course is being delivered this year for the first time	
	b) Yes, the course has been delivered for at least one year already	
	c) No, the course has not been delivered yet, but it will in the future	
	d) No, the course has not been delivered and there are no plans for this to happen	
	e) Not sure	
	f) Other (please describe)	

B9	<b>Do you have any knowledge of how Russian students have reacted to the different (outcomes-based) teaching and assessment methodology?</b>

B10	<b>[If applicable] Can you describe how UK students feel about the introduction of dual award courses? Does it affect them – positively or negatively – in any way? Please discuss.</b>

***Employers***

B11	<b>Would you say you had a good understanding, at the start of the project, of the market for your course amongst employers in the UK and Russia (i.e. were you confident that there was demand for the course)?</b>

THANK YOU

Part C: Questions for projects engaged in research collaboration only

C1	<b>Please indicate <u>up to 5</u> main factors that motivated your BRIDGE collaboration:</b>	
	a) To gain different perspectives in order to promote knowledge	
	b) To build research capacity	
	c) To gain access to research funding	
	d) To develop solutions that resonate around the world	
	e) To improve the recruitment of graduate students	
	f) To enhance the reputation of our institution	
	g) To get research data published in international journals	
	h) Other i) (please describe)	
	i) Other ii) (please describe)	
	j) Other iii) (please describe)	

C2	<b>Does your <u>School</u> or <u>Department</u> have previous experience of research collaboration with Russian institutions? (please tick one)</b>	
	a) Yes, our School/Dept has prior experience of research collaboration with Russia (please describe)	
	b) No, the BRIDGE project was our department's first experience of research collaboration with Russia	
	c) Not sure	
	<i>Please expand upon your answer if you can</i>	

C3	<b>Does your <u>institution</u> have previous experience of research collaboration with Russia? (please tick one)</b>	
	a) Yes, our institution has prior experience of research collaboration with Russia	
	b) No, the BRIDGE project was our institution's first experience of research collaboration with Russia	

	c) Not sure	
	(If yes, please describe)	

C4	<b>How would you describe the BRIDGE research project in the context of the wider activity and/or strategy in your School or institution? (please tick one)</b>	
	a) It has been an important part of our wider activity/strategy	
	b) It is a one-off project with little relevance to our wider activity/strategy	
	c) Other (please describe)	
	<i>Any comments:</i>	

C5	<b>Would you say that your project achieved its specific goals, as described in the original application form? (If not, please say why)</b>	

C6	<b>Has your research collaboration resulted in any of the following? (Please tick all that apply)</b>	
	a) Research papers published	
	b) Conference papers delivered	
	c) New products / solutions implemented by industry	
	d) Other impact on industry (please describe)	
	e) Any further joint research with your Russian partner (please describe)	
	f) Any related joint research with other international partners (please describe)	
	<i>Any comments:</i>	



C7	<b>How (if at all) have you disseminated the results of your research collaboration – both externally, and to colleagues within your institution?</b>

C8	<b>After your experience of BRIDGE, what would you say are the most important factors in creating successful international research collaborations?</b>

C9	<b>Are there any other comments you would like to make about your BRIDGE research collaboration?</b>

**THANK YOU**

## Questions for Russian HEIs

Note: all institutions to answer Part A, plus *either* Part B or C

### Part A: Core questions for all projects

#### **Introductory section (to be completed by the evaluation team)**

Name of institution	
Name of UK partner	
Name of project	
BRIDGE strand (1, 2, etc)	
Dual award / research	
Name of interviewee	
Date / interviewer	

#### **Institutional background and motivation**

A1	<b>What made your institution decide to participate in BRIDGE? (tick all that apply)</b>	
	Gain higher profile / reputation for our institution	
	Recruit new students	
	Be able to provide students with transferable qualifications	
	Provide development opportunities for staff	
	Learn more about UK education system	
	Access funding	
	Pursue research agenda	
	Developing subject areas that are new to Russian higher education	
	Income generation	
	Gain experience in collaborative partnerships	
	Gain useful experience to help move forwards within the Bologna Process	
	Other (please describe)	

A2	<b>Was the BRIDGE project actively supported by the senior management of your institution?</b>	
	Yes, it was actively supported at a high level all the way through the project	
	It was supported at a high level at the beginning of the project, but this support was not maintained throughout	
	It received some support from senior managers	
	No, it was not actively supported at a high level	
	Comments:	

A3	<b>Was the BRIDGE project part of a strategy or a wider development plan in your institution? (tick any that apply)</b>	
	Yes, it was part of a clear strategy ( <i>e.g. to develop international partnerships</i> )	
	It was linked to some other initiatives in our institution	
	No, it was a 'one-off' project	
	Not sure	
	Other (please describe)	

**Partnership issues**

A4	<b>How did you select your UK partner for this project? (tick any that apply)</b>	
	We had worked with them before and we wanted to continue / develop our partnership	
	We chose a partner with a strong reputation	
	There were some personal links between staff in both institutions	
	Not sure / can't remember	
	Other (please describe)	

A5	<b>If the BRIDGE programme had not existed, would you still have looked for a UK partner institution to work with? (please tick one)</b>	
	Yes	
	Maybe	
	No	

A6	<b>Have you developed links or maintained contact with any other Russian BRIDGE institutions? Would you say that there is a ‘community’ of BRIDGE institutions? If so, have you gained any benefits from this? Please discuss.</b>

**Support**

A7	<b>What kind of external support did you receive, and from whom (project managers in Moscow and/or the UK)? How could the support have been improved?</b>

**Results of BRIDGE**

A8		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Please say how strongly you agree with each of the following statements.  <b>As a result of BRIDGE:</b>					
a)	<b>We understand more about the UK higher education system</b>					
b)	<b>We have made some changes to the way we teach and/or assess our students [ for example, classes are more inter-active]</b>					
	Please describe:					

c)	<b>What we have learned about validating courses has been useful to our institution</b>					
	Please describe:					
d)	<b>There have been some changes to our organisational culture</b> [ <i>for example, better relationships between senior management and lecturers; better culture of collaboration, more creativity, etc</i> ]					
	Please describe:					
e)	<b>We have developed closer relationships with industry</b> [ <i>for example, businesses becoming involved in curriculum development; businesses more interested in employing your graduates, etc</i> ]					
	Please describe:					
f)	<b>We have developed new marketing strategies to promote our course/s to students and employers</b>					
	Any comments or examples:					
g)	<b>Our institution is more willing to engage in partnerships with other countries than it was before</b>					
	Any comments or examples:					
h)	<b>BRIDGE has acted as a stepping stone or catalyst for further international activities</b>					
	Any comments or examples:					
i)	<b>We have moved forwards within the Bologna Process</b>					
j)	<b>Other result of BRIDGE</b> (please describe)					

**Lessons learned**

A9	<b>On the whole how would you rate your experience of BRIDGE on a scale from 1 to 5</b> (where 1 is very poor and 5 is excellent)?					
		1	2	3	4	5

A10	<b>If you were to be involved in a similar project in the future, what (if anything) would you do differently?</b>

A11	<b>If you were to be involved in a similar programme in the future, what (if anything) would you like the British partner to do differently?</b>

A12	<b>What have been the greatest challenges for your project?</b>

A13	<b>What have been the greatest rewards?</b>

A14	<b>If BRIDGE (or a similar programme) were to be repeated in the future, would you like to suggest any changes/improvements to the way it is delivered?</b>

Part B: Questions for dual award projects only

**Course/curriculum development and validation**

B1	<b>Please describe how your partner institution worked with you to develop the course (e.g. help you to define outcomes, etc)</b> <i>(e.g. did you attend any workshops in the UK or in Russia; were you provided with written material describing how to do it; etc)</i>

B2	<b>What were the greatest barriers to be overcome in jointly developing and validating your course? How did you overcome these?</b>

B3	<b>Was your UK partner willing to adapt any of its own systems (e.g. financial, legal, quality assurance) in order to make the project work?</b> <i>(Please give example/s)</i>

B4	<b>And was your institution also willing and able to be flexible?</b> <i>(Please give example/s)</i>

B5	<b>Has the course been fully validated and accredited in the UK and Russia?</b> <i>(Tick one)</i>	
	Yes, validated by the UK and accredited in Russia	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Validated in UK only	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Accredited in Russia only	<input type="checkbox"/>
	No, not validated or accredited by either side	<input type="checkbox"/>
	If not yet validated / accredited, please say whether there are plans to do so	

**Students**

B6	<b>When you first started the project, how did you know that there was a demand for it from students? (e.g. did you do any local market research?)</b>

B7	<b>Is the BRIDGE course being delivered to students? (Please tick one)</b>	
	Yes, the course is being delivered this year for the first time	
	Yes, the course has been delivered for at least one year already	
	No, the course has not been delivered yet, but it will in the future	
	No, the course has not been delivered and there are no plans for this to happen	
	Other (please describe)	

B8	<b>How would you describe your students' reaction to the different (outcomes-based) teaching and assessment methodology?</b>

B9	<b>[If applicable] How many students...</b>	
	Have already completed the new course? <i>[an approximate answer is fine]</i>	
	Are enrolled on the course in the current year (2009-10)?	



**Employers**

B10	<b>Would you say you had a good understanding, at the start of the project, of the market for your course amongst employers (i.e. were you confident that there was demand for the course)?</b>

B11	<b>As a result of BRIDGE, have you made any changes to your institutional marketing strategy (e.g. new approaches to researching demand from employers, etc)?</b>

Part C: Questions for projects engaged in research collaboration only

C1	<b>Please indicate <u>up to 5</u> main factors that motivated your BRIDGE collaboration:</b>	
	To gain different perspectives in order to promote knowledge	
	To build research capacity	
	To gain access to research funding	
	To develop solutions that resonate around the world	
	To improve the recruitment of graduate students	
	To enhance the reputation of our institution	
	To get research data published in Western journals	
	Other (please describe)	
	Other (please describe)	
	Other (please describe)	

C2	<b>Would you say that your project achieved its specific goals, as described in the original application form? (If not, please say why)</b>	

C3	<b>Has your research collaboration resulted in any of the following? (Please tick all that apply)</b>	
	Research papers published	
	Conference papers delivered	
	New products / solutions implemented by industry	
	Other impact on industry (please describe)	
	Any further joint research	

C4	<b>How (if at all) have you disseminated the results of your research collaboration – both externally, and to colleagues within your institution?</b>

C5	<b>After your experience of BRIDGE, what would you say are the most important factors in creating successful international research collaborations?</b>

**THANK YOU**

## SURVEY OF PARTICIPANTS

### Introduction

Dear Participant

We are an independent research company that has been commissioned by the British Government to evaluate the 'BRIDGE' programme, which was set up to develop new courses that are jointly certificated by British and Russian universities. We understand that you participated, or are currently participating, in one of these courses.

As part of our evaluation we are keen to hear the views of participants, to gain more understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of these courses. Your email address has been given to us by the Russian university responsible for your course, and we would be very grateful if you would take part in this survey. The survey is completely anonymous, so please feel free to be honest in your feedback. We have not been given your names, addresses or any other personal details, and we will not pass your email address to any other parties.

It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete the questions. Thank you very much for your help with our research.

### A) Introductory questions

1. Please say which Russian university is jointly certificating your course [drop down menu]
2. Please say which British university is jointly certificating your course [drop down menu]
3. Please indicate which of the following applies to you: [select one]
  - I am /was in employment at the same time as studying on this course
  - I am / was a full time student while studying on the course

### B) About your course

4. Can you say why you decided to take this course in particular (rather than another course that is not validated by a UK university)? [open question]
5. What makes this course different from other courses that are already delivered in Russia? [open question]
6. Please describe how the course was/is delivered (for example, what proportion was by lectures in an auditorium; by distance learning (email / internet); in small classes; individual research and self-study; etc) [open question]
7. What proportion of your course was taught in the English language? [select one answer]  
0%    1-49%    about 50%    51-99% 100%

8. What proportion of assessment had to be done in the English language? [select one answer]

0%    1-49%            about 50%    51-99% 100%

9. Did you speak good English before you started the course? [select one answer]

- Yes, well
- Yes, a little
- No, not at all.

9b. If not, was English language training provided before, or during, the course? [select one answer]

- Yes
- No

10. What are the main differences in the way the course was taught, compared to the usual style of teaching in Russia? [open question]

11. What are the main differences in the way the course was assessed, compared to the usual style of assessment in Russia? [open question]

12. What proportion of your course is/was taught by British tutors? [select one answer]

0%    1-49%            about 50%    51-99%            100%

13. What did you like best about the way the course was taught and assessed? [open question]

14. Was there anything you did *not* like about the way the course was taught and/or assessed? [open question]

15. Did you have to pay the full course fees yourself? [select one answer]

16. Did you find the course fees were affordable? Please explain. [open question]

17. Do you think that the cost of the course is worth it? [select one answer]

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

18. Do you have a real sense of 'belonging to' (being a student of) the British university?  
[select one answer]

- Yes, definitely
- A little bit
- No, not at all.

19. Has the course met your expectations? [select one answer]

- No, I am disappointed
- I am not yet sure
- Yes, I am pleased with the course

20. Do you think that you have gained / will gain any particular advantages as a result of participating in the course? If yes, please describe [open question]

21. Do you think that there are any particular disadvantages in participating in a course that is jointly validated by a British university? If yes, please describe. [open question]

22. If similar joint courses are to continue in the future, how do you think they could be improved, in terms of:

- 22a. quality of teaching [open question]
- 22b. quality of learning experience [open question]
- 22c. making the final award (certificate / diploma / degree) more attractive to employers [open question]

**Thank you**

## Annex C: Consultees

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### Stakeholders

C.1 We are extremely grateful to the following people who took the time to meet with us during the course of our research:

- Alexander Mishin, formerly of British Council Russia (member of BRIDGE expert panel / Steering Committee)
- Elena Karpukhina, Academy of National Economy, Moscow (member of BRIDGE expert panel)
- Irina Arzhanova, Executive Director, National Training Foundation, Moscow (member of BRIDGE expert panel / Steering Committee).
- Joanna Collins, British Council, Manchester
- Lena Lenskaya (formerly of British Council Russia, member of BRIDGE Steering Committee)
- Liz Dempsey, British Council, Manchester
- Olga Barnashova, British Council Russia
- Rosemary Hilhorst, Director, British Council Russia
- Sara Cooper, DIUS

C.2 We are also grateful to the following people who spoke to us by telephone:

- Carolyn Campbell, QAA (observer on Steering Committee)
- John Garside (member of expert panel)
- John McGovern (member of expert panel)
- Marie Niven (chair of Steering Committee)
- Michael Brown (member of Steering Committee)
- Pat Killingley, British Council (member of Steering Committee)
- Philip Healy (member of expert panel)
- Roderick Floud (member of Steering Committee)

## Institutional representatives

C.3 We were able to visit 11 Russian institutions, which between them have delivered a total of 18 BRIDGE projects. We would like to thank staff from the institutions for making time to see us:

- British Higher School of Art & Design
- Finance Academy, Moscow
- Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, St Petersburg
- Higher School of Economics, Moscow
- Higher School of Folk Arts, St Petersburg
- Moscow State University of Printing Arts
- St Petersburg State Polytechnical University
- St Petersburg State University
- St Petersburg University of Technology & Design
- Urals State University, Ekaterinburg
- Urals State University of Economics, Ekaterinburg

C.4 We are also grateful to the following representatives from Russian and UK institutions who spoke to us by telephone.

C.5 In the UK:

- Anglia Ruskin University
- Aston University
- Buckinghamshire New University
- City University
- De Montfort University
- Kingston University
- Lancaster University
- Leeds Metropolitan University
- Nottingham Trent University
- Oxford Brookes University
- The Open University



- University of Birmingham
- University of Brighton
- University of Central Lancashire
- University of Chester
- University of Huddersfield
- University of Leicester
- University of Portsmouth
- University of Reading
- University of Sheffield
- University of the West of England

C.6 And in Russia:

- Amur State University
- Bauman State Technical University
- Immanuel Kant State University
- International Institute of Management, LINK
- Kursk State Technical University
- Moscow Lomonosov State University
- North Caucasus State Technical University
- Penza State University
- Russia Academy of Science
- Samara State University of Architecture & Civil Engineering
- Saratov State Socio-Economic University
- Saratov State Technical University
- Sochi State University for Tourism and Recreation
- Tomsk Polytechnic University
- Tyumen State University
- Vladimir State Technical University

## Students / participants

- C.7 During our visits to the Russian institutions we were able to meet with small groups of students / participants who are studying on, or have already completed, BRIDGE courses. We are very grateful to the 26 people who made time to meet with us.
- C.8 Finally, the evaluation team would like to express its gratitude to City University London for its kind invitation to attend the graduation of its first cohort of BRIDGE students in 2010.

## Annex D: List of BRIDGE projects

Table 3: List of projects funded by BRIDGE

	UK Institution	Russian Institution	Subject Area	Level	Total funding
	<b>BRIDGE 1</b>				
1	University of Manchester	Moscow School of Social & Economic Sciences	Education management	MEd	£65,000
2	London Metropolitan University	Urals Academy of Public Administration	Public policy	MA	£69,000
3	University of Wolverhampton	Tyumen State University	Management development programmes	MBA	£37,500
4	Kingston University	Academy of National Economy, Moscow / Togliatti Academy of Management	Management research	MSc	£67,000
5	De Montfort University	St Petersburg State University of Technology & Design	Fashion design & merchandising	MA	£70,000
6	Nottingham Trent University	St Petersburg State University	Strategic entrepreneurship in the global economy	MSc	£60,000
7	Kingston University	St Petersburg Pavlov State Medical University	Healthcare education & management	MSc	£69,000
	<b>BRIDGE 2</b>				
8	University of the West of England, Bristol	Immanuel Kant State University of Russia	English language teaching (options in Tourism) and Tourism marketing for sustainable development	MA(s) (two)	£58,000
9	Oxford Brookes University	Moscow State University of the Printing Arts	Publishing	MA	£58,000
10	De Montfort University	Bauman Moscow State Technical University	Creativity & innovation in high technology industries	MA	£58,000
11	Nottingham Trent University	Urals State University of Economics /Siberian State Aerospace University	Social policy & finance	MA	£55,000
12	City University	A) St Petersburg State Polytechnical University B) Penza State University	Computer and information engineering	MSc	£58,000
13	University of Hertfordshire	British Higher School of Art & Design, Moscow	Product design / Interior & spatial design	BA	£54,500
	<b>BRIDGE 2.5</b>				
14	University of Warwick	Petrozavodsk State University	HE management	CPD	£9,000
15	Institute of Education, University of London	Tomsk Polytechnic University	HE management	CPD	£9,000
16	University of Brighton	Saratov State Technical University	Hospitality management	CPD	£15,000
17	University of Northampton	Moscow State Aviation Technology University (MATI)	Business administration	CPD	£15,000
18	University of Leicester	Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, St Petersburg	Educational leadership	CPD	£15,000
19	City University	St Petersburg State Polytechnical University	Successful international business	CPD	£15,000
20	University of Leeds	Russian Institute of Security, Moscow	Emergency management	CPD	£15,000
21	Leeds Metropolitan University	Amur State University	Global business management with English	CPD	£15,000

<b>BRIDGE 3</b>					
22	University College London	Polytechnic Institute of Siberian Federal University (formerly Krasnoyarsk State Technical University)	Oil and Gas Field Engineering	CPD	
23	University of East London	Urals State University of Economics	International Logistics and Supply Chain Management	CPD	£15,000
24	Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College	Saratov State Socio-economic University	International Management	CPD	£15,000
25	Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge	Moscow State University	Remote Sensing Techniques for Ecosystem Assessment	CPD	
26	University of Portsmouth	Regional Open Social Institute Kursk	Translation for Professional Communication	CPD	
27	University of Huddersfield	Urals State University	Strategic Management in Business and Non-profit Organisations	CPD	£15,000
28	University of Hertfordshire	British Higher School of Art and Design, Moscow	Design	CPD	
29	University of Birmingham	Finance Academy, Moscow	Banking and Finance	CPD	
NB original diploma failed to run, but now developed Masters					
30	University of Chester	Folk Arts School of Higher Education, St Petersburg	Applied Arts and Design	CPD	£15,000
31	Anglia Ruskin University	Urals State University of Economics	International Governance	MA	£37,500
32	University of Leicester	Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, St Petersburg	Educational Leadership	MA	
33	The Open University	International Institute of Management, LINK	Business Studies	BA	£37,500
<b>BRIDGE 4</b>					
34	Birmingham University	Higher School of Economics Moscow	Public Administration	Masters	£40,000
35	London Metropolitan University	Russian State University of Trade and Economics	International Tourism Management	Masters	£40,000
36	De Montfort University	Bauman State Technical University	Trends and issues in ELT Methodology	CPD	£15,000
37	City University and Queen Mary, University of London	St Petersburg Medical Academy for Post-graduate Study	Delivering Effective Health Care and promoting concordance	CPD	
38	Huddersfield University Business School	Sochi State University for Tourism and Recreation	Hospitality Management	CPD	£15,000
39	University of Hertfordshire	British Higher School of Art and Design	Animation Programme changed to Fashion Design	CPD	
<b>Funded from Science and Technology Strand</b>					
<b>BRIDGE 3.5 Dual awards</b>					
40	University of Central Lancashire	Samara State University of Architecture and Civil Engineering	Fire Safety for Gas and Oil Industries	MSc(S&T)	£44,000
41	University of the West of England	Saratov State Technical University	Web Based Systems	CPD(S&T)	
<b>BRIDGE 3.5 Research Collaboration</b>					
42	University of Bath	Samara State Aerospace University	Advanced Fluid Power Systems	Res Co-op	
43	University of Sheffield	Tomsk Polytechnic University	Advanced manufacturing and modelling of the next generation of nanacomposite materials/coatings	Res Co-op	£35,000

44	Queen Mary University of London	Saratov State University	Fabrication and exploration of multifunctional microcontainers with remote controlling properties	Res Co-op	
45	Aston University	Russia Academy of Science	Femtosecond laser technologies and applications	Res Co-op	£39,000
46	University of Sheffield	Russian State Hydrometeorological University	Keeping it cool: building a long-term partnership for climate change research in the arctic and northern regions	Res Co-op	
47	University of Bath	Far Eastern National University	... complex nanoclusters & multilayered heterosystems made of ferromagnetic metals deposited on semiconductor surfaces	Res Co-op	
<b>BRIDGE 4 Dual awards</b>					
48	University of Bedfordshire	Moscow University of Industry and Finance	Information Systems Security	CPD	
49	University of Portsmouth	Vladimir State Technical University	Product Design and Innovation and Rapid Manufacture	CPD	£15,000
50	University of Reading	Perm State University	Computational Science	MSc	
<b>BRIDGE 4.5 Research Collaboration</b>					
51	Middlesex University	South Federal University (SFU)	Head Motion Detection for Positron Emission Tomography (PET) Imaging Scanning	Res Co-op	£35,000
52	Imperial College London	Kalmykia State University	Participatory monitoring of saiga antelope population ecology	Res Co-op	
53	University of York	Kursk State Technical University	Medical innovations in diagnostics using an advanced virtual reality stroke rehabilitation device	Res Co-op	£33,750
54	Lancaster University	Moscow State University Lomonosov	Self- learning medical expert system for lifestyle enhancement based on biofeedback and microcell wireless technologies.	Res Co-op	£28,600
55	University of Bath	Far-Eastern National University	Quantum-sized effects in magnetic nanocontacts	Res Co-op	
56	University of Reading	North Caucasus State Technical University	Functional food development from traditional fermented milks	Res Co-op	£33,900
57	University College London	North Caucasus State Technical University	High performance carbon-based heterostructures for nanotechnology: properties and applications (NANOCARBON)	Res Co-op	
58	City University	Moscow Aviation Institute	High performance and long life time activator valves based on smart alloys	Res Co-op	£40,000

Source: British Council