

Learning & Teaching @ Newcastle Podcast

Ideas in Academic Practice: An Audio Tour of the Newcastle University Branch Campus Sites

Hello and welcome to Episode 6 of the Learning and Teaching at Newcastle University podcast. My name is Ben Steel and I'll be your host for this episode. This is the second of the ideas in academic practice podcasts. The first being the conversation with Paul Fleet and Michael Atkinson about mental health mental wellness. This episode is with Sue Gill, who is part of our Learning and Teaching Development Service here at Newcastle University and Dr. Paul Hubbard, who is associate dean for New Med. In this episode, Sue and Paul will be talking about our branch campuses. So, here is Sue and Paul.

Well, welcome, everybody. I'm with Paul Hubbard today. He's the associate dean of academic affairs at New Med to find out more about the branch campuses. Like many of you, I guess I know we have the branch campuses in Malaysia and in Singapore, but I really don't know very much about them. And I'm hoping Paul can help us out today. So let's start with where exactly are the branch campuses, please, Paul?

Good day everybody. So, yes. So we have two main campuses in the Southeast Asia region. One of those campuses is the NUIS Newcastle University in Singapore campus, which is, as the name suggests, on the island of Singapore in Southeast Asia. That was fairly easy to sort of describe. It is linked to the Singapore Institute of Technology and utilises lots of the facilities, the universities in Singapore. So it's a self-contained area within that part of Singapore. We also have the new med campus, which is where I am based. And I can probably talk a lot more about the new med campus during this blog. So the new med campus in particular is in the southern region of Malaysia on the southern point of the peninsula of Malaysia in a state called Johor. So this is the southern most state of the Malaysian country. And in Johor, there is one major city called Johor Barou. And the new med campus is just to the west of the Johor City in an area that's called ESKANDAR Putri. This is an interesting area to be living in a moment because they are basically bringing it building a brand new city called ESKANDAR Putri and is at various stages of growth at the moment. But New Med is situated on a campus area called at EduCity. And this is a joint campus where a number of universities have that their branches, the branch campuses or mini campuses within that larger area. And it's managed by the EduCity corporation. So when the southern state of Malaysia to Johor Baru and we're actually only about an hour's drive away in normal conditions from the Singapore campus. So outside of the pandemic, we could sort of pop into a car and drive for an hour or so, providing that the borders are free and we can get to Singapore and get the Singapore campus fairly quickly. So we're hoping that eventually, once the pandemic is finished, we can we can go back to sort of visiting Singapore, interacting with Singapore a bit more compared to what we used to do. Yes, that's kind of where we are in relation to all of Southeast Asia.

That's great. Thank you. And I think lots of us in Newcastle are very familiar with the feel of our city centre campus. And how does this compare with the campus that you've just talked about, where you are?

Okay, so I guess now I sort of focus on new med because I'm sure the NUIS team could potentially do a podcast of their own. And I don't want to sort of step on their toes and say too much about the Singapore campus. But new med is actually surprisingly similar to the UK campus in terms of the way that it looks. And it was designed that way. It has the same sort of signage and the branding is as a UK campus. We even have our own version of the Arches, the Newcastle Arches, and actually that that does actually become a very sort of focal point for the campus as well. And a lot of students have their photos taken there and graduation photos are taken there as well. So it kind of does bring it bring us so that the ethos of Newcastle University makes us feel like we're part of Newcastle University. But obviously, the campus is a lot smaller than the UK campus. And we have a few small courses that we run, but it is very green and very leafy and very pleasant campus to walk around as well. So we have a couple of lecture theatres. We have a clinical skills suite and anatomy suite, have a number of seminar rooms as well as offices and cafés on campus. So, yes, it's a very nice and pleasant, if relatively small area to work.

Sounds lovely. And that gives us a really nice feel for what it's like. I wonder if perhaps you could tell us a bit more about what actually you do on the campus. What happens there?

Okay. So ultimately we are assigned or we're linked to the faculty of Medical Sciences and we started out as a medical school and we were the first medical school outside of the UK to have GMC granted status to run our degree outside of the UK. And we were invited to Malaysia actually way back in 2005. It all started, by the Malaysian government to set up a UK campus, a UK medical school in Malaysia. And we started out in so 2009. We took our first group of students and the campus was fully built by 2011. So our first batch of students started out in the UK and then moved back to Malaysia. Once the campus had been built, we are predominately a medical school and the majority of our students are medical students. We have a total of around about 850 students on campus. Of which about 700 and 750 are medical students at any one time. But we also run a biomedical sciences course as well with a small number of students in the biomedical sciences. Students spend two years in Malaysia and they spend another year in the UK doing their degree in the UK as well. And then in 2016, we started what we call a foundation course, a foundation in biomedical sciences and biological sciences. And this one year course is kind of an equivalent to us of A-level type course where we bring students in from the Malaysian equivalent of GCSE and we give them a number of courses on biological sciences, biology, chemistry, maths and train them up to two feet into our into our two main courses. At new med. So. Trying to feed into a medical degree and about technical sciences degree as well. And that course has been particularly successful. And, you know, we generally get around about 60 students per year on that course and they feed into our into our 2 degrees at Newcastle New Med as well. And actually we over that because they start in 2016. Our first cohort of MBBS students from that first run of the foundation course that you to do their final year in the next academic year. So it'll be great to see how they progressed from that foundation through to through to graduation and medicine as well. That's the main course that we run. OK.

Could you tell us a bit about what you feel the links are between the branch campuses and that the broader university.

Yeah, I mean, it's interesting term a sort of branch campus. We kind of think there was more as an extension of the main campus, even though we are 7000 miles away or over 7000 miles away. You know, we try to keep that connection with the campus. And it's helped by the fact that both a medical degree and the biomedical sciences degree are the same degrees that are run in the UK. So it means that we have quite close links and quite close collaborations with the UK team, both in the Faculty of Medical Sciences. For both Biomed and MBBS. It also means that we developed resources together, we developed teaching together, and we work to ensure that the degrees at New Med are equivalent standard and similar to those in the UK. Obviously that can't be exactly the same because we are teaching in a Malaysian context and in particular are all MBBS students that going out into Malaysian hospitals for their training was in UK, and in the Malaysian health care system as well. So our quite close links with particularly the faculty of Medical Sciences, obviously Newcastle University and Singapore. The Singaporean campus is a sage related campus. So has engineering courses, particularly around marine engineering and sustainability and power engineering as well. So they're quite close to links to the sage campus and the engineering aspects of Sage Campus as well. We also you know contribute and work with the sort of wider university connections as well, we even though we are technically linked to the Faculty of Medical Sciences, we tried to contribute to things like the learning and teaching conference every year. And we do research on campus that we try to make connections with the UK, where that's basically pedagogical research or well, more scientific research as well and get collaborations going with the UK campus as well. So have we have quite strong links with Newcastle. We also have exchanges as also our students exchange with the UK. Under, non Covid situations that we see when we can have a travel back. So how would you bring that back in the next couple of years? Once we can start traveling again. But one of that, one of the two of the key things about our courses and one of the core selling point about our courses is that we can do to exchange of our students are MBBS students exchange at year two with UK students and UK students come out to new med biomed, have similar exchanges going on as well. And obviously the biomed students do their final year in Newcastle as well in the UK. So our students, we try to help our students to feel part of the of the UK campus and feel they are a UK student and not just as a sort of student in Malaysia who's not got any real connection to the UK. So we try our best to make those connections.

Given my role at Newcastle, you'll not be surprised. I'm interested in learning and teaching and wondered if you could tell us a little bit perhaps about what that looks like, particularly in Malaysia.

Okay. Yes. So I've touched on a couple of little aspects of the teaching, I suppose, but actually, you know, we're not too dissimilar to that of the UK. And that's partly because our courses are equivalent to those of the UK. So we try to teach in similar ways and similar styles to that of the UK. So, I mean, for MBBS, most of our staff, they do lots of training that's very similar to the stuff run by the UK. We train on campus as well and we teach through lectures, through seminars, through clinical skills on campus, through anatomy teaching lab practical's as well, and try to make it our teaching as interactive and pushing for

active learning as much as possible. And you know, through our so developing pedagogical research as well, we're introducing research led teaching and we discuss with our UK counterparts about how I want to develop teaching both at the new med campus and we feed into the UK campus as well. In addition to that, sort of transnational teaching is very important to us. So it's a new and upcoming area and so something that the university itself wants to look into. So we're looking at ways of actually teaching across the campuses. So and this is one of the benefits of the covid pandemic. The move to online teaching is that we've been able to actually do more teaching where both cohorts of students, both the UK and the new med students are being taught at the same point in the same time. So good examples of that are in for some of our year two biomedical. MBBS student's where we've done seminars, online seminars where we get both. Both the UK cohort and the Malaysian cohort involved. It has to be fairly early UK time. So 8:00, 9:00 U.K. time to try and fit the sort of 4:00, 5:00 p.m. Malaysian time. And it's always voluntary for students to attend these things that kind of extra on top of the standard teaching as well. But we got a really good group of students and they really enjoyed. This sort of teaching we can bring in a little bit of competitions, all which is always fun. So one thing we did is use this on-base technology to generate a quiz and pitted the Newcastle students with against the new med students in that quiz to try and get a bit of competition. And the new med students actually beat the Newcastle students by about 0.2 percent. I think in the end there in that competition. So I think both sets of genes really enjoyed. That's something which I look into and develop further as we go through. And also diverse community, you know, that our students in Malaysia feel they're part of the Newcastle community as well. We're trying really hard to try and try to improve that and develop that and get that community feeling going. So, yeah, so we're not that different in terms of our teaching to the UK. We're constantly looking at ways of improving and developing our teaching, particularly getting so research led pedagogy. You read that as well, trying to make teaching more inviting and interesting to our students.

Right. Thank you. And just from my own experience, as you say, over this sort of covid period, this what do I do with my team. it's been wonderful. We've been able to have colleagues from Malaysia and Singapore joining us, whereas they couldn't join us on campus previously. So that's been a lovely chance to meet them as well and work with them finally.

Yeah. That is I mean, that like you said, that's been a it's been a big, big bonus. And we've been able to join in more with the UK. So training and development of our staff in ways that we weren't able to do that previously. So hopefully that will continue going forward. I hope so. I'm certainly planning on trying to maintain some of that, at least for the work that we do.

And just finally, then, I wanted to pick up some of what you feel. The importance is it's day to day extension campuses to use your word for them.

So, yes, we may we have a number of things that we, you know, we tried to divert, try to push. So one of that one of the real big important aspects of both new med and you, I guess, is that we are international campuses and we feed into Newcastle's drive to be more internationally orientated, internationally focused. We are a presence in the Asian region and having a Newcastle University presence in that reason. Region raises the profile of Newcastle University and its helps it about the reputation of Newcastle University in that

region as well. And we get you know feedback from our students and from parents saying that we now see that Newcastle University is one of the top universities and we like we like our students to come to Newcastle University and having that presence in Southeast Asia allows us to develop and build that that reputation as well. And also, when we can, one of the important aspects says that we are we can develop the university's kind of strategy and policy on that global outlook for our students as well, because we are one of the ideas that we are training students to have that global outlook and that global way of working and having these campuses and allowing students to be able to exchange between campuses is a great experience for our Newcastle and our Malaysian students as well. And we think that's a great benefit for the university and in a great way in which we can move forward for the university. We also kind of helped to open up markets for the university. I mean, you don't get to corporate about these sort of things and say like, oh, we got a good market for the universities. But again, you know, having this presence in the Asian region puts Newcastle University out there and helps with recruitment of international students from that region, not only to our new campus, our new med and Singaporean campuses, but also to a wider Newcastle campus workers. They see the sea as in this region, and we can use that presence to develop that. Another thing that's very important is that the university's policy on engagement in place, we want to be you know, we talk about Newcastle University, Civic University and being placed in the region of northeast of England, similar with our campuses. We are of the region where in the region for new med, it's a sort of southern Malaysian region. The state of Johar, where we're very keen to sort develop those relationships with institutions and organisations within this local region to try and try and push that engagement in place and be a force for good in our region as well.

That's great. Thank you very much indeed.

Okay. Thank you very much.

Thank you very much to Sue and Paul for that great conversation. I hope you will enjoyed it. And thank you very much for listening. Be sure to like and subscribe as podcast. So you don't miss a thing. We'll see you in two weeks.