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# Report

## Models and Types: Guidelines for Good Practice in Transnational Education

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# Models and Types: Guidelines for Good Practice in Transnational Education

## Abstract

*The widespread growth of transnational education has been accompanied by a lack of strategic focus in higher education institutions involved in transnational education, and by debate over quality assurance issues. These issues prompted Swinburne University of Technology to develop a conceptual framework for a Good Practice Model in Transnational Education in 2005, as a project funded by the Australian government Department of Education, Science and Training. The conceptual framework integrates planning and quality assurance in a whole-of-institution approach, and emphasises strategic guidelines and the client perspective, as well as academic and administrative guidelines.*

*At the systemic level, the model acts as an organising principle for guidelines for transnational education provision, and provides analytical tools to assess how a particular regulatory framework operates, and what ground it covers.*

*At the institutional level, the function of the model is to:*

- *integrate transnational education planning and quality assurance from the concept proposal stage;*
- *provide a map to university transnational education procedures and logistics as a tool for strategic management;*
- *monitor university compliance on regulatory issues.*

*The paper puts forward three strategic principles in transnational education planning and quality assurance which underlie the good practice model: complementarity, priority countries, and the key role of a central international office.*

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The Need for a Conceptual Framework

First, the need for a good practice model for transnational education (TNE) should be put into context.

The widespread growth of transnational education has been accompanied by a lack of strategic focus in higher education institutions involved in transnational education, and by debate over quality assurance issues. These issues prompted Swinburne University of Technology<sup>1</sup> to develop a conceptual framework for a Good Practice Model in Transnational Education in 2005, as one of fifteen projects funded by the Australian government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and managed by the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC)<sup>2</sup>.

Major issues in TNE include firstly the lack of consensus on various aspects of quality assurance, seen in the lack of strategic focus on the part of educational institutions, which is at least in part due to competing stakeholder demands. Secondly, there are definitional issues that entangle attempts to put regulatory frameworks around the proliferation of transnational education programmes. The good practice model addresses these issues by integrating planning and quality assurance in a whole-of-institution approach, and emphasising strategic guidelines and the client perspective, as well as academic and administrative guidelines.

This report assumes a vital role for quality assurance in transnational education, as described in a paper for the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education by Middlehurst and Campbell from 2003:

Quality assurance is an important part of academic professionalism. It is also a key mechanism for building institutional reputation or brand in a competitive local and global arena and a necessary foundation for consumer protection. Across the world, it is part of the armory used by governments to increase, widen or control participation in the face of rising demand for higher education and it is central to current debates about higher education as a public good or tradable commodity. Quality assurance is also fundamental to the security of qualifications and the mobility of professionals. Without effective and appropriate quality assurance policies and practices, aspirations towards knowledge economies, lifelong learning, community development and social inclusion cannot be fully realised. It is for these reasons that quality assurance is receiving increasing attention at all levels.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever the quality challenges, it must also be noted that many of the transnational education issues confronting universities are due to considerable success in their implementation. As Doorbar and Bateman note:

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<sup>1</sup> Swinburne University has a history of involvement in transnational education, including a variety of TNE programmes and an offshore campus in Sarawak, Malaysia. See: [www.swin.edu.au](http://www.swin.edu.au)

<sup>2</sup> Swinburne (2005) 'Enhancing Australian Universities' Offshore QA Processes' is available at: [http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/GovernmentActivities/QAAustralianEducationAndTrainingSystem/Grants\\_GdPract.htm](http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/GovernmentActivities/QAAustralianEducationAndTrainingSystem/Grants_GdPract.htm) Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Middlehurst, R. & Campbell, C. (2003) 'Quality Assurance and Borderless Higher Education: Finding Pathways Through The Maze', London: The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, page 4. URL: <http://www.obhe.ac.uk/products/reports/archived.html?year=2003>. Last accessed 4 August 2006.

It is predicted that TNE demand will increase significantly and, by 2010, is likely to exceed the demand for international students seeking an overseas campus-based experience.<sup>4</sup>

In the face of successful growth, then, although the challenges of transnational education programmes are daunting for universities, there appears to be general agreement that there will be long term benefits. As Garrett and Verbik put it:

Transnational higher education (whether distance learning or in-country) has become a major global phenomenon, and is predicted to grow significantly over the next twenty years. It has the potential to offer important benefits to students, local and foreign partners, and host and source countries.<sup>5</sup>

The majority of Australian universities accept this challenge as being important for their future place in the national and global higher education system. This is reflected in the fact that Australia is one of the major players in the transnational education market together with the USA and the UK.

In the present scheme of things higher education institutions must make their own decisions on these matters, and this is another basic assumption underlying this report. In short, the responsibility for quality assurance (QA) in TNE programmes rests with higher education institutions providing the programmes. This responsibility, of course, includes meeting the regulatory requirements of both the home country and the host countries for programme provision.

## **1.2 Lack of Strategic Focus**

In a telling argument, Garrett says that UK higher education institutions lack a clear mission, a situation that includes the need for improved quality assurance:

It is argued that there are growing tensions between the current and predicted scale of transnational activity and what appears to be (with key exceptions) generally poor central institutional understanding of provision, plus limited co-ordination with broader institutional mission. The focus here is on the UK, but the argument would apply with equal force to other countries. To date, innovation has generally been restricted to the basic shift to programme/institution mobility and steady enhancement of quality assurance of provision as conventionally understood. Gathering competition, host country regulatory ambivalence, and threat of source country backlash point to changing conceptions of innovation and competitive advantage. Future innovation may emphasise the value of improved data collection, student integration, tighter quality assurance, mission co-ordination and impact assessment.<sup>6</sup>

It is worth noting that Garrett also stresses the point that the situation facing UK institutions of higher education is universal:

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<sup>4</sup> Doorbar, A. & Bateman, C. (2005) 'Where is International Education Heading?', page 5. Paper presented at The Australian International Education Conference, 11- 14 October, 2005. URL: <http://www.idp.com/aiec/programme/Wed%201140%20Allison%20Doorbar.pdf> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Garrett, R. & Verbik, L. (2004) 'Transnational Delivery by UK Higher Education, Part 1: Data & Missing Data', London: The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, page 10. URL: <http://www.obhe.ac.uk/products/reports/archived.html?year=2004>. Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Garrett, R. (2004) 'Transnational Delivery by UK Higher Education, Part 2: Innovation & Competitive Advantage', The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, page 1. URL: <http://www.obhe.ac.uk/products/reports/archived.html?year=2004>. Last accessed 4 August 2006.

It must be emphasised that while UK data is the impetus for discussion, the arguments made would apply equally to transnational delivery from other countries (although of course different scenarios would impact in different ways and at a different pace in particular national circumstances). Equally this briefing note is not arguing that the majority of UK transnational provision is of poor quality or not tied to broader objectives. Rather, for various reasons outlined below (e.g. the complexity of much transnational delivery, the relative novelty of some forms of provision, lack of data), not least massive projected demand, there is a strong case for concern and insufficient evidence to the contrary.<sup>7</sup>

As found in a recent report for the Department of Education, Science and Training by Bannerman *et al*, the offshore activity of Australian universities to date does not appear to measure up to the requirements for strategic alliances in education and training services as set out in guidelines:

Data is limited on the strategic alliance performance of Australian tertiary institutions. Significantly, in the data that is available, survey responses indicate that offshore programmes are rated as the least important alliance activity. Importantly, there is evidence to suggest a lack of clarity in existing alliance objectives, which the general literature identifies as a critical threat to alliance performance.<sup>8</sup>

As noted above, matters of definition and lack of data about transnational education programme provision make the field complicated and unclear. It follows, therefore, that models of quality assurance for offshore activity face similar difficulties that flow on from the strategic uncertainties.

The lack of strategic focus at institutional level is easily understood in the context of the sheer complexity of the demands that have to be met. As discussed further below, universities involved in developing transnational education programmes face the same sorts of challenges confronting multinational organisations dealing with cultural, legal, marketing, financial and other issues offshore.

In terms of regulatory environments, the task of universities is not made any easier by the plethora of various codes and guidelines, which tend to include extensive lists of recommendations and prohibitions. For example, both the UK regulations laid down by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)<sup>9</sup> and the AVCC code<sup>10</sup>, although grouped in various ways, are not promulgated within a readily comprehensible conceptual framework.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Bannerman, P., Spiller, J., Yetton, P. & Davis, J. (2005) 'Strategic Alliances in Education and Training Services: A Literature Review', Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training, page 8. URL: [http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/MIP/ItemsOfInterest/05Interest26c\\_pdf.pdf](http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/MIP/ItemsOfInterest/05Interest26c_pdf.pdf) Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (2004) 'Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education/ Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)', UK: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). URL: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section2/collab2004.pdf> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) (2005) 'Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Australian Universities', Canberra: Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee (AVCC). URL: [www.avcc.edu.au/internationalcode](http://www.avcc.edu.au/internationalcode) . Last accessed 4 August 2006.

In terms of planning at the institutional level, it would seem reasonable to expect development of transnational education programmes to be embedded in a context of strategic planning coupled with, for example, an internationalisation strategy for the whole university.

To counter this lack of strategic focus within universities, Castle and Kelly<sup>11</sup> argue for a whole-of-institution approach with appropriate policies and structures to provide the right environment for, amongst other things, high quality transnational education programmes and effective quality assurance. This can be achieved in policy terms, through an internationalisation strategy plan that is congruent with the broader university strategic plan, supported by integrated lower level policies and plans. In turn, as Craft<sup>12</sup> notes, the right sort of policy framework and decision-making processes are particularly important in the selection of partners with a strong emphasis on risk assessment and relationship management. Such an approach can work well when the entire institution is engaged in their development.

A difficult issue which recurs in many of these initiatives in the context of partner selection is involvement with third parties, such as brokers and agents, a matter which is addressed in the good practice guidelines, described below.

Given the above challenges to planning and quality assurance, the Swinburne project team decided that a good practice model would need to include a strong strategic perspective, with an emphasis on the interests of the client, that is, the student.

The guidelines described in this report embrace all types of TNE provision, as explained further below in the context of definitions of transnational education.

### **1.3 Definitional Issues in Transnational Education**

A salient issue before good practice guidelines can be addressed is to define TNE. This is important because which aspects of TNE are included or excluded from a definition can have a decisive impact on a regulatory framework both nationwide (as seen in the current debate on Australian TNE strategy, discussed below), and throughout an institution. Particular types of transnational initiatives excluded from regulatory frameworks will be treated differently by their providers. It is argued that exclusions and exceptions create loopholes for exploitation.

#### **1.3.1 OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education**

The December 2005 'OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education'<sup>13</sup>, prepared by OECD in consultation with UNESCO, provide an international framework to protect students and other stakeholders from low-quality provision and disreputable providers.

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<sup>11</sup> Castle, R. & Kelly, D. (2004a) 'Internationalisation: A Whole of Institution Approach', Proceedings of the Australian Universities Quality Forum 8 July 2004, page 1. URL: <http://www.auqa.edu.au/auqf/2004/programme/papers/Castle.pdf> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Craft, A. (2004) 'The Assessment of Quality Risks in Collaborative Provision', *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp.25-29.

<sup>13</sup> OECD & UNESCO (2005) 'Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education'. URL: [http://www.oecd.org/findDocument/0,2350,en\\_2649\\_37455\\_1\\_119820\\_1\\_1\\_37455.00.html](http://www.oecd.org/findDocument/0,2350,en_2649_37455_1_119820_1_1_37455.00.html). Last accessed 4 August 2006.

The OECD Guidelines endorse the 'UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education' from 2001<sup>14</sup> which provides a definition of transnational education that is as close as there is to a global standard:

All types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may belong to the education system of a State different from the State in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national education system.

This definition fits historical usage in Australia. As Knight<sup>15</sup> points out, Australia has a convenient classification:

Australia was one of the first countries to use the term 'transnational education' in the early nineties as it wanted to differentiate between international students recruited to Australian campuses and those who were studying for Australian degrees offshore. Hence, the term transnational education was used to simply describe offshore international student enrolments regardless of whether the offshore students were studying through twinning, franchise, distance or branch campus arrangements. It is interesting to note how the use of terms in Australia has evolved in such a way that 'international education' usually refers to foreign students studying in Australia and 'transnational education' refers to those studying offshore. In this conceptualisation of the term transnational, the focus is on where the student is studying.

Distance education is specifically included in the definition of transnational education, a point with which Australia is currently having some difficulty in its 'National Quality Strategy for Australian Transnational Education'<sup>16</sup> (See further discussion below).

At the heart of the UNESCO/Council of Europe definition is the specification that, simply, the learner is located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based.

But Knight points out that the UNESCO/Council of Europe definition, with its suggestion that transnational education programmes may operate independently of any national education system, also introduces the possibility of stateless programmes and, by inference, stateless institutions.

Kaplan, Inc., one of the world's leading providers of lifelong education with operations around the globe<sup>17</sup>, with 900,000 students across 79 campuses globally<sup>18</sup>, is a candidate for Knight's statelessness.

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<sup>14</sup> Council of Europe, Higher Education and Research (2002) 'Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education', URL: [http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/HigherEducation/Recognition/Code%20of%20good%20practice\\_EN.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/HigherEducation/Recognition/Code%20of%20good%20practice_EN.asp#TopOfPage) Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>15</sup> Knight J. (2005) 'Borderless, Offshore, Transnational and Cross-border Education: Definition and Data Dilemmas', The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education. URL: <http://www.obhe.ac.uk/products/reports/> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>16</sup> Australia Education International (AEI), Department for Education, Science and Training (DEST) (2005), 'Transnational Quality Strategy'. URL: <http://aei.dest.gov.au> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Kaplan, 'About Kaplan', URL: <http://www.kaplan.com/AboutKaplan/> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>18</sup> Asia Pacific Management Institute, 'Kaplan', URL: <http://www.apmi.edu.sg/kaplan.php>. Last accessed 4 August 2006.

But such 'Kaplanesque' providers tend to fit the cross-border model at a campus or school or subsidiary level, with Kaplan pointing out that each of the individual schools in its higher education division is separately accredited by one of several national or regional accrediting agencies approved by the U.S. Department of Education<sup>19</sup>.

Knight suggests one counter-example to the UNESCO/Council of Europe definition of transnational education:

It is unclear whether [cross-border definitions of transnational education] cover 'new types' of providers, especially those that establish a physical presence in the country and obtain permission from the receiving country to offer 'recognised' qualifications. In this scenario, the providers are clearly foreign 'awarding' providers, but they are not located in a different country than the student. Is this type of situation included in a definition of transnational education that is based on the student and awarding institution being situated in different locations?

Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz School Australia<sup>20</sup> in Adelaide in the Australian state of South Australia illustrates Knight's counter-example, with its invitation to 'Get a Top-class American Degree in Adelaide'<sup>21</sup>.

But Carnegie Mellon's Heinz School Australia is registered as a higher education provider by South Australia's Training and Skills Commission, listed<sup>22</sup> between Burleigh Theological College and South Australia's Community Arts Network. The awarding institution, Heinz School Australia, looks like a South Australian registered provider, located in the same country as its learners.

This may be an interesting counter-example. The problem is that Heinz School Australia, a higher education provider registered in South Australia, offering qualifications sourced from the US that have been accredited in South Australia, is not an example of transnational education as we know it.

In this paper, and from the UNESCO/Council of Europe definition, transnational education as we know it occurs when the learner is located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based.

The definition is important because exclusions and exceptions can create loopholes and risk potential exploitation.

### **1.3.2 OECD/UNESCO Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education**

The logic of OECD/UNESCO 'Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education' is that the receiving country establishes a system of registration or licensing of cross-border providers wishing to operate in its territory, and establishes a capacity for quality assurance and accreditation of cross-border provision, recognising that quality assurance and recognition involve both sending and receiving countries. This logic is indisputable.

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<sup>19</sup> Kaplan, 'About Kaplan', URL: <http://www.kaplan.com/AboutKaplan/> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Carnegie Mellon, Heinz School, Australia, URL: <http://www.heinz.cmu.edu/australia/> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Advertisement in *The Australian*, 15 March 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Training and Skills Commission, Government of South Australia, 'Information for Training Organisations'. URL: <http://www.training.sa.gov.au/OVETorgs/> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

The receiving country is responsible for deciding, by registration or licensing, which cross-border providers can provide higher education within its borders. The receiving country is also responsible for deciding, through quality assurance and accreditation, which cross-border qualifications are acceptable for entry to employment in its civil service, or which cross-border undergraduate degrees are acceptable for entry into postgraduate courses in its own institutions.

As noted above, the Good Practice Model for Transnational Education essentially is about good practice on the part of providers in sending countries. How does this Good Practice Model fit with the OECD/UNESCO Model, and its emphasis on the responsibilities of receiving countries?

Recognising that quality assurance and recognition involve both sending and receiving countries, governments and quality assurance and accreditation bodies in receiving countries will have, formally or informally, a hierarchy of jurisdictions in sending countries.

Australia, with its Transnational Quality Strategy, and its use of Good Practice Models for Transnational Education Programmes by providers, will be positioned relatively highly in the hierarchy of jurisdictions as will the US, with its overall reputation as a quality education provider, despite its lack of an overall framework for transnational delivery and minimal oversight from its government. Both Australia and the US will be positioned more highly in the hierarchy of jurisdictions in receiving countries than the admittedly extreme example of the Achilles Archipelago.

### **1.3.3 International Association of Universities: Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders**

The International Association of Universities, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, the American Council on Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation in 2005 issued a policy statement 'Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders'<sup>23</sup> on behalf of higher education institutions worldwide, to lay the groundwork for fair and transparent policy frameworks for managing higher education across borders. The statement proposes a set of principles, including that cross-border higher education should meet the same high standards of academic and organisational quality no matter where it is delivered. The statement makes recommendations to providers and to governments, including that higher education institutions and other providers build a culture of ongoing quality review, feedback and improvements by creating robust quality assurance processes. The same organisations followed up with a 'Checklist for Good Practice in Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders'<sup>24</sup>, formulated as a set of questions covering principles including Contribution to Broader Public Good, Capacity Building, Relevance, Accessibility, Quality, Accountability, Transparency and Commitment to Quality Higher Education Across Borders.

The use of Good Practice Models for Transnational Education Programmes is completely consistent with the statement 'Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders' and its 'Checklist for Good Practice'.

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<sup>23</sup> International Association of Universities (IAU), IAU Policy Statements (2005) 'Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders: A Statement on Behalf of Higher Education Institutions Worldwide'. URL: [http://www.unesco.org/iau/p\\_statements/index.html](http://www.unesco.org/iau/p_statements/index.html) Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>24</sup> UNESCO (2006) 'Sharing Quality Higher Education Across Borders: A Checklist for Good Practice', URL: [http://www.unesco.org/iau/internationalization/pdf/cross\\_border\\_checklist.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/iau/internationalization/pdf/cross_border_checklist.pdf). Last accessed 4 August 2006.

### 1.3.4 Australia's Transnational Quality Strategy

In 2005, Ministers for Education and Training across Australia agreed a 'Transnational Quality Strategy'<sup>25</sup> framework which will protect and promote the quality of Australian education and training delivered in other countries.

The Strategy focuses action in three areas: communication and promotion of Australia's quality arrangements to all stakeholders, increased access to data and information about Australia's transnational education and training and a strengthened national quality framework, which will include:

- list of quality providers and courses for transnational delivery;
- a Code of Practice for Quality Transnational Education and Training;
- trials to identify cost effective approaches to offshore quality assessment;
- arrangements for handling complaints;
- support for good practice; and
- guidelines/templates for good practice in quality transnational delivery.

The definition of transnational education used in Australia's Transnational Quality Strategy excludes distance education, putting Australia out of step with the rest of the world and creating potential loopholes<sup>26</sup>. The logical flaws in this approach are addressed below in a discussion of a two dimensional typology for TNE.

Aside from this distraction, Australia's Transnational Quality Strategy calls for the type of Good Practice Model for Transnational Education programmes proposed in this report.

### 1.3.5 A Two Dimensional Typology of Transnational Education

A Two Dimensional Typology of Transnational Education maps all transnational education provision along two dimensions, a Student Dimension and a Provider Dimension.

The model reinforces that all offshore activity is part of transnational education, essentially of the same type, and subject to the good practice model.

The Two Dimensional Typology was developed from Davis, Olsen and Böhm (2000)<sup>27</sup>. The model suggests that movement along the Student Dimension, and movement along the Provider Dimension, both involve movement along a continuum, with no step changes in type of provision.

Along the Student Dimension, a provider can move from face-to-face teaching, through distance education which it supports directly in its own study centres and/or distance

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<sup>25</sup> Australian Education International (AEI), Department for Education, Science and Training (DEST), 'Quality of Offshore Education and Training'. URL: <http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/GovernmentActivities/QAAustralianEducationAndTrainingSystem/Default.htm> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

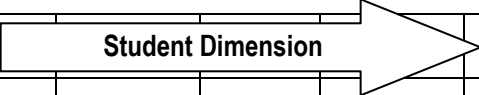

<sup>26</sup> The authors have criticised the Australian definition of Transnational Education in an opinion piece for the International Education Association of Australia, URL: <http://www.ieaa.org.au/Newsletter.aspx?id=108> (last accessed 4 August 2006) on the grounds of conceptual reasons why a definition of transnational education should include pure distance education, that Australia is now out of step with the world and that there is now a loophole.

<sup>27</sup> Davis, D., Olsen, A. & Böhm, A. (2000) *Transnational Education: Providers, Partners and Policy, Challenges for Australian Institutions Offshore*, Brisbane: IDP Education Australia.

education supported by a partner, to independent distance education and online learning. Along the Provider Dimension, a provider can move from a situation on its own campuses where no partner is involved through a series of relationships with partners, initially covering provision of a study location, provision of student support including a library, marketing and promotion of programmes, administration of fees and other financial arrangements, to academic monitoring and support, academic teaching, academic assessment and, ultimately, curriculum development.

The guidelines described in this report embrace all types of TNE provision along these two dimensions.

**Table 1: Two Dimensional Model of Transnational Education**

|                               |  | Face-to-Face   | University Supported Distance | Partner Supported Distance | Independent Distance | Online |
|-------------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|--------|
| <b>Partner Responsibility</b> |  | <b>Mode of Delivery</b>  |                               |                            |                      |        |
|                               |  | <b>Student Dimension</b>  |                               |                            |                      |        |
| No Partner                    | <b>Provider Dimension</b>  |  |                               |                            |                      |        |
| Study Location                |  |  |                               |                            |                      |        |
| Student Support               |  |  |                               |                            |                      |        |
| Marketing and Promotion       |  |  |                               |                            |                      |        |
| Financial Administration      |  |  |                               |                            |                      |        |
| Academic Support              |  |  |                               |                            |                      |        |
| Academic Teaching             |  |  |                               |                            |                      |        |
| Academic Assessment           |  |  |                               |                            |                      |        |
| Curriculum                    |  |  |                               |                            |                      |        |

## 2 Strategy in Transnational Education

This second part of the paper puts forward three strategic principles in transnational education, which underlie the good practice model, namely complementarity, priority countries, and the key role of a central international office.

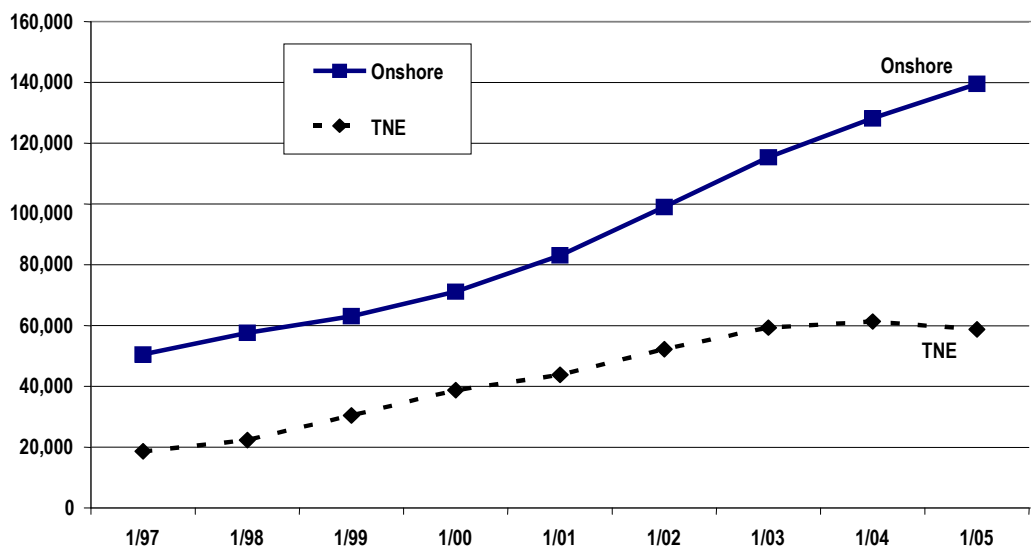
### 2.1 Complementarity

It is fundamental to the existence of transnational education programmes that a university's international student programme and transnational education provision are complementary; that is, they grow together.

The methodology of the 2002 IDP Education Australia study 'Global Student Mobility'<sup>28</sup> states that the demand for Australian transnational education is a function of demand for international education in Australia, implicitly assuming that international education in Australia and transnational education in Australian universities are complements, not substitutes. A similar methodology was used in the British study, 'Vision 2020' from 2004<sup>29</sup>, where demand for UK transnational education is a function of demand for UK international education.

IDP Education Australia surveys Australia's universities every semester on their numbers of international and transnational students. These figures are no longer published in the public domain but are provided to universities, including Swinburne University of Technology. In the first semester of 2005, there were 139,517 international students in Australian universities, on campus in Australia, and 58,713 students in transnational education programmes of Australian universities offshore.

**Graph 1: Number of students in onshore programmes and offshore transnational education programmes in Australia**



Australia's international student programme and transnational education provision have grown together, suggesting complementarity. If transnational education programmes are providing pathways to international student programmes on campus, so much the better.

Into the future, demand for international education and demand for transnational education may grow together, complementing each other. Or demand for transnational education may increasingly substitute for demand for international education.

<sup>28</sup> Böhm, A., Davis, D., Meares, D., Pearce, D. (2002) *Global Student Mobility 2025: Forecasts of the global demand for international higher education*, Sydney, IDP Education Australia.

<sup>29</sup> Böhm, A., Follari, M., Hewett, A., Jones, S., Kemp, N., Meares, D., Pearce, D. and Van Caeter, K (2004) *Vision 2020: Forecasting International Student Mobility: A UK Perspective*, London, British Council.

If transnational education was to become a substitute for international education, an institution would need to make strategic decisions about the relative merits of its international student programme and its transnational education provision. In many cases the university would decide to close transnational education programmes, preferring to preserve its international student programme, the assumption being that for universities international education programmes have greater value to the institution than transnational education programmes.

## **2.2 Priority Countries**

The second strategic principle is that a university should determine its priority countries for transnational education programmes, and these should be the countries where the university should be prepared to invest. A university should look at niche transnational education opportunities suggested by other countries but should not invest outside its priority markets.

In an international student programme, on campus in the home country, good practice often involves diversification of source countries. In addition to large numbers of students from key source countries, an institution would look for smaller numbers of international students from a diverse range of countries.

In transnational education, where the clustering of students in enclaves cannot be an issue, such diversity is unachievable by definition. However, this unachievable diversity enables an institution to focus on its priority countries for transnational education.

## **2.3 The Role of a Central International Office**

Swinburne University of Technology, in Melbourne, the capital of the state of Victoria in Australia, has a Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) with overall responsibility for the University's internationalisation policy and strategy development. The Pro Vice-Chancellor chairs an International Programmes Committee, which provides advice on international matters including agreements, student exchange, both on- and offshore programmes for international students, assessment of business planning and risk management issues and matters of academic concern with respect to transnational education programme proposals.

The Victorian Auditor General has examined four of Australia's largest transnational education initiatives (RMIT Penang, RMIT Vietnam, Monash Malaysia and Monash South Africa) and has commented:<sup>30</sup>

The rewards of offshore operations for Victorian universities include increased revenues, enhancement of their international profile and expanded opportunities for staff development and student mobility. However, as these case studies demonstrate, offshore educational activities of universities also carry both financial and reputational risk which must be carefully managed if the expected benefits are to be realised.

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<sup>30</sup> Auditor General Victoria, Reports & Publications (2002) 'Operations of University Subsidiary Entities and Joint Ventures'. URL: [http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/reports\\_mp\\_psa/psa0202.html#P20\\_363](http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/reports_mp_psa/psa0202.html#P20_363) Last accessed 4 August 2006.

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) consistently finds the need to make recommendations about transnational education initiatives. Swinburne has been no exception, with transnational education accounting for six of the 18 recommendations following the 2002 institutional audit<sup>31</sup>.

At Swinburne, the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) and the International Programmes Committee apply both a brake and an accelerator function in the University's transnational education strategy. They seek to protect Swinburne from financial and reputational risk, by applying the Swinburne good practice model to all proposed transnational education initiatives. This is the brake function. To accelerate transnational education initiatives, they seek to encourage proposals for transnational initiatives in the target countries, ensuring that the proposals meet Swinburne's good practice model. Swinburne then seeks to invest resources such as staff time and travel in transnational education proposals in the target countries that meet Swinburne's good practice model.

Generalising from the Swinburne experience, there is also a need for universities from a central international office to shape institutions' transnational education strategies, focusing on synergies, not silos and on partnerships, not programmes.

If universities are seen as institutions organised as loosely connected disciplinary silos designed for elite, in-residence students and faculty research<sup>32</sup> and if activities are undertaken of which the centre is ignorant<sup>33</sup> there is a need for the central international office to encourage the creation of resource efficiencies in support of transnational activities, identify good practice models and promulgate them throughout the institution, establish an institution-wide quality assurance framework and facilitate a co-ordinated approach to strategic planning, quality assurance and project implementation.

In determining which transnational activities should be taken forward, universities from a central international office perspective need to consider long-term relationships and the ability for individual programme proposals to grow within an overarching institution-to-institution relationship. Programme proposals of and by themselves may have short-term merit, but need also to be aligned with institutional strategic objectives for establishing or maintaining presences and partnerships in priority countries.

To summarise the final strategic principle in transnational education:

- universities from a central international office need to shape institutions' transnational education strategies, focusing on synergies, not silos and on partnerships, not programmes;
- universities from a central international office need to apply both a brake and an accelerator function in transnational education strategy;
- the brake function involves the application of a Good Practice Model to all proposed transnational education initiatives to protect the university from financial and reputational risk; and

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<sup>31</sup> Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), Quality Audit, 'Audit Reports: Self-Accrediting Institutions', URL: [http://www.augqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/sai\\_reports/index.shtml](http://www.augqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/sai_reports/index.shtml) Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Harris, J., Tagg, J. and Howell, M. (2005) 'Organise to Optimise: Organisational Change and Higher Education', The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education. URL: <http://www.obhe.ac.uk/products/reports/> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Woodhouse, D. (2004) 'Issues in Offering Programmes Abroad' presentation to the Australian Universities Transnational Education Forum, Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA).

- to accelerate transnational education initiatives, universities need to encourage proposals for transnational initiatives in the priority countries, ensuring that the proposals meet the good practice model, and then need to invest resources in transnational education proposals in the priority countries that meet the good practice model.

### **3 Good Practice Model in Transnational Education**

This central part of the paper describes the Good Practice Model in Transnational Education developed by Swinburne University of Technology in 2005, as a project funded by the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) and managed by the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC). The model is based on the strategic principles discussed above, and is summarised in Connelly and Garton.<sup>34</sup>

#### **3.1 Development of the Good Practice Model**

In 2004, Dr Brendan Nelson, Australia's then Minister for Education, Science and Training announced funding to higher education providers or groups of higher education providers, for projects to assist in the development of best practice models for offshore delivery<sup>35</sup>. This initiative, targeted at the development of a broader framework for quality assurance of offshore delivery, can now be seen as a step towards the development of Australia's 'Transnational Quality Strategy', as discussed above. The AVCC managed allocation of the grants in collaboration with DEST.

Swinburne University of Technology was awarded funding for the project 'Enhancing Australian Universities' Offshore Quality Assurance Processes: Guidelines for 2+2 Programmes in China', which was completed in 2005.

As noted above, the project was undertaken at Swinburne against the background of the institution's audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) in 2003. This audit recommended that the planned development of an overall framework for quality assurance of Swinburne University of Technology courses delivered off-shore be undertaken and implemented. Similar to many other Australian universities, AUQA made several recommendations with regard to transnational education in Swinburne's audit report, and published its findings on the AUQA website as is standard practice.<sup>36</sup>

Such a recommendation represented a significant opportunity for the newly formed Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) to establish centralised planning, approval and monitoring processes and procedures for Transnational Education Programmes, where none had previously existed.

In 'Benchmarking: A Manual for Australian Universities', McKinnon et al had described the complexities of transnational education amounting to a paradigm shift for higher education institutions:

<sup>34</sup> Connelly, S. & Garton, J. (2005a) 'A Strategic Approach to Offshore Quality Assurance', paper presented at The Australian International Education Conference, 11- 14 October. 2005. URL: <http://www.idp.com/aiec/pastpapers/article17.asp>. Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Department for Education, Science and Training (DEST) (2005), 'Projects to Develop Best Practice Models for Offshore Delivery', URL: [http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/international\\_education/programmes\\_funding/programme\\_categories/education\\_export\\_services/projects\\_best\\_practice\\_models\\_offshore\\_delivery.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/international_education/programmes_funding/programme_categories/education_export_services/projects_best_practice_models_offshore_delivery.htm) Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), Quality Audit, 'Audit Reports: Self-Accrediting Institutions', URL: [http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/sai\\_reports/index.shtml](http://www.auqa.edu.au/qualityaudit/sai_reports/index.shtml) Last accessed 4 August 2006.

Universities that offer offshore (i.e., international) programmes, either through distance education mode or through offshore campuses, face the same challenges of management as any multinational organisation in coping with different cultural expectations, legal requirements, market opportunities, financial issues including currency fluctuations, quality assurance and communications problems.<sup>37</sup>

In the Australian context, Delves and Wilson argued in 2000 that an effective decision-making process in transnational education requires a balancing act in the dilemmas currently facing Australian universities:

All universities face a dilemma in the decision-making processes relating to offshore arrangements. The dilemma is ensuring a balance between adequate risk assessment and overall academic, strategic and resource evaluation for the initiative, and, at the same time, being able to seize upon new opportunities in a timely fashion. An effective decision-making process must allow for a range of approaches, which include, for example, the tendering approach by an overseas partner or agent. The process must also be flexible enough to accommodate new initiatives, which may arise from a university-wide decision relating to strategic positioning or an individual academic unit identifying a lucrative opportunity.<sup>38</sup>

While taking the above balance into account, the focus in the Swinburne project was on centrally-driven strategic initiatives. It could be argued that bottom-up initiatives currently dominate offshore activity, and balance requires a greater measure of top-down approaches. Since top-down or centrally-driven initiatives tend to be larger and more expensive than smaller bottom-up initiatives, the risks are correspondingly greater. There is little room for grandiose visions, and that is why there was strong emphasis on strategic quality assurance guidelines in the Swinburne project.

### 3.2 Overview of the Good Practice Model

The Swinburne conceptual framework or Good Practice Model can be conveniently drawn as a four-box model, as shown in Table 2, which acts as an organising principle for guidelines for transnational education provision. The model captures leading examples such as the 36 precepts on collaborative provision in the UK Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) 'Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education'<sup>39</sup> and the 93 guidelines in the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) 'Code of Practice and Guidelines for Australian Universities on Provision of Education to International Students'.<sup>40</sup> The latter set of guidelines specifically targets offshore students as well as onshore.

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<sup>37</sup> McKinnon, K., Walker, S. & Davis, D. (2000) 'Benchmarking: A Manual for Australian Universities', Canberra: Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, p. 132.

<sup>38</sup> Delves, A. & Wilson, M. (2000) 'Proactive Opportunism: A Case Study in Venturing Offshore' in: Davis, D., Olsen, A. & Böhm, A. (2000) *Transnational Education: Providers, Partners and Policy, Challenges for Australian Institutions Offshore*, Brisbane: IDP Education Australia

<sup>39</sup> Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (2004) 'Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education'. URL: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section2/collab2004.pdf> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) (2005) 'Provision of Education to International Students', Code of Practice and Guidelines for Australian Universities, URL: [www.avcc.edu.au/internationalcode](http://www.avcc.edu.au/internationalcode) Last accessed 4 August 2006.

At the institutional level, the function of the model is to:

- integrate transnational education planning and quality assurance from the concept proposal stage;
- provide a map to university transnational education procedures and logistics as a tool for strategic management; and
- monitor university compliance on regulatory issues.

At the systemic level, the model provides analytical tools to assess how a particular regulatory framework operates, and what it covers.

The framework takes a whole-of-institution approach to planning and quality assurance for transnational education programmes. It is based on the outcomes of an IDP Education Australia project conducted by Davis, Olsen and Böhm in 2000<sup>41</sup>, and is built around the following four areas: strategic guidelines, client perspective guidelines, academic guidelines and administration guidelines. The four areas are explained in more detail below.

Quality assurance is integrated into the planning framework from the very beginning at the concept stage of planning, with the overall goal of minimal but effective central co-ordination. The framework is a *big picture* map, rather than a chronological process. As well as integrating planning and quality assurance, the framework emphasises Strategic Guidelines and Client Perspective Guidelines. The emphasis on Strategic Guidelines is intended to address the lack of strategic perspective in higher education approaches to TNE, discussed above, while the Client Perspective guidelines unapologetically put client interests and consumer rights to the fore.

**Table 2: Good Practice Model for Transnational Education**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strategic Guidelines</b><br/>Policy Framework<br/>e.g. Internationalisation Plan<br/>Quality Assurance Strategy<br/>Decision Making Process<br/>Partner Selection Strategy<br/>Education Plan<br/>Business Development Process</p>                                      | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Client Perspective Guidelines</b><br/>Client Needs – Information for Students<br/>Student Experience Planning<br/>Consumer Protection including Exit Strategy<br/>Client Feedback<br/>Equity Issues</p>                 |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Academic Guidelines</b><br/>Comparable Standards<br/>Sound Pedagogy<br/>Approval and Accreditation Process<br/>Equitable and Ethical Treatment of Students<br/>Assessment Infrastructure and Procedures<br/>Academic Staff Support<br/>Awards – Quality and Control</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Administration Guidelines</b><br/>Project Management<br/>Partner Institution Student Administration Procedures<br/>Marketing Guidelines<br/>Financial Administration<br/>Quality Assurance System<br/>Annual Review</p> |

<sup>41</sup> Davis, D., Olsen A., & Böhm, A. (2000) *Transnational Education: Providers, Partners and Policy, Challenges for Australian Institutions Offshore*, Brisbane: IDP Education Australia.

The four boxes of the framework are not watertight compartments. For example, Client Perspective issues will appear in other boxes, and some operational features of the strategic guidelines will appear under administration QA.

Every main category in each of the four boxes has a sub-category in turn, discussed in more detail below. The four box model is intended as a checklist for the often overwhelming number of issues to be accounted for in establishing and managing transnational education programmes.

The four boxes are described in turn in the next four sections. Further detail regarding the categories and sub-categories is available in the Swinburne project report described above<sup>42</sup>.

### **3.3 Strategic Guidelines**

The process of developing a strategy for international activities such as transnational education programmes needs to take into account broader institutional objectives, as well as national and international factors (regulatory frameworks, issues of supply and demand, capacity to pay, competition).

Within universities, transnational education programme strategy development needs to take into consideration such factors as the role of an International Programmes Committee (as discussed above with regard to the role of a central international office), alignment of international activities with university goals and objectives, alignment of planning processes (university-wide, divisional, etc.), synchronisation of transnational education programmes with onshore recruitment activities and other internationalisation activities and collaboration with existing offshore operations.

Strategic Guidelines ensure that planning and quality assurance for transnational education programmes are integrated from the concept proposal stage onwards. The six items in the Strategic Guidelines box are intended to ensure that proposals are strategically aligned across the university, with clear decision-making processes and quality assurance responsibilities, a sound partner selection strategy, an education plan which addresses the relevant accreditation and assessment issues, and appropriate business development processes. This last item includes financial management, which is a controversial area of transnational planning and implementation in terms of relevant models and needs particular attention<sup>43</sup>.

The Strategic Guidelines items are shown below, with the relevant sub-headings. While all categories might not match all types of transnational education initiatives, they are intended to encompass all forms of TNE activity, at least in principle.

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<sup>42</sup> Swinburne (2005) "Enhancing Australian Universities' Offshore QA Processes". URL: [http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/GovernmentActivities/QAAustralianEducationAndTrainingSystem/Grants\\_GdPract.htm](http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/GovernmentActivities/QAAustralianEducationAndTrainingSystem/Grants_GdPract.htm) Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>43</sup> Back, D. (2004) 'More dollars and sense in international education', 18th IDP Australian Education International Education Conference, 7th October, 2004, URL: [http://www.cdesign.com.au/proceedings\\_aiec2004/papers%20\(pdf\)/thur-%20%20Back.pdf](http://www.cdesign.com.au/proceedings_aiec2004/papers%20(pdf)/thur-%20%20Back.pdf) Last accessed 4 August 2006.

## Policy Framework

- Internationalisation Plan: Policy for transnational education programmes should be embedded in strategic plans for internationalisation. The Internationalisation Plan should address all aspects of university life and all students, including the theme of cultural diversity and cultural proficiency in the learning community.
- Assessment of strategic significance of the transnational education initiative: The programme should be assessed to gauge its strategic significance to the provider institution, and the level of resources that may need to be devoted to it, including planning, financial and human resources.
- Alignment with provider institution policy framework in a whole-of-institution approach: Programmes should be an integrated aspect of university strategy. A whole-of-institution approach is required, with appropriate policies and structures to provide the right environment for high quality TNE programmes and effective quality assurance.
- Advancement of a core provider institution function: Each proposal must advance at least one of the University's core functions of teaching, research and community service. This will help to ensure the strategic coherence of the university's offshore activities, and avoid stretching resources too thinly.
- Sufficient quality to maintain or enhance the provider institution's reputation: TNE programmes delivered by partner institutions must be of a comparable standard to programmes delivered by the provider institution.
- Financial goals and financial security: Financial arrangements for TNE programmes should advance the financial goals of the provider institution. As noted by Liston<sup>44</sup>, in terms of financial security, attention should be paid to "balancing onshore and offshore programmes to maximise returns and foster diversity by investing resources realistically in marketing, staff development, student support and new pathways from pre-tertiary sectors."

## Quality Assurance Strategy

- Clearly identified responsibility for quality assurance, including responsibility for compliance with regulatory authorities: The provider institution should have in place a quality assurance system supported in university policy, adequately resourced, and as noted by Hackett<sup>45</sup>, with "a specialised operational unit to ensure implementation and regular auditing and reporting". The TNE programmes should comply with the relevant regulatory authorities in the partner institution country.
- Quality improvement cycle: The QA system should employ an iterative improvement cycle.
- Benchmarking and peer review: Benchmarking of best practice in relation to TNE programmes should be instituted. This may be in terms of internal benchmarking, using comparison of processes and/or performance within the University, and/or external benchmarking against other organisations external to the University.

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<sup>44</sup> Liston, C. (2004) 'Issues and Risks for Offshore Programmes', proceedings of the British Council's 'Going Global' Conference, December 8–10 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Hackett, J. (2000) 'Quality in Transnational Education' in Davis, D., Olsen, A. & Böhm, A. (2000) *Transnational Education: Providers, Partners and Policy, Challenges for Australian Institutions Offshore*, Brisbane: IDP Education Australia.

## Decision Making Process

- Transparent decision making: Responsibilities for TNE programmes should be clear to all concerned, with identifiable bodies or committees with documented roles on the public record, together with a register of TNE programmes identifying partners and the nature of the collaboration.
- Clearly identified decision making processes and management structures: A balanced and flexible set of decision-making processes is required for TNE programmes, so that new initiatives can be accommodated, whether top-down or bottom-up, while at the same time paying attention to strategic issues, risk assessment and resource allocation.

## Partner Selection Strategy

- Transparent and documented process: Selection of partners is based on established and explainable criteria, with explicit documentation of agreements, through established university planning processes.
- Reputation and culture: The partnership enhances the provider university's reputation and strategic interests. In turn, the provider institution meets the AVCC guidelines with regard to partner selection, including ensuring that "Every effort should be made to ensure offshore programmes comply with all points contained in the Code and Guidelines and that programmes are sensitive to the educational, social, cultural and legal context of the countries in which they are delivered."<sup>46</sup>
- Relationship management: As noted by Adams<sup>47</sup>, ideally the relationship with the partner is based on a clear mutual understanding of the investment required, the protection of student rights (particularly in the event of dissolution of the partnership), and proper business, legal and regulatory planning. Also, the relationship should be based on mutual respect and the full involvement of both university provider and partner senior management and operational staff<sup>48</sup>. The provider and partner institutions and staff are equal partners in the transnational education project, rather than following a "colonial structure".
- Written agreement: In the development of partnership agreements: the AVCC requires Australian universities to pay special attention to a wide range of areas, including the following:
  - contract authorisation, including due diligence, authority of signatories, contract management, scope of contract;
  - internal and external approval processes;
  - curriculum – contextualisation, language, tailoring of content, method of delivery;
  - promotion – accuracy of information, language, who what and where is the promotion being undertaken, consistency with local government regulations;
  - admissions – entry standards, credit transfer, validating evidentiary requirements, management of student admissions;

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<sup>46</sup> Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) (2005) 'Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Australian Universities', Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, Canberra, April 2005, section 23, p. 6. URL: [www.avcc.edu.au/internationalcode](http://www.avcc.edu.au/internationalcode) Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>47</sup> Adams, T. (2000) 'Selecting Offshore Partners' in Davis, D., Olsen, A. & Böhm, A. (2000) *Transnational Education: Providers, Partners and Policy, Challenges for Australian Institutions Offshore*, Brisbane: IDP Education Australia.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 89-93.

- teaching – selection, induction, briefing, support, appropriateness of pedagogy, language of tuition;
  - assessment – schedules, language, moderation, academic security;
  - academic support – facilities and services, equivalence to Australian university;
  - pastoral support – suitability of learning environment, type and level of pastoral support;
  - evaluation and review of learning outcomes, teaching, courses, how, how often and by whom; and
  - insurance, liability and risk covers attached to programmes delivered with and through partners on and offshore.<sup>49</sup>
- Third party agreements: All agreements with third parties such as brokers and agents involved in developing the partnership between the provider institution and the partner institution should be documented.

### Education Plan

- Framed by the provider institution's Teaching and Learning Plan: The Education Plan should align with the provider institution's Teaching and Learning Plan, meeting the strategic objectives of the department/faculty and the university.
- Subject to approval and review by the provider institution and partner institution: Both parties should have detailed legal rights and obligations in a contract under relevant laws. Government or other approvals are obtained, together with satisfaction of established approval procedures within the provider institution.
- Professional infrastructure plans in place: The strategic approach to partnerships includes specification of professional infrastructure to support the proposed transnational education programme/s, for example:
  - staff development arrangements for both provider and partner academic staff and for both provider and partner administration staff;
  - curriculum development arrangements;
  - quality assurance systems for assessment;
  - a regular process of academic exchange;
  - programme evaluations;
  - academic staff feedback (both onshore and offshore);
  - administration staff feedback (both onshore and offshore);
  - student feedback (both offshore and onshore); and
  - quality assurance responsibilities.

### Business Development Process

- Business plans in place: Financial estimates should be made in proposals for transnational education programmes, including the full range of costs and financial benefits over the longer term.
- Market and competitor analysis undertaken: The university should have a clear understanding of the market in which the project will operate before proceeding with further development of a proposal. This should include an understanding of

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<sup>49</sup> Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) (2005) 'Provision of Education to International Students: Code of Practice and Guidelines for Australian Universities', Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, Canberra, April 2005, section 69, p. 15. URL: [www.avcc.edu.au/internationalcode](http://www.avcc.edu.au/internationalcode) Last accessed 4 August 2006

demographic trends, higher education enrolment rates, development of the higher education system, current and prospective competition, competitor fees and market price sensitivity.

- Due diligence undertaken: The proposed partner's academic standards and standing, legal status, financial standing and reputation should be checked, to determine whether it is an appropriate partner for the university.
- Risk management procedures in place: The potential risks to which the university may be exposed if it undertakes the proposed project should be identified. These risks include risk to reputation, risk involving the country in which the partner institution operates, and commercial risk.
- Physical facilities of satisfactory standard: The provider institution should ensure that a satisfactory learning environment is provided together with full information about facilities and services.

### **3.4 Client Perspective Guidelines**

The separate Client Perspective guidelines in this model enable us to capture the entire framework from the viewpoint of students, providing a crosscheck on a range of issues from a consumer perspective throughout the student experience.

The Client Perspective Guidelines cover a range of vital consumer needs and consumer protection issues, as shown below.

#### Client Needs – Information for Students

- Pre-enrolment information: Accurate information should be provided to students in all the relevant areas about the offshore conditions of study, for example, information on the provider university, admission requirements and procedures, courses available, tuition and, where relevant, living costs, living conditions, accommodation and other services.
- Academic entry standards: Comparable entry standards should apply to transnational programmes.
- Appropriate levels of counselling and academic support: A range of counselling and academic support is required for TNE students at a comparable standard to provision for onshore students. This support is essential for students studying in a foreign learning environment. It is the responsibility of identified persons or departments in the provider institution e.g. the TNE programme manager, to monitor these matters, which should also be subject to annual review.

#### Student Experience Planning

- Streamlined enquiries, applications, admissions and enrolment procedures: Procedures for enquiries, applications, admissions and enrolment should align with the provider institution as much as possible.
- Course sequences seamlessly articulated: Student progression, especially through pathway programmes, should articulate transparently, with minimal, well-integrated administrative procedures.
- Good quality teaching, resources and facilities: Transnational education students should have good direct access to the provider institution's materials and library

resources. Partner institution teaching staff should be approved by the provider institution as having appropriate qualifications and experience. Provider institutions should ensure that the facilities and services provided to students studying at partner institutions are of a satisfactory standard.

- Access to alumni resources (which may be organised and supported in-country): Alumni arrangements for graduates returning to their home countries should be supported by the provider institution.

#### Consumer Protection including Exit Strategy

- Termination arrangements: Students should be protected in the event of partnership arrangements being terminated, through appropriate transition or other arrangements.
- Fees: Guidelines for fee refunds should guarantee, amongst other things, full refund of fees if offers are withdrawn, or if the university is unable to provide the programme.
- Agents trained and monitored: Provider institutions should be responsible for training agents in their responsibilities under the relevant regulations for the provider institutions' students.
- Grievance procedures: Students in TNE programmes should be provided with grievance procedures by the provider institution.
- Marketing materials should give accurate information about courses and facilities: It is vitally important that marketing materials be informative, accurate and ethical.

#### Client Feedback

- Regular student surveys, with results published to students: The provider institution should monitor student satisfaction.
- Student consultation conducted as routine part of course administration: Students should have the opportunity to be consulted by provider institution staff, in particular subject convenors and other responsible staff.

#### Equity Issues

- TNE students should be treated by the provider institution and its partners in conformity with provider institution equity requirements to the extent possible in the regulatory environment of the country of programme delivery.
- Equity issues include:
  - Equal opportunity;
  - Cultural diversity; and
  - Privacy.

### **3.5 Academic Guidelines**

Swinburne University of Technology, as a dual sector institution, has statutory boards in higher education and in Technical and Further Education (TAFE) for the approval of academic programmes wherever and however they are delivered. Concept proposals are developed at school, faculty and divisional level for consideration by university executive, following which accreditation documentation is submitted to the Academic Board or Board of TAFE Studies.

Academic approval processes for TNE programmes are being aligned with the process for approval to deliver a transnational education programme. While it is important to ensure that all required approvals are obtained, streamlining of procedures is also necessary so that programme proposals are not weighted with undue paperwork.

The issue of comparable standards is fundamental to academic quality assurance, and underpins much of the list in this box from the Good Practice Model. The sub-headings for Academic Guidelines are shown below.

### Comparable Standards

- Comparable standards to same or similar programme in the provider's home country, including staff qualifications: Bannerman et al.<sup>50</sup> point out the importance of identifying to whom the right to decide is given and lists the following factors to consider with regard to delegation areas with major impact on standards:
  - Who admits students?
  - Who awards scholarships?
  - Who approves course/programme content?
  - Who decides content customisation?
  - Who appoints lecturers?
  - Who evaluates lecturers?
  - Who sets exams?
  - Who marks exams?
  - Who approves supplementaries?
  - Who decides student appeals?
  - Who can apply for voluntary accreditation?
  - Who is responsible for maintaining accreditation standing?

Control of the above factors is essential to good quality assurance in transnational delivery.

- Meets any national or international benchmarks: TNE Programmes will benefit from internal and external benchmarking by the provider institution (e.g. comparative results of "domestic" onshore students and offshore students articulating into programmes and peer/professional review by external bodies).

### Sound Pedagogy

- Transnational programmes should be pedagogically sound with respect to methods of teaching, nature and needs of learners and materials for teaching and learning.

### Approval and Accreditation Process

- Course and subject approval mechanisms ensure that both offshore and internal accreditation is obtained.
- Transnational programmes do not alter the intention of programme or course approval without explicit change to approval: In the interests of maintaining the comparability of programmes both onshore and offshore, care must be taken to monitor programmes to ensure that all changes must be formally approved, to exclude the possibility of ad

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<sup>50</sup> Bannerman, P., Spiller, J., Yetton, P. & Davis, J. (2005) *Strategic Alliances in Education and Training Services: A Literature Review*, Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), p.49. URL: [http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/MIP/ItemsOfInterest/05Interest26c\\_pdf.pdf](http://aei.dest.gov.au/AEI/MIP/ItemsOfInterest/05Interest26c_pdf.pdf) Last accessed 4 August 2006.

hoc changes which have the potential for offshore programmes to drift away from what was originally planned and approved.

#### Equitable and Ethical Treatment of Students

- Students who receive provider institution awards on completion are enrolled as students of the university, are subject to the relevant code and/or benchmarks, and are subject to the same entry standards, academic regulations and discipline as students in the provider's home country.

#### Assessment Infrastructure and Procedures

- Assessment methods should be under the control or quality assurance of the provider institution which should ensure that the academic standard is equivalent to the same or comparable programmes in the provider institution country.

#### Academic Staff Support

- Support should be available for staff teaching on transnational education programmes, including relevant staff development, guidelines, and facilities offshore: Academic staff involved in TNE programmes require support from the provider institution in a range of areas, including cross-cultural programmes, adequate facilities, appropriate qualifications, briefing sessions for overseas duties, and opportunities to provide feedback and access grievance procedures.

#### Awards – Quality and Control

- Students in transnational programmes should be informed by the provider institution of all relevant information about academic matters in relation to their programmes of study and should be assured by the university that programmes meet its quality criteria and that standards are equivalent.
- The process of issuing awards, including certificates and transcripts, remains under the control of the provider institution.

### **3.6 Administration Guidelines**

Similar to academic issues, it is important in an era of increasing scrutiny of transnational education programmes, that administrative procedures support the delivery of a quality academic programme such that students in TNE programmes are administered in a manner comparable with their onshore counterparts. Institutions need to be able to count numbers of students in transnational education programmes accurately and report on them to national education authorities, need to be able to audit recruitment, application and enrolment procedures, upload data from partner systems to central university systems, provide access to library and other physical and online resources, monitor student progress effectively, manage academic progression and other student support matters in a timely manner, and assign responsibility for these tasks appropriately between partner and provider institution staff. Managers and administrators may well agree with Castle and Kelly<sup>51</sup> that administrative systems are as important as teaching delivery in ensuring the success of offshore programmes.

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<sup>51</sup> Castle, R. and Kelly, D. (2004b) 'International Education: Quality Assurance and Standards in Offshore Teaching: Exemplars and Problems,' *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol. 10, No.1, pp.51-57.

Even the best academic programmes lose status if students are not properly enrolled, or experience some other administrative calamity, which could arise from the neglect of any of the issues listed in the Administration Guidelines box of the Good Practice Model, as shown below.

#### Project Management

- Transnational education project management system in place, with nominated provider institution personnel responsible for management and quality assurance issues. As proposals are confirmed and TNE programmes commence, established project management systems should be employed to manage the start-up phase and subsequent development of the programme.
- Project management manual in operation: Project management systems should be supported by written procedures to guarantee systematic management of programmes and clarity of roles and duties of all staff involved.

#### Partner Institution Student Administration Procedures

- Systems for enquiries, applications, offer/acceptance, and enrolments aligned: Responsibility for co-ordinating and monitoring transnational education programmes lies with the provider institution.
- Selection criteria published for admission to transnational education programmes: Provider institutions should publish admission criteria for TNE programmes so that TNE students can access the criteria for specific courses, and information regarding recognition for prior learning, credit transfer and articulation arrangements.
- Student administration guidelines issued to partner and staff development briefings carried out: Where possible, student administration at partner institutions should be integrated with the provider institution. Resources should be devoted to ensuring that partner institution administration staff is trained in the appropriate procedures.

#### Marketing Guidelines

- Marketing guidelines should be issued to partners and staff development briefings carried out. The provider institution should approve all marketing materials, and monitor marketing activities by the partner institution.

#### Financial Administration

- Procedures adopted and monitored for financial administration: Financial administration for TNE programmes should operate in accordance with university policies, and should as far as possible be aligned with standard provider institution systems, and be transparent and accountable.

#### Quality Assurance System

- Quality assurance system in place, with dedicated resources: QA systems for TNE programmes should be in place with established systems integrated with provider institution systems, and with clearly identified responsibilities for the quality of TNE programmes.

#### Annual Review

- Annual reviews of transnational programmes, including review of administration systems, facilities, academic programme management, and staff and student surveys.

Reviews should be conducted by the provider institution in conjunction with the partner institution.

#### 4 Applying the Good Practice Model

An agreed planning and quality assurance framework is vital to negotiating the differing stakeholder perspectives on transnational initiatives within a university. The four-box model quickly illustrates the range of issues to be addressed, and the many facets of planning and quality assurance to be dealt with. Transnational education programmes planning and logistics can then be tackled with knowledge of the different perspectives involved.

The Good Practice Model maps onto a set of logistical procedures, labeled Project Initiation, Project Management, and Project Review, as shown in the example given in the table below. It must be acknowledged that institutions vary greatly in their administration of TNE initiatives, but nonetheless it can be argued that some general principles are illustrated here.

**Table 3: Transnational Education Logistics Table**

| Project Initiation  | Project Management  | Project Review   |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic assessment of proposed partnership</li> <li>• QA strategy integrated into planning</li> <li>• Provider policy and QA meet Australian regulatory requirements</li> <li>• Partner institution profile and background reports</li> <li>• Site visit</li> <li>• Education plan</li> <li>• Accreditation and approvals</li> <li>• Programme delivery model</li> <li>• Curriculum planning</li> <li>• Business plans in place</li> <li>• Market and competitor analysis undertaken</li> <li>• Due diligence undertaken</li> <li>• Risk management procedures</li> <li>• Contract negotiated</li> <li>• Third Party agreement with agents/brokers</li> <li>• Exit strategy</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provider institution</li> <li>• Management arrangements</li> <li>• Curriculum in place</li> <li>• Project Management Manual distributed</li> <li>• Marketing guidelines issued to partner</li> <li>• Staffing arrangements</li> <li>• Staff development briefing sessions</li> <li>• Occupational Health and Safety issues</li> <li>• Student administration</li> <li>• Student information</li> <li>• Partner manual</li> <li>Partner institution               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management arrangements</li> <li>• Staffing arrangements</li> <li>• Student administration</li> <li>• Staff development briefing sessions</li> <li>• Course accreditation confirmed</li> <li>• Student support in place</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual reviews</li> <li>• QA Manual</li> <li>• Compliance system in place</li> <li>• Marketing plans and reports submitted by partner institution</li> <li>• Student surveys conducted every semester</li> <li>• Staff feedback</li> <li>• Comparative exam results data</li> <li>• Exit strategy reviewed</li> </ul> |

The Strategic Guidelines discussed in the planning framework are mapped mainly onto the Project Initiation stage shown above. The Academic and Administration Guidelines are concentrated in the second and third stages, Project Management and Project Review.

The Client Perspective quadrant of the Planning and QA framework is used as a check against all stages of the TNE programme logistics system.

In turn, a logistics table can be translated into a set of procedures, for example, the model can be incorporated into three manuals: a Project Initiation Manual, Project Management Manual (one each for the provider and partner institution), and a review manual for Quality Assurance Audit purposes. Further details regarding applications of the Good Practice Model are discussed in Connelly and Garton<sup>52</sup>.

## 5 Concluding Comments

A major feature of the Good Practice Guidelines described in this report is the integration of transnational education planning and quality assurance within an approach that places emphasis on strategic planning and the client perspective. The strategic guidelines of the model emphasise the need to meet the quality challenges confronting all multinational organisations, in the context of an appropriate international plan.

It would seem fundamental that this model should serve the aim of developing an international university. This aim is a muddled and controversial issue, but one that can readily be served using the model described in this report. The Good Practice Guidelines can assist higher education institutions not only in delivering the fundamentals of transnational education, but also in taking institutions to the next level in developing an international university. The fundamental quality assurance needs of transnational education initiatives are described as *basic innovation* by Garrett.<sup>53</sup> In short, this means transplanting a programme offshore, and developing core quality assurance measures to go with it. This is quite a challenge in itself, and it may be asked to what extent current TNE programmes achieve this level of basic innovation.

However, in the longer term higher education institutions will need to be more ambitious if they are to compete in the global marketplace. According to Garrett,<sup>54</sup> *next stage innovation* in TNE programmes requires a more strategic approach to establish such programmes, above and beyond transplanting current programmes and establishing basic QA procedures. He gives the example of achieving greater critical mass with better integration of transnational and home students, having a broader subject offering, a more substantive in-country presence, more explicit and independent QA, and so on.

Exploring the concept of *next stage innovation*, it can be argued that more strategic approaches that involve the integration of planning and QA procedures set out in the Good Practice Guidelines, together with more specific innovation in such areas as relationship management, professional infrastructure, the client perspective and cultural proficiency, are all aspects to be considered.

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<sup>52</sup> Connelly, S. & Garton, J. (2005) 'A Strategic Approach to Offshore QA', paper presented at The Australian International Education Conference, 11-14 October, 2005. URL:

<http://www.idp.com/aiec/pastpapers/article17.asp> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>53</sup> Garrett, R. (2004) 'Transnational Delivery by UK Higher Education, Part 2: Innovation & Competitive Advantage', The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, p.5. URL:

<http://www.obhe.ac.uk/products/reports/archived.html?year=2004> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p.6.

Relationship management with partners, as set out in the Strategic QA Guidelines of the model, is vital to successful growth of the partnership. Whatever the cultural differences, as Adams<sup>55</sup> puts it:

A partnership based on shared values, the development of trust, mutual respect and an eventual agreement based on a *win-win* model expresses values that are universally shared across cultures.

As well as commitment and focus at all institutional levels, it is suggested that there are professional infrastructure aspects of the partnership that are crucial to long term success.

Professional infrastructure refers to the added value that can be injected into offshore collaboration over and above the bare bones of programme provision, and can be seen as an important part of next stage innovation. It helps to achieve the greater critical mass referred to by Garrett<sup>56</sup> in order to develop a more substantial presence in the partner institution and region.

Professional infrastructure might include some or all of the following:

- staff development arrangements for both provider and partner academic and administrative staff;
- curriculum development arrangements with the partner institution;
- quality assurance systems for assessment;
- a regular process of academic exchange (e.g. visits both ways by academics to participate in teaching on the programme);
- joint programme evaluations with the partner institution (e.g. comparative results of “domestic” onshore students and offshore students articulating into programmes);
- academic staff feedback (both onshore and offshore);
- administration staff feedback (both onshore and offshore);
- student feedback (both offshore and onshore); and
- quality assurance responsibilities (e.g. in the event of an external audit).

It can be argued that these very tangible examples of professional infrastructure should play an important role in guidelines for transnational education if it is to be taken to the next level as part of developing international universities.

Another important dimension of *next stage innovation* is the focus on the client or consumer – the student. As noted in the Good Practice Model, the Client Perspective enables us to view the entire framework from the viewpoint of students, providing a crosscheck on a range of quality issues from a consumer perspective.

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<sup>55</sup> Adams.T. (2000) ‘Selecting Offshore Partners’ in Davis, D., Olsen, A. & Böhm, A. (2000) *Transnational Education: Providers, Partners and Policy, Challenges for Australian Institutions Offshore*, Brisbane: IDP Education Australia, p.89.

<sup>56</sup> Garrett, R. (2004) ‘Transnational Delivery by UK Higher Education, Part 2: Innovation & Competitive Advantage’, The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, p.6. URL: <http://www.obhe.ac.uk/products/reports/archived.html?year=2004> Last accessed 4 August 2006.

From a strategic perspective, too, as noted, there is the fundamental issue of the extent to which the provider university is committed to an internationalisation plan that goes beyond the basics in relation to internationalising staff and students. Castle and Kelly note that internationalisation in universities is “frequently narrowly defined as encompassing international students and off-shore teaching”<sup>57</sup>.

An area of particular concern is that an internationalisation plan should address major issues crucial to transnational education programmes such as the stereotyping of international students identified by Olsen<sup>58</sup>:

Universities in Australia, specifically at the grassroots level where first year students are taught, have commonly adopted a *cultural deficit* approach to international students. International students have been stereotyped as a homogenous group, rote learners, passive, sticking to their own community and lacking analytical and critical thinking skills. Universities have taken the view that international students need to adapt to the dominant culture to maintain standards of excellence, have provided special support services to international students and have offered cross-cultural training programmes to staff to ensure that they are competent to deal with international students’ special circumstances.

The stereotype can be simpler – international students drag standards down, often because of their poor English. The stereotype is rampant, of course, in the first year of higher education.

As a matter of fact, international students do not drag standards down ...

Olsen goes on to argue that universities need to promote an inclusive view of diversity, in terms of cultural proficiency:

In a university culture of *cultural proficiency*, universities will acknowledge and value differences. Students will be valued for their diversity, with a range of attitudes to learning. Services will be provided to students to encourage self sufficiency. And the diversity of student populations will provide opportunities for staff to broaden and enrich their teaching experience. Nowhere will such culture change have more impact than in the first year of higher education.<sup>59</sup>

The state of cultural proficiency in a university may be difficult to measure, but it is clearly crucial to the long term success of any plans to become an international university with a significant presence offshore.

All these issues involve a vision of a modern university that is fully engaged in developing an international perspective, rather than simply extending its current role to include new locations. Without this international perspective current notions of what quality means for transnational education will soon be irrelevant.

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<sup>57</sup> Castle, R. & Kelly, D. (2004) *Internationalisation: A Whole of Institution Approach*. Proceedings of the Australian Universities Quality Forum 8 July 2004, p.1. Available at AUQA Occasional Publications, URL: <http://www.auqa.edu.au/auqf/2004/programme/papers/Castle.pdf> Last accessed 15 March 2006.

<sup>58</sup> Olsen, A. (2001) ‘Diversity and Inclusivity in Teaching and Learning and Student Services in Australia’, paper delivered to the Fourteenth International Conference on the First Year Experience, held in conjunction with the Fifth Pacific Rim First Year in Higher Education Conference, July 2001, p.3. URL: <http://www.spre.com.hk/new.htm#report4>. Last accessed 4 August 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p.5.

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