A Strategic Approach to QA for Transnational Education Programs

Stephen Connelly & Jim Garton
INTRODUCTION

Part A: Strategic TNE issues

Part B: Best practice QA framework for TNEP

Part C: Implementation issues
GLOSSARY

TNE ........ Transnational Education
TNEP ....... Transnational Education Program (offshore program)
OPVCI ...... Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International)
AVCC ....... Australian Vice Chancellors’ Committee
ESOS Act .. Education Services for Overseas Students Act
GLOSSARY

Cane toad: *Bufo marinus* – said to be related to TNEPs, as both are pests that spread everywhere
PART A:
STRATEGIC TNE ISSUES
TNE STRATEGIC ISSUES

Swinburne background #1

1. Swinburne HE onshore enrolments = 23%

2. Established TNE programs:
   (a) Faculty-based TNE initiatives:
       ▪ Master of International Accounting (MIntA) program, Vietnam
       ▪ B.Sc. (IT) Hong Kong
   (b) Central initiatives:
       ▪ Sarawak campus, Malaysia

3. Research links, credit transfer etc
TNE STRATEGIC ISSUES

Swinburne background #2

A strategic approach needs a planning and QA framework. AUQA Recommendation 18:

“That the planned development of an overall framework for quality assurance of SUT courses delivered off-shore be undertaken and implemented.”

(Swinburne AUQA Audit Report March 2003, p. 38)
TNE STRATEGIC ISSUES

Swinburne AVCC Offshore Quality Project November 2004 – June 2005. An opportunity to:

1. Research TNE planning and QA issues at UK and Australian universities and develop a “conceptual framework” for offshore QA

2. Put Swinburne under the microscope in terms of TNEP developments, as the subject of an experiment in implementing the framework
Research themes from AVCC project:

- Complex, changing regulatory issues both at home and offshore
- Multinational challenge: the efforts of universities to become multinational organisations with internationalised staff and students
- Lack of strategic focus in universities operating offshore: “One offshore campus is an experiment, two is a strategy.”
TNE STRATEGIC ISSUES

Regulatory systems

Australia:
- Updated AVCC Code & Guidelines
- DEST discussion paper on national quality strategy
- Increased resources for AUQA audits of offshore programs
Regulatory systems

Asia:
- Local institutions ambitious to expand international education role
- Authorities anxious to control growth and quality
Multinational challenge
Universities operating offshore face the same challenges of management as any multinational organisation:

- different cultural expectations
- legal requirements
- market opportunities
- financial issues
- quality assurance and communications problems

Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Australia.
TNE STRATEGIC ISSUES

Lack of overall TNE planning in Australia:
David Woodhouse Exec. Director AUQA: “A major problem is that off-shore work is still a departmental initiative to a much greater extent than any other significant university activity… Things happen of which the centre is ignorant.”*

► Issues of:
  ▪ “top-down” initiatives vs. “bottom-up” ones
  ▪ Role of international office

TNE STRATEGIC ISSUES

“Top down” versus “bottom up” approaches:

“The [decision-making ] process must … 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…”

In response to AUQA, Swinburne has developed a policy framework including TNE programs in the *Internationalization Plan*:

“8.2 Develop systems for the development and ongoing management of TNE programs, to ensure that TNE programs meet the strategic objectives, academic requirements and financial goals of the University.”
TNE STRATEGIC ISSUES

Implementation of Swinburne policies and plans:

- New PVC(I) and Office of the PVC(I)
- Internationalization Plan
- AVCC Offshore Quality project
- New standardised TNE procedures
- New central initiatives
- International Programs Committee
TNE STRATEGIC ISSUES

OPVCI role is to help facilitate good quality TNEP initiatives with:

- Integrated university-wide planning & QA
- Transparent standardised approval procedures and decision making processes
- Act as brake and accelerator
To summarise:

Why do we need a TNE planning and QA framework?

1. Improve strategic focus
2. Respond to new opportunities in a timely and coordinated manner
3. Deal with complex regulatory environments

Overall, to assist in the process of developing a multinational university
PART B:
BEST PRACTICE QA FRAMEWORK FOR TNEP
BEST PRACTICE QA FRAMEWORK

1. Strategic guidelines
2. Client Perspective Guidelines
3. Academic guidelines
4. Admin. guidelines

BEST PRACTICE QA FRAMEWORK

General comments:
- Based on Davis, Olsen & Bohm 2000 (IDP project).
- “Big Picture” rather than chronological sequence
- 4 boxes are not watertight compartments
- Framework is using AVCC guidelines, but could be adapted to various guidelines (used like an assembly manual)
IKEA

Vergis je niet in de prijs!
DOE MEE EN WIN

3 ①
Attach slat to frame.

4x

6 ①
Use microwave as your helper in the absence of actual friends.

②
Lift desk frame securely with your back.
## BEST PRACTICE QA FRAMEWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Strategic guidelines</th>
<th>2. Client Perspective Guidelines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Policy framework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- QA strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Decision making process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Partner selection strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Education Plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Business development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|------------------------|-------------------------------|
### BEST PRACTICE QA FRAMEWORK

#### 2. Client Perspective Guidelines
- Client needs (student info, academic support)
- Student experience planning (streamlined admin procedures, articulation)
- Consumer protection (fees, grievance procedures)
- Client feedback (student surveys)
- Equity issues
### 3. Academic guidelines
- Comparable standards
- Sound pedagogy (teaching methods, learner needs)
- Accreditation (both offshore and onshore)
- Equitable treatment of students
- Assessment (under provider control)
- Academic staff support
- Awards (under provider control)
BEST PRACTICE QA FRAMEWORK

4. Administration guidelines
   - Project management structures in place
   - Partner institution admin procedures aligned
   - Marketing guidelines
   - Financial administration
   - QA system (compliance logistics)
   - Annual Review
The main headings in the framework have more specific details under them:

1. **Strategic**: Partner Selection (1.3) - *Site Visit Report*
2. **Client Perspective**: Client needs (2.10) – *student info*
3. **Academic**: Equitable treatment (3.4) – *same entry standards*
4. **Administration**: Project management structures (4.1) – *nominated personnel*
BEST PRACTICE QA FRAMEWORK

Function of the framework

1. Integrate planning and QA from the concept proposal stage
2. Strategic management tool for collating essential information
3. Monitor university compliance on regulatory issues (AUQA, AVCC, host country regulations)
4. Provide a map to university TNEP procedures & logistics to assist implementation
BEST PRACTICE QA FRAMEWORK

Using the framework (1): Guidelines checklist

1. Check the fit of university procedures with various guidelines, updated regulations etc – most official sets of guidelines are difficult to navigate and interpret e.g. QAA(UK), AVCC

That is … the framework can be used to help us identify and put together various bits and pieces in the regulations … like an assembly manual
Using the framework (2)

The framework can also be used as:

- Logistics toolkit
- Template for manuals
# BEST PRACTICE QA FRAMEWORK

## Logistics Toolkit:

- **3 phases**

### TNEP Logistics Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT INITIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic assessment of proposed partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA strategy integrated into planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market and competitor analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due diligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract negotiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT MANAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course accreditation confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing guidelines issued to partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing arrangements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student administration &amp; support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner manual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT REVIEW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual reviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QA Manual implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing plans and reports submitted by partner institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student surveys conducted every semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit strategy reviewed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Checkpoints on TNEPS e.g.

**Project Initiation:**
- ▲ due diligence
- ▲ accreditation

**Project Management:**
- ▲ curriculum
- ▲ student information
- ▲ student administration

**Project Review:**
- ▲ student feedback
BEST PRACTICE QA FRAMEWORK

Template for Manuals

1. Project Initiation manual: From concept to contract

2. Project Management manual: From committees to classrooms

3. Project Review manual: From comparisons to compliance

Time sequence ....
1. **Project Initiation manual**: From concept to contract (Approvals process)

(A) **Form 1**: Project Outline - includes (cf Strategy Guidelines):
- Strategic objectives
- Partner selection
- Initial Education Plan
- Approvals

(B) **Form 2**: Full Proposal with budget
- Full Education Plan (curric, staff, QA)
- Market analysis
- Due Diligence
- Risk Analysis

(C) **Contract checklist**: Contract + third party agreement
BEST PRACTICE QA FRAMEWORK

- Appoint management committee and project managers
- Deliver curriculum, staff development, admin. systems

2. Project Management manual: From committees to classrooms
BEST PRACTICE QA FRAMEWORK

3. Project Review manual: From comparisons to compliance

- Comparable standards – moderation reports, exam data etc
- Client feedback – student surveys
- Staff feedback
- Partner compliance
To summarise:

We need a TNE planning and QA framework so that we can:

1. Improve strategic focus with integrated planning & QA
2. Respond to new opportunities in a timely and coordinated manner – logistics mapped out
3. Deal with complex regulatory environments – diagnostic kit at hand
PART C:
IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES
IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

How do we implement a quality framework in TNE programs?

(a) Internal issues – at the provider or home institution

(b) External issues – in the partner country

What are some of the main hurdles?
IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Internal #1

- Alignment of existing programs
- New proposals for TNEP – the red tape issue; new processes may be seen as obstructive
- New PVC(I) and OPVCI trying to generate new central initiatives
IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Internal #2

Stakeholder perspectives within the provider institution:

- Academics cf. administrators
- Central cf. department/faculty perspectives – the “silo effect”

► The framework is designed to:

- Prioritise strategic and client issues
- Provide an overview to overcome silo problems
INTERNAL #3

Institutional frameworks inside universities need effective overarching governance and compliance guidelines e.g.:

- National TNEP framework (DEST)
- AVCC Code and Guidelines
- ESOS Act
IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

External

Relationship management with partners:

- Aligning different value systems
- Contracts – how do you make Australian contracts stick in another jurisdiction?
- Assumptions about teaching approaches – should the provider curriculum give 10 references for a topic?
- Resource issues
- Staff development offshore
- Offshore accreditation
Conclusion

What do we want?
Good quality TNEP initiatives within a university-wide planning and QA framework

How do we get it?
- Integrate planning and QA
- Build on existing TNEP programs & procedures
- Use standardised procedures university-wide
- Develop whole-of-institution approaches

THANK YOU
Sheep dog trials?