Research and Development Series

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Final Report

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Acknowledgements
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John Fielden, Chems Consulting
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Executive Summary

1. This report has been commissioned by the agencies in Australia and the United Kingdom that are responsible for providing management development and training for university leaders. The aim is to explore what leadership skills are needed to enter into, and operate, successful international partnerships between institutions.

2. The study has involved a literature survey and the completion of six case studies of partnerships involving Australia and the UK with each other, China or Malaysia. The case studies cover a wide range of types, for example:
   - Two instances where the case study is a relationship between a university and a state government.
   - An Australian case study illustrates how the leadership planned the internal and external aspects of disengagement from transnational education operations in several countries and managed to keep the partners content.
   - Two case studies describe setting up offshore campuses with government partners in Malaysia and Australia.

3. International partnerships can be started by: (a) a clear strategic decision at the top of the institution (b) a faculty or departmental level contact that is adopted by top management (c) a government-funded aid link that is developed into a larger collaboration and (d) a central or faculty response to an external invitation.

4. It is often argued that the existence of a clear strategy should not limit the leadership’s flexibility in being responsive to opportunity. Opportunism should not be ruled out. Examples of this happening are shown in two of the case studies.

5. Similar messages recur in the studies concerning the skills and competences needed to manage international partnerships and the same critical success factors are repeated. There is also a close match with the factors and attributes that our literature survey showed were needed for effective leadership. The case studies suggest that there are seven areas where university leaders at institutional level have key roles if international partnerships are to succeed.

6. Setting the vision and strategy (or embracing earlier initiatives and bringing them within the strategy). In three of our cases, the vice-chancellor was the key person in developing and then promoting a new international strategy. The three included establishing an offshore medical campus, cutting down many of the university’s international links to focus only on four large strategic partnerships, and deciding to withdraw altogether from transnational education activities in several countries. In another case, the vice-chancellor’s role was to embrace a bottom-up initiative and build it into a much larger collaboration. In another, it was to respond positively to an unsolicited invitation from an overseas government and establish a campus offshore. A conclusion is that leaders must be able to develop and sustain their own visions, but also know when to support and seize other opportunities that may arise.

7. Appointing able champions to develop and carry out the activity. The selection of the right person to oversee the operation of an overseas project or partnership is crucial. Clearly, it helps if that person is familiar with the country and the culture of the partner institution. He or she must also be able to face both ways within the home institution: toward the vice-chancellor and management team as well as toward the faculty, who will need to be involved.

8. Obtaining support from administrators and faculty members for the partnership. Whether the HEI decides to focus on only few strategic partnerships or divert major resources to an entire offshore campus, many faculty members will feel threatened or worried that their own international connections will be downgraded. They may also be reluctant to embark on a project in a country that they do not know. In such situations, leaders have a significant persuasive task ahead, which cannot be left solely to the champion. Winning over professional support staff is equally important, as they may have to work with counterparts overseas— and, in fact, this may be harder than winning over the academic staff.

9. Providing financial resources from central funds to create or encourage partnerships. In the case studies, we saw examples of leaders using central budgets to pay for academic staff to make exploratory trips to their partner institution; to establish training sessions in the language, culture, and practices of the partner country; to finance extensive due-diligence and professional expenses; and on occasion to pay the costs of staff travel from a poorer institutional partner. In one Australian university, the vice-chancellor allocated A$200,000 to each Faculty to fund travel to the partner university.
10. Managing the involvement of the university’s Governing Body. Alarm bells may ring in the minds of many governors when they think about offshore activities or overseas partnerships. Therefore, the vice-chancellor must take care to involve them in such decisions at an early stage if the project is likely to have a financial or reputational risk. Not all Councils are sympathetic to international ventures and the vice-chancellor will need to brief members regularly and assure them that the project has been thoroughly researched. In one case study that we reviewed, a nervous Board commissioned a special audit of how well the exploratory and due diligence processes had been carried out. And in an Australian case, the chair of the Board visited the country and site of the new campus.

11. Supervising the human-resource implications of offshore activity. Some challenging tasks include deciding whether the international venture will be staffed by the institution’s own faculty members, locally recruited faculty members in the other country, or international faculty members from the global market—and determining how to assure quality if people other than the institution’s staff are involved. Leaders will need to ensure that their institution has employment and reward policies that encourage faculty members from their institutions to teach and conduct research abroad, in the hope that when they return their skills will have been enhanced.

12. Handling cross cultural differences. In all the cases we evaluated—including the one between England and Australia—cross-cultural differences arose. But we found that it is important to distinguish between personality differences, cultural and language differences, and institutional and bureaucratic cultures. The last are the hardest to overcome because the processes that are readily accepted on one side may seem ludicrously bureaucratic to the other. We saw many cases of that, but problems were usually resolved by the exercise of patience and cautious understanding.

13. Leaders must be culturally sensitive and able to handle delicate negotiations in other languages and other environments. It is clear from the case studies that personal characteristics are important at the operational level of partnerships, but they can also be critical at the highest level, as the partnerships might not materialise at all if the chemistry between the champions on both sides is wrong.

14. Having defined the most important skills, we should now qualify their universal relevance. This is because partnerships change over time and each stage calls for a different mix of competences. At the start when the partnership is being developed one set of skills is most valuable; when it is operational, another set applies, but when it has to change or develop (as it always will) a wholly new portfolio of competences may be needed. It would be a mistake therefore to assume that leaders require a common range of skills for all the partnerships they might encounter.
1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale
The Leadership Foundation has commissioned this study because of the growing involvement of senior university staff in international partnerships. Almost all universities (and universities of all kinds) that have prepared internationalisation strategies include overseas partnerships as a key element of their strategy. Partnerships are becoming more strategic and institutional leaders are taking the initiative in selecting a small number of institutions with which they want to be closely allied in both teaching and research activity. In addition, there is a universal thrust to internationalise evident among all the world’s major institutions; not only are governments encouraging this (with support funded through programmes such as INSPIRE) but global corporations are sourcing their research and consultancy from countries outside their home base or from global partnerships of institutions. The search for good partners is also becoming a highly competitive game and in developing countries institutions are becoming more selective in the countries where they look for institutional partners.

1.2 Background to the study
Transnational education (TNE) is a growing part of academic life in the UK. A recent survey, to which 82 per cent of UK HEIs replied, found that some two thirds of institutions had some TNE provision. This amounted to some 276,000 overseas students studying for over 1,500 UK awards. The authors of the TNE study also surveyed the international research collaborations of UK HEIs. As expected, it was harder to obtain data in this area, but there was no doubt as to the scale of the activity; 75 per cent of HEIs had research collaborations funded by grants from home or overseas agencies, while 86 per cent supported research activities from their own funds. International research collaboration was seen as part of an institution’s role and only 28 per cent of those who responded to the survey said that it was not mentioned as an element in their institution’s corporate plan.

These findings emphasise the growing significance of international partnerships, whether for teaching or research. Maintaining an effective partnership with an overseas institution can no longer be left to individual academics to manage, if that institution is seen as a strategic partner. Senior management must be involved for various reasons:

- To ensure that the quality guidelines are followed in both countries.
- To link with the governance structure where there are major risks.
- To monitor all joint activities so that they adapt to each other’s changing needs and priorities (since the reason that some partnerships die away is that the original need has been met).
- To widen the scope of collaboration in line with new programmes, knowledge transfer opportunities or research activities.
- To lend occasional central financial support.

Partnerships are emerging as a fundamental element in universities’ long term strategies and the way that these international partnerships are led and directed can be central to the success of the internationalisation strategy.

1.3 Aims
After discussions between the partners, brief terms of reference for this project were agreed to be:

“to examine the particular leadership, management and governance issues associated with international partnerships and collaborative ventures in order to understand better the capabilities and capacities needed to build, lead and maintain successful collaborations.”

The hope of the partners was that the study could focus on a number of deep, strategic partnerships, since these require the most managerial attention and involve many areas of the institution. Partnerships between individual staff, research groups and even between departments can usually operate without the need for much top level management support.

The Appendix (page 56) provides a fuller version of the aims of the study and the topics that it was planned to cover. It was hoped that the research would answer some of the following questions:

- How important is leadership at various levels to the success of a partnership?
- Can partnerships driven from the top really succeed?
- Is there an ideal management model that can help partnerships to prosper?
- To what extent do institutional leaders become involved

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2 INSPIRE is a British Council funded project that aims to significantly strengthen academic and research partnerships between UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and HEIs in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan.
3 Transnational education (TNE) can be defined as where a higher education institution from one country is actively involved in delivering its programmes in an institution in another country or on its own campus in that country.
4 Drew et al (2008a)
5 McCaig et al (2008b)
in the development of international partnerships and strategic alliances – and at what stages of the partnership development process?

• Can one generalise as to the leadership and management skills that are needed by institutional leaders at each stage, when partnerships cross national and cultural boundaries?

• What technical support skills is it important for leaders to have available (eg: financial due diligence, legal/contractual skills, regulatory information) and how are these usually obtained and used?

• Are there any "soft skills", such as cross-cultural sensitivity or negotiation skills, that are essential for the leaders themselves to master?

• How do institutional and faculty-level leaders involve the academic community in key decisions about strategic partnerships or alliances?

• Are there any good practice lessons for leaders to be learned from successes or failures in the operation of partnerships and alliances?

• How should the Council or Governing Body be involved in the development or operation of strategic partnerships and what skills or competences should they have to be able to exercise proper oversight of such partnerships?

1.4 The project structure

The project has high level support in both partner organisations as shown in the chart below.

In each country, the partner organisation was free to choose appropriate consultants to produce the three case studies. In Australia all three studies were written by Dennis Murray, the Executive Director of the International Education Association of Australia and in the UK all three were written by John Fielden.

1.5 Methodology

The project had the following stages:

• Desk research and literature review.

• Selection of potential case study partnerships in each country and agreement with the institutions concerned.

• Case study visits by the study authors.

• Approval of the case studies by the institutions concerned.

• Partners’ meeting to review all the case studies and agree outline contents of the final report.

• Production of the final report.

• Publication by the partner organisations simultaneously.

Identification of suitable case studies proved to be more difficult than expected. The original objective was to focus on strategic partnerships involving at least one of the partner countries that were centrally driven and involved several academic departments. This, it was surmised, would enable us to focus on partnerships that required input from the vice-chancellor or other leaders in order to bring about a wide range of relationships across the institution. Selecting such "deep" partnerships would give an insight into leadership roles. Unfortunately, we were optimistic regarding the availability of such partnerships; although there has been much talk in the UK about strategic partnerships, they are slow to establish and few are operating in the depth we had anticipated.

Support for the project from partner organisations

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<th>Person responsible</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Case study author</th>
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<td>Australia</td>
<td>LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management, University of Melbourne</td>
<td>Professor Lynn Meek</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Dennis Murray, Executive Director, International Education Association of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Leadership Foundation for Higher Education</td>
<td>Professor Robin Middlehurst</td>
<td>Director of Strategy, Research and International</td>
<td>John Fielden, CHEMS Consulting</td>
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There was equal difficulty in finding mature partnerships between two institutions from the countries. As a result of these problems, the project director decided to adopt a pragmatic approach by taking on a wider range of partnerships representing different stages of the life-cycle and to broaden the scope to cover links between universities and governments. This has meant that the case studies now cover a wide range of types, for example:

- Two instances where the case study is a relationship between a university and a state government.
- An Australian case study illustrates how the leadership planned the internal and external aspects of disengagement from transnational education operations in several countries and managed to keep the partners content.
- Two case studies describe setting up offshore campuses with government partners in Malaysia and Australia.

1.6 Brief outline of the case studies

A very brief summary of each of the case studies is as follows:

1. The University of Newcastle, UK and the Government of the State of Johor, Malaysia:
A major property development agency in the State of Johor persuaded the University to open a medical school as its first anchor tenant. This study reports on the intensive due diligence and planning activities by the university prior to the campus opening in 2011.

2. Curtin University, Australia and Sarawak State Government, Malaysia:
The study describes the process by which in 1998 (at the instigation of the Sarawak State Government) Curtin University agreed to establish a branch campus at Miri in Sarawak, Malaysia. The project sought to achieve mutually beneficial business outcomes.

3. University College London (UCL), UK and the State of South Australia:
The State Government approached UCL in London inviting them to establish a campus in Adelaide. Despite this being against the University’s strategy at the time, UCL went ahead since it offered one of its faculties an opportunity to develop research interests in the region.

4. Monash University, Australia and Sichuan University, China:
A strategic decision was taken by Monash to rationalise its international partnerships and in doing so to give priority focus to four major top-tier university partners. After initial brokering through the Chinese government, in 2007 Monash decided to establish firm and deep links with Sichuan University as one of its four priority partners. The case study describes how this was achieved within Monash.

5. The University of Wolverhampton, UK and Shenzhen Polytechnic, China:
Between 1996 and 2006 the University and the Polytechnic built up a broad partnership involving many departments in student flows to the UK, based on an initiative of a Chinese lecturer. The study describes how the original partnership model is changing due to different needs on both sides.

6. The University of South Australia:
In 2007 a new vice-chancellor decided that TNE was no longer central to the University’s international strategy, for academic and for business reasons. This study describes how the decision to disengage from a large number of existing TNE links was made, communicated internally and externally and then put into practice.

In the table opposite, the case studies are analysed by type.
The case studies form the basis of this report and are drawn on as evidence for the final analysis of leadership, management and governance lessons and skills.

1.7 Coverage in the literature
Given that most international partnerships have been initiated by Australian, American and British universities, it is no surprise that the bulk of the literature reporting and analysing such partnerships derives from the three countries. However, most of the published work is empirical and is devoted to operational issues and good practice suggestions.

There have been three related publications from the American Council on Education (ACE), but only one of them touched on leadership aspects. The first publication “On the Ground overseas” focuses on branch campuses abroad and aims to synthesise lessons learned from 10 case studies of such ventures. Managers from the 10 US institutions involved were then invited to a discussion to agree what had been learned. An interesting section of this study is devoted to a case study of each partnership, one of which is similar to the University College London/State of South Australia study in this report, since it describes the partnership between Carnegie Mellon University and the same State Government.

The second ACE publication is also a good practice document “International partnerships; guidelines for colleges and universities” which describes what has to be done in the various stages involved in setting up a partnership with an overseas university. A large number of agreements and documents relating to partnerships are available in a web-based Appendix to the report. The third, “The Power of partnerships”, resulted from a transatlantic dialogue between members of the ACE and the European Universities Association. The topics included; the motivation to initiate and maintain partnerships, the economics of co-operation, conflicts inherent in co-operation, the role of government and partnerships with the private sector. The meeting discussed the leadership qualities needed in developing partnerships. These were stated as:

- Flexibility and creativity.
- Financial "savvy".
- Cross cultural skills.
- Persuasiveness in driving a partnership forward.
- Patience and perseverance.

The International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) produced a “Guide to Good Practice in Offshore Delivery” which describes many of the practical aspects of working with partners offshore in the delivery of one’s own programmes. The content is comprehensive, covering the business aspects of TNE planning and delivery, including partner selection and partner relationship management, as well as issues such as equivalence and maintaining quality (topics that have been of great concern in Australia). Two chapters are devoted to the learning and teaching experience and the development of academic and professional staff. Leadership issues are not covered directly, but are implicit in the treatment of a range of strategic and management matters. However, leadership is discussed in a joint paper by the IEAA and the European Association for International Education in 2009 called “Models
of Leadership in international education in Europe and Australia”.

In the United Kingdom the partnership and internationalisation literature has been largely descriptive with an emphasis on describing good practice in areas such as developing internationalisation strategies (of which partnerships are a key part), and managing the process of internationalisation within an institution. A further study reviewed the international partnerships of the members of the Million+ mission group and analysed some of the reasons for success. However, yet again the specific leadership qualities needed in the leadership of the partnerships were not covered.

The origins of UK HEIs’ partnerships with Chinese and Indian institutions were explored in a recent study for the UK Higher Education International Unit and the Government Office for Science. They confirmed that there was a mixed picture. The majority of links were developed by individuals. “There was no particular encouragement or special support from the university. “I set up the collaboration on my own, but so do most people” said one interviewee. However, this position was seen to be changing with the emergence of a strategic top down approach where the leadership was committing time and resources to the development, co-ordination and overall institutional management of research and teaching partnerships.

The growing literature on leadership in higher education has been summarised and analysed by Bryman for the Leadership Foundation. The study reviews the key publications of the last 40 years in the search for some conclusions on what qualities are required to be an effective leader. He reaches a challenging conclusion “Simple nostrums that abound in popular leadership writings which valorise leadership over management or transformational over transactional leadership or which extol the virtues of dispersed leadership are too simple to provide much value in the higher education context”.

In all the literature on university leadership reviewed by Bryman there is no specific mention of international activity or international partnerships as a focus for leadership skills or as an area where extra competences may be needed. However, the various lists of leadership qualities produced by authors such as Kouzes and Posner ring true when reading some of the case studies in this report.

**Leadership factors that work well (Kouzes and Posner 2003)**

- Modelling the way – leading by example.
- Inspiring a shared vision – developing a vision and enlisting the commitment of others.
- Challenging the process – looking for opportunities to improve.
- Enabling others to act – empowering others.
- Encouraging the heart – recognising and celebrating individuals’ contributions.

In the same way we can recognise in the case studies the tasks of a top leader that Locke has identified and these tie in well with the general findings of Bryman:

**Locke’s tasks of a top leader**

- Vision – what the organisation should be like.
- Core Values – what the organisation should be.
- Structuring – structuring to support change.
- Selection and training – recruiting appropriate people.
- Motivating employees – role modelling, empowerment, recognition, rewards etc.
- Communicating – cultivating communication throughout the organisation.
- Team building
- Promoting change

Source: Cited in Bryman (2009), page 67.

In Section 3 of this report (page 43) we summarise the leadership roles needed to make effective international partnerships. There is a good fit with both Locke and Kouzes and Posner in terms of the qualities and tasks that they list; however one role is rarely mentioned in the leadership literature and that is the task of working with the University Council and the governance structure. This could be incorporated in the general rubrics of communications and enlisting commitment, but the Governing Body has a particular significance in the case of large international partnerships because of the financial and reputational risks and its responsibility for monitoring in that area. The general importance of relationships with governors has been acknowledged by Breakwell and Tytherleigh in their analysis of interviews with UK vice-chancellors on their competences and roles; the authors wrote “managing the relationship with the chair of the governing body properly was fundamentally important to the efficient functioning of the institution”.

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13 See Middlehurst and Woodfield (2007); Fielden (2008); Fielden (2009).
15 Technopolis (2008).
16 Bryman (2009).
18 Locke (2003).
Breakwell and Tytherleigh asked a sample of vice-chancellors what characteristics they thought were important to them as leaders and the following were listed, in order of importance:

1. Academic credibility
2. Financial awareness
3. Adaptability
4. Confidence
5. Strong personality
6. Setting and maintaining a vision

It is striking that financial capability and business focus is high on the list. While this may be specific to the UK, where the search for cost reductions and alternative sources of income are regular agenda items, it is also a key element of developing successful international partnerships and the issue arises in two of the case studies. The other striking point is that “setting and maintaining a vision” is ranked so low on this list. As we shall see in the case studies, there are four impressive examples where the vice-chancellor’s vision drove substantial partnership change.
Introduction: background to the project, its history and origins.

The University of Newcastle is a large civic university in the north east of England. It was established as an independent university in 1963, having previously been affiliated with the University of Durham. It has over 20,000 students and is a member of the Russell Group of research-intensive universities. The university has a reputation for outstanding research and in the last UK research assessment exercise 58% of its research output was deemed to be internationally excellent. The university is very popular with students as the City of Newcastle offers an exciting range of attractions. There are three large faculties and one of them, the Faculty of Medical Sciences, is the subject of this study; it undertakes stem cell research and is the third most academically selective medical school after Oxford and Cambridge.

In December 2004 a scout from a large Malaysian conglomerate visited the UK to investigate the possibility of attracting universities onto a major development at Nusajaya in the State of Johor opposite Singapore. The developer was seeking a major British institution to be the anchor tenant of an EduCity at the edge of a very large scale development (about twice the size of Singapore). The scout made a cold call on the University of Newcastle and met Professor Jordan, then the Dean for Undergraduate Studies of the Medical Sciences Faculty, and subsequently Dean of International Medical Education.

At the time the University’s international strategy was to focus on South East Asia and to create several of what are now called “large flags” in selected countries. One other such flag, a collaboration with Ngee Ann Polytechnic in Singapore for marine technology, was being discussed at the time. While these ventures need to break even, the primary aim of establishing these flags was not financial – they were driven more by the University’s wish to build up its reputation globally. They were also centred deliberately on those disciplines where the university was internationally well known.

The cold call was surprisingly successful, since Professor Jordan passed on the idea to the then vice-chancellor, who authorised a visit to Malaysia to meet the Board of the conglomerate, United Engineers Malaysia (UEM). As these exploratory discussions went well, Professor Jordan was funded to make several more journeys in 2005 to develop the project further to a “proof of concept stage”. His aim was to house a new campus in Malaysia which would deliver Newcastle’s five-year Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) programme to an annual intake of 180 students.

No Malaysian university was involved; discussions were with the Ministries of Higher Education and Health, UEM and the company subsequently formed to undertake the major development project at Nusajaya. A year after the first approach the outline project was sufficiently developed to be presented to the University’s Executive Board. The Board’s recommendation to develop and test the business case and carry out a thorough risk analysis was passed to the University Council in December 2005 and approved. Senate’s approval followed five months later in May 2006.

The project is strictly speaking not a partnership, since it involves the creation of an independent campus wholly operated by the University of Newcastle. However, in order to provide students with the necessary clinical experience and training, very close working is required with the hospitals in Johor and with the national authorities in health. Thus, the project has been called “a partnership with Malaysia” rather than with any institution or corporation.

From 2006 to 2008, there was an active programme of due diligence, legal, financial and tax consultations and reviews of the quality assurance implications with the respective authorities in the two countries. An army of professional advisers and consultants was employed in this preparatory period, including:

- Lawyers in the UK to evaluate the options for the legal and corporate structures in both countries.
- Lawyers in Malaysia to assess the regulatory environment and advise on the creation of appropriate Malaysian corporate vehicles. The lawyers also undertook due diligence on Iskandar Investment Berhad, the potential partner of the University.
- Tax consultants in both countries to review the implications of operating as a not-for-profit entity so as to maximise tax efficiency and ensure compliance with the requirements of both the Malaysian and UK tax jurisdictions.

Case Study 1

The University of Newcastle (NUMed), UK and the State of Johor, Malaysia

By John Fielden, CHEMS Consulting
• Market research on the demand for UK medical qualifications from potential Malaysian students, and from the wider region.
• Physical planners and architects to work with the developer and provide a specification of the buildings and equipment required. At a later stage their role would be to vet all the construction and landscape drawings, and to monitor the build progress.
• Quantity surveyors to review the proposed construction costs.
• Malaysian state owned body (MARA) to market, recruit, and sponsor Malaysian students in the initial years.

The University had to master the regulatory environment in Malaysia for establishing a private higher education institution (through the creation of a Malaysian company) and for the delivery of medical education. Two ministries were therefore involved as well as the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) and the Foreign Investment Committee. None of these processes could be completed until negotiations with the landowner and developer relating to the construction of the campus had been finalised.

Finally, in November 2008, after three years development work, the University Council approved the completion of a 30-year agreement with Iskandar Investment Bhd (IIB) to design, build, lease, and then transfer a campus for NUMed. The project fitted well with the University’s published vision for global activities combined with regional roots in the UK and is an important part of its international strategy

Newcastle’s Council determined at the outset that the University could not invest large capital sums ‘up front’ in the project and negotiated hard with SJIC and its successor IIB to this effect. As the University was the “anchor tenant” in the EduCity development (and the Malaysians were keen to have them), it was in a strong negotiating position. Thus, a beneficial but fair lease was agreed under which after 30 years the campus can be transferred to the University for an agreed amount.

In the initial Proof of Concept phase some research was carried out into how other offshore campuses in Malaysia had fared in order to see what lessons could be learned. Thus visits were made to Monash University Sunway Campus and to the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus. The experience of the University of Sheffield with an abortive medical school project in Ipoh which collapsed in 1998, was also explored.21

Extensive professional discussions have been required. In the UK the General Medical Council (GMC) has provided guidance on overseas delivery of UK medical education to ensure that its requirement of meeting the standards set in Tomorrow’s Doctors will be followed. In Malaysia the MMC and the MQA are also accrediting the medical programme. One issue still to be resolved is how these external quality assurance processes will operate in practice. Since the MBBS award will be from Newcastle, there will be no difference from the Newcastle MBBS in the admissions criteria, programme aims, outcomes and assessment. The Board of Studies of the Medical School will oversee the delivery of the programme at NUMed and it will be subject to the same internal quality assurance arrangements at faculty and institutional levels as that in Newcastle. External examiners will play the same role as they do with the Newcastle MBBS and will report through the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to the Newcastle Board of Medical Studies. The CEO of NUMed will be responsible for quality management.

The stages relating to the establishment of the campus are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages relating to the establishment of the campus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 2006</td>
<td>Signing a memorandum of intent with UEM Land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2007</td>
<td>A collaborative agreement with a successor body to UEM Land, South Johor Investment Corporation.(SJIC).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2007</td>
<td>Council agrees to draft heads of terms for a build, lease, transfer contract with SJIC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2008</td>
<td>Negotiated 30 year lease considered by University Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2008</td>
<td>Lease signed with Iskandar Investment Berhad (IIB), the new identity for SJIC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2009</td>
<td>Construction of the NUMed campus begins with a scheduled completion date of May 2011, when it is due to be handed over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2011</td>
<td>Students will enrol on the campus in September 2011.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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21 This medical school project (called the Asean Sheffield Medical College) was very differently structured and involved the University taking a 20% stake in a company with a private Malaysian company contributing 80%. This company withdrew for financial reasons, causing the project to collapse while over 100 Malaysian preclinical students were still undertaking their first two years in Sheffield. The Times Higher reported that the University had lost at least £2 million (equivalent to $A3.3 million or MR9.7 million). (9th November 1998).
**General description of the project now**

The project is at a stage where construction is underway and due for completion in 15 month's time. However, the first cohort of students who will occupy the campus are already in Newcastle in the first stage of a two year programme in the Medical Sciences Faculty. It was hoped that 40 would be enrolled in the first year, but due to late approval by the Ministry of Higher Education of the company’s registration the marketing contract with MARA in Malaysia was only able to recruit 25 to the first year. It is planned that 40 are recruited to start in Newcastle in the 2010-11 year and thereafter numbers will gradually increase to a target intake of 180. The first two Newcastle cohorts will return to Malaysia to study for the clinical years three to five of the MBBS in Johor in 2011 and 2012 respectively.

Despite the radical nature of the venture, it has considerable support from the academic staff in the Medical Sciences Faculty and a first trawl of Newcastle-based academic staff who might be interested in participating in Malaysia has elicited 48 interested responses. This has been due both to good internal communications about the project and to the Faculty’s confidence in the CEO because of his past track record of successes internationally.

When the project is fully operational with a student enrolment of about 1,000 the intent is to have a staff complement of 125 FTE (full time equivalent) in Malaysia, adopting a staff student ratio that has been agreed with the Malaysian authorities. The plan is to have both resident faculty and a number of visiting international faculty from Newcastle. The time inputs of the latter are expected to provide about 10 per cent of the FTE. In addition, clinical staff from partner hospitals in Johor will be engaged as sessional academic staff.

The medical school will be operated by a specially formed Malaysian company, NUMed Malaysia Sdn Bhd, in which the University has invested 500,000 shares. The University had to obtain special dispensation from the usual regulations concerning foreign ownership of companies; these would normally expect Malaysian shareholders to be in the majority. In the case of NUMed Malaysia Newcastle University is a 100 per cent shareholder. The Company has held regular Board meetings since its formation and it receives reports and budgets from the Faculty’s administration which manages the NUMed cost centre.

The management structure of NUMed is centred on the CEO and a Chief Operating Officer (COO) who will be based in Malaysia from April 2010 onwards. They will be followed by a Dean of Clinical Affairs, academic subject specialists and an administrative cadre in 2011. By the time the campus opens there will also be a Dean of Academic Affairs and a Dean of Student Affairs on site. Staff working on the campus will be either on secondment, and remain employed by Newcastle, or will be working wholly for the Malaysian company.

Work is currently underway in Newcastle developing the terms and conditions of service for all the categories of staff that will be involved. The FTE numbers for staff outlined in the business case were significant:

- 6 senior academic officers.
- 57 locally employed academic staff.
- 40 locally employed part time clinical staff.
- 10 visiting academic staff from Newcastle.
- 30 support staff.

Market research was needed to confirm that local academic staff of the right quality were available in Malaysia and would be attracted to work on the project. Financial projections have assumed that staff would be paid at the top end of local salary ranges. Consultants in Malaysia have now been commissioned to advise the University’s Human Resources department on appropriate pay and conditions and the Iskandar Regional Development Authority is also helping NUMed to develop appropriate employment policies and packages. Their support and advice is also needed for issues such as work permits and liability to local taxes.

It is essential that NUMed has close working links with Malaysian healthcare providers and, to this end, staff members from the faculty have been visiting the hospitals in the region from an early stage and meeting the clinical staff who are likely to be involved with NUMed students. Mechanisms for local co-ordination and management of the clinical phase of training are being developed. There will be two levels:

- A national Joint Committee chaired by the Deputy Director General of Health (Medicine) in the Ministry will monitor NUMed’s activities from the perspective of national policies on health.
- A joint Management Committee at State level will be created, chaired by the Health Director of the State of Johor, to oversee the implementation.

Once the MBBS is underway in Malaysia, the University plans to introduce further undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in the biomedical sciences. The first of these, a biomedical science undergraduate programme, could start in Johor as early as 2012.
Comment on the leadership skills and competences required.

The Faculty was very fortunate in having an experienced senior staff member willing to take the initiative and develop the project. He was responsible for persuading the University to respond positively to the first approach from Malaysia and has been wholly committed to the project ever since. His international experience, project management and communication skills have ensured that the first phases have progressed extremely well.

However, even an experienced international hand can face difficulties due to differences in behaviour and culture. Despite having several professional advisers in Malaysia the project manager found himself surprised at the style of bureaucracy, the lack of co-ordination between ministries and agencies and the sudden emergence of new bureaucratic hurdles that had not been foreseen and were not known about. For example, it emerged at a late stage that his appointment as CEO of a Malaysian company required official approval. It was also discovered that the Malaysian company would need a licence to recruit any international students. The lesson here is to expect delays and to be prepared for unforeseen events.

The University was ready to call on specialists and professionals where it lacked the necessary skills and the very large sum of £700,000 has been disbursed largely on such fees and staff travel to Malaysia.

Given the complexity of the legal and political infrastructure in Malaysia, a major challenge has been to communicate what has been happening to members of the Faculty in Newcastle so that they are kept up to date. Communication skills have been at the fore and the CEO has used films and photographs of Malaysian hospital facilities to show academic colleagues what conditions are like. These will play a major part in the next phase when Newcastle staff are invited to participate in the delivery of the programmes on the NUMed campus.

How the project was managed

At the start of the project the work was undertaken by a small project team that reported directly to the vice-chancellor and the University’s Executive Board. However, as the scale of the venture grew, so did the size of the Management Team and the involvement from the faculty and administrative staff of all kinds. At present, strategic issues are handled at University level by a Steering Committee chaired by the pro-vice-chancellor (Medical Sciences) and the CEO of NUMed is directly accountable to him. The Management Team has met on a weekly basis during the present construction phase.

The project has overlapped the tenure of two vice-chancellors, but both have been very supportive and enthusiastic. In addition, a large number of the pro-vice-chancellors (PVCs) have a professional role in the project (PVC Teaching and Learning, PVC Medical Sciences, PVC Planning and Resources). This has required the Project Manager/Chief Executive Officer to be able to work across internal organisational boundaries and responsibilities in achieving his goals.

The extent of high level commitment to the project was evidenced by successive decisions to provide central pump priming funds between 2006 and 2009 for the studies, travel and professional fees required. In all, some £700,000 was made available in this way. However since September 2009, the budget and the financial burden has become the responsibility of the Faculty which is expected to underpin the financial risk of the project from its internal resources from that date onwards.

The University Council has been involved with the project almost since it began and has received regular progress reports as well as reports on the Board meetings of the Malaysian company. It approved the Proof of Concept paper as a way forward; it authorised the creation of the Malaysian subsidiary company; it approved a decision to proceed for the benefit of the Malaysian government and it authorised the signature of the lease with IIB. Its Audit Committee authorised an internal audit report into the way the project was managed.

Extensive analysis of the potential risks was carried out at an early stage in 2005 and is continuing. Because this process was relatively unfamiliar, a brainstorming exercise was carried out with all the key players to identify and then prioritise the key risks in November 2007. The resulting risks are shown in a formal Risk Register which is updated and reviewed regularly. In September 2008 for example 10 of the 16 key risks were classified as Amber while the remainder were Green. The highest ranking risks were:

- Failure to execute appropriate and robust succession strategy for top team members.
- Failure to attract, develop and retain required numbers of local staff of sufficient quality.
- Failure to attract required numbers and quality of visiting overseas academics.
- Failure to control expenditure.
- Failure of other Newcastle international projects which might damage NUMed’s reputation by association.
- Staff time spent on NUMed causes capacity issues in the Faculty of Medical Sciences and teaching quality suffers.
In 2009 the University’s Internal Audit department undertook an audit of the project for the University Council with the aim of assessing whether appropriate processes and governance arrangements had been put in place to help to ensure that the project was successful. Their report was extremely comprehensive and positive in its conclusions by giving the University the highest level of assurance possible that the project was working effectively and was well controlled.

**Evaluation**

It is clearly too early to say whether the project will be a success. However, one can review it in the context of good management practice in planning and developing an overseas partnership. Building on his experience in the project, the CEO has summarised what he believes to be the requirements for success in such a situation. He divides these into internal and external factors.

**Internal factors**

- The institution must be able to recognise an opportunity and willing to act on it quickly.
- It will then need to carry out thorough market research and explore case studies of similar ventures to see what went wrong and what went right.
- Based on this, a clear business case has to be made which shows how the project fits with the institutional mission.
- Meanwhile, internal support from top management and project champions needs to be nurtured and developed through regular information on how the project is developing.
- Subsequently, internal buy-in needs to be secured from the subject specialists and administrators who will deliver the programmes.

**External factors**

- Ensuring that there is mutual benefit with the partner organisation.
- An appreciation of the aspirations of the host country.
- Institutional willingness to take risks but also being healthily sceptic through sound risk management processes.
- Obtaining buy-in from a wide range of external stakeholders.
- The use of extensive professional and expert advice in both countries.

In the same workshop presentation the NUMed CEO outlined a list of lessons learned which he has called “The 15 ‘Musts’”. These are outlined below and have widespread application.

**Lessons learned – the 15 ‘Musts’**

1. Due diligence is necessary at all times.
2. Understand risks at every stage and respond.
3. Do not over-delegate, but define responsibilities. Clear lines of responsibility and accountability are required at all times.
4. Communicate well and visit the partner country often.
5. Recognise that political support does not remove the need to follow and work through the usual systems and procedures.
6. An early engagement with the professional and regulatory bodies in both countries is essential.
7. One must expect and respect cultural differences and anticipate misunderstandings, as each national context will be different.
8. Patience is essential. Allow enough time (and then double it!).
9. Make realistic forecasts of the income and expenditure.
10. Review and revise plans, budgets and timetables regularly as part of good project management.
11. Maintain transparency in all activities.
12. Ensure that appropriate legal agreements are in place between all stakeholders.
13. Keep complete control of quality assurance and remember the project aims and purpose.
14. The venture must be owned and embedded within the institution at all levels.
15. Leadership is vital, but do not rely wholly on one individual. Succession planning and backfill must be built in to the planning from the start.

Source: Professor RK Jordan, CEO Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia with acknowledgement to Carolyn Campbell, QAA.

The processes and controls over project decisions and expenditure have been well described in the report of the Internal Auditors which praised them for their effectiveness and for being developed carefully. The audit report also referred to the key factor behind the successful work so far – “the considerable experience, knowledge and competence of key staff” involved, although the report rightly pointed out the risk of reliance on these crucial individuals. The auditors were also impressed by the “ready availability of clear and comprehensive documentation” and the sensible way that the University’s regulations had been adhered to where they were relevant.

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24 In a paper presented to a workshop on international partnerships in December 2009, organised by the British Council.
25 The CEO acknowledges the work of Carolyn Campbell of the QAA, who first described “The 11 Musts”, deriving from the Audit of Overseas Provision India: Overview Report, July 2009. From Newcastle’s experience this original list has been extended to “The 15 Musts”.
Conclusions
The University's objectives in creating NUMed are to build its reputation in Malaysia as a quality provider and to extend its global footprint. The venture will be ‘not-for-profit’ aimed at meeting the medical and clinical needs of the state of Johor and of Malaysia in some specialist areas. It also aims to provide a nexus for the University's other interests in the region.

This case study is an example of a well planned and well managed overseas development. The process described above has taken just over five years from the initial approach from Malaysia to the present (January 2010) and there is a further 20 months work ahead before the campus is fully operational. The University has been very fortunate in the quality of the staff managing the exercise and in the fact that they have formed a stable team and the two key players are willing to relocate to Johor.
Institutional profile of Curtin
Curtin University of Technology was established in January 1987 and grew out of the Perth Technical School and the Western Australian Institute of Technology. It is Western Australia’s third university and Australia’s first university of technology. Curtin is typical of the “third generation” Australian universities in experiencing very rapid enrolment growth and capital investment. Student numbers grew from 13,000 in 1987 to 41,000 in 2007. Staff numbers doubled in that period to approximately 3,000. Curtin is now a large multi-campus university with a metropolitan, regional and international presence offering a wide spectrum of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and with a significant international research profile.

From the time of its elevation to university status in 1987 Curtin has been continually building and refining its infrastructure “in a game of catch up to meet the requirements of ever-growing numbers of students and staff”[27]. Growth in international student numbers was an important part of its planning and supported ongoing university development. In 2008 Curtin had 12,033 international students representing 29 per cent of the student population, the third largest international student population in Australia[28]. Curtin is a member of the Australian Technology Network. In 2008, it was the fifth largest university in Australia and the third largest provider of transnational education of the Australian universities.

Internationalisation at Curtin
Curtin has had a longstanding interest in internationalisation. The University’s international activities over more than 20 years are reflected in a series of internationalisation plans going back to the early-mid 1990s, all of which emphasise aspects beyond international student recruitment. These included such objectives as internationalising the curriculum and research, staff exchange, student mobility and cultural variety.

Through various iterations these plans demonstrate increasing sophistication in the University’s understanding and application of internationalisation as a concept. Curtin moved at an early stage to develop an offshore presence in Asia. Curtin’s first offshore venture was in 1985 in Hong Kong and its first venture in Malaysia dates from 1993. The University currently operates two main offshore models, namely with local partners who offer all or part of programmes on Curtin’s behalf and via two Curtin campuses, in Sarawak, Malaysia (1999) and in Singapore (2008).

The Curtin, Sarawak project
In 1998, the Sarawak State Government invited Curtin to establish a university in Miri, Sarawak on the north-west coast of East Malaysia. The partnership which followed is a Joint Venture between Curtin and Curtin (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd. which owns and operates the Curtin Sarawak campus. Curtin Sarawak was Curtin’s first offshore campus and the first foreign university campus to be set up in East Malaysia. Campus operations started in February 1999.

Curtin (Malaysia) Sdn.Bhd. is a privately owned company whose shareholders are the Sarawak State Government and local Sarawak business. The company is responsible for the physical facilities and the campus operations, including staffing, finances, marketing and advertising. Curtin is responsible for all academic matters. Curtin Sarawak functions as a division of Curtin, and is headed by a pro-vice-chancellor. All academic staff employed at Curtin Sarawak must be approved by the pro-vice-chancellor on behalf of Curtin.
Decision making processes in the development of the project

While, anecdotally, the story is told of the day a land developer from Miri requested an appointment with the vice-chancellor and proposed establishing a college on his land offering a range of Curtin courses, “the decision to have a university campus in Miri has a much longer history based in Malaysian development plans”. There was a strong culture and tradition in Curtin of supporting access to higher education amongst the communities in Malaysia, including Sarawak, and a desire amongst the leaders of Miri to provide higher education for Miri residents without their having to leave Sarawak to study, either elsewhere in Malaysia or overseas.

The offer by the Miri based developer to build a campus from his own resources and to obtain all the required Malaysian Ministry of Education approvals had sufficient merit for it to be taken seriously by Curtin's vice-chancellor and to be given strong consideration by the University.

After two in depth exploratory meetings in February 1998, the vice-chancellor saw sufficient merit in the idea warrant further investigation. The University began to articulate some basic conditions for the potential teaching facility. At this stage the initiative was envisaged as a small college.

The pace of decision making over the remainder of 1998 was brisk, but different for the two partners. As one Curtin senior manager commented: “The Sarawak side made it happen quickly, Curtin had to follow through”. On the Malaysian side, the land developer quickly gained the support of the Miri local government and through them senior members of the Sarawak State Government, who immediately looked beyond the college proposal, envisaging the establishment of a university.

On the Curtin side, the pace of decision making was much more cautious and risk averse. Clear risk management processes were seen as necessary for University commitment and if final Curtin Council approval was to be gained. The project was considered in the light of Curtin's prior experience offering two well-established twinning programmes in peninsula Malaysia. However, an offshore campus was a totally different proposition given that Australian universities had very limited experience in their establishment and management. There were only two examples at that time, one of which was perceived as being unsuccessful both financially and educationally.

Risk management strategies were identified, ensuring any campus established would be consistent with Curtin's academic standards and would not detract from Curtin's positive image and reputation in Asia. By March a figure of $A46.5 million had been identified by Curtin as necessary to establish a campus of 4,000 students involving health, engineering, computer science, art and design, business and language courses.

The positive benefits that could flow to Curtin were also being explored – including the prestige of being the first foreign private university in East Malaysia, the opportunity for staff and student exchange along with study abroad opportunities for international students, and the chance for Sarawak students to undertake part of their studies at Curtin in Perth, all of which would have financial as well as education benefits.

Curtin’s Council noted these factors and authorised discussions in Miri. After a series of visits to Miri A Letter of Intent was then signed by the University and the land developer’s private company, to progress discussions further with the objective of offering the first programmes in February 1999.

Momentum increased. In April the focus of efforts to establish a branch campus shifted to the Sarawak State Government, after consideration of the proposal by the Sarawak Chief Minister. His intervention shifted the basis of discussions, accelerated capital input into the project and ultimately helped shape the formal Malaysian partnership arrangement and structure used to operate the project. State Government land for establishment of a campus would be available at Lutong, near Miri, and start up capital for the project could be provided through State statutory authorities.

During a visit to Miri by the Curtin vice-chancellor, a formal MoU was signed between Curtin and the Sarawak State Government. It set out four conditions for the initiative to proceed – ensuring formal Malaysian Government approvals; making necessary amendments to the Curtin University of Technology Act; obtaining the approval of the Western Australian Minister of Education; and establishing a mutually agreed upon corporate and governance structure for the branch campus.

On his return, the vice-chancellor reported developments to the May 1999 Council meeting, after which it approved ongoing negotiations provided the proposal was linked to the University’s strategic plans and no legal documentation was yet signed.

29 The author has drawn substantially on Sheehy, F. (2009) From Perth to Miri: A Journey of Transformation, for this section, supplemented by interview of senior Curtin staff.

30 These were Sydney and Monash. The Sydney one closed down after a few years.

31 Equivalent to £28.2 million or MR136.4 million.
At this point, the Council designated the Deputy Vice-Chancellor International (DVCI) responsible for developing the proposal and undertaking negotiation with the Sarawak partner. In June the DVCI recommended to Council a risk-averse strategy in proceeding but also indicated that the greatest risk would be in not securing Curtin’s long-term future in the Malaysian market. Serious consideration therefore needed to be given to winning approval for a campus in Malaysia.

A crucial “relationship and goodwill building” visit to Perth occurred in September involving the Deputy Chief Minister of Sarawak, Tan Sri Dr Chan, accompanied by several Sarawak State Government Ministers and members of the Miri community, who met with the Curtin chancellor, vice-chancellor and senior staff. The role of the Curtin Council at this point was crucial. According to the vice-chancellor, the chancellor “quickly grasped the significance of the opportunity and was a major influence in supporting the case put to Curtin Council that then allowed courses to begin in temporary facilities”.

In October a full draft business and financial plan was presented to Council. Council was asked to approve the offering of Curtin programmes at Miri under twinning-style arrangements with the Sarawak consortium, starting in February 1999, and to approve the drawing up of a contract for the establishment of a branch campus in Miri.

There was some hesitancy at this point on the part of some Council members. One of them commented later: “some felt that the decision-making was being rushed for a venture that was perceived to be a big step into the unknown. As the majority of community-appointed members of Curtin Council came from business and accounting backgrounds, the reservations they were expressing reflected legitimate commercial concerns, particularly as the arrangements concerned a largely unknown offshore partner”.

With four months to go to the proposed starting date, the Council’s request for more detail before any more commitments were made led to the establishment of a Miri Working Party (WP) comprising the Curtin DVCI, executive deans and branch directors and staff from the teaching divisions, finance and other administrative areas. The WP was charged with developing a full academic plan.

A fundamental issue was the initial decision to start in a temporary campus delivering only intensive English, foundation engineering and business programmes with students transferring to the main Perth campus for degree completion. The view was that degree studies should not begin in Miri until the permanent Miri campus was completed. However, this was not acceptable to the Miri interests as issuing of the licence to develop a branch campus was based on the availability of degree programmes.

A further complication arose when Curtin’s existing Malaysian partners, who understandably felt threatened by the new campus, were concerned that degree launched at Miri would directly compete with Curtin courses offered at the partners’ sites in Kuala Lumpur. Ultimately, Curtin management made the decision that momentum would be lost if it offered only foundation programmes in 1999 and that some degree programmes should also be offered. A major point of issue was the Curtin equity in the project, given the size of the investment expected by the Malaysian Federal Government – MR350 million represented a significant start up contribution from shareholders. Curtin was not prepared to make any commitments from its resources. Curtin leadership proposed an alternative method of equity contribution involving reinvestment of royalties from intellectual property rights. This was accepted and fleshed out in detail in Joint Venture Agreement negotiations.

The other critical issue was the naming of the temporary site at Riam Road School. Initially, Curtin viewed this as a site to be known as Curtin International College as it would be operating at a lower level than a university. The Malaysian partners, however, were adamant that for legal reasons and for reasons of demonstrated commitment by Curtin, the facility be known from the outset as Curtin University of Technology. The University subsequently agreed to allow the Curtin name and logo to be used with the proviso that the agreement would lapse if the permanent campus was not ready in three years.

At this point the chancellor publicly stated to the local media that Curtin was firmly committed to the project and that operations would commence in February 2000. At this stage the Curtin Council was still to give final approval. “This statement clearly indicated that the chancellor was convinced of the efficacy of the proposal”.

Two crucial University appointments were then made by Curtin. A senior university resources manager was appointed as the Curtin Sarawak administration director and executive officer to the Miri Working Party. At the same time the vice-chancellor appointed as Sarawak Academic Director a senior Curtin academic staff member with substantial experience in Malaysia and Indonesia.
After a formal ceremony in Kuala Lumpur at which the Malaysian Ministry of Education invited Curtin to establish the campus, the Protem (Provisional) Council and University representatives agreed on two major conditions required for final Curtin Council approval – that the campus governance structure would give Curtin full academic control and that the University would have full control over key administrative appointments. The Protem Council then travelled to Perth to meet with the University Council to settle any outstanding issues and to reinforce the strong links developed between the partners.

The legal requirements for Curtin to operate a campus were clear. Curtin could not establish a campus in its own right and would need to contract with an independent Malaysian company. Because of this a draft Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) and a newly devised Curtin Statute had to be considered by a special Council meeting.

The JVA and the new governance and management structures it put in place have guided the development of the campus and the partnership ever since. While there have been many issues between the partners over the years requiring consideration, negotiation and resolution, the framework set up, and the relationship developed between the two partners in the decision year of 1998 laid down the basis for the continuing development and the ongoing success of the project.

Evaluation of the project’s success
The evidence of success is manifest, through both external and internal evaluation, audit and review of the project. External views of the project are highly positive and complimentary. Two audits of the partnership have occurred through the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) in 2002 and 2009. In 2002 AUQA formally commended Curtin for “the very thorough, rigorous and effective process of quality assurance in place in relation to courses offered overseas, noting the smooth translation of Curtin’s policies and procedures to the overseas campus, the effective linking in of the venture to the Curtin strategic plan, the establishment of community links and the beginning of the development of the research programme.” AUQA made only one recommendation for improvement, “that Curtin provides centrally coordinated induction and support for all staff teaching overseas”.

In its 2009 audit, AUQA commended Curtin “for the conceptualisation, establishment and successful development of the Curtin Sarawak Campus”. AUQA particularly commended Curtin for its vision in establishing the Curtin Sarawak Campus, the successful development of the Campus and its contribution to the region, the collaborative model, and the measured increase in autonomy. AUQA also noted that Curtin has been active and modestly successful in developing the research record at Curtin Sarawak. Finally the AUQA report commented on the Campus’s significant attention to community engagement through the collaboration with local schools, charitable organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The University’s own current assessment of the project adds a further dimension. There is widespread agreement within Curtin, at all levels, about the benefits of the project. “Everyone sees it as a success”. There is an equal sharing of risks and benefits. While from time to time there are communication and quality issues, there is an “ongoing commitment on both sides to the partnership. We are continuing to learn from each other”. Curtin is increasingly relaxed in devolving many administrative and academic responsibilities to Curtin Sarawak, within the agreed quality frameworks. One senior Curtin staff member commented “Curtin Sarawak is actually ahead of us on some quality assurance matters”.

The financial benefits to Curtin have been largely in terms of teaching, including through the transfer of regular cohorts of students to Curtin in Australia under faculty based twinning arrangements and through the advanced training of Curtin Sarawak staff, many on scholarships funded by the Malaysian campus.

But there is also an increasing return from growing research partnerships. There are growing relationships across a range of Sarawak industries, and both partners are successfully and increasingly winning research funds from the Malaysian Ministry of Science and other sources. “We are successfully becoming part of the local community in terms of research and consulting – in timber, agricultural products, CO2 emissions – and we are successfully gaining research support”. “There are opportunities in consulting work for research and training and we need to work more on this”. Some Curtin staff acknowledge that the research activity perhaps “needs more focus around what we are both good at, in niche areas such as sustainable development”. But it is generally agreed that Sarawak based research activities “line up with the Curtin strategic research plan”.

While Curtin staff acknowledge that there are occasional differences in cultural understanding, values and the alignment of business and political objectives, and that these matters frequently need attending to, the early groundwork established for open communication and trust has allowed the majority of issues to be resolved satisfactorily. “Communications and negotiations are friendly and based on a great deal of sociability built up between us over the years, including a shared sense of humour over many matters. We
are able to successfully negotiate any ‘nasties’ and language is not a real issue either’. Overall, however, there is no serious doubt that the project has been outstandingly successful.

The only remaining question about Miri is “where do we go from here?”. In the words of a current senior manager “The project has consolidated nicely and there are still things to do for it to grow and develop. But we have possibly reached a plateau. The challenge will be to see if we can successfully take the partnership and the project to the next level”.

Leadership and management skills and competencies
The Curtin-Curtin (Sarawak) partnership developed in less than ideal circumstances, particularly with severe time pressures which must have been felt to be ‘white hot’ by the participants. All the good practice literature on effective partnerships (and the lessons recorded earlier in the NUMed case study) recommends a much more measured approach to identifying, assessing and establishing successful partnerships than occurred between Curtin and Curtin (Sarawak). As Curtin’s current vice-chancellor and Acting Deputy vice-chancellor International at Curtin in 1999 said, “the project probably wouldn’t have been approved if all the preliminaries had been handled hyper-rationally in advance”. Despite all this, the project has been outstandingly successful. Why is this?

The following analysis concentrates on the original decision-making processes since it is clear that the thoughtful, carefully engineered and effectively negotiated up front decisions provided the basis for subsequent success. Continuing success has clearly been grounded on the initial relationship formation and on the business, governance and quality assurance frameworks put in place in the critical decision making year of 1998.

The leadership of the vice-chancellor was central both in the genesis of the project and in its translation into reality. There was considerable initial scepticism amongst many in the University about the strategic sense and viability of the project and many risks were evident. It was the achievement of the vice-chancellor to steer the University and the University Council through to the point where confidence was finally gained in the strength and worth of the project over the long term.

Curtin staff acknowledge that the decision making was “top-down”, but variously describe the vice-chancellor’s actions as “strategic and insightful”, “bringing the opportunity to Council”, “he took a risk, with the Council initially less inclined and anxious about the finances and quality assurance”.

The leadership characteristics displayed by the vice-chancellor can be summarised as a long term strategic vision; a strong business focus, a strong commitment to consultation from the level of the Council; trust in and effective delegation of planning, negotiation and implementation responsibilities to well chosen, competent staff at the appropriate levels; a personal and effective engagement with all concerned, including with the Malaysian partners and the Sarawak Government leadership; and, not least, a strongly held personal commitment to the project as an important educational and community service venture, reflected as part of Curtin’s overall values in terms of service, equity, ethics and cultural awareness.

The commitment to “whole-of-institution ownership” of the project, from Council down, achieved by the vice-chancellor enabled the successful melding of different experience and capabilities across all the roles required for effective leadership and management. In terms of Quinn’s framework of leadership there was a successful, balanced focus on external and internal issues and concerns as well as a focus on flexibility within the parameters of established university policies and procedures. The vice-chancellor’s focus was both internal and external. In his external role he was innovator, broker, producer and director. In his internal role he was facilitator, monitor and coordinator and to a lesser extent mentor. He was able to effectively combine both.

There was clearly sufficient experience and capability amongst Curtin academic and administrative staff to design and operate the project successfully, even under an exceptionally tight timeframe. This experience and capability was recognised and mobilised by the vice-chancellor. Senior staff identified and authorised to take lead responsibilities at both the planning, negotiation and implementation stages were experienced senior academics and managers many of whom, crucially, had direct experience of delivering university programmes offshore. All the senior designated staff had some, and in many cases extensive, experience living and working overseas, particularly in Asia. Curtin’s prior experience in Hong Kong and Malaysia placed it in good stead. The educational, business, legal, and socio-cultural elements of quality offshore delivery, as well as the pitfalls, were well understood.

The personal experience of many Curtin staff in operating within an Asian context should not be underestimated. Many of the principals on both sides acknowledge the happy development of excellent personal relationships between staff in the partnership, leading to enhanced interactions. There is a strong and genuine reciprocal interest in the cultures and communities of both countries amongst the partnership staffs.
At the same time, Curtin’s quality assurance regime was strong and experienced, including in the issues around teaching offshore. AUQA’s 2002 commendation of Curtin’s offshore quality assurance was based on the recognition that quality monitoring was rigorous, comprehensive, systematic, thorough, ensured the gathering of valid and reliable feedback and that any needed remedial action was undertaken promptly. Curtin’s unremitting insistence on satisfactory academic quality assurance processes at the project design stage was critical to later success.

It goes without saying that the continuing strength of the business relationship is a major touchstone of the partnership’s success. Without mutually beneficial business outcomes there would be no basis for continuance. While it might be said, as it certainly was at the initial point of consideration of the project, that Curtin might have been better placed from a business perspective to operate in West Malaysia rather than in Miri, the overriding judgement, including ultimately of the Council, was that the greater business risk was not to act given the assurance of a secure financial partner and the opportunity to secure a license to operate one of the very limited number of Malaysian government approved foreign branch campuses then being set up in Malaysia.

The business plan presented to Council in December 1999 clearly placed the branch campus within the overall context of the University’s strategic plan, emphasising the competitive advantage it offered. As it turned out, the financial planning undertaken by the University and the successful negotiations to avoid Curtin committing substantial financial equity to the project reflected strong financial and business management capabilities in the Curtin leadership team and negotiators. The solution, as it turned out, was a proposal of the vice-chancellor to reinvest profits gained from research and consulting into the research infrastructure, which was a genuine financial commitment by Curtin without serious risk of adverse financial exposure.

The vice-chancellor’s strong personal commitment to community service was explicitly internationalist. He was able to manage initial doubts and tensions in Curtin partly because he convinced the University and the Council that not only was the project strategic and viable in a business sense, but also that it was an important international community service. His delegation of the key responsibilities to well chosen competent staff was also crucial. However, the project might not have happened without Curtin’s considerable experience of international partnerships and the university’s embedded quality assurance processes coupled with the firm commitment to academic quality assurance from the outset.

Conclusion
The success of Curtin Sarawak is a reflection of a wide range of factors that the Curtin leadership was able to comprehend and master at the critical first stage of development of the partnership. Hard and soft skills and capabilities of many individual leaders and managers in Australia and in Sarawak came into play to achieve the desired outcome. Without these capabilities the project would not have succeeded. It is a reflection of the strong and capable leadership in Curtin at the time that this was understood and successfully acted on, despite the pressures imposed by the timeframe for delivery.
Case Study 3

University College London, UK and the State of South Australia

By John Fielden, CHEMS Consulting

Background, history and objectives

University College London (UCL) is one of the world’s leading higher education institutions. Based in the Bloomsbury area of London it was listed as number 4 in the Global Ranking compiled by QS and the Times Higher in 2009. It badges itself as “London’s Global University” and over 34 per cent of its 22,000 students come from outside the UK. Over 8,000 academic staff are involved in world leading research, which led to it being rated in 2008 as the third best research university in the UK.

Until 2007, UCL’s international strategy did not envisage it having any overseas presence at all. It had decided to remain firmly rooted in Bloomsbury. However this all changed when the Deputy Agent General of the State of South Australia in London approached the Provost of UCL enquiring about the possibility of UCL having a presence in Adelaide. The approach was positively received and the proposal was then passed to the Vice Provost (Academic and International) (VP-A&I) to explore further.

The State of South Australia has a strategic vision which is to create a University City in Adelaide. In pursuit of this, the State government has sought collaboration with leading overseas universities and has invited both Carnegie Mellon University (2006) (CMU) and Cranfield University (2007) to become established in the city. South Australia also attracts one of the fastest growing inflows of international students in Australia, an important area of the State’s economy. Above all, South Australia has extensive natural resources (e.g. uranium, copper), a significant mining industry and urgent water resource issues. All these areas are appropriate to UCL’s research interests and provided the context for UCL’s involvement.

Carnegie Mellon’s campus in Adelaide graduated its first 35 students in 2006 and is targeting a total of 200 masters students across three programmes. CMU was a pioneer in entering Australia, since until their arrival federal and state legislation had prohibited foreign post-secondary institutions from offering degrees in Australia; this legislation had to be amended. The South Australian Government drew on its experience of discussions with CMU and Cranfield in all its dealings with UCL.

The VP-A&I tried at first to interest academic staff in another discipline in establishing a presence in Australia. They debated the idea for some time with particular focus on the financial risk; but, as the faculty was divided, the dean had to reject the opportunity. Thus, the VP-A&I tried again – this time with known academic entrepreneurs in the faculty of engineering sciences who had developed an innovative model of an MSc with a strong industrial component and who had previous international experience. This idea was seen and welcomed by the Premier of South Australia on his visit to the UK and after further exploratory discussions the idea emerged of an offshore presence in Adelaide that would address the energy and resources situation in South Australia and internationally. It was to be called the UCL School of Energy and Resources Australia (abbreviated to SERAus by UCL) and is conceived as a world-class, research-led academic facility that will engage with academic and industrial partners internationally. Ultimately it will represent UCL with a strategic presence extending to the Pacific Rim, Asia and beyond. Given the energy focus, the School will be multidisciplinary, drawing on individual researchers from several relevant disciplines.

There were two reasons why SERAus fits well with UCL strategy.

- The development of SERAus reflects UCL’s overall strategic mission outlined in the International Strategy to use its research strength to address problems of global significance – one of which is energy and resources development and utilisation and the developing international energy policy context.
- UCL’s policy position is that all its activity should be research-led and as a development of the collaboration, the State will create an International Energy Policy Institute to be led by UCL. The shared vision of UCL and the State is that Adelaide will “become the ‘Davos’ of energy policy” in the hemisphere.

The venture is not driven by financial motives; it is essentially an initiative focussed on helping UCL’s research profile in a key global problem area and helps to meet one of the four Grand Challenges in UCL’s research strategy centred on “Sustainable Cities”. UCL SERAus presents an outstanding opportunity for UCL to provide academic leadership in the area of energy and resources policy development, based in a geographical area where energy and resources are immediate and relevant.
General description of the project

UCL SERAus is UCL’s first overseas academic presence and an historic first for the university, even though the University already has 44 operational international agreements. None of these involve offshore delivery or franchising, since these were prohibited under the University of London rules by which UCL was bound for many years. Technically it is a collaborative project between UCL and the Government of South Australia, with support from Santos Ltd, a major energy company based in the State 36.

The partners’ contributions to SERAus are:

- The State Government has underwritten the School for seven years and has provided A$4m 37 towards very high quality re-furbished accommodation in the centre of Adelaide. It has also funded some local consultancy and market research.
- Santos Ltd is providing funding of A$10 million 38 over five years and will work closely with UCL on the development and design of the programmes. The funding will contribute to scholarships, research activities and a Santos Chair in Energy and Resources.

When it is fully established the School will offer the following

- A portfolio of executive education programmes tailored to meet the requirements of senior industry professionals, such as those in Santos.
- A two-year Master’s programme in Energy and Resources (the Bologna model) which incorporates a nine month industry-based project, ensuring a close interface with business and industry.
- A Doctoral programme jointly supervised by staff in Adelaide and London.
- Academic research of international significance undertaken in partnership with staff from London and with collaborating universities in the region.
- An International Energy Policy Institute, which will carry out consultancy and applied research for government and industry.
- A programme of CPD workshops and seminars for the energy and resources sector, adapted to a large extent from modules that have been developed for BP.

The School is post-graduate and small scale; with a maximum target intake of 30 students per year for the MSc. The Executive Education Programme will be developed in consultation with industry.

UCL recognises that it is impossible to replicate the UCL London experience in Adelaide; however, students of UCL in Adelaide will have a UCL experience of equal value – related closely to their future employment. A feature of the School will be the use of IT to link into UCL in London, giving online access to teaching and learning materials and UCL’s Library resources. The MSc is unique to Adelaide and an unusual model for UCL, as it will be delivered over two years with a nine-month project placement in a company that can take place anywhere in the world. This model is designed to promote employability and ensure that the course is relevant to the needs of industry.

From the perspective of the Engineering Faculty where the project is constitutionally based, SERAus will bring together academic staff in chemical, civil and mechanical engineering with colleagues in other disciplines with an interest in energy topics and will help the faculty to develop its research in energy generation.

All academic regulatory requirements, standards of admission and assessment and QA systems will be those of UCL in London. In developing the project, however, it has been necessary to liaise very closely with, and satisfy, the academic quality agencies in Australia at both State and federal levels.

While pump priming support has been provided by the State Government and Santos Ltd, it is intended that by 2017 the UCL campus establishes itself as a viable, self-funded and self-sustaining overseas university institution. Over the course of a long development period UCL has forged good working relationships with the Office of the State Premier, the Office of the Agent General in London, Santos Ltd (at the level of the CEO and in depth) and at a business development level with leading companies in South Australia. These relationships are being sustained by the staff in Adelaide.

The State is delighted to have attracted a university of UCL’s calibre. The State Premier said that UCL’s decision to set up in Adelaide “reflects our city’s reputation as Australia’s ‘university city of the future’” “South Australia is an ideal location”, he said “because our state continues to lead the nation in renewable energy”.

In developing the SERAus research portfolio, UCL expects to work in close collaboration with the South Australian universities and to develop partnerships where there is complementary expertise.

36 Santos is a major Australian oil and gas exploration and production company with interests in Australia, Indonesia, PNG, Vietnam, India, and Bangladesh. See www.santos.com
37 Equivalent to £2.4 million or MYR11.7 million
38 Equivalent to £6 million or MYR29 million
The collaboration has taken two years to deliver and has been managed for the State by the office of the Agent General in London and in Adelaide by the University City Project Group in the Office of the Premier and the Cabinet. The State has invested considerable resources in time from its officials on the project;

Leadership and skills
The Deputy Agent General for South Australia has reported that he was most impressed by the responsiveness and enthusiasm of UCL when he first approached them. This was in contrast to the reception that his proposals had received in other universities. This enthusiasm and commitment continued throughout the preparation stages and was evidence of a firm institutional leadership. Unlike his dealings with other universities, in UCL he always knew who took decisions and who was driving the project forward.

For the full two and half years that the project has been in gestation it has been led for UCL by the VP-A&I, who has overall responsibility for managing it within UCL and for leading negotiations in Australia at the highest level. The VPA&I has required enormous patience as well as a clear vision, drive, the ability to overcome conservatism and to keep pressure on those charged with delivering. Working to him has been a large team of professional support staff within UCL. The work on legal contracts was supervised by the Director of Finance (Special Projects) in consultation with UCL’s own external legal advisers. In Australia it has been necessary to appoint lawyers, accountants and bankers.

The Dean of the Engineering Faculty has not been involved in detailed negotiations with the Australians, but his role has been to sell the idea to his heads of departments. Some of them were happy with the concept of SERAust, but asked “why do we not have it here?” The culture of the faculty is that there are many opportunities to carry out interesting research, so that they can afford to be selective. However, to some the unknown research potential in Australia was an interesting challenge.

For the State, the State Premier has given his personal commitment and clear political leadership and the office of the Premier has provided support for the negotiations. The Deputy Agent General in London played a key role in negotiations for the State. His experience in this was invaluable as he had also acted for the government in the negotiations with the two other foreign institutions in Adelaide, CMU and Cranfield University. In the first of these a large number of legislative barriers had to be cleared away before CMU could operate in Adelaide.

The Deputy Agent General’s continuing enthusiasm for SERAust was confirmed when he applied for, and was appointed to, the post of Chief Executive Officer of SERAust which he took up in May 2010.

The negotiations had a very difficult patch when the Government of South Australia announced budget cuts which had an immediate impact on their contribution to the project. Fortunately they were able to persuade Santos Ltd to plug the gap with funds from its community support programmes. However, this has meant that from this point onwards there have been two parties to most of the Australian negotiations. The brunt of all these discussions and negotiations has been borne by the VP-A&I many thousands of miles away.

Project management
a) Set up phase
The Project has been developed in phases agreed with the State:

- Pre-feasibility and feasibility stage which involved market research and business modelling leading to the signing of an agreement on (Heads of Terms).
- Following this contractual agreement, a four-phase project development plan was defined in the overall contract with the State of South Australia.

Following the feasibility stage, UCL established a Project Group to undertake detailed planning, chaired by a senior member of the VP-IA’s staff and reporting to him; this group comprised academics from the Faculty of Engineering Sciences and professional officers from Human Resources, Estates, Educational Liaison, Information Systems, the Registrar’s Division, Quality Assurance, the Library and Finance. It was a large group and met about 15 times which some of the academic participants thought was excessive. Expert advice was taken from UCL Business and Management Systems.

This project group was responsible for developing the academic plan, business case, estates plan, risk assessment and HR policies during the planning stages. Post contract, the group undertook detailed development work for overseas registration and accreditation, estates requirements and terms and conditions for staff working overseas. Consultancy and legal advice was commissioned, as needed, to support the project. The Project Group exercised firm control in ensuring that UCL’s regulations and guidelines were adhered to wherever relevant.

UCL’s Council has been involved from an early stage of the negotiations and the project was a standing item on every agenda over a two year period. It was also formally involved
whenever legal agreements were required. Since it was the University’s first overseas campus, Council members were concerned about the reputational and financial risks and how they would be managed. They also had concerns about the amount of senior management time devoted to negotiations. However their general view was that “the project was relatively straightforward since the academic case for it was strong, the values of UCL were largely shared by the government and Santos and arrangements were deemed sound”. The Finance Committee of Council reviewed the detailed financial projections and recommended the go ahead to the full Council. Now that SERAus is operational, the Council will no longer have detailed reports on it.

Academic Committee will continue to have oversight of the School. Departments other than engineering sciences are becoming involved by providing academic staff to participate in the programmes and already seven UCL staff have been identified as “Affiliated Academic Staff”.

UCL worked with its lawyers appointed in Adelaide on the legal establishment of the School (in discussion with the lawyers for the State of South Australia and for Santos Ltd), and seconded a member of staff from London to ensure appropriate business systems were in place. It was necessary for UCL to establish a corporate entity in the State.

The School will be recognised under the AUQA as well as the QAA, and UCL will aim to ensure the combined quality audit requirements do not place an undue burden on the School.

b) The operational phase
The first Masters programme (MSc in Energy and Resources; Policy and Practice) started its first semester in February 2010, with the second following in July 2010. Scholarships funded by Santos are available for both Australian and international students. The course is offered either full time over 2 years or part time over 3-5 years. The first candidates for PhD study were also sought in February 2010. Tuition fees for full time MSc students were set at A$32,250 per annum for two years and the same fee was charged for a full time PhD over a three year period. The MSc has been constructed in such a way that any international students who successfully complete the course will be eligible for residence status.

In terms of integration with UCL, the School is regarded as a department in the Faculty of Engineering Sciences and will work within the Faculty structures, so that the Faculty Examination Board will have overall responsibility for the SERAus awards. In Adelaide, the organisation is headed by a Chief Executive Officer under whom are an Academic Director with three permanent members of academic staff and a Chief Operating Officer who oversees five permanent support staff. Other “affiliated academic staff” from several departments in London will fly in to deliver some of the specialist modules in the Masters programme and some executive education programmes in Adelaide.

However, the corporate administration of SERAus is centred on the office of the Vice-Provost. The Chief Executive Officer of SERAus in Adelaide reports to the Vice-Provost (Academic and International) and also to the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering Sciences. As the School is on a small scale, it has its own local systems for record keeping; data from this are then fed back to London to be integrated with UCL’s main information systems.

The School has two operating Committees, one for academic matters (Education Committee) and one for non academic matters. The School also has an Industry Advisory Board which includes representatives of the State government.

Evaluation
UCL’s SERAus is a good example of an offshore venture that fits well with institutional strategy. By staying small and focussing on areas where UCL itself is strong and where the academic staff are research-active, the venture appears to meet both the ambitions of its State backer and UCL’s own regional aspirations. However, all these research targets are based on a relatively small market for master’s programmes and, unless these can attract students from all around the Asia-Pacific region, SERAus will be unable to grow to meet expectations. Given Australia’s dominance in the mineral and mining industries and China’s growing strategic reliance on them, there will be a huge investment in both countries in research in the energy and alternative energy fields. Other leading universities of the world are also seeking to be involved in this massive programme. SERAus is well positioned but is very small and far from its parent. Can it build on its location and develop into the world leading facility it wants to be?

There is also a financial hurdle ahead. At present the State is providing free accommodation and some travel costs; this offer expires in seven year’s time and SERAus will have to pay the full rent, all travel and be financially self supporting. Santos has funded a chair and is also supporting scholarships and research; this funding may not be permanent – despite the company’s emphasis on helping the State and the Adelaide community. In the next five to seven years SERAus will need to build up some reserves to cushion itself against meeting all its operational costs in 2017.
The project is a top-down initiative and has been very dependent on the leadership of one man – the VP-I&A. He responded to the State’s original approach and then promoted it within UCL to identify and sign up faculty champions for the idea. His willingness to devote time to it (despite massive demands on his time from his other national and international activities) is exceptional and cannot be a model for similar ventures. He has had to undertake many long trips to Adelaide in order to negotiate in person; UCL has acknowledged this and is moving to establish a Committee for Overseas Development under the Academic Board, since there are two other substantial offshore ventures in the pipeline. In parallel, it is hoped that the relative success of SERAus (so far) will encourage a wider range of academic staff to become involved in international activities.

Without their enthusiasm and willingness to travel offshore for teaching and research, any such venture will fail. Work overseas does not rate highly in UCL’s promotion criteria and this limits its appeal to most academic staff. This may be one reason why many of the major research intensive universities have been so slow to establish activities overseas requiring inputs from key staff. It is also the reason why SERAus hopes to operate on a mix of locally employed academic staff backed by “flying faculty” from London for periods of no more than two weeks at a time.

Accreditation of the School and of its courses under the State and the Australian Federal system has proved challenging and UCL has had to learn to work with the Australian bureaucracy at many levels. Negotiations with Australian officials have been said to be “tough but fair” and UCL had to fight hard on issues such as index-linking of grants from the State and the level of securities required. However, there have also been unexpected surprises and several examples of cultural differences despite the common heritage. One person involved in the project said “We thought that we understood the Australians, but we did not. We did not appreciate their speed of working and they were slower than we thought”. For example:

- Interpersonal skills proved to be essential in dealing with the bureaucracies which some found frustrating. Even though the State Premier was strongly behind the project, this enthusiasm did not fully permeate down into his office and the State government. UCL staff in London got the impression that civil servants responded only when instructed to do so by their superiors.
- The two levels of State and federal bureaucracy did not connect with each other and processes could never work in parallel. An issue had to be cleared at one level before it could pass to the other. UCL assumed that the State’s experience with Carnegie Mellon and Cranfield would have ironed out any questions or problems, but this was not the case.
- The quality assurance procedures for evaluating UCL’s capacity to award masters degrees were complex, paper based and not always relevant. These procedures had to be followed even though the award was from UCL and was ultimately subject to the oversight of the UK’s Quality Assurance Agency. A senior UCL academic involved considered that the demands of Australian quality assurance required more staff input than those of the UK Quality Assurance Agency. In some areas, UCL felt that it was showing its Australian counterparts what to do and Australian officials have acknowledged that they have learned a lot and might use UCL’s approach as their future model.

The rigidity of some of the hurdles placed in the way of SERAus’s establishment was due largely to Guidelines that had been developed by Canberra to prevent the incursion into Australia of dubious foreign degree mills and bogus unauthorised institutions. Thus, the federal and state governments were legally bound (to their evident embarrassment) to follow procedures that were wholly inappropriate to an institution of UCL’s standing.

**Conclusions**

This is an excellent example of a UK university entering into a partnership with an overseas government to help it meet its national objectives. In addition there is a close fit with UCL’s global research strategy and the project is clearly not designed to generate large surpluses that would offend the host.

Although the process of establishing an agreement took time, once this happened, the set up and implementation has gone according to plan with SERAus opening on schedule.

There are several messages for university leaders in similar situations:

- Outsiders like to deal with an institution that is responsive and enthusiastic, when faced with an unexpected proposal.
- It may not be the best solution to burden one person with all the negotiations, particularly where more than one party is involved and the activity is 10,000 miles away.
- However, partners from government or industry are used to dealing with one person who has the power to deliver what is promised. A university’s management style and processes must be willing to trust one person in this way.
- However able the leader, a project team of the academic and support staff will be needed to meet regularly to monitor progress.
- Leaders and managers must be prepared for “cultural” differences and different styles of decision making, even where one thinks it unlikely.
- Managing the involvement of a Governing Body, which is traditionally risk averse, requires special skills, particularly where the project is not designed to be an income generator and there are medium term financial risks.
Case Study 4
Monash University, Australia and Sichuan University, China
By Dennis Murray, LH Martin Institute, University of Melbourne

Monash University profile
Monash University was established in 1958 and officially opened in 1961 in Melbourne, the State capital of Victoria. It is a large, publicly funded university and as a member of “The Group of Eight (Go8), which is a coalition of leading Australian universities, Monash is intensive in research and comprehensive in general and professional education. It has eight campuses including one in Malaysia and one in South Africa, and a centre in Prato, Italy and operates a joint research academy with IIT Bombay in India.

In 2008 Monash enrolled 56,573 students, over 19,000 (34 per cent) of whom were international students (this figure includes those enrolled at the non-Australian campuses). Through collaborative research, student exchange programmes and an ever-growing alumni network, Monash has links with people and organisations throughout Asia, Europe, the Americas, Africa and the Middle East. By several measures, Monash is amongst Australia’s most internationalised universities.

Internationalisation at Monash – the new strategy
During the 1960s and onwards Monash consciously positioned itself as an international university. It welcomed international students from its inception. In the late 1990s and early 2000s it undertook a major expansion of its international activities within a strategy of a global presence to take the form of campuses in each continent. The strategy was embedded in a set of documents: Leading the Way – Monash 2020, The Global Development Framework, and subsidiary regional and country plans covering Europe, North America, China, South Africa, the Middle East, South Asia and South East Asia. At the same time, Monash also set out to link widely with overseas institutions for teaching, research and for staff and student exchange. It established “several hundred” international partnerships and links of various kinds, though in the University’s own words “the selection of partners “tended to be reactive and driven by individuals rather than by strategy”.

A new vice-chancellor was appointed in September 2003. At an early stage he initiated a review of Monash’s strategic directions. The outcome was Monash Directions 2025, a 20-year strategic directions statement, which was approved by the University Council in February 2005. Monash Directions 2025 described in a broad way the aims of the University over the ensuing 20 years, in particular the University’s aspiration to be one of the best universities in the world and its objective of achieving this through a research-intensive, international focus. An International Self Review was also initiated in 2004 and completed in 2005. The review produced thirteen volumes of information concerning the state of internationalisation at the university.

A new DVCi position was created and filled in 2006 [note: the position has recently been renamed Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) but will be referred to throughout this case study by the previous title]. The DVCi was charged with taking the University’s international strategy and activity in new directions. The outcome was a Discussion Paper as Background to the International Plan 2007-2010.

The change of direction was driven by challenges the University acknowledged it was facing given a rapidly changing domestic and international environment. The International Plan 2007-2010 therefore sought to expand the University’s focus beyond a concentration on international and postgraduate coursework students both at home and abroad (although this remains a core activity) to include engagement in all aspects of international research: research training of higher degree by research students, collaborative research, collaborative publication, and commercialisation of intellectual property. “For the University to improve its international ranking as a world class university and at the same time maintain its reputation, it is essential to focus on both research and learning and teaching excellence”.

The Plan made five key points:

- “The overarching goal of Monash’s international strategy is to become a world class research-intensive and international university”.
- “It is vital to be selective in the cultivation of international partnerships and activities”. The Plan proposed a four category typology for international relationships (see the Box below).
- An effective, efficient and transparent model for the structure and governance of international matters is necessary”. The Plan sets out such a model.
• A task force approach was proposed for setting international directions together with priority topics for immediate investigation.
• A set of major priority activities for 2007-1010 was also outlined, “with a focus on enhancing our international profile”.

Monash University – International Partnership Typology

Category 1  A limited number of top-tier institutions, for very active, comprehensive and well funded alliances.
Category 2  Institutions with similar international rankings to Monash, with similar primacy within the higher education sector in their country, which could be targeted especially for student exchange.
Category 3  Institutions with which only study abroad and short course training activities are appropriate.
Category 4  Institutions in developing countries which have primacy in the country concerned, which would benefit from capacity building support from Monash (curriculum design, teaching partnerships, staff upgrading and research training).

Monash initiated a significant rebalancing of its internationalisation activities by adopting a research-led international strategy. The key aim was to significantly reduce the number of its international partnerships and linkages and target a small number of relationships with top institutions around the world in globally significant locations (in China, India, USA, UK, Continental Europe and UAE) on a bilateral, multilateral and thematic basis.

In addition, the structure and governance of international was to take place under a “One Monash” arrangement, which includes its two major offshore campuses, its specialist centre in Europe and its smaller number of more research intensive partnerships. A multi-layered hubs and spokes model provided the structure to guide the future development of the Monash international network. Partnerships within “One Monash” cannot be bilateral (between a campus and a partner) they must be multilateral (between all Monash campuses and the partner).

Research collaboration in particular required growth as well as a higher level of integration with international education cooperation. The DVCI and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research (DVCR) now work in much closer alliance, “with the aim of creating a research-led teaching environment and further internationalisation of the curriculum, students and staff”.

A realignment of the role of the Office of the DVCI has also been negotiated with Faculties, together with a realignment of governance and administrative support within the Office to move away from administrative support for committees, towards providing greater support in project development and implementation, focused especially around identified priority projects undertaken by a range of task forces.

Monash has selected three partners in its Global Partnership Framework: Warwick University (UK), Arizona State University (US), and Sichuan University (China). The four universities (including Monash) on four continents have a combined capacity of over 200,000 students, 3,000 professors and a US$620m annual research budget. International cooperation between the four partners is treated as integral to research rather than as an optional extra. International cooperation works as a strategic and effective multilateral mechanism for linking together and exploiting synergies between existing research programmes in different nations.

**Choice of Sichuan University (SU) as a partner**

The obvious choice was a top tier Chinese university. It was clear however that many of the top tier universities were already overwhelmed with international partnership requests. In 2007 the Monash Council and Monash leadership began to actively explore options.

In early 2007, the Victorian Government hosted a senior Chinese delegation which included Madam Wu Xi Di, Chinese Vice-Minister for Education. Informal discussion over lunch between Madam Wu and the Monash DVCI led to Madam Wu suggesting that Monash choose as its partner either Sichuan University, located in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan Province in the south-west of China, or one other top tier university located in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei Province in the central-east of China. The DVCI subsequently visited the two universities in China and recommended that Monash consider partnering with Sichuan University.

Sichuan University is one of the oldest and largest universities in China, and is a national university directly under the Ministry of Education (MOE). It is also one of the State 211 Project and 985 Project universities enjoying privileged development in the Ninth Five-year Plan period.

Monash’s choice of Sichuan University (SU) as a partner institution was very much “top-down” guided by the new international partnership typology developed by the International Plan. Fundamentally, however, the clinching factors were the age and prestige of the university, the strong support for Sichuan University by the Central Government as part of the Government’s strategy to develop the Western

For the names of those universities in the 985 and 211 projects see [http://www.cucas.edu.cn/HomePage/content/content_214.shtml](http://www.cucas.edu.cn/HomePage/content/content_214.shtml)

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Provinces, Sichuan’s research strengths, and the fact that the Sichuan President was proactively supportive of the partnership and clear in his articulation of its mutual value and that there was a good, comprehensive strategic fit against Monash’s teaching and research priorities and the associated international partnership selection criteria.

History of the partnership

Early in 2007 the vice-chancellor led a large and high-level delegation to China and Sichuan. As a consequence, a formal agreement between Monash and Sichuan Universities was negotiated and signed in May 2007. The relationship is explicitly characterised as follows:

- A commitment to engage across a number of fields or disciplines.
- An understanding by the parties that the relationship is identified to be long-term.
- Joint research projects that add to the research quanta of both partners.
- Teaching collaboration through joint or dual degrees, and through supervision of Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students.
- A sharing of financial burdens arising out of the partnership, and a readiness to cooperate in the pursuit of funds and grants.
- A shared understanding that the relationship is fundamental to further the growth in excellence and reputation of both partners.

The duration of the agreement is 5 years in the first instance. A number of subordinate agreements, institution-wide and faculty based have also been negotiated and signed.

A reciprocal visit to Melbourne by Sichuan faculty and administrative heads occurred in August 2007 at which time discussions and negotiations about potential areas for collaboration at the discipline level were held. During this visit, discipline/administrative unit based MoUs were signed with all 10 Faculties. Similar discussions resulted in MoUs between Monash and Sichuan administrative units for collaboration and a number of joint projects. Faculties at Monash were not involved in the strategic decisions about SU as a partner. “We had to catch up, but we did so in a positive way”, one staff member said. There was a view initially that while SU was a good university it was geographically a long way away.

At the teaching level, programmes were designed around 2+2 or articulation arrangements, involving the transfer of students from Sichuan to Monash for top-up degree studies. Initially, faculties had difficulty getting the details of SU courses and were sceptical about equivalence levels. However, the DVCi’s office pursued the curriculum documents and arranged translations of them. Once they were examined, and after face-to-face discussions between MU and SU academic staff, MU faculties generally agreed that the materials used and the training received by SU students was “very solid”. The consensus amongst Monash faculty staff is that this confidence wouldn’t have been gained without the central allocation of travel funds to allow Monash faculty to travel to SU for familiarisation and to allow discussions on the ground there.

In terms of the Faculties’ international strategies, the SU link for teaching is seen to provide two advantages. It provides better assurance about continuing flows of high quality fee paying international students and in some cases, such as for the Faculty of Science, assists the faculty concerned to grow the proportion of international students beyond current modest levels. At the same time, the link is seen to result in higher quality undergraduate students who have a propensity to go on to Honours and subsequently to advanced research, thereby complementing existing faculty research strategies – “the attraction for us is the quality of the students”. These two fold benefits translate into financial and educational incentives for the Faculties to be involved.

The Monash academic community also required convincing of the choice of Sichuan as an across-the-board research partner. The University, through the DVCi and DVCR undertook three weeks of negotiation with faculties over the areas of research priority, based on the research and MoUs signed by the ten faculties. In due course, six priority research areas were identified after a careful desk exercise involving identification and examination of Sichuan research strengths and the mapping of these against Monash strengths and interests and the Australian and Chinese governments’ research funding priorities.

The University also put in place at this time a “Monash-Sichuan International Strategic Scholars Scheme” aimed at supporting researchers from both sides to come together to discuss ideas and prepare submissions for external research funding. The Monash seed fund contribution to the Scheme in 2007-8 was A$200,000. This fund was matched by Sichuan to support their researchers’ participation. As a result, in the first year of Monash-Sichuan Strategic Scholars Scheme 11 research project proposals were developed across a broad range of disciplines in medical biology, engineering, science and the social sciences and submitted for external funding.

The partnership currently includes both research and education collaborations across five Faculties at Monash (Science, Engineering, Information Technology, Arts and
Business and Economics) and twelve Schools at Sichuan (Foreign Languages and Cultures; Literature and Journalism; Politics; Public Administration, History, Culture and Tourism). In some cases faculties took time to be persuaded of the value of the partnership. The 2007 visits needed to be followed up, in some cases over 18 months to two years. The University provided funding through the “International Initiatives programme”, managed by the DVCI, to allow extended discussions and face to face visits. These were still occurring during 2009 for some faculties and discipline areas.

Benefits now recognised by Monash researchers include access to modern, high quality equipment (in some disciplines) as well as access to top minds. “Staff are willing to put in the time to develop the relationship with SU because of the quality of SU programmes and SU students”.

Activity to date has involved a variety of forms of academic cooperation for teaching and research. These include such arrangements as undergraduate student teaching in twinning mode (e.g. 2.5+1.5 or 2+2 models, with Sichuan students completing at Monash); dual bachelor and PhD awards (in place in some Faculties and in discussion in others); and a series of joint-research collaborations in a range of disciplines (climate change, earthquake disaster prevention, the European Union, stem cells, human resource management, development biology and human genetics, and economics). Sharing of administrative staff and good practices has also begun. Amongst other things, a Deans Leadership Programme was delivered by Monash in Australia in 2007, attracting 34 Sichuan participants.

**Current and future activity**

There is continuing willingness to invest in the further development of the project through incentives for staff and students. For example, staff are assisted to learn about China and to acquire Chinese language capability through a learning programme delivered through the Faculty of Arts. Monash and Sichuan also currently provide mobility scholarships to enable Australian students and Chinese students to move under the partnership’s exchange provisions.

Most recently, a Director for China Engagement position has been established in the DVCI’s Office with the responsibility for coordinating the implementation of activities and initiatives related to China together with the Faculties, including the SU partnership. The incumbent is required to possess outstanding written and oral Mandarin skills.

The SU partnership is the most advanced of Monash’s recent efforts to develop “deep” partnerships, but it is rather too early to comment on its success. However, there is substantial evidence of commitment on both sides. Significant time, effort and resources are being spent by both partners to achieve broad success in teaching and research and in administrative programmes.

The key challenge will be to achieve an active and continuing two-way flow of staff and students, funded by each side, and a durable and truly reciprocal partnership over time. While obviously SU is free to choose to enter into even more prestigious relationships, the potential of the current four-way relationship involving SU, Monash, Arizona State and Warwick is very attractive to SU. The challenge obviously is to develop a really effective four-way link which will be the true test of the model Monash has chosen to operate. The progress of the Monash-Sichuan partnership, and of the wider grouping overall, will be of widespread interest to many universities, in Australia and elsewhere.

**Leadership and management skills and competencies**

Monash’s long, distinguished and successful history of international activity on its own would not have been sufficient to achieve the significant strategic and programme outcomes that have occurred over the past five years. The leadership and management skills that were brought to bear in redirecting Monash’s international partnership strategy relied on the Monash history and built on it, but in a particular and innovative way. The leadership and management aspects of the change may be characterised as follows:

**Vice-chancellor’s vision and strategic perception**

The 2004 review of Monash’s strategic directions was initiated by the, then recently arrived, vice-chancellor in the light of the local and international challenges he believed the University was facing. His vision and strategic perceptions set the context in which Monash’s directions were to be reframed, resulting in their renewed expression in *Monash Directions 2025* and encapsulated in the vision that Monash should become “one of the best universities in the world, distinctive because (of) our research-intensive, international focus”.

The challenge for the vice-chancellor was to translate this strategic vision into reality and bring the University with him. The appointment of the new DVCI at this point was critical. The achievement was to both conceptualise the position in a new way (the focus being broader than international student recruitment and closely aligned to the academic core of the university, including research) and of course to make the right appointment. Once the appointment was made, the responsibility for moving the strategic vision forward fell to the DVCI.

**Role of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor International**

While Monash’s future broad strategic directions were clear, and while the Monash international self review had already
begun, the future international strategy, its characteristics and directions, was yet to be conceived and accepted by the University.

The leadership of the DVCI was reflected in her Discussion Paper, which built on the International Self Review and subsequently in the International Plan 2007-2010. The two crucial achievements of the DVCI were to:

1. Re-conceptualise the University’s international goals and to persuade the University to lift its sights and to expand its international focus beyond a concentration on international and postgraduate coursework students to include a much broader international engagement, and to establish the processes and engage the individuals and the groups in the administration and the academic areas, and

2. Articulate a more strategically focused, resource efficient and “organic” approach to international partnerships: “Our expression of international engagement has matured and we are feeling our way towards an organic network involving fewer, but critically strategic players. Sichuan is a critical quadrant along with Warwick, IIT Mumbai and Arizona State.”

Some of the leadership and management skills involved in reaching and in implementing the new international partnership strategy were:

**Strategic, analytic, creative and innovation skills**

- Identifying the weaknesses of the current international engagement strategy.
- Aligning solutions to contribute to meeting the longer term strategic needs of Monash generally.
- Conceptualising “what a balanced relationship would look like”.
- Identifying clear strategic options which built on Monash’s existing international strengths but focusing them in a new direction and in new ways.
- Recognising that research must play a central part.
- Identifying international partnerships as central to the strategy.
- Devising a clear partnership typology that would act as the framework to guide future partner identification.
- Identifying a small number of whole institution-to-institution partnerships as the central component of the new strategy.
- Recognising the need to sustain the Monash international student market and to diversify the international student programme more effectively into postgraduate research.
- Recognising the emergence of concentrated research hubs, particularly in Asia.

**Brokering, facilitating, coordinating, monitoring and directing skills**

- Effectively managing these changes through the University with the key stakeholders. This involved strong management “soft skills” – a willingness to consult, facilitate and delegate and an ability to direct, coordinate and persuade.
- Understanding, facilitating and directing a more flexible and responsive method to investigate and solve internationalisation issues resulting in a task force approach focused on identified priority projects.
- Recognising and devising “an effective, efficient and transparent model for the structure and governance of international matters”.
- Managing the initial scepticism of faculties.
- Activating and directing existing capabilities within Monash, particularly at the level of academic involvement.
- Achieving cultural navigation. Monash’s substantial international experience is shared by a large number of Monash staff at all levels but there were cross-cultural issues between the partners at the planning and implementation stages.
- Tangibly supporting the faculties to build understanding and trust with their Sichuan counterparts and trusting academic areas to make the right judgements and decisions. The decision to invest substantial financial resources to prime the partnership played a crucial role. “The key turning point was when we met the key Sichuan staff in particularly strong departments matching our own interests and strengths”.
- Facilitating “good people (in the faculties) to do what they are good at and interested in doing”.
- Achieving administrative clarity in structures and roles and responsibilities within the International portfolio.
- Committing resources, either through administrative streamlining or by allocation of new funds, to prime and maintain the partnership.
- Finally, committing to a values framework of mutual respect, trust and benefit for the two partners from the outset and directing effort and resources with this framework at the centre of thinking.

**Conclusion**

The DVCI’s statement sums up the new thinking: “internationalisation...is not another task to add on to a long list of priorities – it is a way of thinking and behaving. It should be at the core of every Monash activity”. Whether Monash’s internationalisation strategy has gone through a revolution or evolution is a moot point. To many Monash staff the change is viewed as very substantial, and is sometimes seen as an overthrowing of Monash’s former “global positioning” stance. While the change has been effected by new leadership, it clearly has built on Monash’s long standing experience
and expertise in international matters, not the least its very intimate knowledge of international partnerships. In this sense, the transition is an evolution from the past. However, very definite leadership and management skills were brought to bear to bring about the change and in sum, they successfully combined a broad range of skills focused both internally and externally, involving the hard strategic and business skills as well as the “soft” facilitation, communication, negotiation and cross-cultural skills all successful leaders and managers must have.
Background
The University of Wolverhampton (UoW) is located on four campuses across the West Midlands and Shropshire. The city campus is in Wolverhampton city centre with a second campus at Compton Park, Wolverhampton; a third in Walsall and a fourth in Telford. The institution was known as Wolverhampton Polytechnic before gaining university status in 1992.

The University has nine academic schools, a Graduate School, and cross-disciplinary research centres and institutes. It has approximately 23,000 students and currently offers over 380 undergraduate and postgraduate courses. The University is noted for its success in encouraging wider participation in higher education and its links with the community.

In 1996 an academic from Shenzhen Polytechnic (SP) was looking for UK partners at a British Council exhibition in China. He approached a member of staff from UoW at the exhibition in order to discuss his idea of having a 3+1 partnership and the award of a degree from a foreign university. An approach at the same time was also made to the University of Ballarat in Australia.

At that time the Polytechnic was very small, having been founded in 1993; it had only just commenced teaching on its Xili campus and the site was also limited in scale. It had no power to award degrees. Despite the difference in size and status of the two institutions, substantive discussions started very quickly and the UoW vice-chancellor gave his initial approval to further talks within three weeks. This was followed by two visits to SP by four UoW staff within nine months of the first meeting. This speedy response impressed the Chinese. A year after that first contact a delegation led by a Vice President from SP came to UoW and a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) was signed between the two institutions.

The leadership of UoW was involved behind the scenes in agreeing the principles of the programme to top up SP’s diplomas and in signing the MoA, when the Vice President of SP came to UoW. After that there were regular visits by UoW pro-vice-chancellors to SP. However these were nearly always ceremonial events, as the main development work was done by the deans. The University had no International Office in the early days and it was up to each School to develop overseas partnerships.

The partnership activities developed in an ad-hoc way because of the initiatives of academic staff members and the collaboration was not part of any central strategy by the University, since no international strategy had been agreed at that time. Not until an International Office was created did a common policy emerge and in 2003 the success of the Shenzhen link encouraged the University to include an emphasis on overseas partnerships in its international strategy. Partnerships that emerge now are controlled and monitored from the International Office.

UoW then took the unusual step of seconding a member of staff (who was an ‘english as a foreign language’ (EFL) teacher in the School of Languages and European Studies) to SP for a period of 3 months in April 1997 to teach English to the students who were planning to come to UoW. This first batch of five students arrived the following term and joined three faculties. The daughter of the President of SP was one of the students in this first batch – a factor that had both good and bad implications – but which showed how supportive the President was. After this initial visit the EFL teacher returned to SP for differing periods of time every year until 2006.

The early years
There was no staff accommodation at SP in the first years and so UoW staff had to live in student accommodation, which was extremely basic and not too comfortable, with rats and cockroaches in attendance. All the Chinese academic staff were also housed in the same space and this common experience of living sparsely created a bond with the UoW staff, which helped to foster trust and friendship in later years. The EFL teacher was able to benefit from this mutual experience which smoothed the way for her in SP.

The initial activity by UoW was topping up three years of SP’s courses to a degree in Business Studies and offering English teaching in SP focussed on Business English, so that students coming to UoW would be up to the International English Language Testing System levels required on entry.
How the partnership developed
In the ten years between 1997 and 2007, the partnership was actively pursued by champions in both institutions and the various activities which developed were:

- Staff from UoW went to SP to teach English and to run short two week bridging courses. They were followed by staff from the Business School, the School of Languages and European Studies and the School of Applied Sciences who also delivered similar bridging programmes in Accounting, Business, Biology and Environmental Sciences.

- Students from SP came to the Business School in UoW for one year, after having completed 3 years study, to top up their diplomas and get a degree. This was followed by flows of students into other Schools and Departments to study subjects such as Fine Art, English, Computing, Mechatronics, Biology, Construction, Tourism and Animation.

- Three graduates from UoW were recruited to teach English at SP and assist students preparing to study in the UK.

- Staff from SP came to UoW to get teaching experience in a UK environment. A dean from SP spent a semester at UoW and then went on to become Vice President for research at SP. Another visitor was the head of SP’s International Education Department who came to UoW for a one year sabbatical. In this period he delivered classes on Chinese Language and Culture.

- Staff development workshops were run in SP by SP scholars who had studied overseas, with support from the EFL teacher.

- Some small research collaborations took place between staff at UoW and SP under a Visiting Fellowship scheme at UoW.

- In 2007 students from UoW went on a Study Tour to SP for two weeks and this has become a regular feature; it is hoped 25-30 will continue to go each year.

- In the future it is planned that exchange students from SP will go to UoW on annual short reciprocal Study Tours.

In the eight year period from 1997 to 2005 37 Chinese academic staff and 440 students visited and studied in UoW, as the table below shows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Staff numbers</th>
<th>Subjects involved</th>
<th>Student numbers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>1997</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<td>2006</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There have been almost no regulatory barriers on either side. A pro-vice-chancellor at UoW said “it has not been a noisy relationship”. The SP students coming to UoW follow the same course as their UK counterparts so that there have been no special quality assurance issues.

SP wanted to make the 3+1 arrangements reciprocal and offer degree programmes to UK students on their campus; however, this was frustrated by the Chinese government’s reluctance to give degree awarding powers to SP and their wish to build it up as a “model polytechnic”.

After 2006, SP policy was focused on strengthening its research capacity and, in order to help with this, a Visiting Fellowship scheme was developed and offered in two Schools of UoW. It was hoped that this would lead ultimately to joint PhDs. Most of the costs were met by a development fund set up for developing the SP link. The scheme has operated for three years with a maximum of two Fellows a year and has led to some joint research publications. It is kept alive by the efforts of a champion in the School of Applied Sciences.

The Director of the International Centre (DIC) would like collaboration from 2010 onwards to include:

- A continuing professional development link with SP helping them to develop staff capacity in this area, which could lead to both SP and UoW collaborating on delivering joint programmes for clients in China.

- Assistance in developing pre-Masters courses, once SP has obtained University status.

- A continuing annual programme of students from both partners having short Study Tours on the other's campus.

- Developing a tri-partite arrangement between SP, UW and a partner in HK to offer programmes in China.

Skills and competences involved in the collaboration
Until recently, all the initiatives for the collaboration came about through senior academics and deans. However, the intended collaboration did not work in all cases, because of the reluctance of some UoW deans to adapt their processes to fit with SP's procedures for describing courses or defining entrance requirements. The EFL teacher seconded to SP was able to arbitrate in some cases due to her understanding of both contexts and cultures. She also found herself acting as an intermediary between SP's International Education Department (IED) (the key department coordinating all the activity) and the International Office at UoW. Since the head of the IED spoke little English her role was very important.

The regular stays of the EFL teacher in SP over a ten year period were invaluable in enabling UoW to understand how
things operated in SP. At that time most staff at SP had little experience of the mechanics of student mobility. She was also able to liaise on administrative matters such as how to manage transfers of funds from China to the UK and how to be flexible in interpreting the legal and other obligations in the MoUs between the partners. In addition she acted as a guide and mentor to the Chinese students coming to UoW through assisting them to obtain visas and prepare for life in the UK. In this latter role she found herself negotiating with the British Embassy to acquaint them with the commitment of the institutional relationship and the rigour of the academic mapping process. Finally, however, in 2006, her regular visits ceased as they were thought to be bringing fewer benefits than in the early days.

Another major advantage was the commitment to the partnership of the present Director of the International Centre, who had originally been a Principal Lecturer in UoW’s Business School, where she had responsibility for international development. This led to her early involvement with SP through the recruitment of two students to the School as the first instance of collaboration. After this she was appointed as Link Manager with a role of co-ordinating all UoW’s activities with SP. These past roles serve her well as Director of the International Centre (DIC) from where she continues to promote the partnership and adapt it to future needs on both sides.

The partnership has been very one-sided as regards the flows of staff and students. Not until 2007 did anyone from Wolverhampton travel to China specifically to study the Chinese language and in 2009 the first British student has begun a one year course in China. Meanwhile, the willingness of about 500 Chinese staff and students to come to the UK makes a sad contrast.

**Management of the collaboration**

When the first collaboration began, UoW had an International Office which focused on monitoring quality rather than student recruitment and there was no international strategy; each School made their own arrangements with international partners and as a result the approaches varied between the schools involved. The EFL teacher acted as a link to the International Education Department (IED) of SP, which co-ordinated the partnership arrangements at the Chinese end. In UoW she helped to standardise working arrangements between the schools and helped them to understand Chinese cultures and processes as well as sending consistent messages to their SP counterparts.

Not until the later stages of the link did the vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellors in UoW take the lead in starting new areas of collaboration, although those involved at the detailed level say how very supportive the former vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellors had been since the very beginning. In addition, the current vice-chancellor is very keen on outwards mobility by students and has pushed the annual Study Tour programme very strongly. The UoW senior leadership has nonetheless visited SP on several occasions and in almost every year of the partnership until 2007 a pro-vice-chancellor from UoW or a Vice President from SP visited the other’s partner institution. UoW’s former vice-chancellor visited SP in 2002 to renew the MoA and SP’s President visited UoW in 2007. The present vice-chancellor of UoW also visited SP in 2006.

The key drivers for the partnership have always been at School and IO/DIC level, referred to above. Writing in the Tenth Anniversary Book, the current DIC emphasises her pride that her “personal involvement goes back to the early days”, when she had responsibility in the School for international development.

The University had a representative office in Hong Kong, which, due to its proximity to Shenzhen, was involved in many of the detailed negotiations over administrative matters. The Representative often worked closely with the EFL teacher to remove technical barriers and clear misunderstandings.

One unusual feature of the partnership is the ease with which UoW has been able to tap central funds to support activities. It is an indicator of the high level support for the venture that since 1996 central funding has met all the costs of the Chinese staff when visiting the UK (and paid them a stipend) as well as some of the set-up costs borne by schools. Two Shenzhen Development Funds, both controlled and managed by the IC, have also proved useful as sources of support when required. In addition all schools have International Development budgets from which they have financed some of their costs. SP has also helped by meeting the living costs of UoW staff visiting and living on their campus.

The Governing Body has had no formal involvement. This may be because the scale of the operation was relatively small and there was no activity that would trigger any warning bells on their risk register. The costs of the partnership were not substantial and were contained within School and International Office budgets. Taking an overall view, these were more than offset by the income from the 440 students who came to UoW from SP.

**Evaluation and future outlook**

The partnership was established because of the initial enthusiasm of academic staff on both sides and because the two institutions had much in common with similar goals that valued vocational education. Personal relationships were also very important in stabilising the partnership and it was
remarkable that key people stayed the same on both sides for so long. For example, the EFL teacher visited SP regularly for ten years and the head of the International Centre was also involved for a similar length of time (with different roles). At SP the Deputy Director of the International Education Department was a strong supporter of the UoW connection and was also deeply involved with the partnership for 8 years, but has recently moved to another position.

Three other points would support a pessimistic view of the future:

- It is likely that UoW deans used the income from SP students to invest in developing new activities in SP. Since that has declined, the enthusiasm for SP may have waned as other more lucrative markets have emerged.
- Only two Schools are willing to undertake joint research collaboration with SP and the activity that has resulted is on a very small scale, given the size of SP and its ambitions for research.
- Some of the key people in both institutions have changed and there are few strong personal relationships left.

The fall off in student numbers coming to UoW from SP may be due to several other factors:

- The recent Chinese graduate employment situation means that even those with UK degrees do not get jobs; their high expectations of a good return from the investment in a UK degree have not been justified.
- There was a period of poor recruiting performance by the University’s office in Hong Kong; this has been remedied by a change of staff, office relocation to the Mainland and an improved pricing structure.
- Chinese employers are not always quick to recognise the value of a UK degree and Chinese students who studied at UoW did not always get a job from local employers.
- In addition there has been much greater competition from other universities in the world, all keen to “knock on the door” of Chinese institutions. There are many local agents jostling to recruit students for UK institutions. Other UK, American and Australian institutions have also been wooing SP as a potential partner. In some cases their country’s regulations for enabling international students to become resident after their programmes have ended are very attractive when recruiting.
- Chinese students and their parents are now much more selective when deciding where to study; inevitably they use league tables to help them choose UK institutions and some of UoW’s competitors will appear more attractive.
- Some staff in UoW have a perception that SP thought that the UoW was making a great amount of money from the Chinese students it received from SP.

A contextual factor is that in the ten year period Chinese higher education has expanded massively, possibly at a faster rate than anywhere else in the world. The gross enrolment ratio has grown from a mere 8 per cent of the age group to 23 per cent. Chinese institutions have grown not only in size,
but also in confidence and in their capacity to work alongside western partners on equal terms. China is now the second largest producer of research publications in the world, having overtaken the UK in 2009. SP is a large institution with over 21,000 full time students, over 1,000 academic staff and four campuses covering 168 hectares with 40 hectares of buildings. The Polytechnic has also become an attractive partner for other UK HEIs.

The Chinese government plans that 100 of the best polytechnics will be upgraded to full universities in the near future and it is expected that SP will be one of the first to gain the title in 2010. This new classification brings with it expectations of an active research profile and that each new university will develop at least five areas of specialisation to international standards.

While some are pessimistic about the future of the partnership, others are more positive. The idea that an annual group of UK students would spend a study period in China has taken root since 2006. After heavy marketing and promotion of the idea by the vice-chancellor and the DIC 15 students went to SP in 2007 and paid all the costs themselves. In 2008 another 15 went (in this case some had part of their expenses met by their Schools) and in 2009 12 students made the visit, all of whom were self financing. Another reason to be positive is that the Polytechnic has advanced so much in the ten year period that UoW can now learn some lessons from it. Many of its buildings and facilities are said to be superior to those at UoW and some visitors have suggested that it looks after its students and liaises with their parents better than UoW.

UoW has one even longer lasting partnership link with China. Its collaboration with the University of Yunnan (UY) started in 1989 and is still surviving. This is because it is based on a number of deep personal friendships between academic staff in one School of UoW and all the senior people in UY; these personal links still remain on both sides. It has also grown in depth within the School concerned and covers teaching, research and joint curriculum development. The growth area is now research collaboration and this has produced 8 joint PhDs and 5 joint MScs in the one School. The partnership also involves UoW offering Yunnan support in curriculum development in the sciences and assistance with the introduction of a PG Certificate in Educational Development for academic staff. By comparison the SP partnership was more broadly spread across the institution, but it was dependent on a few key people, many of whom have moved on.

Personal links were very important to the partnership with SP. When a dean of Economics changed at SP, that faculty’s relationship with the UoW Business School also stopped. The Director of the IED in SP has always been a strong supporter of the link, but gradually as the number of other international collaborations increased, his enthusiasm for SP diminished.

The role of the vice-chancellor in developing or promoting the partnership has been less important, since there have been three postholders at UoW and only one at SP. Nonetheless the partnership did require the support of the vice-chancellor and senior colleagues. One dean considered that “it worked because it was both bottom up and top down”. Until recently the visible role of the leaders had been a largely ceremonial one limited to signing agreements or awarding honorary degrees. However the present vice-chancellor is very keen to see UK students visiting China and actively promotes the present study visit scheme. She is also seeking to widen the partnership activities into areas involving work experience so that Chinese students are more employable when they return.

Conclusion
The partnership is a good example of a link that developed from the bottom up through good personal relationships between academic staff at School level. It has involved over 440 students from SP coming to Wolverhampton as well as about 40 academic staff; these were spread throughout UoW and were not just linked to the two original Schools of Business and English.

However, the period of growth in partnership activities peaked in 2006 and since then there has been a decline in the scale of collaboration. This has led some to consider that the link has had its day and several external factors have conspired to make Wolverhampton a less relevant strategic partner for SP than it was before. But this is not to say that the partnership cannot adapt to the changing needs of SP with a mature view by UoW of what partnerships are all about.

The ways forward have been sketched by the vice-chancellor and her senior colleagues as collaboration in research and real exchanges of students each way to learn about each others’ culture and history. It is still quite possible that, after the first phase of high volume student flows (with financial motives to the fore), the partnership might evolve into a more genuine mutual collaboration between academic equals. If it does, it will be an interesting example of a top down strategy changing the content and style of a former bottom up collaboration.
Case Study 6

University of South Australia

A study of disengagement from transnational teaching partnerships

By Dennis Murray, LH Martin Institute, University of Melbourne

AUQA commends UniSA for the quality of the planning and implementation of its decision to withdraw from the substantial provision of transnational education programmes and for the overall leadership and management of the associated teach-out processes.

(Australian Universities Quality Agency, Report of an Audit of University of South Australia, AUQA, 2009, p.33)

In 2008 the University of South Australia (UniSA) began a phased withdrawal from TNE delivery while retaining capability in the key markets of Singapore, Malaysia and China with a few partners and programmes that met the University’s criteria of quality, profitability and strategy. This case study looks at the development by UniSA of a quality assurance framework in TNE delivery extending from the scaling up of transnational education provision in the mid nineties to scaling down in 2008-2010, and particularly at the University’s management of a staged disengagement from transnational delivery in its past manifestation. The case study looks specifically at the leadership and management processes UniSA went through to make this crucial strategic shift and to carry it out successfully.

University of South Australia profile

UniSA was founded in January 1991 through the amalgamation of the South Australian Institute of Technology and the Magill, Salisbury and Underdale campuses of the South Australian College of Advanced Education, whose precursors were originally founded in the late 19th Century. It has a long tradition of equitable access to education, applied professional education and community engagement. It was one of Australia’s early and leading providers of “distance education”, a capability central to its mission to support students spread over large geographic areas of South Australia, a State with an area greater than France and Germany combined.

UniSA is a large and diverse institution with four academic divisions. In the early 2000s it was the largest Australian provider of on-campus transnational education. It was also the first Australian university to receive European Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) accreditation for its transnational programmes. Nevertheless, in 2008 UniSA decided to begin to withdraw from transnational education and to strengthen its other internationalisation activities in line with the aspirations espoused in the vice-chancellor’s 2008 document: New Horizons: our aspirations people and performance.

Internationalisation at UniSA

International partnerships had been a central part of UniSA’s internationalisation activity since 1991. At that time UniSA was a new university. Transnational delivery of UniSA courses provided a platform to promote the University and raise the University’s profile throughout Asia. In the period since 1991, public funding of higher education declined significantly in real terms and transnational delivery quickly became an important source of alternative income for the University. In the period 2001 to 2003, revenue from TNE students exceeded revenue from fees paid by on-campus international students in Australia. The academic delivery model largely involved Australian staff travelling to teach on site in intensive block mode at international partner institutions.

By 2003 the size and scope of UniSA’s transnational programme presented substantial challenges for University management. Much of the growth had been driven by entrepreneurial activity at the School and Division (Faculty) level rather than by planned corporate strategy. Both centrally and at Division level, the rate of growth began to be seen as challenging the traditional onshore quality assurance mechanisms which could result in significant risks around academic quality and institutional reputation. At the same time there was a growing sense that the opportunity costs of transnational delivery should be monitored more closely, as well as a growing awareness of the financial risks arising from fluctuating currency exchange rates. Also evident by 2005 was the differential financial return between the onshore international student and the transnational student programmes.

Within the Division of Business, the University’s largest TNE provider, the newly arrived pro-vice-chancellor faced considerable challenges, recognising not only the financial risks of transnational delivery but also the large scale academic effort involved and the high transaction costs of some partner interactions. At the same time he had a strong orientation to improving the Division’s research activity and success. An external review commissioned by him in 2004 signalled the need for significant changes to the Division’s strategic directions, including its TNE activity. At this stage, the focus of transnational efforts in the Division shifted to reviewing, refining, consolidating but not withdrawing from offshore programmes.
By 2007, UniSA had willingly dropped to the position of fourth largest Australian provider of TNE. In 2008 the University had almost 7,000 transnational students, representing approximately 6 per cent of Australian university TNE numbers and 16 per cent of the University’s total load but only 4 per cent of its total revenue. The beginning of a reduction in transnational activity was part of a previously planned and systematic approach to the management of quality in a volatile environment.

A change in international strategy
In October 2007 the newly arrived vice-chancellor initiated a review of UniSA’s TNE strategy to determine the value and risk of continuing with the University’s existing commitments. While this review got underway early in the vice-chancellor’s tenure, it subsequently became part of wider strategic considerations the vice-chancellor was beginning to set in train and which in 2008 led to a comprehensive re-examination of the directions of the University overall, articulated in a major strategic directions statement, New Horizons.

The review of transnational programmes essentially asked whether the University’s existing internationalisation strategy was the right one. Five main issues triggered the review:

- The University's priorities to strengthen research and teaching quality.
- Diminishing financial returns from transnational activity, particularly during periods of a strong Australian dollar.
- The complexity of maintaining a diverse offshore portfolio to high standards.
- Increased competition.
- The University’s determination to retain EQUIS accreditation for its Business programmes.

The first issue, the need to strengthen research and teaching quality, was prominent in the mind of the vice-chancellor and other staff for a number of reasons. While, as a newer university, UniSA, successfully doubled its research income over the period 2000-2006, this was in the context of similar gains by other Australian universities as well as in the context of the relatively low expenditure by Australia on research compared with other OECD countries (1.76 per cent of GDP compared with an average of 2.3 per cent of GDP for the OECD as a whole). In addition, emerging Australian government arrangements for future allocation of research funds were perceived as likely to adversely impact UniSA, partly because of its need to develop a more comprehensive and deeper research record.

The recognition of UniSA’s relative position in the international research stakes was accompanied by an awareness of the need for improvement in learning and teaching quality. While UniSA knew it had improved its learning and teaching performance, its position relative to other universities was viewed as disappointing. As New Horizons expressed it, “the scope for further improvement will require a number of responses”. One of these was in terms of the future role of transnational teaching.

Another issue in the fore-front of mind was the financial return the University gained from its TNE activity. Following the high point of 2003, the University well knew that financial gain from TNE was subject to considerable risk, particularly but not only from currency fluctuations. With the University’s increasing success in attracting onshore international students it was also becoming clear that there was greater potential for more positive and stable revenue streams from onshore students.

Ultimately, the review was informed by a detailed, “forensic” analysis of profitability at a programme, cohort, School, Division and whole of University level. The financial modelling was sophisticated and built on an already sophisticated financial capability that the University’s Finance Office had developed for an improved and more transparent understanding of the University’s finances. The findings were clear. Once exposed to the Senior Executive Group and then to a group of approximately 30 senior University staff members, they were also persuasive.

With the results of the review to hand in mid 2008 the University decided that there should be a phased withdrawal from TNE and that UniSA would retain only a small number of partners and programmes that met its criteria of quality, profitability and strategic considerations. This resulted in an immediate decision to reduce the number of partners from 20 to 6 in the first instance.

Development and implementation of a TNE exit quality framework
In a manner highly characteristic of the University, once the decision was taken in favour of a staged exit from its transnational partnerships, a Transnational Exit Quality Framework (TNEF) was wrapped around the withdrawal project to ensure its effectiveness, acceptability and success.

A subgroup of the University’s existing Transnational Management Group was established with wide University representation under the leadership of the pro-vice-chancellor International and Development (PVCi&D). The group was
charged with developing the TNEF. It focused on a quality phased teach-out from most of the University’s programmes, including in some cases the largest and most longstanding. The Framework included timelines, a governance framework, exit checklist, templates for advising students and staff, progress reporting, a risk register and contingency plan. The PVCI&D exercises continuing institutional oversight of the process.

The TNEF governs strategic decision making and oversight of decisions to close programmes, negotiations with partners, and communications with students, alumni and national agencies. Detailed protocols, templates and reporting mechanisms have been implemented ensuring that all students have study plans to complete and graduate from programmes that are scheduled to close. The majority of final intakes will take place in 2009-10. The University, in keeping with the excellent partner relationships it has enjoyed over many years, has assisted a number of partners to locate alternative Australian providers. The University will reconsider its position in 2011 in relation to remaining programmes.

Planning and implementation of the teach-out included detailed plans for each partner and programme and a rationalisation of programme administration at Division level. Disengagement committees were established in the Division of Business and the Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences. The Division of Information Technology, Engineering and the Environment’s transnational programmes and the Division of Health Science’s exit operations were less significant and were managed at the Divisional level in accordance with University-level expectations in relation to quality processes and timelines, guided by the major exit exercise carried out in respect of the Business programmes.

At the outset the PVCI&D took a leading role in consulting with internal stakeholders and overseeing the communication process, in particular communication with the overseas partners. The teach-out process was, and remains, a substantial undertaking which in the words of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) in its 2009 report of its audit of the University, was “planned and implemented both effectively and sensitively. It is for some programmes a lengthy process that will not be concluded until 2016”.

AUQA reported consistently positive feedback from all sample transnational partners which it consulted. The partners “attested to excellent communication channels between themselves and UniSA. Partners also commented on the clear and extensive procedures and guidelines in the form of manuals or handbooks that guide all aspects of the business partnerships. This applied to the ongoing partnerships as well as to those partners and programmes that have been identified for withdrawal and teach-out”.

Most recently, in early 2010, and while the number of the University’s overseas teaching partnerships are being reduced, transnational enrolments are around 7,600, not much different to the numbers some years earlier. The greatest change has been in terms of financial returns. The proportion of revenue generated from transnational, as opposed to onshore international student enrolments, has declined considerably, to the point where there has been a clear “cross over”. Growth in UniSA’s international student enrolments in Australia has been considerably more productive in revenue terms.

Analysis of leadership and management skills and competencies

The leadership and management skills and competencies involved in UniSA’s success in effectively withdrawing from transnational activity were considerable and were focused in very sharp and precise ways both internally and externally.

Internal focus

The collective task of the UniSA leadership was to bring the University to understand and accept the need for a shift of direction away from the previous reliance on transnational delivery. The task was to examine forensically whether the former international strategy was the right one for the future.

The essential motivation for the change was an emerging recognition by senior University managers of the risks, including the financial risks, associated with the University’s entrenched commitment to transnational delivery. This early sense of a need for change was accelerated and guided by the new vice-chancellor who both catalysed action by initiating a review of transnational activity and, through New Horizons, placed that review within a wider strategic context which pointed to new directions and priorities for the University.

However, the strategic understanding alone was not sufficient to ensure the acceptance and success of the change. It was necessary to communicate it effectively and also to back it up with actions which effectively engaged the whole University community in deciding and owning the form the change would take.

The original decision to withdraw was widely seen as being top-down. “The repositioning exercise was initiated and led by the Centre and by some Division executives, not by academics and the international office”. Consequently, the decision and its basis, in particular the financial analysis of transnational activity, initially came in for criticism by parts of the University identifying closely with the University’s transnational efforts. A major challenge for University management was to persuade those academic and professional staff who were deeply
committed and dedicated to transnational programmes and partners to accept that this was the best way forward.

Ultimately, University executive management was successful in implementing the strategy because of the commitment from the highest levels to putting in place an open and comprehensive consultation process and because of the public, shared view amongst key members of Senior Management. In addition the University’s “flat management” structures contributed to the general buy in with a combination of centralised and collegial management of the change effected through the PVC&I&D.

It was recognised that it would be important for the Division of Business to lead the change. The PVC&I&D perceived this early on and worked closely with the pro-vice-chancellor (Business) and operational staff in the Division to establish the Transnational Quality Exit Framework and to apply it across the University.

Other reasons for the successful acceptance of the new strategy were:

- The ability of relevant senior executives to bring a number of crucial heads of department onside early. Some heads, facing administrative challenges with large numbers of staff offshore on a regular basis, were seen to be “predisposed to making the change”. Moreover, some of the relevant staff had been recently appointed and reflected ‘generational change’ within the Division and School leadership. Executive managers were able to capitalise on this circumstance.
- Departments that believed they were generating a profit from their transnational engagement and those who initially perceived the financial modelling to be flawed were consulted and refinements were made to the modelling based on their input and advice.
- Perceived disadvantages to departments and to individual academic staff were sensitively handled.
- The University leadership successfully appealed to higher motives and new strategic directions. This appeal was made the more persuasive through the consultative processes put in place for the development of New Horizons.
- By no means least, the University’s leadership showed great sensitivity to UniSA’s laudable history in international matters and forthrightly and explicitly valued and praised the achievements of the past. The change was partly sold “not as a revolution but an evolution, the result of our successful history in international delivery”.
- Finally, University Council was persuaded of the validity of the change. “The presence of very strong business people on Council made it an objective assessment when we proposed it”. The vice-chancellor invited the pro-vice-chancellor (Business) (one of the strongest proponents for the change) to address the Council, whose members asked whether he supported the change and whether he believed he could succeed in pulling it off. His affirmative response aided Council’s agreement to the change.

“TNE was so much a part of the UniSA psyche for so long, no one originally thought we should withdraw”. Ultimately, however, the change “was received reasonably well at the coal face. Indeed there was a sense of relief in some areas that the University was separating from some partners who were less well-regarded than others”.

External focus

The external focus of the change initially required a decision about partners and countries where withdrawal would be put into effect. The deep analysis of partnership programmes informed this decision and partners in Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong especially were selected for closure. However, UniSA’s programmes in China were quarantined from the change for the time being for strategic reasons.

The reputational risk of the disengagement backfiring was very high; the University’s image could be damaged severely and it could be seen to “lose face” which in Far Eastern cultures is a serious matter. Equally the partner’s reputation might suffer from the loss of an important overseas link. Fortunately, in the view of some UniSA staff, “external relations over the withdrawal from transnational education were handled better than internal ones”. Whatever the validity of this view, there is no doubt that the University’s management of the change with its international partners, students and the relevant overseas authorities was particularly successful. There were a number of reasons for this:

- Crucially the PVC&I&D, in conjunction in particular with the pro-vice-chancellor Business, took lead responsibility for managing the relationship with the overseas partners, particularly in breaking the “bad news” about withdrawal. The PVC&I&D was the “consummate diplomat”, with outstanding “soft skills”. She possessed great intercultural, interpersonal and communication skills, had deep and trusted relationships with the partners concerned and consequently was able to successfully steer the University “smoothly over the speed humps”, despite the sensitivities involved. This was no easy task. The view shared by many is that the University “could not have pulled it off with such assuredness and style without her”. Equally, without the firm resolve of the pro-vice-chancellors of the University’s four large Divisions, and of the Business Division in particular, the process would not have run as smoothly as it has so far.
• Similar capabilities, however, applied in the case of a large number of University staff, academic and administrative, who subsequently had to interact with the partners over withdrawal arrangements and the phased teach-out. The University’s long involvement with transnational programmes, the intercultural capabilities of many UniSA staff and the deep and personal familiarity between these staff and many staff within the partner programmes helped to effect a smooth and cordial withdrawal.

• Communications and negotiations were undertaken openly and in good faith with partners and students of the overseas universities. Particular efforts were made to inform and reassure students about the changes and particular attention was paid to ensuring that individual students were not academically disadvantaged throughout the teach-out phase.

• A crucial challenge was to persuade the partners that the reasons for withdrawal did not necessarily have anything to do, for the most part, with the partners concerned. This required not only providing the evidence basis for the shift in strategy but committing to ongoing, productive communication, without rancour and without blame, while the partnership was being phased out.

• Evidence for the change was provided, including evidence about the declining financial returns to the University. At the same time the normal termination clauses in contracts were adhered to, involving sufficient advance notice of the University’s intentions. In some instances money was owed by partners so discussions with them had to be carefully timed. In other cases, the University was active in finding new partners to replace the University after its withdrawal.

• Partners who were badly affected financially tended to be more “argumentative”, but the University was able to reach a financial accommodation with them, essentially not to withdraw precipitously, so as to allow adjustment by the partner.

• Finally, the long and successful relations with most partners held the University in good stead for making the change. The University was well known and trusted by the partners and there was willingness, despite the sting which the announcement of withdrawal must have had for the partners involved, for the partners to acknowledge and accept that the University was moving from one stage of its development to another.

Overall, the turbulence of withdrawal was minimal because of the way the change was sold to the partners. Clear, evidence-based strategic assessment, outstanding communication and negotiation skills, deep intercultural understanding, strong and long-standing trust and personal involvement, sensitivity to the business and “face” needs of partners and courtesy and flexibility on the part of the University ultimately worked together to assure the partners that the University was not engaged in “ a dump and run game.”

The outcome was generally amicable. While some partners may initially have been surprised and aggrieved, there was no adverse media or student “flare up”. Importantly, partners were seen publicly not to be blamed. While some might not be willing to work with the University again, this is unlikely to be due to ill feeling so much as a recognition that partnerships, even long standing ones, need to change over time.

Conclusion
The disengagement was successful thanks to a combination of strategic leadership and sensitive management of both the internal and external stakeholders. There was also a commitment to open and comprehensive consultations with internal stakeholders about the need for change and throughout the change process. The strategic decision was triggered by a trenchant analysis of transnational programmes requiring a high level of business experience and capability. However, the withdrawal would not have been possible without the existence of very good contracts and agreement processes which meant the formal withdrawal process had a firm legal base to it. Its success also owed much to the strong relationships that had been built up over a number of years with partner institutions. Those partners with whom the University had the deepest relationships were those who most understood the need for the strategic changes.
3. Leadership roles

Our analysis of the studies suggests that there are five areas where university leaders at institutional level have key roles if international partnerships are to succeed. They must:

• Ensure that the international partnership strategy is in line with the broad institutional strategy.
• Appoint able champions to develop and operate the partnership.
• Ensure that central pump priming funds are made available when needed.
• Communicate the international strategy so as to get wide institutional support from academic and professional support staff.
• Manage the involvement of the Governing Body at the right time.

We now explore each of these in turn with reference to evidence in the case studies.

3.1 Setting the international partnership strategy

International Partnerships can be started by: (a) a clear strategic decision at the top of the institution (b) a faculty or departmental level contact (c) a government-funded aid link and (d) a central or faculty response to an external invitation. In our case studies, we have examples of each of these approaches, as the table below shows.

The university’s international or internationalisation strategy is usually (but not always) the driver for an international partnership (or as in case of UniSA) for a decision to change partners or reduce reliance on TNE. In recent years, it has become common to find an emphasis on strategic partnerships at the heart of international strategies. Universities are finding that partnerships are demanding in management time and that it is sensible to limit them to a few selected institutions in which all faculties are encouraged to collaborate. The Monash decision to focus on four global partnerships, of which Sichuan is one, is a good example of this strategy. A similar high level, strategic decision is illustrated in the UNISA study; in this case, academic and financial analyses led the university to abandon its emphasis on offshore TNE and focus instead on recruiting more international students and to raise its research profile and activity. This decision was driven by concerns about the effort needed to ensure quality of teaching offshore and the profitability of TNE.

Thus, the relationship between the overall vision and strategy and the vice-chancellor is crucial. If he or she is the driver or author of the strategy, he or she may well initiate the partnerships (or the decision to stop them). We should not assume that partnership strategies are set only by the vice-chancellor, since the initiator of a strategy may be a dean or head of a College, to whom authority has been delegated.

One way of analysing international partnerships is to classify them in three ways:

• Level One – Those that are strategic from a whole-of-institution perspective and which aim to involve a wide range of faculties and departments in collaborative teaching and research. These tend to be selected and promoted by top management.
• Level Two – Those which are initiated at faculty or departmental level.
• Level Three – Those which are essentially one-to-one arrangements between individual academic staff or researchers.

In the preceding paragraphs we have described Level One arrangements, but an interesting area is at Level Two where partnerships begin at a lower organisational level and are then adopted and developed with help from senior management into much broader collaborations. An excellent example is the link between Wolverhampton and Shenzhen, which started with two junior members of academic staff meeting at an exhibition in China. In USM’s case, this is hindering the expansion of the existing partnerships, since funding is being diverted to the development of new ones in line with ministerial objectives.

Strategic origin of partnerships

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Clear institution level strategic lead</th>
<th>Newcastle/Johor University of South Australia (UniSA) Monash/Sichuan</th>
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<tr>
<td>A faculty or departmental initiative later adopted by top management</td>
<td>Wolverhampton/Shenzhen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Top management response to an external request</td>
<td>UCL/South Australia Curtin/Sarawak</td>
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It is often argued that the existence of a clear strategy should not limit a university leadership’s flexibility in being responsive to opportunity. Opportunism should not be ruled out. Examples of this happening are shown in two of the case studies. These are where the decision was taken to accept a government offer to set up a campus (e.g., Curtin in Sarawak and UCL in Adelaide), even though in UCL’s case this was contrary to the existing strategy. In UCL, having authorised the decision, the Provost left the entire project to a Vice Provost to promote and develop and the project led to a total change in the university’s international strategy (since it now has two more offshore projects in hand).

In our case studies where such ad hoc or opportunistic decisions were made it required involvement from the institutional leadership; it is doubtful whether anyone at a lower level would have had sufficient authority to go against an accepted corporate strategy. The leadership role, therefore, is not only to set a strategy, but also to decide when it can be challenged. However, where there is no clear institutional strategy on international partnerships (and where structures and decisions are heavily devolved), the way is more open for initiatives to be taken at Level Two.

3.2 Appointing champions to develop and operate the project

Once a decision had been made to launch a new international partnership project of the Level One kind, the leadership has to find a champion to carry it forward. In the cases of Newcastle and UCL, the vice-chancellors appointed a former Dean of the School of Medicine and the Vice Provost respectively to be champions to develop the projects. But, in those cases where the partnership has evolved from a donor/aid project, the champions will already be there, since they are the project leaders who sought external funding in the first place.

In those case studies where the partnership was at the faculty or departmental level there was no need for any particular champion to be selected by the institutional leadership since that had already happened. The initiative to develop the partnership took place and was put into practice there also, without any special input from the institutional leadership (other than that which was required by the university’s routine procedures).

The Wolverhampton study is interesting because the champion role changed over time. As described above, the partnership was a classic “bottom-up” relationship, driven by individual academic staff which then broadened out and became a project of the International Office with its head as the champion. However, respective vice-chancellors were increasingly involved and the future of the partnership now rests with the vice-chancellor and the head of the International Office.

In the UniSA case study, the vice-chancellor required a strong champion to manage the disengagement process and found it in the pro-vice-chancellor International and Development. This was particularly challenging as there were both internal and external audiences to manage. Internally, academic staff in faculties who thought they were benefiting from their trans-national education activities had to be persuaded that they could achieve the same objectives through other means. Externally, the problems were greater, since the overseas academic partners who had relied on UniSA’s academic support were told that it would no longer be available. Even though UniSA undertook to ensure that no student suffered academically, there was an enormous risk of damage to the University’s reputation in the countries concerned. It is a tribute to the management and diplomatic skills involved in the disengagement process that the Council was willing to take the risk and that the withdrawal was accepted by partners. The case study’s words on this are: “there was willingness, despite the sting which the announcement of withdrawal must have had for the partners involved, for the partners to acknowledge and accept that the University was moving from one stage of its development to another. To have achieved this smoothly is a reflection of the long and successful relationship between the University and its overseas partners”.

A classic challenge in university management is obtaining ownership by the academic community of initiatives and strategies that have been agreed at the corporate level. This is where the principle of having one or more project champions is essential. The choice of champion is a key factor, since the role requires the person to be able to face both ways in the hierarchy – to the Senior Management Team and to faculty and departmental leaders where the real work will take place (and where the partnership will succeed or fail). Champions must have the time to devote to persuading colleagues as well as a reputation and a personality that ensures that they are listened to. Where the strategy is for multi-faculty partnerships, the vice-chancellor and the champion have a particularly strong leadership role since they have to sell the virtues of the link to several deans. The case study of the Monash/Sichuan partnership is a good example of a centrally driven strategy which can only work if deans are persuaded that it should happen.

However, different skills are needed by project champions at different phases in a partnership’s existence. The phases of development change and so do the skills needed to drive or steer the activities involved. In general, more entrepreneurial skills are needed for the early set up phases, while managers and professional support staff are more valuable when the activity is operating fully.
3.3 Providing central pump priming funding
Investigating major offshore partnership initiatives can be hugely expensive. Newcastle has spent £700k from its central funds on all the due diligence and investigative work required in both the UK and Malaysia. Monash also has invested large sums in helping deans to map their respective strengths with potential partners, in paying for them to travel to get to know the other side, as well as funding cultural programmes for Monash staff on Chinese language and culture.

In the Wolverhampton study, there was a regular flow of central funding that kept the partnership going and the University’s central funds paid for the costs of 37 visiting Chinese scholars over a ten year period from 1996 to 2006, including giving them a stipend. This funding was also supplemented by School Development funds which were used to support some of the partnership costs.

Funding for partnership activities in their early stages usually comes from a central pot – under the control of a pro-vice-chancellor or an influential International Office. Clearly the institution level leadership must be supportive, if this is to happen. However, central funding cannot support partnerships for ever and so there has to be a strategy for ensuring that any costs are picked up by those directly involved. In the case of the NuMed development, for example, the Faculty of Medical Sciences was expected to manage all the budgets for the partnership once the course delivery had begun.

3.4 Getting wide institutional support
Many internationalisation strategies argue for a few deep partnerships rather than many shallow ones. Where this is the case, there is a considerable burden on management to get the policy adopted throughout the university. Not only will it mean that the centre is less interested in some existing partnerships (which will all have their champions and supporters), but academic staff will be expected to show interest in an institution with which they may not be familiar. The select few partnerships will receive central funding and support that may have been more widely spread before. Monash’s focus on four big links is a good example.

Leaders have to persuade academic colleagues of the value of creating a partnership in their own discipline. Clearly, this cannot be done by the Senior Management Team alone; it needs the support of the deans to whom leadership responsibilities will have been distributed. Strategies cannot be imposed and will require sensitive negotiation by their champions with senior members of the community. Then, once the deans are persuaded of the academic merits and opportunities from working with the selected partner, they in turn have to persuade their faculty and departmental colleagues. Monash and Newcastle achieved this commitment through a mixture of persuasion and financial support (such as paying for travel and all the development costs connected with academic collaboration). Monash even allocated A$200,000 to funding exploratory work in its 10 faculties to identify subjects for joint research with Sichuan. After this two deputy-vice-chancellors spent three weeks negotiating with them in order to identify six priority areas of research for the university. In UCL’s case, commitment was achieved through careful selection of likely faculty champions who were known to have interests in the country concerned and to be of an entrepreneurial nature. However the dean or head of department may then have to persuade colleagues to invest time in understanding the particular characteristics of the partner institution and encourage them to travel regularly or even in some cases to reside offshore.

Using central funds to persuade the community
At the University of Leiden a central university fund meets the costs of exploratory missions of senior staff to visit a number of universities in countries where the university wishes to develop strategic research partnerships. This is justified by the university’s wish to be proactive in steering its academic staff towards partnerships in certain target countries. The university hopes that individual research collaborations will be identified during these visits and then lead to deeper strategic partnerships with the institutions concerned.


It is not only the academic community that needs to be persuaded to work with an international partner. The professional staff also have to be won over, since very large numbers of support staff can be involved in helping to make a new international partnership work. In the case of UCL there was some initial criticism by the academic community that there were too many administrators involved in the initial stages of the project. But the decision to involve them all had two main objectives; firstly, to ensure that all aspects of the partnership including the objectives and the rationale were understood by all the support staff likely to be involved; secondly, so that they would understand the need to amend procedures or adapt regulations if necessary.

The case studies have given some examples of frustration in the one country about the bureaucratic approaches of support staff in the other; this can be ameliorated if professional staff are involved at an early stage and are encouraged to adopt entrepreneurial rather than regulatory attitudes.
A key managerial decision is when to call in external professional advice; how much can internal professionals be relied upon? What specialist help is needed from the other country? The most comprehensive example of this is the NUMed project which required lawyers to be commissioned in both countries, tax consultants in Malaysia, architects and planners in Malaysia, marketing consultants in both countries and quantity surveyors in Malaysia. It was not appropriate for all of these to be managed by the academic champion for the project and so there was an evident need for a high level planning group to oversee the project, as happened in UCL. Curtin University’s new campus in Sarawak had similar issues to manage and also drew on many professionals from both countries.

3.5 Managing the governing body’s involvement
An important role for the vice-chancellor is managing the relationship with the Governing Body. The vice-chancellor has to decide how much to involve them and when. If they are left out of key early discussions and not told until it is too late, they could be very unhappy. No governor likes to feel that he or she is a rubber stamp. If they are brought into discussions too early, they may hinder an open appraisal or foreclose options on the basis of very little understanding of the opportunities. Thus the timing is crucial, as is the amount of information they should be given.

This topic is considered further in the next section, but the key point is that the vice-chancellor, by nature of the relationship with the chair of the Governing Body, is the one who must decide when to involve the governors. This can be risky. The Curtin case study records staff as viewing the vice-chancellor’s actions as “strategic and insightful”, but that in taking the opportunity to Council “he took a risk with the Council initially less inclined and anxious about the finances and quality assurance”.

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4. Governance aspects

In the UK, there is a very wide range of practice in the extent to which governors are involved in a university’s international strategy or are even informed about it. Some of the reasons are obvious as they depend on the scale and type of the university’s activity internationally; others may be more personal and relate to the interest and experience of the chair or members of the Council itself. Informal surveys of Governing Body members in the UK have shown that in many cases they do not know about (and have never been asked to approve) their university’s international strategy. However, there are three reasons why a Council or Governing Body (GB) should be involved in an international partnership:

a. If there is any risk that the link may bring reputational damage, not only to the institution but to the country’s national reputation.

b. If there could be financial losses.

c. If the link does not fit within an internationalisation strategy that they have agreed.

In both the United Kingdom and Australia there have been several *causes célèbres* in which universities have suffered major financial losses or reputational damage as a result of overseas ventures. Some of the early UK cases resulted in their Governing Body chairs being called before the Public Accounts Committee of the UK Parliament. Because of this history, it is inevitable that some Councils or GB’s have concerns about offshore activities. In general it is safe to say that high profile offshore campuses and large scale delivery of TNE are seen to be the most risky, while small scale franchising or 2+1 and 3+0 relationships are less risky. A big unknown, however, is what verdict a QAA, MQA or AUQA review will give when assessing the quality of teaching delivered overseas. Should this be critical, then the Governing Body will need to be informed and will want to know what steps have been taken to protect the university’s reputation. This raises issues of the relationship between the Governing Body and the Academic Board or Senate, since this is where policy on academic quality usually rests.

In the case studies there is a wide variation in the involvement of governors, although the three projects involving a significant offshore presence were inevitably more demanding of their time.

- The chancellor (chair of the GB) was actively involved in the decision by Curtin University to establish a campus at Sarawak; he met Malaysian officials when they came to Perth and also visited the campus site at Miri during the negotiations. The role of Council was crucial in designing a solution that limited risk and also required no capital investment. During their discussions some of their doubts were mitigated by the view that not proceeding was a greater risk than going ahead; so much had been invested in high level conversations with senior government officials.

- At UCL, the Council reviewed all the legal agreements that were required during the negotiation phase and members saw information reports on the project from the Vice Provost at each of its meetings, after it had given the initial approval in principle to the decision.

- Similarly, at Newcastle the Council approved the Proof of Concept paper as a way forward; it authorised the creation of the Malaysian subsidiary company; it approved a decision to proceed for the benefit of the Malaysian government and it authorised the signature of the lease with the Malaysian landlord. Its Audit Committee commissioned an internal audit report into the way the project was managed.

- In contrast, there was little involvement by the Council in the Wolverhampton/Shenzhen partnership or in the USM or Taylor’s projects. These were undertaken at a level where the Council delegated managerial authority and did not require feedback.

- The Council of the University of South Australia was asked to approve the change in strategy; this was not easy since, as the case study reports, TNE “had been part of the UniSA psyche for so long that no-one originally thought we should withdraw”. However, Council was persuaded that the difficult and potentially risky withdrawal from established partnerships was wise.

- At Monash the University Council was asked to agree a new international strategy in 2005 and 2006 which led to the decision to focus more on international research in order to improve its global ranking. This was the basis for the focus on three strategic partnerships with Sichuan, Warwick and Arizona State Universities. Since the Council contained members with considerable China experience, they were interested in considering and supporting a China link.
In some cases the Governing Body relied on checks done by its committees, eg; the Finance Committee looked at the forecasts to confirm that projects were viable and the Risk or Audit Committees were sometimes required to report on the risk profile and the plans to mitigate any significant risks. In the Curtin case the Council’s view on risk was cautious and it was instinctively risk averse. At that time, Australian universities had limited experience of operating an offshore campus; “there were only two examples and one of them was perceived as being unsuccessful educationally and financially.”

The Newcastle case is a good example of a very comprehensive due diligence and risk assessment process which lasted for more than two years. During the early Proof of Concept phase in 2005-06 research was carried out into how other offshore campuses in Malaysia had fared and visits were made to Monash University’s Sunway campus and Nottingham University’s Malaysia campus. In addition, the reasons for the expensive failure of Sheffield University to establish a medical school campus at Ipoh were explored.

Only one case study has suggested a role for the Council in setting or monitoring the partnership with Key Performance Indicators and this is the NuMed project at Newcastle University. The venture lends itself to some quantitative measures and is in any event high profile and high risk in reputational terms. It is also the University’s first major overseas venture and it is understandable that the Council will be particularly vigilant.

Although there are many examples of Governing Body members having specialist country expertise that is used to help on aspects of a partnership, the general rule has been that any decisions on international operations are collective ones, taken by the Council as a whole.
5. Ensuring effective management

5.1 Management structures

The case studies illustrate different models of the management support needed for partnerships. The factors influencing how they are managed are the existing institutional structure on international issues, the degree to which decisions are delegated and the type of partnership activity. Clearly a major project to establish an offshore campus requires a different management structure (and scale of support) than is needed to oversee a series of inter-faculty links.

In the case studies we therefore see a range of management approaches, including:

- An influential deputy-vice-chancellor charged by the vice-chancellor with implementing the project. (UCL, UniSA, Monash).
- The vice-chancellor delegates the project management to someone of dean status (Newcastle).
- The vice-chancellor takes the lead and coordinates input from several others (Curtin).
- An International Office or Partnership Office oversees operations from a quality perspective (Wolverhampton).

One key factor is the past international experience of the University. At Monash, for example, the university was a pioneer in pursuing internationalisation from the mid 1980's and its academic and administrative staff had little to learn about the operational aspects of working overseas. Curtin similarly had many offshore interests. In contrast at Newcastle or UCL there was no tradition of overseas working at institutional level and for both of them the project represented a major leap into the unknown. Novice universities will usually call in outside professionals (both from the home and target countries) when due diligence is needed or legal/corporate set ups. They may also do what Newcastle did and study instances where similar ventures in the target country failed.

The role and size of the International Office is another factor. At Wolverhampton it played a key role from 1998 onwards in co-ordinating all the various linkages with Shenzhen, whereas in many UK institutions its brief has traditionally been restricted to recruiting international students – although that is now changing. In the current structure of many universities a strong Partnerships Office is emerging with the functions of overseeing due diligence checks on potential partners, approving any MoUs or partnership agreements and then monitoring the performance of all operational partnerships. Where such an office exists, the decision on where to locate managerial and professional support for a new partnership is an easy one.

The way that the venture was managed at UCL is perhaps typical. The Vice Provost has an office which in all but name is a Partnerships Office. The head of this office was given the job of servicing and chairing a Project Group which was formed after an initial feasibility study had been completed. This Group comprised academics from the Faculty of Engineering Sciences and professional officers from Human Resources, Estates, Educational Liaison, Information Systems, the Registrar’s Division, Quality Assurance, the Library and the Finance Department. It was a large group and met about 15 times (which some of the academic participants thought was excessive). Expert advice was also taken from UCL’s Business and Management Systems concerning ICT links and operations with the Adelaide campus.

One of the main problems in the routine management of overseas partnerships is distance and the consequent difficulties in clearing up problems as they arise on the ground. UCL was in a very fortunate position as their partner, the Government of South Australia, had an Agent General in London whose office was able to help throughout. Indeed, the Deputy Agent General became so committed to the project that he has joined UCL’s team on the ground in Adelaide.

5.2 Sound research and information resources

Leaders at all levels rely on being able to obtain sound, up-to-date information at the various stages of developing a partnership. We saw in the Curtin and NuMed studies how much effort was dedicated to undertaking extensive due diligence and market research before the decision to proceed. Many universities have invested resources in creating their own international research teams investigating target countries and potential partner institutions.

However, in Australia and the UK there are extensive national sources of intelligence housed in organisations such as Australia Education International, IDP and the International Education Association of Australia. The UK is home to the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education as well as the UK HE international Unit and the British Council; each of these produces market intelligence.

Information about the performance of a partnership is also important once it has reached the operational phase. While a Partnerships Office is the obvious body to expect to obtain monitoring information, the need for this may depend on the scale, significance and risk profile of the partnership. Information on Level Two partnerships may often remain at faculty level and be fed only to the Faculty Board.
5.3 Human resource management issues
Unsurprisingly, human resource and staffing issues are a key management area of concern in all international partnerships and will need to be attended to by the leadership. An offshore activity can involve three kinds of staff:

- Those nationals employed on local terms and conditions. This is likely to involve both academic and professional support staff.
- Staff recruited from all countries to work on the project or campus.
- Academic staff from the home country.

Agreeing the respective terms and conditions for all three categories of staff will be a testing exercise for an HR department. Although it is not usually an issue that will involve the vice-chancellor once the basic principles have been agreed, problems in this area have the potential to disrupt any project.

For academic or support staff of one’s own institution there are some major HR management issues:

- The technicalities of employing academic staff in another country. Not only are there the national regulations and possible restrictions on visas, work permits and foreign workers, but also it is necessary to understand the Terms and Conditions of academic staff in the partner organisation. These could be relevant in agreeing the terms and conditions of home academics who transfer overseas.
- There may be a lot of education to do for those who are unfamiliar with working abroad. The Global Support Project at the University of Washington in Seattle is an example of an institutional service aimed at helping staff and students learn about working overseas.
- Even if staff understand all the issues related to overseas work, they have to be persuaded to spend regular amounts of time as “flying faculty” teaching or working with the international partner. Academic departments often find there is initial enthusiasm, but after some years this wears off and it becomes harder to get regular committed teaching carried out.

When the offshore activity is to work with a research partner there is less reluctance to travel if the partner has research projects to which both sides are committed. In the Monash and UCL cases the key rationale for the activity was to carry out world class research so the motivation was there. However, in UCL’s case the question of scale arose. How realistic is it for a small unit of no more than five or six permanent staff to carry out such research many thousand miles away from base?

Despite the barriers to travel and working overseas, many staff enjoy it and relish the opportunity to work in another culture. Smith describes two alternative scenarios for academic staff: either “sinking in the sand” because they are not familiar with local customs and seek to make the campus a remote outpost of their own institution or “blooming in the desert” because they learn and adapt after they have enjoyed effective induction and staff development.

5.4 Cross-cultural differences
It may be useful to distinguish between three kinds of “cultural” difference which can become conflated.

- Those relating to personalities. In the Wolverhampton case, for example, the Dean of Business reported that he could no longer work with the Business School in the partner institution because the dean there had changed and the present one was not interested.
- The differences that relate to national characteristics and customs. Small industries have developed showing people “How to do business in…” which, for example, describe the correct way to hand over business cards and show which simple gestures might give offence. Allied to this are the barriers that result from needing to work with interpreters or with one side having a less than perfect understanding of the other’s language. To its credit, Monash has invested considerable funds in enabling its staff to learn about China and to study the Chinese language.
- Institutional cultures. Some institutions are more bureaucratic than others so that complaints by one partner about the other’s regulations or processes may not be due to national cultures (unless they directly relate to the regulatory framework). There were frequent mentions in the case studies of one side being frustrated by the slow speed of decision making or the ever changing processes in the other partner. Some of this may well be due to the pioneering nature of a partnership and to the fact that both parties are nervous at going ahead when the ground rules are not well defined. In this context it is interesting to see that an Internal Audit report on the NuMed project praised the project team for their common sense in interpreting unhelpful university regulations flexibly – rather than stalling because they were a barrier.

Almost all the case studies comment favourably on university leaders’ ability to overcome any cross-cultural barriers. To some extent this is due to the growing use of English as a

48 See http://f2.washington.edu/fm/globalsupport/
49 Smith (2009)
lingua franca in academia, the convergence of Anglo-Saxon academic structures (an increasing similarity between university management models from the USA and the UK) and to the frequency of contacts between institutional leaders through networks such as the Association of Commonwealth Universities and International Association of Universities.

Despite the leaders’ abilities to overcome cultural misunderstandings, the case studies show that unexpected problems occurred frequently with those academic and administrative staff charged with developing the detailed collaboration. At UCL, one academic said “we thought that we understood the Australians but we did not”. At Curtin, the staff acknowledge that differences in cultural understanding and values are inevitable in Sarawak, but consider that they have created a basis of mutual trust and sociability over the years, including a shared sense of humour. “We are able to successfully negotiate any ‘nasties’ and language is not a real issue either”.

There are ways of removing or minimising cross-cultural blockages. The University of Wolverhampton decided to send a member of academic staff to live in the partner institution for several months each year. She became very well known to their academic and administrative staff and was invaluable in clearing day to day obstacles. Another way is to share administrative staff and management practices, as is happening in the Monash-Sichuan partnership. In this way both sides start to understand the other’s management cultures and procedures.

The cross-cultural challenges arise mostly in those cases of genuine joint working between the two partners. They are not so evident in the cases where partnership exchanges are one sided with staff or students moving one way only (as in Wolverhampton-Shenzhen). Many early Malaysian partnerships in the 1990s had their basis in aid funded projects in which Australian or UK academic staff went to develop and deliver programmes in Malaysia. In time these moved to a 3+0 basis with no student flows to Australia or the UK. Since the awards were those of the Australian/UK institution and much of the material owed its origins to the awarding institution, the scope for difficult cross cultural issues was lessened.

In global terms, we are seeing a gradual move away from one-sided partnerships in which the movement of staff and students is all one way to ones in which both sides participate on equal terms; there are movements of staff and students both ways, and joint teaching and joint research collaboration becomes the norm. This is the model which the UCL, Monash-Sichuan, and NuMed projects hope to achieve, although in UCL the partner is the State Government which will fund research. However, this has been achieved very successfully at Curtin. The case study records one comment “we are successfully becoming part of the local community in terms of research and consulting and we are gaining research support”. It was also found that Sarawak based research activities “line up with the Curtin strategic research plan”. Ironically perhaps, it is this model of mutual research that potentially raises the most risky cross-cultural issues and where the leaders face the greatest challenges, since it demands close collaborative working across the board. The model requires the incoming university to understand the research needs and developmental aspirations of the host nation so that genuine joint working can take place.
6. Conclusions on leadership skills and competences

Readers of the case studies will find that similar messages recur concerning the skills and competences needed to manage international partnerships. In almost all the cases the same critical success factors are repeated. There is also a good match with the factors and tasks that our literature survey showed were needed for effective leadership.

Vision

First, and most important, is the vision to adopt and promote a partnership, particularly if it is linked to a major strategic change. This vision was clearly shown in the Curtin, Monash, UCL, Newcastle and UniSA cases. In all five studies the university was making a major change which required the personal commitment and drive of the vice-chancellor to take effect. In four cases the decision went against the existing strategy and considerable effort was devoted by the vice-chancellor and senior colleagues to persuading the community that a change was needed.

- The Sichuan partnership that Monash pursued was an important part of a new strategy of reducing the number of international partners to a small number of key relationships.
- UCL’s venture into South Australia was the university’s first international offshore presence and went against the existing policy of remaining a London-only institution.
- Newcastle’s decision to establish a campus in Johor was also a first with the objective of building up an international reputation.
- Finally, UniSA’s policy of disengaging from almost all its offshore teaching activity was a radical reversal of the earlier strategy of building up capacity in this area. The change required confronting the academic and administrative community many of whom had a vested interest in the status quo.

This first characteristic of strategic thinking has many related attributes such as the ability to analyse the present situation critically, to identify the weaknesses, to develop innovative solutions and then translate them into strategic and visionary terms, which all can understand.

Consultation

A second key skill is the ability to consult comprehensively with the university community about the change. Some leaders are excellent at setting strategy, but lack patience during the inevitably long stage of consultation with members of staff. If the vice-chancellor is able to handle these consultations in a way that does not seem as though it is an imposition of an already agreed position, there is a much greater chance of the desired change being accepted. It also helps if the vice-chancellor is enthusiastically committed to the new policy. In the Curtin case, the vice-chancellor is described as being “facilitator, monitor and co-ordinator – and to a lesser extent mentor”, while an AUQA audit of the project in 2002 commended the vice-chancellor for “his high level of visibility and interaction with staff and with the community”.

The case study on UniSA’s decision to disengage from some transnational activities shows that at first the change was criticised internally as it was seen as being top-down; this perception meant that considerable investment of time was needed to consult with all those who felt aggrieved and disenfranchised.

One of the most important audiences to persuade about a strategic change is the Council and, as we have seen above, the vice-chancellor has the key role in ensuring that Council members as a whole are behind any strategic change. The instinct of most Council members is to be risk averse so that winning them over to any dramatic new overseas activity could require advanced skills of advocacy and persuasion.

Selecting the right people

A third key skill is the ability to select the right people to whom responsibility for managing an international partnership strategy can be delegated. While the vice-chancellor will still be required at key milestones in any major change, the bulk of the operational activity must be placed in the hands of a person, or persons, with the time and the right skills. Thus, developing a practical framework for managing and monitoring a new strategy is an essential requirement of leaders. When the project involves regular negotiation with counterparts from another culture, the choice of a project leader must take personal characteristics into account. It may not be wise to ask someone with no international experience to take the lead; thus, in the NuMed project the vice-chancellor chose an experienced academic with a long international career, while the two deputy-vice-chancellors involved at Monash and Curtin also had substantial international experience. Once the right persons have been selected, the vice-chancellor or his/her nominee will need to be familiar with high level project management techniques and create a regular reporting system, which may well be shared with the Governing Body.
Business capability and focus
The fourth key skill is a necessary business capability and focus – that is the ability to be hard nosed and financially literate when required. In most jurisdictions universities are not allowed to use their public funding from domestic sources to subsidise overseas operations (although income from international students has no restrictions placed on it). However, Governing Bodies will require any activity offshore to be self-sustaining in the long run. At the strategic level, this is shown in the UniSA decision to use financial factors as one of the two main reasons for a change of strategy on trans-national education. More practically, the vice-chancellor will usually play a key role in deciding how much to invest financially in supporting international partnerships in their early days. He or she will also need to use sound business-like criteria in reviewing and monitoring the progress of a partnership; the university’s Council will expect this and the vice-chancellor will have to develop some relevant reporting and monitoring systems.

Cultural sensitivity and relationship building
Finally, leaders must be culturally sensitive and able to handle delicate negotiations in other languages and other environments. It is clear from the case studies that personal characteristics are important at the operational level of partnerships, but they can also be critical at the highest level, as the partnerships might not materialise at all if the chemistry is wrong. One increasingly key feature, particularly of north-south partnerships, is the growing emphasis on seeking to make partnerships effective two way operationally. As we see from one of the case studies, where exchanges are one-sided they are likely to fail.

Having defined the most important skills, we should now qualify their universal relevance. This is because partnerships change over time and each stage calls for different competences. At the start when the partnership is being developed one set of skills is most valuable; when it is operational, another set applies, but when it has to change or develop (as it always will) a wholly new portfolio of competences may be needed. It would be a mistake therefore to assume that leaders require a common range of skills for all the partnerships they might encounter.
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Information on the two partner organisations

**About the Leadership Foundation**

The Leadership Foundation's vision is that the leadership, governance and management is regarded as world-class and the practice of excellence in leadership attracts the same high esteem as excellence in research, teaching and learning. The Leadership Foundation is a UK-based membership organisation and last year 97% of all the UK universities and higher education colleges were in membership. Over 2,500 key individuals took part in a wide range of programmes, events, conferences or other form of leadership development during the past year. In addition to activities in the UK, the Leadership Foundation also engage in a wide range of events and development activities outside of the UK. In the past few years this has involved events with participants from China, India, Pakistan, India, the USA, Canada, Australia, the UAE and Saudi Arabia among others.

It is the mission of the Leadership Foundation to deliver a significant and visible contribution towards equipping current and future leaders in higher education with the skills and the awareness of good practice to help them respond to current and future challenges: this is achieved by

- Developing, commissioning and delivering leadership development programmes
- Demonstrating the benefits of tailored development approaches for leadership teams in individual higher education institutions
- Actively promoting a culture of organisational learning and reflection
- Promoting equality and diversity by creating a larger pool from which future leaders, governors and managers within higher education can be drawn
- Championing examples of excellent leadership, governance and management within higher education, wherever it is to be found and ensuring this is disseminated to the higher education sector.

Further details about the Leadership Foundation can be found at [www.lfhe.ac.uk](http://www.lfhe.ac.uk)

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The LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management has been established to enhance tertiary education in Australia, New Zealand and the region by providing a suite of programs and activities focused on institutional management and leadership and tailored to the particular needs of the sector.

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Further details about the LH Martin Institute can be found at [www.lhmartininstitute.edu.au](http://www.lhmartininstitute.edu.au)
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