

Internationalisation of the curriculum and student experience

Why an internationalised curriculum and student experience?

The basic proposition is that business is global and we have to prepare our students for that. Equally, the major business and public policy challenges are global in nature. As we research these issues they should naturally flow into what we teach.

Some key drivers towards internationalisation are

- i) the richness of the curriculum itself – perhaps we can teach Chinese political economy as a way of understanding Keynes or market economics
- ii) the demands of business and the broader community – therefore we teach topics such as cross cultural negotiation and international financial capital flows to equip our students for their future employment
- iii) the expectations of students – the better students want to broaden their skills and want international study opportunities to enrich their learning experience
- iv) the new challenges – globalisation, sustainability etc – which are cross disciplinary problems

What is expected of us?

The University: The University does not mention internationalisation in its list of expected graduate attributes (UWA Educational Principles, Appendix 1) other than that content should be to internationally recognised levels and standards (which we are doing through AACSB and EQUIS accreditation and through discipline/program reviews).

AACSB: Neither does AACSB specify content. The expectations are general (Appendix 2). We might infer they expect our programs to have practical application across all contexts, including international.

EQUIS: The EQUIS understanding of internationalisation is broad and relates in part to the positioning of the School. With regard to course content, there should be international content throughout the curriculum, with a further implication that this content which should be informed by the School's research activities (which in turn are responding to the challenges faced by international corporations with which the School has contact). Also a leading school would have internationally recognised post-graduate programs (not necessarily the MBA) which are able to attract international students and recruiters; and joint programs and alliance based activities. (See Appendix 3.)

A range of responses is required

The expectations of students (and of their potential employers) vary widely. Not everyone is going to be negotiating an iron ore price contract with BaoSteel. Equally important, the 'international' perspective is not the only one that can inform us; some researchers make a significant contribution to knowledge and practice through Oz specific, not international, research.

The diverse range of expectations and incentives suggests a multi-layered response when considering the international content of the curriculum

- for all students – an **awareness** and understanding of the global context of business
- for some students – specific cross cultural knowledge and **competence** in their chosen areas of study
- for some (an increasing number) – an international **experience** through overseas study

The international content of our programs

International content in the curricula is shaped by the discipline in general and the School's research activities in particular, the latter being one of the ways we demonstrate our distinctiveness.

Further internationalisation of the curriculum might be achieved through

- i) continued infusion of international perspectives into existing disciplinary curriculum through case studies and other teaching material and through the use of competing theoretical frameworks
- ii) the development of a program of study or major which is built upon international and interdisciplinary frameworks and integrating studies
- iii) offering specific cross-cultural competency units (there is an increasing expectation of dual language proficiency in business graduates)
- iv) study tours
- v) exchange programs
- vi) joint or double degree programs
- vii) an international student body which brings cultural differences into the class room

With regard to the curriculum content, there are a number of useful review questions about the international content of what we teach to ensure that is it not content that has simply been included to make the unit look 'international'

To what extent are the core principles of the disciplinary content universal in application? how is this demonstrated?

Should the international perspective be fundamental to the major's or unit's conceptual development?

How does the international content relate to other majors or units in the same major?

What are the learning outcomes that relate specifically to that international content? how are they articulated in the degree, major and unit learning outcomes?

How is the international content actually taught?

Freeing up the curriculum for international exchanges

There is an increasing demand for international study; School commitment to increase these opportunities. This is despite the obstacles which students face which are both financial – the actual costs and opportunity costs of having to give up a part-time job and social – lose your place in the footy team.

A third obstacle that some students face is that they can't find a semester in which to go overseas because there are compulsory units each semester. This occurs in part because they have left making the decision to study overseas too late but we are addressing this through our early marketing of international study opportunities.

Can the u/grad timetable, the sequence of units in the majors be made more flexible with a view to creating space in second semester second year and first semester third year, for overseas study?

- i) can existing sequences be made more flexible so as to create an open semester of only electives?
- ii) can units which are required for a major sequence be equally taught elsewhere?

Appendix 1

UWA Educational Principles

Students at The University of Western Australia are encouraged to develop the ability and desire:

- to master the subject matter and techniques of their chosen discipline at internationally-recognised levels and standards;
- to acquire the skills required to learn, and to continue through life to learn, from a variety of sources and experiences;
- to adapt acquired knowledge to new situations;
- to write and speak clearly, concisely and logically;
- to think and reason logically and creatively;
- to question accepted wisdom and be open to new ideas and possibilities;
- to develop mature judgement and responsibility in moral, social, and practical, as well as academic matters;
- to develop the capacity to take a leadership role in the community.

Appendix 2

AACSB: Assurance of Learning Standards

(15) The standard requires use of a systematic process for curriculum management but does not require any specific courses in the curriculum. Normally, the curriculum management process will result in an undergraduate degree program that includes learning experiences in such general knowledge and skill areas as:

- Communication abilities.
- Ethical understanding and reasoning abilities.
- Analytic skills.
- Use of information technology.
- Multicultural and diversity understanding.
- Reflective thinking skills.

Normally, the curriculum management process will result in undergraduate and master's level general management degree programs that will include learning experiences in such management-specific knowledge and skills areas as:

- Ethical and legal responsibilities in organizations and society.
- Financial theories, analysis, reporting, and markets.
- Creation of value through the integrated production and distribution of goods, services, and information.
- Group and individual dynamics in organizations.
- Statistical data analysis and management science as they support decision-making processes throughout an organization.
- Information technologies as they influence the structure and processes of organizations and economies, and as they influence the roles and techniques of management.
- Domestic and global economic environments of organizations.
- Other management-specific knowledge and abilities as identified by the school.

[MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULA]

Appendix 3

EQUIS: The International Dimension of Higher Education Institutions in Management and Business Administration

I. Qualitative aspects of management education.

Here we are concerned with adapting management education and research to an increasingly global managerial world. High level management education that aspires to prepare people to assume significant managerial responsibility in companies and organisations, whether these managers work in

their own country or abroad, must of necessity be international in content and spirit. Companies expect their managers to perform in a world of interdependence and cross-border challenges. Internationalisation of the curriculum and of the learning context is today a *sine qua non* for any business school.

In the pursuit of this qualitative objective, some essential vehicles for success are:

The international content of the business education curriculum in all areas

- An educational environment in which diversity is seen as a major value
- Close contact with corporations that are internationally active and able to provide information about the challenges that they face in a globally competitive environment
- Research that explores the relevant international challenges mentioned above
- The international exposure and mobility of students, professors, administrative staff and, very particularly, top management of the Institution.
- The proactive openness of the Institution to foreign cultures shown by:
- Effectively helping foreign visitors to gradually learn about and smoothly adapt to the culture of the host country, and
- Persuasively encouraging its domestic students, professors and staff to actively take advantage of the presence of foreign visitors in order to learn about other cultures and to appreciate the enrichment that diversity provides.

Every management education institution aiming for EQUIS accreditation must integrate these dimensions.
