

A Question of Quality: Offshore Teaching and Learning

Final Report for the AVCC of the Flinders University Offshore Project

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intention of this project was to develop an evaluation framework to determine the educational experience for offshore students. In addition, the project set out to develop resources and processes for Flinders University that would ensure offshore programmes are of comparable quality to on-shore programmes with respect to teaching and learning, student support, and assessment.

The project focused on critically understanding and evaluating the status quo in terms of course offerings, assessment processes, policy coverage, and the appropriateness, availability and accessibility of staff and student preparation and support. Following the initial analysis, materials have been developed to meet the identified needs and gaps. These materials are now ready to pilot and modify. The materials include:

- A dedicated portal for all Flinders Offshore Students and Staff involved in offshore teaching
- An induction programme and a Teaching Offshore Manual (hard copy and CD-Rom) have been designed, trialled and resourced for Flinders-based staff who will go offshore to teach
- *A Guide to Teaching for Flinders University* has been designed for tutors who have been recruited offshore to teach Flinders programmes
- An *Induction to Flinders University Studies* CD-Rom for students has been designed
- A new dedicated offshore student evaluation form and process that accounts for cultural differences has been developed. One version includes Chinese Mandarin language translations of the questions alongside the English questions
- A set of Quality Assurance Principles has been developed to be piloted by the university in terms of curriculum issues, student issues and staff issues

Now that these products have been developed, they will be piloted in offshore venues later in semester two, and among Flinders University staff who teach offshore. The funds budgeted for in the proposal for this aspect of the project, have been set aside for these purposes.

Both the initial investigation and analysis involved wide ranging consultation and engagement of the staff involved to ensure that the outputs would have a high level of validity, authenticity and usefulness. In addition, universities across Australia were surveyed to ensure that needless duplication of resources did not occur. This latter endeavour helped establish a network of contacts that have been consulted regarding the appropriate timing for a National Offshore Education Symposium (October, 2005). Once again the funds budgeted for this event in the proposal, have been set aside.

This project has enabled Flinders University to successfully assess the quality of its processes and offerings in regard to Offshore Education and to follow the assessment with highly relevant educational development and change. All staff now leaving to teach offshore will have access to support materials and mentoring by those already experienced in doing so. Resources are now available to enable offshore students and tutors to feel more familiar with Flinders University. Additionally, the project has been part of an ongoing and systematic way of ensuring quality outcomes for all students whether offshore, on-shore or off-campus.

OFFSHORE PROJECT REPORT

This report outlines the intentions, activities and outcomes of the Flinders University offshore teaching project; *It's a Question of Quality*. The focus of this project was to develop a framework that, once in place, would ensure that the quality of programmes delivered offshore were of comparable quality to those delivered on-shore on the main campus. The framework and resources have now been developed as a result of the project. We will now begin to pilot, evaluate, modify and promulgate these in the next stage of the project.

This report will restate the detailed intentions of the project, outline the methods and strategies used to identify the necessary points of attention and intervention, detail the learning of the project team, and finally describe the outcomes in terms of processes and products.

Aims of the Project

As stated in the funding submission, the aims of this project were:

1. To develop an evaluation framework to assist in determining the quality of the educational experience for offshore students. The framework will be defined by the expected standards of Australian Higher Education in respect to:
 - (i) aspects of teaching and learning, including curriculum design and delivery, provision of student support and applying agreed policies and rules
 - (ii) assessment and moderation
 - (iii) measuring student experience and satisfaction
 - (iv) applying agreed policies and rules
2. To investigate current practice and effectiveness of teaching and learning offshore from the perspective of staff and students so that good practices can be established.
3. Using the results of the investigation, develop generic resources which enhance, support and ensure quality with respect to:
 - (i) preparing staff to teach offshore in a culturally appropriate manner
 - (ii) providing induction for students that is appropriate for their cultural milieu
 - (iii) providing appropriate models for student assessment and moderation

In summary, this project has assisted Flinders University to use an evidence-based approach to adapt and adjust existing policies and procedures with respect to offshore programmes, and to design resources to meet the needs of offshore students. In particular, the project has focused on comparability between the on-shore and offshore student experiences of Flinders education in terms of the quality of the educational experience, access to support resources and to appeal and grievance procedures. As a result of the project, Flinders University has established resources based on effective practices, as well as developed, piloted and evaluated induction programmes for Flinders staff and offshore students. In addition, a 'community of practice' or 'brains trust' of effective practitioners has been established who will lead innovation and support change that will enhance ongoing quality improvement and mentor novice offshore teachers. The project has also begun to plan the establishment of a national 'community of practice' through a national symposium to be held in October 2005.

Methodology

The methodology used to achieve the aims of the project was to examine current policy and procedures in the area of offshore teaching, and then to collect data on the appropriateness, quality and effectiveness of offshore teaching.

A project researcher, project assistant and administrative assistant were employed to assist with the investigation. Data were collected through the use of focus groups, interviews and surveys with stake-holders and participants in selected countries (Singapore, China, and Hong Kong) as well as on Flinders University campus in Adelaide.

The project also involved:

- Examining Flinders University policies and procedures related to offshore programmes, and those of other Australian universities, as well as the AUQA Audit reports, to note any gaps in the current status quo
- Examining all Flinders educational policies to ensure that they account for the particular needs and circumstances of offshore education
- Evaluating offshore student satisfaction and perceived needs
- Consulting offshore tutors for feedback on the systems currently in place
- Developing a framework for designing culturally appropriate induction programmes for offshore students, including the development of on-line resources and articulation of appropriate policies
- Developing guidelines for designing staff induction programmes. The project recognises that there are several distinct categories of staff involved in offshore teaching, namely, on-shore staff (at FU, Adelaide campus), offshore staff in the host country, third party teachers from other universities and on-line teachers). Their diverse needs will be considered
- Analysing assessment policies and practices with respect to correlating them with offshore assessments and where necessary recommend any amendments to policy that may be required
- Auditing assessment tasks currently used, interpreting and grading systems, and trialling and evaluating multiple moderation systems
- Evaluating the role and options for moderation through examination of nation-wide examples of good practice

Investigative Activities

1. Audit and Review

The project team undertook a process of initiating a review of the existing Flinders University policies relating to offshore education. In addition a preliminary review of Flinders student related policies and procedures was undertaken with a view to ensuring that they are relevant to, and inclusive of, offshore students. Students taking Flinders University offshore courses may have a different range of concerns to those of onshore students and may require different facilities to be available. There is also a need to recognise sensitivities when offshore parties are involved.

The results of the review are being incorporated in changes made through the senior officers of the University and through Academic Senate. The new policies will ensure

that there is comparability for offshore and onshore students and that quality measures are equally applied.

One area which needs careful attention is policies that relate to academic integrity and student appeals. To date, there have been no cases of student appeals in offshore courses. However, the possibility of such occurrences in the future must be anticipated.

2. Programme Audit

The project team has completed a complete audit of Flinders University offshore programme offerings. The first step involved developing a matrix which would take into account and accumulate the following information:

Course Details

- Titles of courses currently offered
- Name of course coordinators
- Faculties in which courses are taught
- Geographical locations where courses are offered
- Models of course delivery
- Mode(s) of course delivery
- Proportion of courses delivered offshore
- Whether courses are delivered both on- and offshore
- Employment status of teaching staff (employed by Flinders or by partner institution)
- Special conditions (e.g., management of practicum)
- Level of English for acceptance into course
- Methods used to determine applicants and students level of English
- Extent of provision of support for students experiencing learning difficulties

Quality Assurance Procedures

- Extent of offshore teaching orientation and induction provided for and received by Flinders-based teaching staff
- Extent of orientation to Flinders and induction to teaching for teachers employed by partner institution
- Robustness of mechanisms in place to handle student appeals
- Written evidence of quality assurance processes (e.g., annual report)
- Arrangements for maintaining teaching and assessment standards (and what they are?)
- Arrangements for evaluating the course and student experiences (Who undertakes this? How and where is information located?)
- Extent of student access to resources
- Extent of student use of Flinders Library online (and arrangements otherwise)
- Extent of student use of other Flinders electronic resources (e.g., email, WebCT)
- Course review procedures
- Processes for extraction of data for review of student enrolment, progress, performance and graduation
- Provision of student support in the eventuality of transition to Flinders University mainland campus
- Special requirements by offshore accreditation agencies
- The extent of other Quality Assurance processes in place for the course

3. Assessment Audit

Flinders University has a system of requiring the coordinators of a topic (a semester long unit of study) to provide their students with a Statement of Assessment Methods (SAM). This statement outlines the assessment tasks that are required to successfully complete the topic and the methods and rules governing submission, interpretation and grading. It has been accepted practice at Flinders for discipline and course coordinators to request an audit of their course or disciplinary SAMs to gain an oversight of the prevailing culture of learning, and the collective course design generated through the assessment methods. Following this custom, the SAMs and the course outlines for all offshore topics were audited and the assessment methods categorised. Additionally, if they existed, differences between assessment tasks for on-shore and offshore offerings of the same topic were noted. Of particular importance was the determination of the reason for the differences and to ensure that the different tasks were comparable and had the potential for students to demonstrate similar learning outcomes, namely, those of the topic.

4. Review of Evaluation Tools

Another of the requirements of the project was to review the tools used for student evaluations of offshore teaching. Flinders University has a set of Student Evaluation of Teaching (SETe), Topic (SETo) and Supervision (SETs) tools, the use of which are supported by policy requirements. Where offshore courses have been evaluated, generally the standard SETs have been used. Some academic units have developed their own evaluation tools that are neither validated nor consistent across programmes. This makes an overall university view of effectiveness difficult, but it is recognised by the project team that to measure both on- and offshore courses in exactly the same way does not produce comparability due to the differing nature of on- and offshore courses.

Therefore, a new range of SET tools have been developed which take into account the unique circumstances of offshore course offerings. With this in mind, a number of questions have been added to the existing Flinders University SETs which attempt to understand and ascertain the preferences of the offshore student. At this stage, the tool has been developed and formatted and is being trialled. In some cases these new tools will be translated into the home language.

5. Open Forums

As part of the project, a number of face-to-face and electronic forums have been initiated. The purpose of the multi-modal forums is to provide support for Flinders University staff who teach offshore. The forums act as a networking and informal mentoring mechanism for staff, and have provided an on-going grounded evaluation for this project.

The initial forum on offshore issues was held in 2003, prior to the grant being awarded and in response to the identified needs of the University. The forum was entitled 'Preparation for Teaching Offshore' and aimed to provide:

- Communication and interaction strategies for working in different cultural contexts
- Information and guidance on how to monitor the teacher's own practices and to confront the teacher's own values
- Discussion and guidance on adjustments that can be made to common teaching processes
- Strategies for assessment within cross-cultural contexts

- Information and strategies on teaching academic integrity in cross-cultural contexts
- Everyday practical tips for personal health and travel issues

In late 2004, after the grant was received, a second forum was held entitled 'Preparing to Teach in Offshore Classrooms – Lessons Learned'. This forum specifically addressed:

- Modes and strategies for effective teaching and assessment in offshore programmes
- Managing cultural differences in the learning context
- Lessons learned from those experienced in teaching offshore

Further fora are being offered in the second semester of 2005 and early 2006 on topics generated by the project and include:

- Assessment and moderation
- Educational design and delivery (including online)
- Different modes of design and delivery and induction of students
- Quality assurance and evaluation
- Supporting student learning
- Teaching in intensives, possibilities and limitations

In addition, the project team has set up an electronic resource entitled 'Offshore Teachers Network'. This resource enables staff to collaborate and sustain themselves by being able to communicate with each other on important matters. An email listserv has been developed which operates as a tool to disseminate information to all such staff on upcoming workshops, courses and fora, in addition to sending out readings on targeted issues. The listserver is connected to the web-based resources. The listserver will be moderated and used as a tool to indicate when new material, such as best practice chosen from across the university, appears on the website.

The Offshore Teachers Network provides a chat space in which staff can discuss issues of importance at particular times. The electronic chat space will, in this way, serve as an electronic forum which can be opened to staff at particular times to discuss particular issues. An advantage of such a format is that all responses can be recorded electronically and archived for the use of Flinders University staff involved in offshore courses. Currently, we have 115 Flinders University staff who are involved with the listserver or in using the on-line resources.

Overall, this approach based on 'open fora' has resulted in the establishment of a community of practice around offshore education at Flinders University. Within this community of practice, a number of exemplary practices and staff have been identified and are being utilised as resources for other staff involved in offshore teaching. Such an approach has helped in establishing a more structured and better planned set of offshore course offerings.

6. Investigation of Offshore Student and Tutor Experiences

As part of a regular Flinders University five year course review programme, a Graduate Entry programme and a Masters Programme review were incorporated into this project. Reviewers were selected to review specific programmes in Singapore, Hong Kong and China and the project steering group identified a number of areas to be explored with offshore tutors and students. Questions used in interviews and focus groups examined

the students' and tutors experiences of Flinders University Education. The outcome of this review has been the design of an introductory DVD that not only provides quick access to practical information and policies, but also provides both tutors and students to study support resources and a virtual tour of Flinders University as a locality and as an institution.

7. Analysis of AUQA Offshore Reports

A review of the AUQA reports was conducted to identify the issues pertaining to offshore programmes noted by quality assurance auditors. This analysis has allowed the project team to gain an overview of the main issues involved in offshore programmes around the country. The insights gained through the analysis have encouraged the project team to focus on issues of concern to the higher education community and has provided a frame of reference to examine Flinders University policies, procedures and practices. The following section follows the analysis of the offshore portions of the AUQA reports and reports a summary of concerns associated with offshore teaching and offshore programmes. These were:

1. Provision of Induction Programmes and Professional Development for offshore teachers

Some tutors are recruited from host institutions offshore and may work for several international universities. Many may not have experienced Australian approaches to higher education. While it is advantageous to have tutors who are familiar with the student's backgrounds and expectations, it is also important that the educational integrity of the course as offered is maintained. A significant number of universities have been specifically asked by AUQA reviewers to implement such programmes or to establish some form of professional development for offshore tutors, incorporating into such programmes sessions handling the differences in assessment and teaching models, which also arose as significant areas of concern.

2. Student Evaluations of Teaching

There were concerns noted as to whether student evaluations of teaching were actually conducted with the level of frequency required by policy and as conducted on-shore. Additionally, the way they were being conducted lead to concerns. Normally, SET forms are distributed and collected by a third party to ensure that students do not feel coerced into providing favourable evaluations. However in some cases AUQA found that lecturers were either collecting SETs from students, or not leaving the room when they are being completed. Our discussions with international students at Flinders confirmed the concern that students feel about providing honest or negative feedback in such circumstances. Yet, they felt that as long as confidentiality was assured, they welcomed the opportunity to provide such feedback.

3. Access to Resources

Students' problems with access to resources, particularly on-line resources (internet access, WebCT access, electronic library services), was flagged as a significant area of concern for quite a few universities. When students failed to gain access to sufficient resources there were detrimental impacts on services and course offerings. AUQA noted that it was important that the reality regarding access was also reflected in promotional material, providing an accurate picture of what was actually being supplied by universities.

4. English Language Proficiency

Concern related to students English language proficiency questioned whether the test or criteria has been set too low for some students for entry into particular courses. As a result some universities found that they needed to extend the period of pre-enrolment English language studies.

5. Quality Assurance Systems

Where Universities had been asked by AUQA to implement extensive quality assurance systems it was suggested that these systems should incorporate:

- Model contracts with offshore partners
- Due diligence checks of partners prior to approval of contracts
- Systematic provisions for programme and unit approvals with regular reviews
- Improvement of communication systems with partners
- Defined assessment processes and responsibilities
- Academic security provisions
- Evaluation of student learning outcomes against domestic students as a benchmark
- Evaluation of teaching using an accepted methodology, and
- Quality controls and strategies if translation services were utilised

Ideas from AUQA reports focused on the development of induction programmes for staff teaching offshore, handbooks for staff, IT helpdesks for offshore students, and professional accreditation from both on- and offshore professional bodies.

Future Directions

Policy

As the work on offshore programme issues and resources has continued, awareness of how policy can account for the unique characteristics of offshore courses and how their particular features impact upon students and staff has increased. As a result, a central administration review of policies relating to offshore programmes, as well as student related policies and procedures have been implemented.

QA & QI

This project has had at its core two goals that address both quality assurance and quality improvement (Sachs, 1994). Firstly it set out to establish equivalence and assurance regarding its contractual offshore programme obligations. Flinders takes pride in its record of effective teaching and learning on-shore and aspired to maintain this record in offshore teaching. Therefore, secondly this project has also been committed to quality improvement and enhancement of its programmes that meets more than standard requirements. The process and resource development established in this project are now in the process of being mainstreamed into existing structures and service provision so that they can become embedded in Flinders policies, procedures and practices and further up-scaled, ensuring that they continue beyond the life of this project.

Student Needs

Offshore students are in a familiar social environment in which they are surrounded by family and friends and all the social support systems that are available to domestic students. The main concerns for offshore students may be significantly different to international students studying on-shore, with whom they are often compared. The main concerns are balancing family, work and study commitments, in addition managing the

cultural differences (Pyvis and Chapman, 2005) involved with doing a degree from an offshore university. Cultural differences are embodied in pedagogical expectations, practices and language, as well as the social and cultural world views associated with the teaching staff that are often inherent in the content of the course. These issues mean that curriculum design needs to account of the strengths, limitations and students familiarity with intensive forms of learning and teaching, as well as with the peculiarities of students who are in a familiar environment and yet at the same time, facing unfamiliar pedagogies and assessment practices. This awareness has guided the development of curriculum and induction resources for offshore programmes.

Staff Induction

As a result of the different circumstances which teachers face when they teach offshore for the first-time, it is critical to have some kind of induction system. It has been accepted at Flinders that teaching at university for the first time required careful induction to the role and its demands. Equally the challenge for Flinders now is to gain acceptance that teaching offshore is sufficiently different to require even experienced onshore teachers to attend an induction to teaching offshore programme. The programme needs to challenge staff to consider their own tacit cultural orientation and how this impacts on their design of educational environments and their students. In addition, they need information and resources to help them plan for teaching and living in unfamiliar circumstances.

Support Needs

While an induction workshop can provide urgent introductory information and skills, the long-term development of expertise, derived and validated from experience and critical dialogue with colleagues is also essential. A facilitated 'community of practice', can enable sharing of best practice as well as offer mentoring, and generate new and innovative opportunities. Through the investigations of this project it has been apparent that staff are willing, and actively seek opportunities, to engage in collegial forums (including electronic modes) in which they can raise issues and discuss and exchange ideas, as well as forming partnerships with staff with similar responsibilities, interests and concerns.

Educational Design of Courses

Educational design for offshore programmes needs to take into account that intensive teaching is the preferred method when working with partner institutions. Eight hours of traditional didactic lectures a day do not facilitate student learning in the intensive environment. Creative thinking needs to be supported in relation to course design. Academics responsible for offshore programmes need access to a repertoire of innovative educational practices that include an understanding of the potential and limitations of diverse teaching, learning and assessment strategies. These strategies need to include:

- The value of a creative use of information technologies. In many countries in which Flinders University courses are taught, computing and informational technologies are often not as accessible as can be expected on the home campus. Educational planning, therefore, needs to account for the possibility of technological inaccessibility or breakdown.
- Cross cultural and inclusive strategies. Curriculum design needs to be grounded in a positive, rather than deficit, view of students' cultural and experiential differences.

- Effective ways of preparing, working with and providing support for offshore recruited tutors.
- Working with interpreters.

Project Outcomes

As a result of the investigative activities the following resources and processes have been developed.

1. Quality Assurance Framework

The Quality Assurance Framework which has been developed has informed the processes of the project. The elements of the framework are:

- **Regular Policy Review:** The policy framework needs to be reviewed in an on-going way to ensure that it accounts for the needs and circumstances of off-shore students.
- **Learning Outcomes-based Programmes:** Programmes will enable students achieve the same learning outcomes irrespective of location and mode.
- **Assessment Moderation:** Assessment design, grading and outcomes distribution will be moderated regularly to compare the outcomes of onshore and offshore students.
- **Appropriate Topic Evaluation:** Topics will be evaluated within policy guidelines however the questions will vary to account for the different teaching and learning context.
- **Course Reviews:** Five yearly course reviews will record and evaluate curriculum changes and student feedback in respect of off-shore students
- **Student Induction:** Off-shore student access to resources will be reviewed regularly to ensure that have access to adequate study skills and subject content resources. In addition students' programmes of study will include access to an induction to studying at Flinders University.
- **Student Support:** Students will be provided with an appropriate level of support through Flinders University or where appropriate through partner organisations.
- **Staff Induction:** Staff induction will include preparing Flinders University staff to teach offshore and offshore tutors to be familiar with and function within Flinders University policy framework.
- **Staff Support:** Staff will be provided with resources that meets the particular requirements of teaching offshore.

2. An Offshore Teaching Web-based Resource

The website has been designed as part of an overall offshore portal which incorporates three separate sections, one each for:

- Flinders University-based teachers who go offshore to teach
- Tutors employed by partner universities
- Offshore students

Section One is a link to a secure WebCT site which can only be accessed by Flinders University staff. This secure site has a continually growing set of examples of effective practice in offshore teaching, particular effective assessment practices, culturally sensitive teaching, innovative approaches to intensive teaching, translated resources,

and links to further resources (articles, organisations, and so on), as well as effective practices in everyday survival for the offshore teacher. These latter types of resources include items such as checklists, links to other organisations, details of mentoring systems, networks of experienced offshore teaching staff, and so on.

Section Two of the website is for students who are studying Flinders University courses offshore. Importantly, students need to feel part of the university, therefore, the site is branded as a distinctly Flinders University product. The site links students to a range of Flinders' resources which have been produced by different parts of the university, but in particular, to those resources produced for students by the Student Learning Centre. As these resources have been produced for Flinders University on-campus students, they introduce the offshore student to the Flinders way of teaching, learning and support. Again, this is important in terms of identification with the university. Some of the resources that students can link to include information on essay and argument construction, information on referencing and the various citation systems, writing an academic essay, group work and collaboration, and time management, in addition to other study skills. Some of these resources have also been adapted to take into account the specific needs of offshore students.

In addition, the Flinders University Staff Development and Training Unit has been involved in the creation and implementation of a University-wide academic integrity management strategy for the past 12 months. The strategy includes a website for students. As part of the offshore project, an academic integrity section has been integrated into the student section of the website, adapting these already existing resources on academic integrity to take into account the circumstances of the offshore student.

Section Three of the site is for staff who are employed by partner institutions to tutor in Flinders University courses. Although not Flinders University employees, such staff need to understand the Flinders University way of operating in order to fulfill their duties and to ensure quality. This website allows them to identify with Flinders University (a stated need), to learn the Flinders University methods of teaching and learning, and to use some of the resources produced by the university which are linked to the website.

<http://www.flinders.edu.au/teach/offshore>

3. An Off-shore Teaching Manual for Flinders based staff.

A manual has been developed for Flinders University staff for the purposes of providing a resource which staff can carry with them when they teach offshore. Often when teaching in particular locations, for one reason or another, staff may not have immediate access to the full range of electronic and copying technologies that they may enjoy in the on-shore environment. In such a situation, the manual could have a range of uses. For example, such a manual can be referred to while travelling, or can have resources which simply need to be photocopied if access to a computer with a printer is not readily available. Thus, the manual is designed to provide ready access for staff to resources at any time.

The manual focuses primarily on teaching and learning in the offshore context as well as everyday survival skills. A brief summary of the chapter sections are as follows:

- Section 1: Preparing for Teaching Offshore
- Section 2: The Practicalities of Travelling Offshore to Teach
- Section 3: Cultural and Social Issues
- Section 4: Teaching and Learning Issues
- Section 5: Using WebCT
- Section 6: Assessment & Feedback
- Section 7: Student Support Issues
- Section 8: Supervision of Student Research
- Section 9: Evaluation of Teaching Topic and Supervision

The manual will be available in hard copy and on a DVD which will also have direct links to the resources created for the project. In addition, the DVD will have:

- Information and video footage of Flinders University campus,
- Interviews with Flinders' staff
- Information about their particular topic/course and discipline area.

The DVD will be available as a 'shell' into which it is possible for coordinators to add their own specific course information. The video footage and personalised information assists staff to engender a sense of belonging for offshore students and tutors. Another feature of the DVD is that it is a portable version of the manual when travelling.

The staff manual is included as Appendix 1.

4. "Teaching Offshore" Theory into Practice Strategies (TIPS) (for inclusion in Flinders Cultural Diversity and Inclusive Practice (CDIP) Toolkit

The CDIP Toolkit is a core resource designed to assist all members of the Flinders University community to promote mutually respectful relationships and translate the university's policies and intentions into practice. The toolkit is designed to support members of the university community in monitoring their own practice for strengths and identifying areas for development. It is not a prescriptive, fixed set of practices. The Toolkit can be used by individuals for self-reflection or by small groups to facilitate discussions about reflections on current practice, obtaining colleague/student feedback, planning, and review and evaluation.

As part of the offshore project, and to integrate offshore practice into the CDIP Toolkit, the project team has developed a TIPS sheet on Offshore Teaching. Particular issues covered in the TIPS sheet include effective teaching and learning in offshore classrooms, teaching with translators, small group teaching, academic integrity, assessment, evaluation for quality teaching and learning, and pre-departure planning. Also included is a check-list for staff who are going offshore.

The TIPS sheet is included as Appendix 2.

5. Induction Programme for Flinders staff who go offshore to teach for the first time

The induction programme will consist of a half-day workshop, to be held in early 2006 in time for the new academic year, which will have the following objectives:

- Providing the opportunity for staff to reflect on their personal and professional responses to offshore teaching situations
- Providing access tools for teaching, learning and evaluation from experienced teachers
- Establishing personal support mechanisms, and

- Gaining knowledge of faculty and administration support within the university community

The programme will address the following issues:

- Flinders University commitment to offshore teaching and future plans
- Intensive teaching techniques
- Cross cultural class management strategies
- Course and assessment design to assist with developing assessment literacy and academic integrity literacy
- Facilitating Discussion groups using examples of best practice teaching and learning strategies

The programme for the induction workshop is included as Appendix 3.

6. Induction and Support Package/manual for Offshore Tutors

An induction package in the form of a manual has been produced for tutors in Flinders' courses who are living overseas, but are employed by Flinders University to assist/teach in Flinders' courses. Again, a major focus is identification with Flinders University and the Flinders way of operating. By using the manual, the tutor can gain an understanding of Australian academic expectations and the Flinders University academic environment, which is essential when teaching a Flinders University course.

Other sections of the manual include:

- About Flinders
- Teaching at Flinders University
- What Should Guide Your Teaching
- Tutorials
- Supervising Student Research
- Assessment
- Evaluation of Teaching

The manual is included as Appendix 4.

7. A New University-wide Student Evaluation Tool

The project team has created a new Student Evaluation tool which is due to be piloted in Semester 2. The resource provides a tool for student evaluations of teaching, topic, and supervision. They have been adapted from the existing question banks of the generic Flinders University student evaluation tools. Therefore, having a base of similar questions provides direct measures of on- and offshore courses, which can result in measures of comparability. Additionally, there are a number of extra questions added to take into account the offshore environment. Finally, we have had the tool translated into Mandarin, side-by-side with English. This is to take into account some of the subtleties involved in asking for such feedback which may be better conveyed in the students' own language. In addition, the majority of Flinders' offshore students are in mainland China. The untranslated version will be used for Flinders' courses in other countries.

The package of SETs (student evaluations of teaching, topic and supervision) are included as Appendix 5.

8. Faculty-based, Offshore Education Quality Assurance Guidelines

A set of Quality Assurance guidelines has been established in order to put in place a Quality Improvement process at the Faculty and course level. These guidelines were developed from a review of AUQA reports and from the Five year Flinders University

reviews of programmes in Hong Kong and Singapore, both conducted as part of this project.

Effective Offshore programmes have Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement processes that aim to *prevent* as well as *detect* deficits. Such processes need to look for and attend to:

Academic Programme Matters

1. Clear outlines of courses and topics
2. Clear explanations of the interrelatedness of elements of the curriculum: Aims, learning outcomes, assessment, expectations, processes, procedures
3. Well presented learning materials, readers, etc
4. Moderation of assessment processes and outcomes to ensure that assessment tasks are equivalent to on-shore versions of the same topic and processes and explanations to justify changes if they occur
5. Timely grading and useful feedback on student work
6. Regular administration of SET for teaching, topic and supervision, accompanied by analysis and appropriate responses
7. A process for monitoring student progress by relevant Faculty curriculum committees to ensure that offshore students' progress compares favourably with that of on-shore students

Student Matters

8. Guides and materials for students to develop effective study skills and habits
9. Access to library and quality materials for study and research
10. Attention to student identity and their sense of belongingness to a learning community and to Flinders University

Staffing Matters

11. Staff selection processes for offshore staff, evaluating credentials and ensuring clarity of expectations
12. Provision of possibilities of deeper alliance with Flinders University through awards of adjunct status and other forms of recognition
13. Provision of programmes and resources for staff induction to teaching and research supervision
14. Ongoing staff support materials and processes to increase commitment and expertise of offshore staff and reduce the risk of high turnover
15. Opportunities for interaction between Flinders' academics and offshore teachers both in the host country and at Flinders University.

9. National Symposium to Showcase Outcomes of Projects

The project team has designed and planned a national symposium. The purpose of the Colloquium will be:

- To bring together those who gained AVCC project so that they can showcase their outcomes and subject them to review by their peers.
- To look for opportunities to advance a national forum for improving, supporting and further developing Australian offshore education
- To identify effective resources and strategies that can be shared and developed and to identify gaps in our understanding and in the resources available and make them the focus of future collaborative action.

The symposium will provide the opportunity for all project groups involved in the wider AVCC-managed offshore project to come together to share the processes, lessons learnt, and outcomes of their part of the overall project. At this stage, the proposed date for the symposium is in October. A website will be designed to share information prior to the colloquium so that participants come to the event well informed.

Future Activities

This Off-shore project has completed its investigative and design phase and has produced all the resources materials, quality assurances processes and programmes that it has set out to do. What remains to be done is to:

- Trial the materials and modify them in the light of feedback from both onshore and offshore key stakeholders.
- Produce the CD/DVD package based on the model and design plan.
- Conduct the National Symposium to showcase the projects that were funded

These activities are part of the original project plan. They are now possible with the completion of the investigations and resources development activities.

Summary

The strength of this project is that it has engaged a wide range of stakeholders across the University. These have included University senior management, Faculty leaders, academics, and administrators, central administration units including policy and planning division, human resources and academic development. It has included onshore and offshore staff and students and has turned to colleagues and institutions across the sector.

The project has allowed the development of a quality assurance project, embedded resources which will be further trialled and an understanding of good practice which will be used in all current and proposed off-shore programmes across the University. The outcomes of the project can therefore be adopted and adapted by other universities in higher education.

REFERENCES

- Pyvis, D. and Chapman, A. (2005), 'Culture Shock and the International Student 'Offshore'', in Journal of Research in International Education, 4(1), pp.23-42.
- Sachs, J. (1994), 'Strange yet Compatible Bedfellows: Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement', in Australian Universities' Review, 37(1), pp.22-25.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Staff Manual

Appendix 2: Offshore TIPS Sheet

Appendix 3: Induction Workshop Programme

Appendix 4: Induction to Flinders University and Teaching support manual for offshore tutors

Appendix 5: SETs