### Project title
Building sustainable School infrastructure for Vietnam and offshore partnered programs.

### Project leader
Assoc. Prof. Peter Horsfield, Deputy Head, Learning and Teaching, School of Applied Communication

### Team members
- Ms Bernadette Mazzarella, School Manager
- Dr. Marianne Sison, Programs Director, Communication
- Mr Russell Bevers, Programs Director, Advertising and Design
- Ms Jill Powell, Program Coordinator, B.Comm (Advertising)
- Ms Philippa Brear, Program Coordinator, B.Comm (Public Relations)
- Dr. Chengju Huang, Program Coordinator, B.Comm (Professional Communication) (Hong Kong)
- Mr. Graeme Domm, Program Coordinator, B.Comm (Professional Communication) (Vietnam)
- Ms Carolyn Jones, Project Worker
- Ms Jaclyn Rouvray, Project Worker

### Funds approved
$36,015

### Funds acquitted (attach financial statement)
$26,194

### Introduction
The project arose from the practical demands of the School offering its Bachelor of Communication (Professional Communication) degree in Hong Kong (in partnership with the Hong Kong Management Association) and Vietnam (RMIT). The degree in Hong Kong is a three semester, post-diploma degree offering. In Vietnam the degree is a full six semester offering.

The School has several other established programs offshore. These two initiatives were taken in response to requests from the University to explore the possibilities of a communication and media degree in Hong Kong, and to expand RMIT’s Vietnam offerings to include the Bachelor of Communication. In both instances, the four areas of specialty available in the Melbourne degree were narrowed to two - advertising and public relations. In conversation with the offshore partners, these were considered of particular relevance to those markets and more manageable in an offshore offering.

Both were set up using one of the teaching models available for offshore programs at the time. The School was to prepare and provide the teaching materials to be taught by local teachers in the place of offering. The School also exercised quality assurance...
through control of teacher selection and induction, student selection, program and course renewal processes, and course moderation. A week after the Hong Kong program was approved by University Council, the School received advice that that model was to be phased out. We are currently reviewing whether the Hong Kong program will be viable to offer under the new regulations. The School has not considered the Vietnam offering as a profitable activity for the School, and has proceeded on the project in response to University strategic directions. The desire in implementing these programs was not just to meet our obligations, but to establish the programs on a sustainable basis within the School in a way that enabled also collaboration in student and staff exchange and research with the new centres.

In total 33 courses are to be taught in the two programs: 20 in Vietnam, and 13 of the same courses in Hong Kong, but on a 15-week rather than 12-week teaching semester. The course materials for these 33 courses did not exist in a central location within the School, so implementing these new programs required the School mustering every teacher teaching the courses in Melbourne to provide the materials for the courses they teach personally in Melbourne in a form that their course could be taught by someone else in another cultural context.

Producing course materials for teaching by someone else, and supporting that teaching to meet quality assurance requirements, required the invention of new processes, structures and work demands that didn’t exist in this School previously. To the extent that similar demands will be placed on any School that takes the initiative to make its programs more broadly available, what has been learned in this process may be of value to others. That was part of the intention of this LTIF project.

The primary function of the project therefore was to identify and develop the infrastructure within the School to develop its new regional offerings of the Bachelor of Communication in Vietnam and Hong Kong and to sustain their quality. The identified outcomes of the Project were the establishment of an infrastructure of "Regional Course Coordination" within the School, comprising

1. Production of a description of Regional Course Coordination within the School in line with our contractual obligations and University Strategic Initiatives;
2. A process of collaboration with programs and staff to finalize how it will work and how workload will be allocated and planned;
3. Compilation of a schedule of regional course offerings and designated regional course coordinators in time for workload planning for semester 2 (Melbourne), 2008;
4. The finalisation of portable course materials for implementation of the BComm (Prof Comm) and teacher liaison in Vietnam and Hong Kong in September/October 2008;
5. Documentation of the process and final model, in a form available to other Schools.

### Detailed project description and outline of what was done

### Initial conceptualization

Our initial thinking was to align the offshore offerings of each course with the onshore offerings by designating the courses to be offered offshore as “regional courses.” The Melbourne-based course coordinator would then become a regional coordinator for that course, responsible for its regional as well as its local offering. This would help maintain the parity of offshore material with onshore material, provide a means of teaching support for the offshore teacher from the subject expert who taught the course onshore, provide an efficient means for ongoing renewal of offshore materials, and provide effective moderation of assessment and feedback. The management and provision of materials solely through the DLS would enable efficient delivery and renewal.

This process appeared also to provide an effective process for managing of workload. The regional course coordinator would have incorporated in their workload the additional work involved in any offshore offerings of their courses.

### Development and Implementation
The project was managed by a project group and lead by a project worker, a School staff member paid by the School working 0.4 on the project. In addition to the production of teaching and student materials for each course to be offered, the group had responsibility for sorting out the practical coordination, administration, contractual and liaison requirements in the setting up of the new programs. These ongoing responsibilities were allocated within the organizational structures of the School.

Meetings were held with relevant teaching and admin staff, expectations were clarified and time-lines established to ensure materials and people were in place in plenty of time for the induction of offshore teachers and the commencement of the programs in October 2008. Workload was allocated for the additional work involved in reworking teaching materials for the regional offering. The LTIF grant money was directed primarily to teaching relief for continuing staff or sessional staff preparing the course material, and casual workers who primarily edited and formatted the material and loaded it online. The School’s contribution to the whole project meant that the project came in under the LTIF budget.

A designated “regional course coordinator” for each of the courses to be taught was identified and appointed. In most cases this was the coordinator of the course in Melbourne. Once the nitty gritty of the work was under way, the term “regional course coordinator” was changed to “regional course moderator,” to resolve confusion around responsibilities and workload issues. The regional course moderator’s responsibilities were identified as:

- Production of initial teaching material for the offering of the course;
- Liaison with, email support and advice to offshore course teachers or coordinators in their understanding and presentation of the teaching material;
- Moderation of assessment for the course in each of its offshore offerings - moderation will generally be 20% of each assessment task within the course;
- To maintain the currency of the course material provided for the HK and Vietnam programs - this will normally be done in the process of updating content taught locally and will be done working with the Regional Courses Coordinator.
- Regional Course Moderation does not involve direct contact with offshore students - that is the responsibility of the HK or Vietnam teacher.

In consultation with staff, workload for the ongoing task of being a regional course moderator once the programs began was agreed and incorporated in staff workloads. This was initially calculated as if the onshore teacher was overseeing a local tutor sharing in the teaching of their course. This was seen as a starting point, and it is intended to review this when the actual workload involved is known once the programs were underway.

Timelines were established for the preparation and editing of teaching material and delivery of the material to the offshore location. These timelines were blown out by a number of factors. Because part of the purpose of the project was to provide insights for use by other Schools, these problems are important learnings from the project and are detailed below.

The teaching materials were prepared and delivered on time for the commencement of teaching in both locations. The resourcing provided by the LTIF was vital in supplementing the costs borne by the School in the work that was involved in getting the materials prepared and the two programs underway. To the extent that the new programs have been successfully commenced in Vietnam and Hong Kong, the major aims of the project have been achieved.

However the final planned outcome, of providing a model for other Schools, has not been achieved. The reasons for this, which are an important learning from the project, are provided in the following evaluation of project outcomes.

### Problems encountered in development

A number of issues arose once things got under way that significantly complicated the project, multiplied the work required, and set back the original timelines significantly.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project outcomes including evidence of the impact the project has had. Also make reference to how the outcomes address the five key objectives:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Improved student learning experiences, outcomes and employment opportunities  
- Innovation  
- Strategic alignment  
- University wide application  
- Value for money |

Because the problems we encountered are important for other Schools to note if they are planning to implement offshore, these are detailed.

- **The conversion of materials taught onshore for offering by other teachers offshore requires significantly more work than may be expected.**
  Workload for conversion of teaching materials was calculated on the expectation that onshore teachers would have comprehensive materials already prepared that could simply be handed over to an editor to format for offshore offering. That was an unrealistic expectation. In areas such as media and communications, where content changes rapidly, we found that a common practice among tertiary teachers who are experts and researchers in their field, to keep their teaching materials primarily as summary materials and add the detail (up-to-date content, ideas, illustrative material, case studies) from their own expert knowledge, research, resources and experience when the course is offered. Working from summary materials also allows them to adapt the material presented for different class characters and moods. Converting one’s internal knowledge and embodied expertise to a comprehensive extant package that can be picked up and taught by someone else is not easily done. The workload involved can be equal to writing a new course or a small text book on the subject.

This problem was complicated further by a number of other factors. A number of the Melbourne-based teachers of the courses to be taught offshore were sessional teachers, or in two cases new sessional teachers, who required further payment for the additional work of preparing their material for another offering.

Teaching structures in Hong Kong and Vietnam are different. Vietnam, like Melbourne works on 12 week semester. However Hong Kong Management Association works on a 15 week semester. This required an additional reworking of materials for the twelve courses being offered in Hong Kong. It also involved thinking through the educational administration processes to minimise the additional work of running two different versions of 13 of the courses.

Teachers in the creative professions are often creative in their powerpoint presentations and other material, and the time required in editing that material into corporate templates was significantly greater than expected.

Schools who are planning to implement new programs offshore need to allow for these factors in their workload calculations.

- **Evaluating the cultural relevance of teaching material and assessments**
  Because most of our teaching is in areas directly related to cultural material and practices, judgments had to be made about how to translate culturally specific Australian material to totally different cultural contexts in which teachers had little expertise. This took a good deal of discussion among teachers and clarification with the educational contexts in Vietnam and Hong Kong. We found no ready site within the University where we could get advice on this.
  
  The decision was eventually made to provide the material as it was used in Australia, with advice to the offshore teachers to use their judgment in adapting it to local cultural examples and practices where necessary. This meant that substantial portions of courses had to be rewritten to allow for cultural adaptation in the offshore teaching contexts, including the removal of cultural material that was commonplace in Australia but could have been considered offensive in Vietnam or Hong Kong. This added to the expected workload required in setting up the programs.

- **Copyright issues, particularly with visual materials and audio-visual.**
  Because most of our courses involve analysis of visual and audio-visual cultural products, there were significant copyright issues identified that had to be resolved. In some cases this involved inappropriate use of copyright material in some of our courses locally, which is now being rectified. The major issue however has been the use of Australian copyright materials in another country. Material that can be used locally in an Australian classroom under the fair use provisions encounters quite different problems if it is to be republished on the DLS. We found that other Schools address this problem by basing their material almost solely on a single text book, from which any visual material such as diagrams or illustrations are also drawn. In our case, where cultural engagement and illustration is crucial to the objectives and outcomes of the courses, and where there are often no appropriate text books, this could not be done. A good deal of work was required and time lost.
in identifying the problems and thinking through solutions, including following a few solutions that lead to dead end. This problem is still being resolved. The immediate resolution has been to reproduce all our teaching and student material on CD Rom’s which are burned in Melbourne and shipped each semester to Vietnam and Hong Kong. This appears to meet copyright requirements, but it has created a number of problems. It has made the DLS largely redundant for the delivery of materials, whereas we anticipated it being the primary mode of delivery. Having to provide students with all material for the semester's courses in advance has interrupted the planned timed-release of materials to students as they are needed. It has significantly increased the workload of delivering the materials to offshore teachers and the cost of producing the CDs. It also delayed delivery of materials to the Vietnam campus because the CDs were held in the Office of Cultural Affairs for scrutiny.

- **Problems in identifying University sites for information and support**

We found significant difficulty in finding out where to go for some of the necessary information we needed on the new centres we were moving into. While the project was going on, university handbooks for Vietnam and Hong Kong were still being finalised, which meant we couldn’t get authoritative guidelines on basic procedural processes that we needed urgently. There appears to be no Vietnam liaison office in Melbourne, for example, where one can go for any information needed, such as semester dates. There is one office that deals with business matters, for example, but the same office can’t provide any information about educational issues. It was only when we found someone in the School of Business that we were able to get practical information from their experience about basic aspects and issues in learning and teaching, workload issues, cultural adaptations, etc.

When I raised this in a meeting once, someone from ARG said, “You should have asked me” – which I would have done if I knew he was the person to ask.

**Problems in establishing a sustainable practice**

The desire of the School was to use the Project not simply to get new offshore programs under way, but to embed these programs and their opportunities for inter-cultural exchange and research collaboration in a sustainable way within the School that served as a model for other Schools. This intent was outlined in the project proposal as follows:

“(to establish) a sustainable infrastructure of School workload practice and planning that regionalizes the School identity, embeds the demands of supporting regional teaching of our programs within the structures of the School, and takes up the opportunities they offer of student exchange, work-integrated learning, staff exchange and collaborative research.”

While the School has successfully done what has been required to get these two new programs underway in 2008, the desire to embed these programs within the School in a sustainable way that furthers the University’s and School’s identity as a global university has not been achieved. For that reason, at this stage we can’t provide a model that can be made available to other Schools doing the same thing.

It was thought that once the programs were underway and there was a set of identified regional course moderators, the process would be largely self-managing through existing program management and workload structures of the School. The School has successfully done this distribution of workload with its other offshore programs in Singapore. This has not been possible in this case, for a number of reasons, and we are still working on those issues.

- **Work load management**

The regional course moderator structure has been set up, and workload calculated, on the basis that the offshore offering of the course is counted as the equivalent of an additional tutorial of the locally taught course. There are a number of factors that are making this difficult to manage.

  - Level of subject knowledge in offshore teachers.

    This is not as much of a problem in Hong Kong, where public relations and advertising are well established commercial practices. However these are new industries in Vietnam, and the shortage of competent professionals means that teaching staff are often drawn from competent professionals.
whose expertise is not necessarily in the specific subject being taught. This can add significantly to the level of demand on regional course moderators.

- Differences in time of offering of courses
  Because of scheduling differences, the offshore courses rarely coincide with when they are being offered in Melbourne. This places additional demands on course moderators, who in addition to their local semester of teaching may find themselves supporting the teachers and moderating the work of one or more other of their courses being taught at that time offshore. Negotiating these demands through the work planning process has required a good deal of discussion and consultation that is still not resolved.

- Changes in staff
  Staff changes in and out of the School, or reallocation of work responsibilities, means that the cadre of moderators is continually changing and has become an added factor in staff appointment and workload planning.

- The fracturing and defocusing of staff work
  The “regional course moderator” concept and best quality assurance practice was built on the principle that the best person to prepare teaching materials, be the point of contact and reference for the offshore teachers teaching that material, moderate the course, and renew the course materials, was the subject expert who was teaching the course in Melbourne. While the regional course moderator is allocated work load for this liaison and moderation work in the offshore offering of their courses, the net result is that local teachers’ work is becoming increasingly fractured, with bits and pieces increasingly being hived off for bits of work here and other bits of work there in addition to their local teaching. This is exacerbated by the fact that the other programs taught by the School offshore also take bits and pieces of staff time from across all the programs.
  This is generating some resistance from some staff, who find the additional demands detracting from their energy and imagination for research. Some program coordinators also are beginning to object to the effect this slicing off of bits and pieces of staff time and the effect it is having on local teaching quality.
  One of our program groups has decided to address this by designating an experienced sessional teacher as responsible for regional moderation. This issue needs to be addressed in resolving the workload impact of increased offshore programs.

- The need for coordination
  It was thought initially that because we weren’t actually teaching the courses, there would be minimal additional coordination required outside what currently exists within the School. That has turned out not to be the case. The need to produce course materials for both new programs on CD each semester as well as manage the DLS sites has added a workload not expected. Quality assurance requires oversight of the consistency of the material provided by different teachers and ensuring that course material is renewed on a regular basis. There are common issues across the new programs and courses being taught and liaison with the offshore centres and university bodies that require a dedicated coordinator of the learning and teaching requirements of these new offshore programs. That tasks of that role, which we have called the Regional Courses Coordinator, have been identified as follows:
  - To maintain the master files of course materials for courses being offered in Hong Kong and Vietnam;
  - Working with the Portfolio DLS coordinator, to oversee the uploading of those materials to the relevant DLS sites and to ensure that the DLS sites for each course are ready on time for commencement of each offshore semester;
  - If it is necessary (because of copyright or DLS problems), to produce CDs of course material to ensure effective delivery of the materials in HK or Vietnam;
  - To maintain liaison with Programs Directors or Program Coordinators in Melbourne to ensure there is an appropriate Regional Course Moderator assigned for each offering of a course in HK or Vietnam;
  - To oversee the process for assessment moderation;
- To work with the Program Coordinators for HK and Vietnam on any issues related to the provision of content;
- To work with Regional Course Moderators to maintain the currency of material provided for the HK and Vietnam programs.

**Lack of resourcing**

A major problem in establishing a sustainable process for effective management of these two new programs is the lack of adequate resourcing. Even though both new programs were acted on at the request of the university, no ongoing resourcing has been allowed to the School for the additional workload involved in the servicing of two new offshore programs comprising 33 new taught courses. The School knew that responding to the request to offer our communication degree in Vietnam was going to cost the School money, and it was expected that allowance would be given to direct other School income to support this university initiative. That has not happened.

Application was made in last year’s budget round for the funding of a part-time Regional Courses Coordinator position and an additional teaching position to cover the additional workload of two new offshore programs. Neither of these positions was approved. As a result the additional workload has had to be distributed among current teaching staff. This is testing the effective staff management in sectors of the School and has removed any capacity to respond to the opportunities hoped for: looking at new opportunities for student or staff exchange, work-integrate learning and collaborative research. This will add further to the workload.

The School has now been required to add another intake each year to the Vietnam program, which will double this workload. This is unmanageable unless the resourcing issue is resolved.

**Dissemination of project outcomes both completed and planned.**

Our noses have been to the grindstone in getting the two new programs under way and dealing with the emergent problems within the deadlines, so little attention has been given to disseminating the results beyond the outcomes of the project itself.

As we have not been able to finalise a working model of a sustainable process that other Schools may adopt, that cannot be provided in a final form that can be readily distributed or communicated more widely.

The greatest value of the Project for others at this stage is in the insights we have gained that would be of use to other Schools or Programs planning on establishing similar programs offshore. We are open to communication and consultation with those interested, and on ways in which those insights can be made more widely available.

**Summary of the project, outcomes, impacts and dissemination**

The project arose from the practical demands of the School offering its Bachelor of Communication (Professional Communication) degree in Hong Kong (in partnership with the Hong Kong Management Association) and Vietnam (RMIT). The two programs required the provision of course material taught in Melbourne for teaching by local teachers in the two offshore sites. A process for the production of teaching materials, the support of the offshore teachers through liaison and ongoing consultation, and quality assurance processes through moderation of teaching and assessment was established in the School. Course teachers in Melbourne were identified as “regional course moderators” and the work involved in course preparation, renewal and moderation incorporated in their workload. The project also encountered significant unexpected organization and learning and teaching problems, in some cases distinctive to creative and culturally based subjects, that needed to be resolved. These are detailed in the project report and may be of relevance to Schools or Program Coordinators becoming involved in offshore or Vietnam program offering.