Welcome to the New Year

Welcome to the second Transnational Education newsletter. In this edition I am pleased that we are able to provide you with more news on initiatives, developments and success stories related to RMIT programs run with our offshore partners. I wish you all the best for the New Year, and I hope that we can work together to make 2009 even more successful and productive than 2008.

Dr Madeleine Reeve
Pro Vice-Chancellor
International and Development Portfolio

Graduations

As well as the annual onshore graduation ceremony held in Melbourne on December 17, more than 400 students graduated from the Ho Chi Minh City campus of RMIT International University Vietnam, in a ceremony held at Hoa Binh Theatre on December 3. More than 170 students also graduated from RMIT Vietnam’s Hanoi campus, in a ceremony held at the historic Temple of Literature. Most students received either bachelor or diploma qualifications, in fields relating to business and commerce.

As RMIT Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Margaret Gardner AO, noted: ‘We are linked by our shared commitment to education, a bond that creates significant cultural and economic benefits for our countries. RMIT has a special role in that relationship as the only fully foreign owned university in Vietnam. When we opened in 2001, there were just 30 students. During 2008, some 5 000 Vietnamese students studied at RMIT in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, with a further 400 in Australia.’

In total more than 2 600 RMIT University students from around the region celebrated their achievements at graduation ceremonies in late 2008.

In other news from overseas, we have recently celebrated a number of anniversaries with our partners, including the Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade and Hong Kong Arts School, both of whom have been RMIT partners now for 10 years. We have numerous valued, long term partnerships – some in excess of 20 years – and we believe the strength of our relationships is evidenced by these milestones. We look forward to celebrating many more!

AUQA and AQTF preparations

RMIT, like other Australian universities, is subject to audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency each five to six years.

Our first quality audit was in 2003, and the University’s next audit is being conducted during February and March 2009. The audit outcome is a public report containing recommendations for action, affirmations for improvements identified and already in action, as well as commendations on strengths. RMIT is required to regularly report to the Agency on actions in place to address recommendations and affirmations made. The process provides RMIT with an opportunity to have our own self-assessment and understanding of our performance validated externally, as well as to leverage change and improvements to support the continued delivery of high quality programs and to showcase good practices and achievements.

The 2009 audit is focusing on how RMIT has responded to recommendations from the 2003 audit, as well as the University’s activities in internationalisation and industry engagement. For the first time, the audit is also covering the University’s VET operations in relation to the Australian Quality Training Framework standards.

As part of the process of considering RMIT’s international activities, audit panel representatives have visited several of our partners with whom we deliver RMIT programs in locations outside of Australia. They met with a range of staff involved in the program, including program mangers (or similar), teaching staff, as well as current students, alumni and local employer/industry representatives. This has been an excellent opportunity to showcase the close partnerships we have in place to deliver high quality programs in various locations.

During February 2009 the audit panel visited the following partners:

- Singapore Institute of Management
- Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade
- Taylor’s College in Malaysia
- Vocational Training Council of Hong Kong.

Assistance from these partners in helping us to showcase the effectiveness of our partnerships in delivering high quality programs to students has been an important part of the audit process. We appreciate your continued support.
Marketing sign-off procedure
The coordination of marketing activities in partnership programs presents many challenges. Factors such as the need to meet tight marketing deadlines, the involvement of multiple stakeholders at RMIT and partner institutions, the importance of negotiating different institutional requirements, and the management of feedback and approval processes across different countries all combine to make this a process that requires intensive effort and organisation.

The importance of meeting these challenges in an effective and efficient way has led us to develop a new marketing sign-off process for offshore partnership programs. This process provides the partnership manager as a single point of contact for each of RMIT University’s offshore partners. The partnership managers will coordinate the input and approval of all relevant marketing materials forwarded to them, making things much simpler and clearer for all concerned. The RMIT partner manager will ensure academic input and corporate input are obtained for any material to be used for marketing RMIT programs including brochures, posters, web or advertising in newspapers. We hope that all of RMIT’s offshore partners will find this to be a major improvement, and will work with us to make this new system a success into the future.

Offshore manuals
During 2008 RMIT University continued to work with partners to develop and refine the Student Information Guide and Program Administration Manual for use offshore. The Student Information Guide is already in use at some of the University’s larger partners, and we expect to have the Program Administration Manuals finalised shortly. We aim to roll out manuals for our other offshore partners in early 2009. The manuals are an excellent way by which we can keep partners informed of changes to policy and procedure, and will keep the manuals relevant by reviewing and updating them on an annual basis. We are excited to be moving closer to finalising these useful documents for each partner and feel confident that this will help streamline our day to day student and administrative activities, both here and offshore.

Changes to provision of transcripts offshore
Recently RMIT has put in place a new system to streamline the provision of transcripts and align our policy on and offshore. A letter was sent out from the Academic Registrar to our partners in late 2008 outlining the new procedure and a time line for its implementation. In 2009 one transcript will be provided free of charge to offshore students, in addition to their award transcript which is provided six weeks after conferral. In line with transcript provision for local students, from 2010 onwards offshore students will receive their free award transcript six weeks after conferment and can purchase duplicate transcripts through the Hub at RMIT in the same way that onshore students do. We hope that this alignment of process will provide a more equitable arrangement and reduce the administrative overheads for all parties.

Newsletter Feedback
We are keen to receive your feedback on the information provided in Transnational Education News. Please send any comments or queries to:

Rachel Hancock
The Editor, Transnational Education News
Email: rachel.hancock@rmit.edu.au
Tel. +61 3 9925 1639
Fax: +61 3 9925 5153

Student profile
Alicia Too completed her Masters of Business Administration with RMIT University through the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group project. In the following Alicia shares her learning experience and how she feels she has grown as a result of it.

The MBA courses were delivered in residential workshops in Hong Kong so this gave participants the opportunity to meet with colleagues working for the same company from around the world. These relationships were strengthened further by the group case study and research projects which continued in the weeks after the residential. As a result of hearing different cultural and historical perspectives on issues, it helped to broaden my vision, so I am more aware of the global aspects in business and decision making. As a mature aged student I also realised the different relationships developed with professors, faculty and colleagues of RMIT University – they facilitated my learning rather than taught me. I was also grateful for the support from my general manager during the learning process.

The difficult parts of study were managing my time to undertake the necessary research and then writing data up in a logical sequence. With time and practice my writing skills became better, but there were times …! Managing a busy hotel environment involves working long hours and this sometimes made it difficult to have conference calls with colleagues working on our group project.

As a result of my postgraduate study, I feel I’ve become more open minded and have developed the ability to see things from different perspectives. I am also aware of the need to keep up to date with information by reading articles and online materials so my own knowledge is current and in pace with the world. One of the nicest aspects is that I’ve developed confidence in my own abilities as a person and will take on challenges far more than I would have done in the past.

My advice to others is that you will need to:

- be both mentally and physically prepared for the study journey
- develop strong time management skills – last minute work is too stressful
- look outside your studies for mentors or experts in an area you can discuss issues with
- enjoy the process or else it will be a torture!

Alicia Too

Contact Us
For further information relating to the RMIT offshore partnership program please contact:

Scott Crighton
Associate Director Transnational Education
Email: scott.crighton@rmit.edu.au
Tel. +61 3 9925 1448

For contact details of RMIT staff holding key roles as part of the partnership management model please visit: www.rmit.edu.au/ged/tne/pmcontacts