

This paper was delivered at the RMIT University Council Retreat by Dr Madeleine Reeve, Acting PVC (International) in October 2001.

## **INTERNATIONALISATION AT RMIT**

### **1. BACKGROUND**

This paper has been developed in the context of: RMIT's teaching and learning and research and development strategies; outcomes from Council and senior management working groups during 2001; current international activities; and macro trends in our national and global operating environment. The proposed strategic goals and priority areas for action relating to internationalisation are drawn from the themes which have emerged from these contexts.

Internationalisation is a multi-dimensional and dynamic developmental process. This paper proposes a framework for strengthening and/or re-shaping key dimensions so that we continue to meet the needs of students and clients and the communities we operate in; respond to changes in our operating environment; and remain competitive.

#### **1.1 RMIT's Principles and Values of Internationalisation**

Internationalisation is integral to RMIT's teaching and learning and research and development activity and commitment to being an innovative university. It is critical to preparing students and researchers for global mobility and careers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to meeting the life long needs of individual learners and government and corporate clients. In particular, internationalisation is important in order to:

- Ensure further growth, development and reputation
- Meet rapidly increasing demand for international education
- Add value to the educational experiences of domestic students
- Produce graduates with global understanding, skills and imagination
- Enhance reputation for contemporary relevance and quality
- Foster international relationships and inter-cultural understandings.

The principles and values which underpin internationalisation at RMIT are:

- Commitment to student/learner centred and culturally inclusive programs
- Development of graduate capabilities linked to the contemporary processes of globalisation
- Commitment to the quality of the university's programs and research regardless of mode or location of delivery
- Extensive and effective use of the latest information and communication technologies to enhance access, quality and global reach of programs and research
- International collaboration which contributes to the creation of a culture of innovation
- The creation of a network of international learning communities, reflected in productive and sustainable partnerships grounded in the principles of respect, trust and reciprocity
- Respect for local traditions and values and working for the social and economic good in all the communities in which RMIT operates
- Commitment to just, humanitarian and sustainable solutions to contemporary problems
- Adherence to all appropriate legal requirements and cultural expectations of host countries
- Adherence to appropriate Australian regulations (eg: Education Services for Overseas Students Act, National Code and Migration Act) and the AVCC code of ethical practice
- Development of appropriate staff and organisational capabilities which contribute to internationalisation
- International activities based on sound business principles assessed in terms of RMIT's commitment to a balanced scorecard.

#### **1.2 Macro Trends Affecting Tertiary Education**

The dimensions of internationalisation within the tertiary education sector have shifted over time in response to changes in patterns of student demand, national policies, economic settings and the impact of globalisation. Macro trends currently affecting the direction of internationalisation include the following:

- Globalisation of economies and cultures including global growth in transnational education through scholarships, exchange and full-fee award programs
- Australian foreign, trade and aid policies focus on positioning Australia in the Asia-Pacific region and in opening Australia to world competition and ensuring Australian enterprises and institutions are competitive.
- The decline in Australia of public investment in education and training systems and a corresponding financial imperative for self-reliance for Australian universities.
- The emerging knowledge-based global economy which is expanding and building new networks for knowledge creation and producing corresponding changes to management and organisational structures, partnerships and business processes
- New information and communication technologies (ICTs) are changing educational delivery models, communication processes, relationship management and marketing and making possible significant growth in international education and training
- Strong competition to recruit international students from Canada, Malaysia New Zealand, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States. These countries have strong national government support to build or regain market share
- Emerging strong competition from the corporate sector to meet rapidly increasing demand for education and training throughout the world
- Deregulation of world education markets. World and regional trade alliances are freeing up international education markets. The World Trade Organisation has the potential to not only open Australia up to foreign universities but to make foreign markets more accessible to Australian universities. APEC also has an objective to expand tertiary education exports.

These trends demand new responses from RMIT which will build on our current internationalisation initiatives but which will also re-shape our global partnerships and alliances, international program and service delivery models and our portfolio of products and services which are offered internationally to ensure the University remains internationally competitive.

## **2. OVERVIEW OF RMIT'S INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES and GLOBAL REACH**

### **2.1 Scope of International Activities**

The scope of RMIT's international activity is summarised below (the attachment to this paper provides more detail). Each activity contributes to the process of integrating an international perspective into the teaching/learning and research functions of the university with the majority also contributing to the University's financial self-reliance.

- Onshore international student award programs
- Delivery of programs offshore through educational partner institutions using a range of delivery modes
- Twinning arrangements with partner institutions to enable students to transfer to Melbourne
- Both on and offshore provision of award programs to international and multinational corporations and government agencies
- Education abroad – study tours, work placement, exchange and fee paying study abroad programs for RMIT and international students
- Staff exchange with international institutional partners
- International research links
- Customised training and short courses in response to demand from international clients
- Participation in development/aid projects
- Participation in and/or hosting of international conferences
- On-line delivery through a global partnership – the Global University Alliance
- Establishment of a campus in Vietnam

### **2.2 Global Reach**

RMIT has in place and is part of a complex network of international partnerships, alliances and relationships. Supporting these networks is an extensive global marketing infrastructure mainly focused on on-shore international student recruitment and developing new business opportunities with international clients in the corporate, government and aid sectors. Market niches for RMIT programs and services have been established in priority countries in the Asia Pacific Region with an emerging focus on the Indian Ocean Region. Scandinavia, Europe and the USA are growth markets for onshore international students. The range of programs and services delivered internationally varies in each country depending on student and client demand, partnership arrangements, priority industry sectors and the legislative and commercial environment. An overview is provided below.

### 2.2.1 Programs and Services – An Overview

The delivery of RMIT's **award programs** offshore are concentrated in East and South East Asia – in particular in China/Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam. Business models include twinning arrangements, articulation agreements, 'franchise' agreements, a partnership as per GUA and a campus in Vietnam.

**Exchange agreements** are worldwide. Study Abroad opportunities for RMIT students have also been enhanced through the Commonwealth Government's University Mobility in Asia Pacific Program (UMAP) and further opportunities are anticipated through the new university mobility program - University Mobility in the Indian Ocean Region (UMIOR). Fee-paying inbound Study Abroad students have mainly come from North America and Scandinavia with increasing numbers being anticipated from Latin America (Mexico) and Europe (France and Germany).

**International students** studying at RMIT in Melbourne are recruited world wide but the majority still come from the traditional top 10 markets of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, India, Hong Kong, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Taiwan and Korea. Markets which are mature and experiencing some decline include Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Indonesia. Growth markets include China, India, Mauritius and Scandinavia. There are 7,200 international students currently studying at RMIT in Melbourne.

**Consultancy and training** services are being delivered as part of Australia's aid program, through linkages with the OECD and UNESCO and other multi-lateral organisations such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. Growth in the delivery of training services to individual international corporate and government clients is mainly being experienced in South and East Asia in sectors such as aviation, energy, health management, management and finance.

### 2.2.2 Global and Country Strategies

RMIT has an established and extensive **global reach** through the diverse range of its international activities and network of recruitment agents (including IDP) and this reach is being extended through new global partnerships and alliances such as those with GUA, AXA and Austrade. These new partnerships and alliances draw on complementary capabilities around distance education, e-learning, IT infrastructure and global learning networks. Whilst these networks, partnerships and alliances provide a solid base to leverage for growth on a global scale RMIT will need to expand its strategic alliances to enable the University to participate in major aid programs such as AusAID's Virtual Colombo Plan and the World Bank's Global Development Learning Network which focus on poverty alleviation through bridging the digital divide and increasing access to education and training in developing countries via the internet.

A **country strategy** is in place in parallel with the developing global strategy. Countries have been targeted as a result of: offshore demand for RMIT programs; client demand for consultancy and training services in particular industry sectors; high levels of demand to study at RMIT by international students; and/or because they are recipients of Australian aid in conjunction with other United Nations or multi-lateral donor agencies in areas which match the interests and capabilities of RMIT. Through adopting a targeted country strategy RMIT has built a very significant profile and strong brand recognition in several countries in our region and this also provides a solid base to leverage for growth.

**Targeted or priority countries** for RMIT over the past decade, with a focus on the development of offshore programs, have included China/Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam. This has been complemented by

extensive international student recruitment activities in these and other major Asian and South East Asian countries. Offshore programs and international student recruitment have provided a strong profile for RMIT in the region and the springboard for other activities including participation in aid projects and building a client base for consultancy and training services to corporate and government clients. Countries or regions which are developing in significance for RMIT due to the University's participation in development/aid projects include Southern Africa, the Philippines, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Island Countries. Some examples of the scope of country based activity are outlined below.

**China** is a major market for RMIT with high demand for vocational education and training, degree programs and professional training by partner universities, state owned enterprises and individual students wishing to study both in Australia and in China through flexible delivery. RMIT has been established in China for over 10 years with partnerships with educational institutions and government instrumentalities in Wuhan, Shanghai, Nanjing, Tianjin and Beijing. Membership in the GUA with NextEd is now positioning RMIT to deliver agreed higher education programs in IT and Business online to students across China through a network of learning centres attached to key Chinese Universities. RMIT has also been involved in a number of poverty alleviation and capacity building projects in China in the health and vocational education sectors and in assisting the Chinese government prepare for entry to the WTO. Sectors identified for growth in the corporate sector and which are compatible with RMIT's interests and capabilities are aviation, energy, health management, creative media and education and training. Priorities in the aid sector include community health, education and training, environment, governance and gender and development.

RMIT has a well established presence in **South East Asia** and in particular in Malaysia and Singapore through the delivery of offshore programs with partner institutions. The Singapore Institute of Management is a long standing and very significant partner with the majority of RMIT's offshore students. Partnerships also exist in other countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines and this region remains one of the major sources for onshore international students. More recently RMIT has become increasingly active in aid programs in Indonesia and the Philippines in the governance (management and finance), environment and health sectors.

**The Pacific Region and Papua New Guinea** are major recipients of Australian aid and RMIT has increased its involvement in these regions. RMIT for instance is building on its partnership with the University of PNG to deliver a significant capacity building program in the aviation sector and also provides a diverse range of training services to Pacific Island countries through AusAID in-country training programs.

**South Asia** and in particular India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka is a growth market for RMIT particularly for onshore international student recruitment. RMIT has also participated in aid projects in the VET sector in India in recent years. New Institutional linkages are also being formed which will expand opportunities for RMIT to work with Indian partner universities and their local communities on community-based projects.

RMIT is also engaged through aid projects in **Southern Africa** - in particular in the VET sector South Africa and Mozambique- and there is increasing student demand from countries in East Africa (Botswana, Kenya and Zimbabwe) to study at RMIT in Melbourne.

A campus, with a focus on flexible delivery, has been established in **Vietnam** with Vietnamese Government support and in response to student and industry demand for education and training services of an international quality to be offered in Vietnam. RMIT's in-country presence will also enable increased participation in development assistance projects and community-based research projects.

### 3. THEMES INFORMING INTERNATIONALISATION AT RMIT

The themes informing internationalisation are outlined below.

**Teaching and Learning.** The process of internationalisation must continue to underpin teaching and learning in whatever mode and location to ensure our programs are of contemporary relevance, of a high quality, are internationally recognised; and are responsive to student/learner and client demand.

**Research.** Our research needs to be world class to inform program renewal, attract leading researchers and research students, responsive to client demand, and contribute to the economic and social development of the communities in which we operate

**Flexible Delivery.** There is an increasing high demand globally for flexibly packaged and delivered education and training to all age groups within formal and informal sectors and to corporate clients. These programs and services are being delivered by a wide variety of specialist and corporate providers in addition to universities. RMIT's developing global partnerships and strategic alliances will enable the University to remain competitive and to offer flexibly delivered programs and services on an international and/or global scale which are of a high quality and which are financially viable.

**Networks, Partnerships and Alliances.** International networks, learning communities and partnerships grounded in the principles of respect, trust and reciprocity are becoming more significant for RMIT in order to: contain and share costs; benefit from a partner's local cultural, legal and political knowledge; share knowledge and mobilise creativity internationally; develop mutually beneficial research and development activities; transfer best practice across a range of areas; complement expertise or programs; foster innovative credit transfer and exchange arrangements; and to maximise market reach.

**Changing Demand Patterns.** There is growing student mobility but demand from international students is changing. As access to high quality university education becomes more available in countries such as China, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand students are seeking shorter periods abroad either to complete their under graduate degree and/or to incorporate an international component into their under graduate program. Lower cost alternatives are being sought and articulation and Study Abroad are becoming more significant as is distance learning and the demand for program and credential portability.

**Brand Value.** International visibility, recognition, and status of qualifications ( 'brand value') are significant factors in student choice and in attracting the best researchers and teachers. In this context of growing international competition for high quality researchers, teachers and students, international benchmarks are becoming very significant measures of quality in addition to national quality assurance frameworks.

**Social and Environmental Responsibility.** Social and environmental responsibility are significant issues for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. RMIT is making an important contribution through, for example, its centre for Global Sustainability; research concentrations (eg: environmental sustainability, globalisation and cultural diversity and social (urban and regional) development); international networks; programs (such as M. Social Science [International Development] and BA [International Studies]); and through capacity building projects in developing countries.

**Technology.** New technologies are transforming market boundaries, facilitating greater market access for new competitors, reducing the time to market and increasing demand for quality web communications. New responses are required to increase access globally to RMIT's programs and to improve marketing and client relationship management systems. A network of learning centres utilising the new technologies combined with strong learning support mechanisms (such as the GUA/NextEd model in China) is a key growth strategy for RMIT.

**Financial Self Reliance.** There is a need to diversify revenue sources in areas that enhance the University's teaching and research goals and international standing with decisions based on a full understanding of costs and benefits.

#### **4. STRATEGIC GOALS**

The ten goals and priority areas for action proposed below derive from the above themes informing internationalisation at RMIT.

##### **4.1 Strengthen the internationalisation of the curriculum**

Permeate all RMIT courses with explicit international content and reference points so that courses have cross national applicability and comparative dimensions that allow students to develop global understanding and imagination

Provide students with opportunities to access a wide variety of international experiences

Encourage students to participate in projects that are designed to explore global issues of local significance to the communities in which RMIT operates

#### **4.2 Strengthen international research links and projects**

Strengthen links with international research organisations, research focussed universities and industry bodies and enterprises which are in alignment with RMIT's research priorities

Expand numbers of high quality international students undertaking research degrees

Expand opportunities for staff to undertake international consultancy and research projects that dovetail with their research interests

#### **4.3 Develop and manage partnerships, networks and alliances more strategically**

Develop rigorous processes for the review and selection of partners and new programs with existing partners to ensure that: partners are compatible with RMIT values and strategic goals; programs meet demand and are of a consistent and high quality; and programs and services are financially viable.

#### **4.4 Expand RMIT's global reach**

Use new technologies to improve interaction with partners, build new community based networks and to increase access by learners and clients to RMIT's programs and services

Provide increased opportunities for international student/learner-centred flexible learning through partnership arrangements using the new technologies

Increase RMIT's international student and client base

#### **4.5 Strengthen RMIT's contribution to the social, economic and environmental well being of the international communities in which it operates**

Expand involvement in multi-national and bilateral aid projects

Strengthen the university's international scholarship program

Encourage research into global issues affecting the international communities in which RMIT works

#### **4.6 Strengthen quality assurance mechanisms**

Apply international quality benchmarks to RMIT programs and services whatever their mode and location of delivery

Fully comply with Australian legislative requirements regarding international education

Make effective use of student feedback in relation to internationalisation and the experience of international students to ensure continuous improvement to programs and services

#### **4.7 Strengthen RMIT's brand identity and corporate position**

Develop an international brand management strategy

Develop an integrated international marketing plan

Strengthen RMIT's global positioning through a targeted government and corporate relations strategy

#### **4.8 Develop policy frameworks and planning and management processes which effectively support international growth**

Agree a set of policy frameworks within which RMIT will manage the extension of its global reach

Strengthen market research capabilities to identify market trends, new business opportunities, demand for new products and services and the most appropriate partnerships for new ventures

Manage the life cycle of existing partnerships and the international product and services portfolio to ensure appropriate partnerships and portfolio are maintained and channel conflict is avoided

#### **4.9 Develop appropriate staff and organisational capabilities to progress internationalisation**

Provide opportunities for staff to participate in international teaching and learning networks and projects to foster internationalisation of the curriculum

Strengthen RMIT's network of productive and sustainable international partnerships and alliances with: international government bodies; industries; compatible education and research institutes; professional

associations; Alumni; and local communities in order to exchange information and share knowledge resources and intercultural understanding

#### **4.10 Increase self-reliance**

Ensure international activities are an integral component of the University's overall business plan, are based on sound business principles, and are assessed in terms of RMIT's commitment to a balanced scorecard and triple bottom line

Pursue growth and diversification of income from international activities through extending the markets for RMIT programs and services in targeted countries and industry sectors and through innovative practices and systems which promote the most effective and efficient use of resources.

### **5. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Student and staff involvement in international activities

Strategic alliances and partnerships which increase access to RMIT's programs, research, and consultancy and training activities

Use of new technologies to deliver programs and services on an international scale

International student and client demand for RMIT's programs, research, consultancy and training services

Revenue from international activities

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