A support guide to quality teaching and learning, and traveling, experiences for students/teachers/administrative personnel involved with intensive offshore teaching.

“Pre-planning is the single most important thing in relation to effective course delivery over an intensive period (experienced offshore teaching practitioner, April 2004).”

Essential ingredients of effective pre-planning can be broken into two categories: personal and educational.

A BEFORE YOU LEAVE
1. Personal planning

**Contacts**

- Make contact with your host teaching institute(s).
- Email teaching notes/materials to your contact at the teaching institute, and keep hard/soft copies with you.
- Keep location details, including addresses/maps, details of your hotel/teaching institute/airport with you.
- Set up a ‘safety line’ contact “just in case” there is no one to meet you when you arrive or you are delayed/deviated in transit.
- Write, on a card, the name of your accommodation/teaching institute in English, and in the language of the country (countries) that you are visiting and keep this with you at all times.
- Photocopy the first two pages of your passport and any visas that you may require. Store these in a safe place – separate from your passport.
- Take Business cards with you.

**Health**

- Keep vaccinations up-to-date. Check with the University health services to see if you require vaccinations, and/or need to undertake health care measures, for your destination(s).
- Ask your doctor for advice re: taking any medical information/records with you.
- If you have any dental concerns, visit a dentist before you leave to teach offshore. Complete any medical insurance/travel documentation and submit to the appropriate authority well before your departure date.
- Make-up a small first aid kit, ask colleagues and the University Health Service for advice re: the contents of the kit.

**Clothes**

- Check any university/national/international travel warnings. Find out what the climate will be like during your stay, and the heating/air conditioner facilities at the teaching institute. This will allow you to pack appropriately.
- Don’t wear new shoes/clothes in transit – be comfortable.
- Always carry a spare change of clothes with you while you are in transit.
Money
- Carry, where possible, local currency with you.
- Check with your bank whether you will be able to access your accounts from your destination country and the bank charges for doing so.
- Keep a list of credit card details, including phone numbers to ring if you lose them.

Eating and drinking
- Take a bottle of water with you for the journey. Check to see if you can drink water in your destination country (countries).
- Ask local students/colleagues about good local eating places.
- Let airlines/hosts know of any dietary requirements, e.g., vegan.

Settling in
- Try and find out about your accommodation and be prepared that it might not meet your expectations. The key word here is be “adaptable”.
- Take a good guide book with you and read it before you depart.
- Find out what power point adapters are used and take them with you.
- Make sure you are aware of any time differences between your destination country (countries) and Australia.
- Factor in jet lag – give yourself, if possible, time to recover and adjust to climatic conditions.

Don’t do any of the above at the last minute.

Key sources of information for personal preparation –
Your colleagues – speak to people who have taught at the institutes that you will be visiting;
Head of School
The course co-ordinator(s) of the courses that you will be teaching
International contact/colleagues
International students at RMIT
RMIT University Health Service
Your doctor
Australian Embassy
Heather Bigelow Cross Cultural Consultant (108.3.41 tel. x55617)
RMIT Travel website http://www.rmit.edu.au/travel

2. Educational pre-planning
“What makes a good teaching experience for students in intensive offshore courses is a teacher who can make the best of whatever happens – that requires adaptability, flexibility, a good sense of humor and a lot of courage. Let’s face it – there’s an awful lot you can’t control in any teaching context, but there is always something that you can, and intensive offshore teaching is no different. So prepare, prepare, prepare – and prepare to let the preparation go, too (experienced offshore teaching practitioner, May 2004).”
Learning outcomes for students engaged in intensive offshore teaching and learning experiences have to be comparable to students in traditional teaching and learning contexts. That is, between students doing a 13 week course and those doing a 2 week intensive course. How do you do this? Through preparation, which includes analysis: of your teaching and learning methods, curriculum, expectations, learning outcomes and objectives, and those of your prospective offshore partners and students.

Use the following points as reflective prompts as you prepare to teach intensively offshore. Synthesizing these points with your own teaching and learning preparation will support intensive teaching and learning experiences that are comparable to non intensive experiences.

**Communicate**

- Talk to teachers who have worked at the location(s) you will be teaching at.
- Don’t leave things until your arrival at your host institute. You will hit the ground running – there is no time to prepare or reflect when you are there.
- To reduce issues of unfamiliarity with your off-shore partner, and the students that you will be teaching, communicate with your off-shore counterpart prior to departure.
- Identify needs that you might have.
- Identify your expectations and ask your partner to identify their expectations of you, and those of the students.
- Clarify what teaching resources are available to you – photocopiers/audio visual/power points/lecture room – teaching room facilities and seating arrangements.
- Are there deadlines for written material to be printed-photo copied?
- Find out what resources, including texts, that students have available to them.
- Find out what exactly your off-shore partner expects you to be teaching and how this fits into the program of study (studies) that students, attending your course, are undertaking. This will assist you to contextualise your preparation/course materials.
- Find out where you will be teaching, when you will be teaching, and the total teaching hours that you have been allocated.
- Find out how your teaching hours have been broken down e.g., 3x 6 hour blocks = 18 hours in total.
- Find out what demands are placed on the majority of your students prior to attending your classes. For example, are your students arriving for a 1 pm – 7 pm teaching session on a Saturday afternoon after having worked all week and all morning?
- Find out how students are used to learning. For example, linear teaching arrangements: “You speak and they learn.” Or do they use a more interactive model? Consult with staff that have visited the partner, and worked with students, in the past. Remember – what students want is not necessarily the most effective way of supporting their learning in intensive offshore courses.

**Provide effective T&L experiences**

- You may feel under pressure, from students, to provide information rather than promote active learning. How can you reduce this pressure? Discuss possible approaches with colleagues before you leave; plan your approach. That is, how
will you check what students are expecting? How will you communicate your expectations?

- Consider an introductory session where you discuss learning strategies and how students can develop and monitor their capabilities. Practice – try your ideas/teaching methods out on your local students and seek feedback from them.

- Find out about your students. Are there part time students with work experience? This opens up opportunities for discussion.

- Think laterally in your teaching preparation and ask yourself: “What knowledge will these students have that I can make use of while I am with them?” Ask staff who have taught offshore and communicate with staff in your off-shore location.

- Know your curriculum – and dissect the key ideas behind it. Remember that you don’t have 13 weeks to work around key ideas – you have to go straight to them. What is the best way to do this? You may need to rethink your curriculum in the form of primary and secondary information.

- Don’t leave secondary aspects of your curriculum to chance – if you want something discussed make sure you build it into your curriculum. For example, you might ask students to present a brief discussion about it. Check the students’ local curriculum to see if there are secondary aspects to it that you might be able to tap into.

- Localize your content where possible. For example, develop a local theme for teaching material, use student knowledge of the area – ask them where a good place to eat is.

- Ask off shore partners to provide examples of case studies that students might find useful to work with.

- Getting student feedback requires that students are willing to engage with you and the curriculum.

Preparing resources

- Forward teaching resources to partners and get confirmation of their arrival and accessibility. Get contacts for accessing photocopiers and teaching materials.

- Take everything that you need with you. This includes: videos, case study materials, blank overheads, white board markers, pens, online quizzes. And/or make thoroughly sure that these materials are available upon your arrival.

- Find out if you, and your students, have local internet access. Talk to colleagues – is the connection reliable?

- Localize teaching materials to engender and open up discussions. How? Access local newspapers upon arrival, ask students, and/or access local papers prior to your departure.

Prepare interactive T&L experiences

- Encourage students to talk about their experiences.

- Introduce yourself in light hearted way. Take pictures of you, and your family, with you and introduce these to students.

- Try and connect to, and engage with, students as much as possible. For example, try and say a few words in their first language – ask students for assistance in pronouncing words, including their names. Make a point of
saying that to learn and study in a second language is a very challenging and
courageous thing to do. Ask them to be patient with you while you try and
pronounce their names.

• Be open about mistakes – show them that you make them, point out mistakes,
when exposed, can provide poignant learning opportunities.

• Be patient with them as they listen to you – be aware of your accent and
talking speed. You may not have time, but rushing through your material and
talking quickly will not assist student to learn more quickly.

• To get student feedback quickly ask students to recap at the end of each
session. You may suggest that they do this in groups.

• Student presentations are useful – they keep students attentive and awake!
They break-up long lectures, and provide you with useful feedback relating to
your teaching. For example, are students presenting what you expected? Have
students understood your key points?

• Student presentations provide immediate feedback on your teaching content.
Have they learnt what you expected? Have they learnt what they expected?

• Be prepared for large groups, for example, lecturing to two lecture theatres via
video link-up.

• Talk to colleagues about possible size classes before you leave and
feedback/interactive teaching strategies.

• You may need to perform as much as you talk. Leave the lectern and walk/sit
amongst students.

• Help students to digest information by breaking down teaching sessions into
lecture and discussions.

• Don’t speak for more than one hour.

• Allow students to walk around, have a cup of tea. Chose an interactive
teaching style over a delivery model – this will encourage and support students
to stay awake. Remember that the majority will be attending your classes after
working all week/day.

Give yourself opportunities to give and receive feedback

• Plan for feeling isolated, vulnerable, anxious, excited, frustrated, lonely and
nervous! How? Locate possible sources of support before you leave. Is there
someone in-country who you can talk to while you are there? Is there someone
in Australia/home that you could e-mail? Is there someone else travelling at
the same time as you?

Key sources of information

Your colleagues – speak to people who have taught at the institutes that you will be
visiting;
Head of School
The course co-ordinator(s) of the courses that you will be teaching
International contact/colleagues/offshore partners
International students at RMIT
Academic Development Unit
Student Learning Skills Unit (Business Portfolio)
International Students’ Union
Heather Bigelow Cross Cultural Consultant (108.3.41, Tel. 55617)
WHEN YOU COME BACK TO AUSTRALIA

1. Personal

- Organize a day off, if possible – this will help you to settle in, relax, get over jet lag and reflect on your teaching and living experiences.
- Review your experience with your supervisors – debrief – what should be improved? What worked? What didn’t? What can be changed? What cannot be changed? Could you have been better supported?
- Communicate with your off-shore counterpart – seek feedback – provide feedback.
- Make notes of what you would do differently next time, what worked for you and what didn’t. Share these with colleagues. Send them to the Academic Development Unit. Help develop resources that will support staff and students involved in intensive teaching delivery on and off shore.

2. Educational

If there is going to be follow-up by a local lecturer, it is important, upon your return, to connect and discuss:

- Teaching philosophy
- Approach to assessment and what is being looked for in the assessment (understanding of issues rather than rote learning)
- Include the local staff in assessment design and construction. They have a better feel for their students than we have and they understand their language difficulties and their learning styles. Show trust to your local staff – encourage them to draft questions and check exam papers.
- Maintain email with local teaching staff. Ask them to seek informal feedback from students who have completed the intensive course and its assessment.