Implications of Bologna and Trade Liberalisation

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The Bologna Process

• Intended to create a unified European Higher Education Area, to enhance student and labour mobility.

• Australia is committed to ensuring ‘compatibility’ with emerging European standards.

The most important features are:

• Three cycle degree system (3+2+3) (with exceptions)

• Diploma Supplement document to accompany testamur and transcripts

• European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)

Failure to align with Bologna may reduce our attractiveness to students from Europe (currently 32,000 in Aust) and elsewhere as European standards become adopted in other regions (eg Latin America)
The Three Cycle System

- The 3+2+3 system will speed the development of graduate entry professional programs in Australia.
- Five year programs such as architecture are being split, allowing for mobility between first and second cycles.
- The honours year is a discrepancy, as European doctorates now require masters for entry, but all Australian universities are persisting with both pathways at present.
- Across the ATN we should differentiate our first cycle degrees from other universities - ours are as professionally and vocationally focused, whereas others’ are increasingly generic and preparatory to second cycle specialisation.
An Australian Diploma Supplement

- Provides a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies
- DEST has allocated $400,000 to develop a common template - QUT and RMIT were involved in pilot projects in 2002 and 2005

1. Includes the name and status of both the institution awarding the qualification, and (if different) the institution administering studies.

2. Includes the mode of study - full or part-time, distance education or on campus

3. Includes “details of any rights to practise, or professional status accorded to the holders of the qualification. What specific access, if any, does the qualification give in terms of employment or professional practice and indicate which competent authority allows this. Indicate if the qualification gives access to a ‘regulated profession’”

- The ATN should begin issuing diploma supplements as soon as technically possible
European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

• All European programs are beginning to express course loads similarly, amounting to 60 credits per full time year of study, as does the UMAP Credit Transfer Scheme

• There is no credit point standard in Australia, and within the ATN one EFTSU = 100 points at Curtin, 96 at RMIT and QUT, 48 at UTS and 36 at UniSA

Three options for the ATN:

• Wait and see what other Australian institutions do

• List ECTS points alongside institutional credit points in course guides and diploma supplement

• Adopt ECTS instead of institutional credit pointes in order to improve alignment across the network and with Europe
Over the past ten years, states’ restrictions on international trade in education have been relaxed in most countries, to greater or lesser extents, through:

- Unilateral liberalisation
- Bilateral trade agreements
- The General Agreement on Trade in Services, administered by the World Trade Organisation
Unilateral Liberalisation

Many countries are slowly changing the way they regulate private and foreign education providers:

Less:
  – Restrictions on the number of providers, the number of student places, the types of courses offered
  – Discrimination between local and overseas-based private providers

More:
  – Transparent regulatory frameworks
  – Quality assurance measures
  – Competition over access to public funding
Bilateral Agreements and GATS

- Have had little practical impact on education directly
- Most countries’ regulatory frameworks are much more open than their commitments under these international agreements
- The consultation and negotiation process provides an opportunity for governments to talk to each other about the impact of regulation on cross-border education
Implications of Trade Liberalisation

- Forget trade agreements and focus on national strategies
- Foreign investment in education is becoming easier, and is likely to lead to transnational networks of private institutions as well as more branch campuses
- Local institutions, both public and private, are also benefiting from liberalisation of tertiary education, and are increasingly competitive with transnational providers