

# Dealing with Faculty..... So What's Changed?

Desma Smith, Australian Catholic University  
Maureen Balsillie, Swinburne University of Technology

## Abstract

Continuing on from the Dealing with Faculty workshop (ISANA 2003), this workshop aims to re-capitulate and investigate just what has happened at your institutions since 2003. We will hear from those who attended the last workshop and about some of the implementations it inspired. We will also hear what encouragement and resistances may have been encountered at the faculty.

The exponential growth of International Education constantly presents new challenges for International Offices and Faculties. The ever-increasing diversity of socio-cultural groups and the integration of academic programs and services to provide a whole education experience for students requires a dynamic approach. ADAPTATION is the key!

This follow-up workshop will expand on the originally presented methodologies for essential communications between International Offices and academic and administrative staff in the faculties. This session will also brainstorm the issues of 2004 and focus on developing new strategies to deal with the challenges now present. New and proven (tested) initiatives will be used as a basis for this interactive workshop where individual institution's requirements can be focused upon and planned.

## Introduction

The Internationalization strategy in place at most if not all Australian institutions has placed pressures on faculties to accept increasing numbers of full-fee paying award International students as well as the short-term non-award Study Abroad students. The income generated by these students is now built into university budgets. It is interesting to note that Australia is reported as the second most expensive study destination behind the UK (IDP Research release, 18<sup>th</sup> IDP Conf. Sydney, Australia 2004.). Also built into strategic goals are student Exchange programs. Australian institutions now realize the importance of having significant numbers of students travelling overseas for part of their Australian degree programs. The balance side of these opportunities is that universities must accept short-term non-fee paying Exchange students.

Do you find that faculties find the words 'International', 'Exchange' and Study Abroad' confusing, bothersome or an interruption to their day to day tasks? At ISANA 2003, some of the Resistances and frustrations that International Offices experienced were:

- Who is the relevant person to contact at the faculty?
- There is no flexibility at the faculty
- Faculties want to know what advantage they will receive if they accept Exchange and Study Abroad applications
- There is a lack of information at the faculty level and this leads to a lack of understanding

- Faculties do not want any extra workload
- Different faculties have different administrative procedures
- Faculties need policy and procedures relevant to International students.
- Faculties have very different agendas from International offices e.g . budgets, student numbers and the cancellation of some teaching units

### **Issues for the workshop**

#### *Relevant people.*

For the effective and timely turnaround of applications, International Offices must work cooperatively with all areas of the university. There must be a team effort! It is important to identify all players and to consider the skills of each player. There is an expectation that each player will apply his/her skills to achieve the targets set by management.

But how does this work at your institution? In your own International Office, do you know the markets that are being targeted? Do you know the agents that have been commissioned? Do you receive feedback and reports from conference attendees, partner visits, visitors to the university? Are you kept informed of fee increases for tuition, accommodation, OSHC, visas? Are you informed of changes in staff at the Faculty? Are you advised of DEST changes e.g HESA and OS-help?

#### *Faculty is inflexible*

What are the expectations at your institution? To accommodate incoming students, do you expect the faculty to overload a lecture or tutorial group? Do you expect them to be inflexible about allowing an International student to take certain single subjects when an application does have some evidence of pre-requisite studies? Does your institution allow students to take units across many Faculties?

#### *What advantage is there for Faculties accepting International applications?*

Do International Offices need to be able to communicate to Faculties the proportion of the international student fee that will be allocated to them? Should the Dean of Faculty be the leader advising the Faculty to work with International Offices?

#### *Lack of Information leads to Lack of Understanding*

International Offices have staff with acquired knowledge of the different academic systems around the world. This knowledge ranges from: (a) the timing of academic systems e.g semester, term or quarterly; (b) the study load required in each country e.g European Credit Transfer System and the US credit hour system; (c) the grading systems; (d) the style of teaching and assessment. Unless this information is given to academic and administrative staff at the Faculties, it is understandable that lack of support for International student applications may be as a result of 'ignorance'. Knowledge is essential in the processing of credit transfer for exchange students who study overseas and then return to the Australian institution.

#### *Extra workload*

Resourcing levels, both human and financial vary enormously between Australian universities. We constantly hear the cry that resources both at the International Offices and at the Faculties are stretched to the extreme. Prioritising workloads is essential and again the teamwork approach must be applied in order to meet the challenges of additional partners, additional markets, increasing applications, innovations in programs (e.g. study tours). If there is an unworkable pressure on any one of the players, the effectiveness of the process will be undermined.

Academics who have studied at overseas institutions and who also have contact with colleagues through research collaboration and/or through contact at various academic forums are the ideal 'champions' of particular institutions and countries. But the demands on the academic may mean that unless incentives are provided, the extra workload of supporting the International Offices becomes too onerous.

#### *Different administrative procedures*

Whilst all Australian universities have a central student database, the databases of International Offices do not necessarily overlap with the central database. This leads to duplication of data entry for applications, offers and historical tracking. Due to the nature of the disciplines offered by various faculties, different administrative procedures may be in place e.g. degrees with research or internship components.

#### *Faculties need policy and procedures*

The 'top' tier of the university, (those who direct strategic goals) need to ensure that faculties incorporate the needs of International Offices into their operations. This cooperation needs to be a directive from senior management and it is important that there is consultation between the International Office and Faculty to ensure effective policies and procedures serve all concerned.

### **Solutions for Dealing with Faculty**

At ISANA 2003, the workshop was presented with a Course Coordinators Guide as one effective means of communicating with academic and administrative staff at the Faculty. The participants in the workshop were invited to trial a Guide that is tailored to the needs of each institution. It was stressed that because of the constant changes in education, such a booklet is a 'living' document that must be flexible and constantly adapted.

#### *Other suggested solutions were;*

- In-service programs to visit each Faculty where the International Office staff have the opportunity to meet with Faculty staff-both academic and administrative. This would be the appropriate forum to 'Launch' the Guide.
- Agreement on a "Carte Blanche" permission for International Offices to sign off on certain units.
- Training of International Office staff to administer Study Abroad applications even to the point of enrolment.

This session is intended to be an interactive workshop aimed at addressing solutions to the needs, pitfalls and barriers as suggested by the presenters and identified by the participants.

## **Potential group scenarios**

With each scenario, the group will be asked to keep in mind the ways that each person deals with the Faculty.

1. How does your institution manage local students who have applied to study overseas? This group should discuss the processes from the marketing of the available opportunities, the application and selection process, the period overseas and the returning student.
2. How does your institution manage Exchange/Study Abroad applications from International students? This group should workshop the application process, orientation, the study period and the returning home process.
3. How does your institution manage applications for fee-paying full-degree International students? This group should workshop the marketing for International students, the application process, orientation and the management of the student for the duration of the course.

Depending on the number of participants, it may be necessary to have two groups working on each scenario. If this is the case, the groups will be asked to workshop specific sections of each scenario.