



VC-NET

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Internationalisation gathers pace

Two studies being published in Canada and the UK give a picture of the spread of internationalisation across university campuses. In Canada the Association of Universities and College of Canada (AUCC) has issued four “fact sheets” derived from an analysis of its 2006 survey of all its members. These show a dramatic increase in the scale of international activities since a similar survey in 2000, for example:

- The number of international students coming to Canada has increased dramatically and is three times what it was in 1996. China provides 23 percent of the 70,000 full time “visa students” in Canada. Overall this means that in Canadian universities foreign students represent some 7 percent of undergraduate numbers and 20 percent of the postgraduates. (Equivalent percentages for the USA are 2 and 22 respectively for four year public universities.)
- 69 percent of institutions offer scholarships targeted at international undergraduate students compared with 36 percent in 2000.
- International Offices play a role in internationalising the curriculum in 83 percent of cases and a majority of institutions run workshops to help their academic staff in this area. In 2000 their role was minimal.
- Almost all universities are interested in promoting study abroad and 81 percent provide financial support for those who study abroad for credit. However, the actual take up from students is very low with only 2.2 percent of the total student population participating. Nonetheless, this is double the percentage for 2000.
- What the AUCC calls “knowledge exports” have grown significantly since 2000. The survey suggests that three quarters of institutions are now delivering education or training programmes overseas. In 2000 the figure was 42 percent. The prime motive for doing this is not financial, but to enhance the institution’s reputation internationally. Only four branch campuses are identified in the survey, but there is an increase in the number of joint degree and twinning programmes. China, Malaysia and India are the most cited countries for international delivery.
- Unlike the responses in 2000, all those replying in 2006 said that they had quality assurance mechanisms in place for courses delivered abroad.

One striking finding from the AUCC survey was that the overwhelming reason given by institutions for wanting to have international students on campus was to promote internationalisation. Only 10 percent gave income generation as their prime reason

Canadian universities have always placed a higher value on international development co-operation than their major competitors and over 265,000 people in the developing world have been trained by Canadian institutions since the 1970s. This commitment, although highly dependent on funding from federal government, shows no sign of receding, as the AUCC survey reports that 73 percent regard international development as a high/medium priority in their internationalisation strategies. This is partly driven by an upwards push from students wishing their institutions to be more engaged with the problems of the developing world.

In the UK a parallel study, based on institutional visits rather than a survey, has identified a similar increase in internationalisation activity. The report, to be published shortly by the Council for Industry and Higher Education, scans what is happening across the UK and presents some examples of possible good practice for institutions to consider. Universities' strategies for internationalisation were found to be largely of two kinds; those that were university-centred (in which the prime motive was to enhance the international standing of the institution) and those that were student-centred (in which the aim was to ensure that students acquire an understanding and appreciation of global issues during their study and become global citizens).

The report's examples of good practices cover all aspects of internationalisation ranging from providing special support for the families of international students to promoting international volunteering and developing deep strategic partnerships with peer institutions overseas.

Sources: AUCC: for a report on the full survey and access to the four fact sheets see http://www.aucc.ca/policy/research/international/survey_2007_e.html The CIHE report will be discussed at conferences in the UK in October 2007 and published shortly afterwards. It will be available on the CIHE website at <http://www.cihe-uk.com/index.php>

Messages from the OECD

The annual publication of OECD's Education at a Glance tends to cause a flurry among policy makers and this year is no exception. One focus of the OECD's analysis this year (dated 2007 but based on data that is at least two years old) is the effect that expansion of higher education has had on labour markets. Their findings are very positive:

- "With few exceptions the employment rate for graduates of tertiary education is markedly higher than that for upper secondary graduates."
- "Individuals with a university degree and advanced research education had earnings that were at least 50 percent higher than individuals whose highest level of attainment was below the upper secondary level"
- "The longer individuals spend in education, the more likely they are to be in employment and to earn more."

A recent Australian survey of postgraduates by Graduate Careers Australia quantified this in financial terms, since it found that graduates with a coursework masters degree earned a median salary of A\$50,000 compared with A\$40,800 for those with just a bachelor's degree. The other positive conclusion from the OECD is that fears of "crowding out" - when an increase in graduates might lead to more unemployment at the lower ends of the scale - do not appear to be justified.

In the UK there are some concerns about the trends revealed by the OECD. The percentage of 20-21 year olds graduating from higher education is not growing as fast as in competitor countries. The UK is now tenth in the league table at 39 percent, well below Australia at 59 percent and New Zealand at 51 percent. It also looks as though more countries will overtake the UK, as the OECD finds that aspiration levels among teenagers are low with only 32 percent expecting to go on to university, the lowest figure across OECD members.

Some areas where some Commonwealth countries do well are:

- The high numbers of science graduates: Australia, New Zealand and the UK have more than the OECD average per 100,000 of population.
- The enhancement of earning power for graduates is more significant among females than males in the UK, Australia and Canada.
- The percentage of international students on campuses is 6% across the OECD but 14 percent in the UK and 17 percent in Australia and New Zealand.

Source: OECD at www.oecd.org/edu/eag2007 The Guardian Education page 18th September 2007.

Codes of Responsible Research

Australia has just launched a revised version of its Code for Responsible Research sponsored by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and Universities Australia. The code is mandatory for all recipients of research funding who are expected to ensure that all their procedures, employment conditions and contracts progressively conform to it.

To some extent the code is consolidating good practice in Australian universities. According to a recent international survey by the ACU of institutional policies on research ethics, Australian institutions have been very active in developing and disseminating policy guidelines on research ethics – adopting what the report calls an “irrigation model”, flooding academics and departments with guidelines.

Guidelines of this kind are becoming increasingly comprehensive as public concerns about the moral issues and the complexities of science grow. Thus, the Australian national Code embraces topics as wide as managing data and materials, publication and dissemination of findings, attribution, peer review processes and conflicts of interest. In addition it sets out processes for handling breaches of the code or misconduct. It is a fair bet that another revision of the Code will follow within five years.

Source: See the NHMRC site at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/r39syn.htm> An order form for the ACU report on Current Practice in Research Ethics can be found at <http://www.acu.ac.uk/resman/pdf/orderformresearchethics.pdf>

The editor, Jay Kubler, and author, John Fielden, are always pleased to receive comments on the usefulness and content of this briefing service. News from other Commonwealth countries, which might be of wider interest, is also most welcome. They can be contacted by e-mail on vcnet@acu.ac.uk or by fax on +44 (0)20 7387 2655.
