

## Global Forum 2012

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### *Recognising and Rewarding Leadership Roles in Transnational Education*

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#### **Conference research domain(s) addressed**

Considerations involved in planning and operating campuses in other countries – pedagogical and managerial:

- Academic practice, work and identities
- Learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum
- Leadership, management, governance and policy in higher education

#### **Research Focus**

Program coordinators and unit convenors involved in transnational education (TNE) represent a distributed group of leaders who often take on TNE coordination roles that can be challenging in cross-cultural settings. In their roles they are involved with colleagues from offshore branch campuses or partner institutions in the curriculum, delivery, and assessment and moderation of programmes. Both parties are concerned with achieving the course learning outcomes of the course while negotiating cultural and social contexts of learning in different campuses and countries. Therefore, the issue of recognition and reward for academics in TNE roles at home campuses and branch campuses is integral to the pedagogical and managerial success of the courses offered.

This panel presentation highlights the broad outcomes and recommendations from an Australian Learning and Teaching (ALTC) funded project entitled “*Learning Without Borders: Linking Development of transnational leadership roles to international and cross-cultural teaching excellence*” undertaken by a project team from two Australian universities with a branch campus each in Sarawak, Malaysia. TNE is defined in this *Learning Without Borders* project as an arrangement for provision of higher education where students in one country acquire an award which has been issued by a higher education institution based in another country.

The project involved identifying issues relating to recognition and support for staff in TNE roles and identifying what policies, procedures, and professional development are needed to assist academics function in their roles better. Data gathered from academics in the four campuses (two home campuses and two branch campuses) suggest that most of the academics in TNE roles receive little training, instruction or mentoring on working in cross-cultural contexts. Nevertheless, many Australian-based staff members have had experience working outside Australia, and are confident about their ability to work with staff from other cultures. Indeed many respondents to surveys and interviews reported very positively on their experiences with TNE and saw it as enriching. Some reported that their experiences with TNE help their approaches to teaching and to internationalisation of curriculum generally.

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On the other hand TNE leaders at the program coordinators and unit convenors level do not expect their involvement in TNE to have a positive impact on their careers. Issues raised by academics in TNE roles include:

1. The want of recognition of TNE responsibilities in work load and remuneration.
2. Competing for time with other responsibilities such as research.
3. Having insufficient time for interaction between on shore and off shore staff.
4. Ensuring equivalence of curriculum and assessment as overseas students prepared for an Australian qualification whilst providing content and learning activities suited to the cultural context of students.
5. The English language competency of off shore students.
6. Design of curriculum
7. Determination of learning and teaching activities and related learning resources
8. Choice of assessment instruments and drafting of assessment items
9. Moderation and Grading of student performance

We propose TNE measures that might enhance staff experiences and student learning. Based on the discussions and interviews held with academics from home campuses and branch campuses, recommendations regarding a range of issues such as decision making, communications, recognition, reward and recompense, and support and professional development are suggested.

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