

Policy Redesign Project

All policies and procedures are being reviewed as part of this project. This document is pending review, but remains in effect until the review is carried out.

Development of Off-Shore Programs Policy

Establishment:	Council, 5 December 2002
Last Amended:	Academic Senate, 11 May 2011
Nature of Amendment:	Amendments to established course approval process at clause 2.4.1, 3.1 and 3.2. Updating terminology at clause 2.5.5
Date Last Reviewed:	September 2005
Responsible Officer:	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)

1. Preamble

1.1 Introduction

Flinders University encourages the development of off-shore programs, subject to certain criteria being met. The due diligence criteria include selection of an appropriate off-shore partner, establishing a demand for the program which would justify the investment, investigation of resource issues and appropriate costing of programs to ensure that acceptable financial returns are achievable.

Off-shore program proposals must be in the overall interests of Flinders University and be consistent with its international strategy. Nothing should be done which benefits one part of the University to the detriment of its overall interests. Off-shore programs must add value, for example by increasing international opportunities for students and staff, enhancing the University's overall standing and providing an additional income stream.

1.2 Scope

For the purposes of this policy, off-shore programs are defined as award courses of study which are taught outside Australia either in accordance with a formal agreement between the University and an overseas institution or organisation or wholly by Flinders. (Note: where a course is offered through flexible delivery to students within Australia and overseas with no face-to-face contact between a student and a staff member, this would normally be defined as an on-shore program).

Off-shore programs are necessarily commercial ventures and hence involve a degree of risk. Such programs include:

- programs taught wholly off-shore by Flinders staff, without a local partner;
- twinning or franchised programs using Flinders curriculum where the University offers a Flinders award, or studies towards an award, with a partner, usually an organisation in the host country. The program may or may not be taught entirely by Flinders University staff. The partner organisation might be a private provider, a professional or industry association or a university or college; and
- joint award programs.

2. Guiding Principles

2.1 Partner selection

2.1.1 Partner selection processes must be transparent and documented, giving consideration to maintaining the reputation and culture of Flinders University. Written agreements must cover the management of the relationship between the University and the partner. Reasonable efforts must be made to establish the probity, financial viability and professional standards of any partner before any agreement is reached.

2.1.2 Any alliance or partnership must be in the overall interests of Flinders University and be consistent with its international strategy.

2.1.3 Selection of an appropriate partner is complex and the selection criteria will vary according to the location of the program, the timing and type of program proposed. A partner which is appropriate in one country may not be appropriate (because of regulatory or other reasons) in another country.

2.1.4 Normally, it would be expected that the following would be taken into account in the selection of a partner:

- whether the partner has experience in education and whether they are recognised as such in the host country;
- whether there is a clear understanding of the investment required;
- how the relationship between the University and the partner will be managed;
- whether students are reasonably protected from the operation ceasing because of insolvency, changes of regulations or other changes;
- whether there has been proper business, legal and regulatory planning;
- whether the partner understands the regulatory environment in the host country, and
- whether the partner is able to ensure that appropriate levels of student support are offered, consistent with the expectations of Flinders policies.

2.1.5 Any alliance or partnership should add value to the University, such as by extending learning, teaching and research, increasing international opportunities for students and staff, enhancing the University's overall standing or providing an additional income stream.

2.2 Market & competitor analysis

2.2.1 A proposal to offer an off-shore program must demonstrate:

- that an appropriate assessment of the demand for the program has been made;
- its potential for viability over the planned life of the project, and
- that competing programs offered within the same market have been identified.

Where a partner has identified potential demand for a program, evidence about how that demand has been assessed and verified must be provided.

2.3 Financial plan and viability

2.3.1 Full account must be taken of the resources - financial, human, technical and physical - required for Flinders to meet its obligations under any agreement. Full costing and an assessment of costs and benefits, and identification of the source of any funds required, must be undertaken before any agreement is reached. All programs must operate on a full cost recovery basis.

2.3.2 A financial plan for the program must identify what fees will be charged for the program and growth rates to be achieved in order to meet the financial forecasts in the plan.

2.3.3 The following issues must be addressed:

- Variability in exchange rates where a fee is to be charged in local currency
- Repatriation of funds
- Taxation liabilities

2.3.4 The proposal should include a risk management strategy, including an exit strategy should the program prove not to be viable. In addressing this requirement, the University's Risk Management framework should be consulted.

2.4 Curriculum

2.4.1 A new course proposal is required to establish a new course off-shore. A new course proposal is also required to propose the offering of an existing course off-shore or an existing off-shore course in a new location, in order to establish the business case. Where it is proposed to offer all or part of the course in a language other than English, information identifying and justifying the language of instruction and related quality assurance processes must be included in the course approval form.

2.4.2 Where changes in curriculum are proposed in order to meet the needs of a local market, the proposal must provide assurances that the program meets the University's criteria for educational quality and that the same standards are applied regardless of the place in which the program is offered or the language of instruction. Curriculum adaptations which might be made include:

- inclusion of local case studies
- substitution of local examples in course materials

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- provision of a local context
 - inclusion of additional topics
 - provision of bridging topics
 - delivery of all or part of the course in a language other than English.

2.5 Quality assurance and risk management

2.5.1 The quality of Flinders programs must be assured wherever and however they are offered. To this end, a quality assurance strategy must be in place which covers equivalence of standards, achievement of objectives and independent review. The processes applied to evaluate quality will be similar to those used for on-shore courses, including periodic course reviews and key accountability measures.

2.5.2 Teaching and learning strategies must be explicit, including the processes for approval of programs and courses, and covering the equitable and ethical treatment of students. This includes entry standards, academic regulations and discipline, assessment and awards.

2.5.3 The major risks associated with the program and probabilities associated with these risks must be identified. Attention should be given to what actions would be necessary to manage these risks, e.g. how would students be protected reasonably from the operation ceasing because of insolvency or changes of regulation.

2.5.4 Any activity must accord with the spirit and letter of the law in relevant host countries. The contract will include the partner's commitment to ensure that all relevant legal and government obligations are met in the establishment of the program.

2.5.5 Each off-shore activity must be self-sustaining. Under Commonwealth Government legislation, the University is not allowed to support off-shore activities which require any form of cross-subsidy from public funds.

2.6 Enrolment status

2.6.1 Any student enrolled in an off-shore program is a Flinders student and will be subject to Flinders University policies and procedures. Where the normal provisions contained in policies and procedures require amendment to reflect specific requirements of a particular off-shore program or a particular national environment, alternative provisions may be approved in accordance with normal University processes, and these will be identified in the contract for the particular program or programs to which they will apply.

3. Procedures

3.1 Proposals for offshore programs must follow the principles outlined in the [Flinders Quality Assurance Framework for Offshore Programs](#) and the procedures in the [Flinders Offshore Guide](#). Concepts should be discussed with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) and the Deputy Head, Development and Partnerships, International Centre.

3.2 Approval for new offshore courses and new offshore locations for existing courses is through the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International), the Vice-Chancellor's committee and Academic Senate, in accordance with the [Courses Policy \(PDF\)](#).

3.3 Faculties are required to report annually, as part of the KAMs quality reporting process, on the operation of each offshore program using the approved annual reporting proforma.

Related Links

[Flinders Quality Assurance Framework for Offshore Programs](#)

[Flinders Offshore Guide](#)

[Courses Policy \(PDF\)](#)