Transnational doctoral education and research: a case study

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Chapter 1

Transnational Doctoral Education and Research: A Case Study

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Overview

This chapter provides background to the design and development of Doctoral programs offered by Southern Cross University (SCU)—specifically the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). SCU’s PhD is a traditional research degree completed by thesis only. However, the DBA was specifically designed for those graduates who required background in advanced units in management as well as research methods. The chapter traces the development of the DBA with modifications over the first decade of operation and the program’s delivery in several overseas locations in Asia. The DBA is the first research DBA available in Australia and the first graduate was recorded in 1997; up to 2010, over 250 graduates have completed the degree. Over the same period some 16 PhD graduates have completed their research supervised by Graduate College of Management staff. DBA candidates have come from many countries but predominantly from Asia—31 from Malaysia, 28 from Thailand, 24 from Singapore, 10 from Indonesia and others from Hong Kong, Vietnam, Taiwan, Korea, Dubai and Japan. The program is also delivered by collaborative educational arrangements with partner institutions in country in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. Discipline areas cover financial management, human resource management, systems, marketing, small enterprise, management, organisation and the professions. The chapter concludes with comments on possible future developments.
Introduction

As the initial chapter for this book, the focus is on setting the scene for doctoral programs offered by Southern Cross University throughout the region. With this in mind, the chapter has clear objectives:

- Outline a brief history of Southern Cross University and its establishment.
- Trace the development of management and business programs at undergraduate and specifically at post-graduate level.
- Identify factors that lead to the establishment of the Graduate College of Management with its Doctoral programs—PhD and DBA.
- Outline the rationale for the DBA and identify off-shore DBA centres throughout New Zealand and Asia.
- Outline candidate support and supervisor support systems for PhD and DBA programs.
- Provide a brief overview of PhD and DBA candidates and graduates up to and including 2008.
- Comment on current developments including the establishment of an International Centre for Professional Doctorates.

The structure of the chapter in general follows the list of objectives above, beginning with a brief overview of the history of Southern Cross University and working through programs associated with management and business with an emphasis on doctoral programs in these discipline areas.

Southern Cross University—A Brief History

Southern Cross University was established on 1 January 1994 on the North Coast of New South Wales, Australia, following the dismantling of the University of New England, which had been established as a network University in 1989. The Lismore campus in that network was known as The University of New England Northern Rivers.

Originally, the tertiary institution in Lismore was the Lismore Teachers’ College, founded in 1971, and this institution was expanded and renamed the Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education in 1973. The Commonwealth Government of the day produced a White Paper on Higher Education in 1988 with an emphasis on the development of larger institutions and the Northern Rivers College of Advanced Education agreed to an association with the University of New England and became a network member under legislation brought down in 1989.

During 1992, an Advisory Group was established to consider the possibility of the network (University of New England) being dismantled and the Advisory Group recommended that a new University be established in the North Coast region of New South Wales as an academically integrated institution incorporating the current UNE network centres at Northern Rives and Coffs Harbour, with a potential of establishing additional sites at other North Coast Centres as
required. In June 1993, the Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Training and the NSW State Minister for Education and Youth Affairs announced that a new University would be established in Northern NSW incorporating campuses at Lismore and Coffs Harbour and appropriate legislation was passed by both houses of the NSW Parliament in October 1993, and received Royal Ascent on November 1993 leading to the establishment of Southern Cross University from 1 January 1994.

Management, Business and the Graduate College of Management

Business studies were introduced at the College of Advanced Education in 1973 with the first undergraduate intake in 1974, with a Diploma program replaced by a Bachelor of Business in 1975. In terms of academic organisation, the school was divided into three areas of specialisation—administration, data processing and accounting/finance. By the mid 1980s, the academic development of the School concentrated on four main disciplinary areas: accounting and finance, business computing, marketing management and small business management. Programs continued at the undergraduate level although some Graduate Diplomas were introduced—for example, the Graduate Diploma in Applied Communication Technology, accredited in 1982.

With the network linkage to the University of New England from 1 January 1989, the School was renamed the School of Business and Computing. A major development in 1989 was the decision to appoint a full-time Director of Graduate Studies and Research—an appointee on secondment from UNE's Armidale campus. The purpose of this appointment was to attract research funds and develop research programs, develop graduate programs at the Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma and Masters levels, and attract candidates for a PhD program with rules and regulations adopted from the University of New England. Initially, candidates enrolled for the PhD graduated through UNE and candidates continuing with their research following establishment of Southern Cross University on 1 January 1994 were also allowed to graduate through UNE.

Following the establishment of the DBA in 1996, strong arguments were developed for a separate Graduate College of Management (GCM) and advantages were seen for the GCM to be established on the Tweed Coast with land made available adjacent to the Tweed City Council facilities at Tweed Heads. The Director of the GCM and senior staff were located at the Tweed Campus although some administrative facilities in particular organisation of distance learning programs, remained at the Lismore Campus. The significant growth of the MBA since its establishment in 1990, and further growth of Doctoral candidates with a launch of the DBA in 1996, provided sound justification for the establishment of a separate Graduate College of Management to cover the administration and delivery of all graduate programs in management and business, including doctoral programs.
As at 2010, the GCM offers the following awards at Masters and Doctoral level:

- Masters of Business Administration
- Masters of Business Administration (advanced)
- Graduate Certificate in Business Administration
- Graduates Diploma in Business Administration
- Masters of Professional Accounting
- Masters in Supply Chain Management
- Masters of Human Resources and Organisation Development
- Masters of Technology and Management
- Masters of Management
- Masters of International Business
- Graduate Certificate in Research Management
- Masters of International Sport Management
- Doctor of Business Administration
- PhD.

An update on courses available through the GCM claims that the College offers quality programs with high academic standards, a practical focus, relevant content and excellent support to meet challenges faced by 21st Century managers. The College administers post-graduate programs in business administration, international business, management and marketing, and research degrees in business and management covering such areas as knowledge management, leadership, action learning, innovation and technology linked to research. The programs provide a wide range of specialisation areas including human resources, finance, marketing, international leadership, entrepreneurship and small business management, sports management, health management and information systems management. This represents an extensive expansion of specialisation areas when compared with programs available in the 1980s.

**Doctoral Research Award—PhD**

Rules applying to candidature for the award of PhD at Southern Cross University were accepted when the campus joined the UNE network in 1989. The UNE rules for PhD candidature were based on those of the University of Sydney (Australia’s first University) and were applied to UNE when that campus was established as a University College of the University of Sydney in 1938 and rules were subsequently retained when the University became autonomous in the 1950. Only relatively minor modifications to rules have been made including the introduction of a PhD qualifying examination in May 2000 for those potential candidates who did not meet the standard requirements of admission (see below). Other minor changes to the research rules were to allow candidates to interrupt their candidature for a period totaling no more than 12 months—approved in 1994 by the University Council.
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The Southern Cross University PhD is a research degree administered by the University’s Graduate Research College with candidates approved by the Higher Degree Committee, which is a sub-committee of the Graduate Research Committee of Academic Board. Candidates enroll through the Graduate College of Management, but their candidature is subject to the rules of the Graduate Research College.

A brief overview of admission to candidature, requirements of the Award and details of thesis and examination of thesis are set out below with full details available on the Graduate Research College website.

- **Admission to candidature:** applicants may be admitted as full-time or part-time candidates and applicants must possess a Bachelor Degree with at least 2nd Class Honours First Division or the equivalent, or a Masters Degree with at least 50% of the assessment of the Award based on thesis or dissertation or research qualifications being equivalent to these requirements. As noted above, provision now allows candidates to complete a PhD preliminary assessment for admission to candidature.

- **Confirmation of candidature** normally takes place within one year of admission to candidature.

- **Eligibility for the Award of PhD** requires a candidate to make an original and significant contribution to knowledge through research by submitting and having accepted a thesis prepared under the supervision of a principal supervisor. Normally to be eligible for the Award, a candidate shall be a full-time candidate for at least two years or a part-time candidate for at least three years.

- **Work environment and supervision:** a principal supervisor is appointed and a program of research and related requirements is agreed to by candidate and supervisor with probation and progress reports submitted on a regular basis. A candidate–supervisor agreement containing criteria for satisfactorily progress is developed and approved by both candidate and supervisor.

- **Thesis submission:** completion of research will result in the preparation of a thesis with evidence of authenticity and originality—four copies will be submitted—with copies examined by three examiners of which two shall be external to Southern Cross University. Examiners are asked to comment specifically on:
  - The thesis demonstrating that the candidate has an adequate understanding of the field of research.
  - The thesis demonstrates that the candidate has designed, undertaken and reported on an investigation in the specific field of research at a satisfactorily level.
  - The candidate has presented the thesis in a manner and level appropriate to the field of research
  - The literary standard of the thesis is adequate. In addition, the examiners recommend whether any modification or adjustments are required of the thesis before the Award is made.

Full details of the rules applying to Southern Cross University’s PhD are on: www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm.
Supervision of PhD candidates by staff in business and management commenced with the appointment of the Director Graduate Studies and Research within the then Faculty at the end of 1989, and the first Graduate was awarded the PhD in 1995 followed by six graduates in 1997 and two in 1999. Since 2000, more than 30 graduates have completed the PhD Award in research areas linked to business and management.

**DBA—Rationale and Development**

Given 1 January 1994 saw the establishment of Southern Cross University, the Faculty of Business and Computing immediately began discussions on the structure of a professional Doctorate in Business (DBA). Stage 1 of a Course Approval Submission was considered by the Academic Board in November 1994 and forwarded to University Council in the same month. Director of Research and Graduate Studies (Professor Geoffrey Meredith) lead support for the new doctorate, believing that a need existed amongst qualified graduates who may not have had prerequisites to enter a PhD program and, importantly, sought a program that provided updates on research methods and opportunities to test abilities to produce quality research articles. Council recommended that the DBA be approved subject to subsequent course accreditation.

The proposed DBA set out an advanced course of study involving course units, supervised published papers and a supervised thesis. In general terms, the DBA had as its aim, to produce graduates with skills to apply appropriate business disciplines and techniques to solve resource management problems of the private and public sectors with particular emphasis on resource management within the Asia/Pacific Region, and to provide candidates with the opportunity of participating in interactive processes of research. The Submission proposed that the DBA be the only program in Australia offered on a distance learning basis so that the DBA was linked to the University’s mission of providing scholarship at an advanced level to suitably qualified candidates through Australia.

The need for a professional Doctorate such as a DBA was emphasised in a discussion paper prepared for Australia’s Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Research) that identified the extent and range of professional Doctorate programs available in Australia at universities during the early 1990s. Twenty-two Australian universities at the time were awarding professional doctorates and of the remaining 15 universities responding to a survey, nine indicated that they were in the process of formulating policies to introduce these awards. Support for professional Doctorates including a DBA was stated in the following terms:

- To provide extended and advanced training in a professional field with projects and investigations applied in nature and oriented to practice in the professions and where the setting might be industry-based rather than campus-based.
- DBA programs serve different consumer markets to PhD Awards keeping in mind that at the time, Australia had several thousand executive managers with a completed course work Masters Degree (including MBA) that would not qualify for admission to candidature in PhD programs.
• There was an immediate demand for a DBA in the field of management consulting and for senior executives within public and private sector entities who had an ‘Internal Consultant’ role within their organisations.

• Many senior personnel who had completed a Masters Degree that had complemented their first degree with a broad program of course units and often a minor project and these executives now wished to focus specifically on areas of important for Australia and Asia with the opportunity of converting knowledge gained through advanced course units with the production of publishable research papers and a thesis.

• DBA would provide qualified candidates with a credible terminal qualification—the DBA would have relevance for senior executives in private and public sectors and also would have relevance in educational institutions.

• Through the proposed specialist program in key cities in South East Asia, Southern Cross University had the opportunity of meeting the demand for a terminal Award at Doctoral level with hundreds of senior public and private sector graduates who would see the DBA as an attractive terminal qualification.

• In general terms, the DBA would meet a need in the field of business and related professional areas by providing post-graduate opportunities for candidates with appropriate background experience, providing extended and advanced training in professional fields associated with the faculty of business and computing, and furthering relationships between Southern Cross University and the Business and Professional communities to their mutual advantage.

The Stage 1 submission recommended that the DBA require the equivalent of 18 units:

• Six advanced course units.

• Two units representing the production of papers, one to be submitted to a refereed journal either in Australia or overseas and one to be published as a high quality working paper—both papers to be embodied in a Thesis.

• 10 units representing a Thesis submitted for examination by internal and external examiners.

It was proposed to introduce the DBA during the second and third trimester of 1995 with the award available on a full-time basis, part-time on campus, part-time on a distance learning basis in Australia with compulsory residential workshop requirements each trimester, and on an off-shore basis at selected university centres in Asia, with a minimum number of candidates and compulsory residential workshops each trimester at those university centres.

The submission included details of candidates converted to a strategic budget over a three year period, indicating a surplus since the program would be available on a full-fee basis both for Australian and overseas candidates.

Further details were provided on proposed six advanced units, DBA working papers and article requirements and the DBA research Thesis.
An Academic Board meeting held in May 1995 resolved that the Doctor of Business Administration be accredited, and this accreditation submission was approved by University Council in November 1995 with an appropriate set of rules also approved.

Administrative arrangements approved were for applications for admission to the program to be submitted to the Dean, Faculty of Business and Computing and be approved by also the Director of Research within that Faculty. Candidates were to be finally considered by the Faculty of Business and Computing Research Committee, which would approve course units and an appropriate research field and supervisors. Before being permitted to proceed to the Thesis section of the course, candidates were to complete the requirements of six advanced course units and two research paper units approved by the Faculty of Business and Computing Research Committee and also have completed the units with results with an average Credit level. At least 67% of the course of study was to be research papers and research thesis.

The Thesis submitted by candidates would be referred to two examiners appointed by the Faculty Committee on the recommendation of the Faculty of Business and Computing Director of Research. At least one of these examiners was to be external to the University. After considering examiner reports, the Committee could recommend to the Academic Board that the DBA be awarded or the Committee may require the candidate to submit to written, oral or practical examination as it considered fit.

At University Council meeting on 9 February 1996, a proposed amendment to rules of the DBA allowed candidates to complete the degree on a full-time basis over an extended period of three years of study. This was introduced to meet the requirements of a number of scholarship/fellowship granting bodies including international agencies, which offered scholarships or fellowships over a three year period of full-time study.

Following the establishment of a Graduate College of Management, the University Council of July 1988 approved amendments to rules that substantially eliminated reference to ‘Faculty of Business and Computing Research Committee’ for the new ‘Graduate College of Management’.

A further amendment of rules at the July 1999 University Council meeting reflected changes in the Schedule of Course work units available for study, and also made minor changes to the administrative arrangements for the DBA program. The 18 units required for the DBA included:

- Four advanced units in Management and Business (candidates with prior qualifications may be granted credit for these).
- Research Methods and Design I and II
- Research Papers I and II
- 10 Thesis units.
At the University Council meeting of July 2001, a further minor variation in structure of Thesis units was approved on the basis that the new structure would be of assistance to candidates as they plan their research degree. At this stage, the previous Research Papers I and II also were modified to be the units Preliminary Literature Review and Research Proposal. By 2002, the structure was modified to include 24 units—four advanced Management units, two Research Method units, a preliminary Literature unit, a Research proposal and 16 Thesis units. In February 2005 a further change in name was introduced with the Research Methods units being known as ‘Qualitative Research Methods’ and ‘Quantitative Research Methods’. In supporting this change, the Graduate College of Management argued that the revised names better reflect the content of the research units.

In 2006, a Course Review of the DBA was undertaken to consider re-accreditation of the Degree for a further five years. The Chair of the Review Committee was the Chair of Programs Committee of Academic Board with three external members of the panel. The outcome of the review was a recommendation to Academic Board that the DBA be reaccredited for a further five years and this was accepted by the University Council in 2007. The review report included a number of recommendations:

- That the DBA be more strongly promoted as a research higher degree qualification and that the focus of this promotion be upon its suitability as a qualification for tertiary level teaching and for problem-solving across a wide range of fields in business and management.
- That a proposal for there to be three examiners for a DBA Thesis be rejected.
- That an intention to develop a Centre for Professional Doctorates be supported.
- That an intention to apply a set of generic rules to all professional Doctorates be supported.
- That a policy of limiting to a maximum of 10 the number of Doctoral candidates per supervisor be supported.
- That an intention to embed the two units—Qualitative Research Methods and Quantitative Research Methods—in all Masters Degree Programs that articulate with the DBA be supported.
- That the DBA and fee paying PhDs be the principal focus of the Graduate College of Management’s Higher Degree by Research activity.
- That an intention to develop a Graduate Attribute to apply to the DBA program be supported.
- That an intention for the Graduate College of Management to embrace its alumni more pro-actively be supported.
- That an intention to make the action research approach a significant vehicle for DBA Theses be supported.
- That an intention for the Graduate College of Management to seek more research and development grants from large companies be supported.
• That an intention for a Graduate College of Management to explore industry partnership possibilities that will support DBA and MBA research be supported
• That the College investigate further the progression and attrition data and address this issue based on the findings.

The DBA course review concluded with a strong statement of support.

The Southern Cross University DBA Program is one of the largest and most successful programs of its type in Australia. It has a current enrolment of 180 students, all full-fee paying. It enjoys strong market demand from across Australia and the Asia/Pacific region. The program is making a significant contribution to the University’s strategic priorities. It is held in high esteem among business management educators across Australia. It is distinctive for its focus on the development of research skills, its high levels of candidate satisfaction, the quality of supervision, its vastly superior completion rates and its high overall quality standards.

In making its recommendations for re-accreditation for a further five years, the panel commends the Graduate College of Management for the following achievements:

• The extraordinary market success, as evidenced by the strong demand for the program, its remarkable retention and completion rates and the high peer esteem in which it is held.

• Its impressive commitment to continuous quality improvement as evidenced by numerous initiatives to provide better forms of support for candidates and supervisors, the decision to raise the IELTS score required for admission to the DBA to 7 and the activities of the Course Advisory Committee in implementing internal course review procedures.

• Its willingness to support a proposed Professional Doctorate Centre, which is likely to have benefits for other Schools across the University.

• The uncompromising approach to the maintenance of high quality standards in the approach to the assessment of candidate performance in the DBA program.

International Collaborative Partnerships

The Southern Cross DBA is a transnational award and offered in partnership with a number of overseas institutions. The overseas centres become collaborative partners with SCU in delivering the program. Candidates remain students of SCU. Therefore, it was necessary that an organisational structure facilitating knowledge sharing be put in place. In 2005, the then Director of the program, Associate Professor Peter Miller, established a ‘pod’ supervision model whereby a group of candidates at particular overseas locations were assigned to a particular SCU full-time staff supervisor (the principal supervisor) to work together with the local in country supervisor to create a formal link between the local supervisors and College doctorally qualified and experienced staff, and to ensure supervision standards, quality and procedures are matched at the overseas locations.
A summary of each of the partnerships is provided below.

**The Hong Kong Institute of Technology**

Southern Cross University and the Hong Kong Institute of Technology (HKIT) entered into an Educational Collaboration Agreement in September 2003. The agreement provides the educational and business delivery model for the partners and establishes quality procedures and processes to ensure that the candidates receive the same quality educational experience and service expected at the Southern Cross University campus. A management committee comprising of senior representatives from both institutions was established by the agreement to oversee the arrangement. The first graduate of the program occurred in 2008.

**Manukau Institute of Technology**

Manukau Institute of Technology in New Zealand and Southern Cross University celebrated 10 years of educational collaboration on in September 2008. The Educational Collaboration Agreement was amended in May 2005 to include the delivery of the DBA program. The agreement provides the educational and business delivery model for the partners and establishes quality procedures and processes to ensure that the candidates receive the same quality educational experience and service expected at the Southern Cross University campus. A management committee comprising of senior representatives from both institutions was established by the agreement to oversee the arrangement. The first graduate of the program occurred in 2008.

**Sydney College of Business and Information Technology**

Southern Cross University and the Sydney College of Business and Information Technology (SCBIT) entered into a Educational Collaboration Agreement in December 2004. The agreement provides the educational and business delivery model for the partners and establishes quality procedures and processes to ensure that the candidates receive the same quality educational experience and service expected at the Southern Cross University campus. A management committee comprising of senior representatives from both institutions was established by the agreement to oversee the arrangement.

**Management Development Institute of Singapore**

Southern Cross University and the Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS) entered into an Educational Collaboration Agreement in April 2001. The agreement provides the educational and business delivery model for the partners and establishes quality procedures and processes to ensure that the candidates receive the same quality educational experience and service expected at the Southern Cross University campus. A management committee comprising of senior representatives from both institutions was established by the agreement to oversee the arrangement.
Unity College International Malaysia—now known as City University College of Science and Technology (City U)

Southern Cross University and the Unity College International Malaysia entered into an Educational Collaboration Agreement in June 2007. Prior to this agreement, the University had agreements with a number of other Malaysian institutions including the Cybernetics Institute of Technology and the Southern Cross Management Centre. The Unity agreement provides the educational and business delivery model for the partners and establishes quality procedures and processes to ensure that the candidates receive the same quality educational experience and service expected at the Southern Cross University campus. A management committee comprising senior representatives from both institutions was established by the agreement to oversee the arrangement. There have been many graduates from this partner program. The College was renamed the City University College of Science and Technology (City U) in 2010.

Candidate and Supervisor Support Systems

Up until 2004, most of the DBA candidates worked mostly on their own, with a supervisor with whom they shared and created new knowledge as they pursued the research project. The rapid increase in enrolments over the early years of the program and the concentration on admission and student growth meant that the administrative systems and infrastructure to support the program was a secondary consideration to the priority of the program’s establishment and growth. As a result, the future success of the program and the ability of the program to sustain additional candidates were potentially restricted.

Accordingly, in early 2005, the then Director of the DBA program, Associate Professor Peter Miller, developed and established a number of knowledge sharing technologies, techniques and practices, including an online Doctoral Candidates Centre, online Doctoral Supervisors Centre, doctoral symposia, online reporting systems and later in 2007, an online professional development program for supervisors. The cost of underwriting this project was provided by Professor Peter Baverstock from the University’s Graduate Research College. The infrastructure encouraged collaborative knowledge creation and sharing by of doctoral research and supervision by the use of electronic networks permitting asynchronous distance learning in a real-time collaborative environment. Included in the initiatives was also the Doctor of Business Information System (DoBi), which included a full client relationship management module and management of enquiries system. The concept of self service was also introduced as all paper-based forms were web mounted and a new six monthly web-based reporting system for both candidates and supervisors was developed and implemented.

Doctoral Candidates Centre

The ‘doctoral candidates centre’ was established where the candidates could locate relevant information and academic resources, network with other candidates and
complete their progress reports and also get a better understanding of the processes, procedures, practices of the doctoral programs.

**Doctoral Supervisors Centre**

The ‘doctoral supervisors centre’ was established as an online knowledge repository for doctoral supervisors where supervisors could share their knowledge and experiences of supervision and locate required information and resources. The supervisors centre also aimed to facilitate supervisors’ understanding of the processes, procedures and practices of doctoral programs that have an impact on both supervisors and candidates. All of the content areas in the supervisors centre are identical to those in the candidates’ centre, in order to provide supervisors with an appreciation of the resources available to candidates.

**Research Symposia**

Half-yearly doctoral symposia are held for both DBA and PhD students from at the Tweed Gold Coast campus of the University. Up to 85 candidates attend the symposia together with their supervisors and academic staff from the College. Similar but smaller symposia are also delivered at each overseas partner location where the main purpose is knowledge sharing between candidates and their supervisors, as well as with peers and other academics.

Candidates are encouraged to present their research at each symposium and other candidates and supervisors critique the research in progress presentations giving the candidates the opportunity to learn from questions asked by peers and academics.

**Professional Development for Doctoral Supervisors**

In 2007, the then Director of the DBA, Associate Professor Peter Miller commissioned the development of a supervisor professional development program. The wide-ranging campuses of SCU and network of overseas partners necessitated an online program to enable Higher Degree Research (HDR) supervisors in a number of national and overseas locations to participate in HDR supervisor professional development. The program needed to be relevant for HDR supervisors from all disciplines. The cost of underwriting this project was provided by Professor Peter Baverstock from the University’s Graduate Research College. The objectives of the HDR supervisor program were to:

1. Assist HDR supervisors to examine the nature of HDR supervision and to discuss what might constitute ‘effective’ research supervision;
2. Assist HDR supervisors to articulate and reflect on their supervisory practice in a collegial environment;
3. Expose HDR supervisors to different models of supervisory practice;
4. Assist HDR supervisors to develop a critical understanding of the teaching and learning processes involved in effective HDR supervision;
5. Engage HDR supervisors in a reflective process to challenge and extend their understanding of effective supervision;
6. Expose HDR supervisors to the resources available to assist effective supervisory practice outside the SCU environment.

The multiple construct nature of research supervision begged for a professional development program that exposed participants to the range of ways of thinking about ‘good’ research supervision, helped them to identify which of the ways related to their own views of good research and good research supervision, and helped them develop critical reflection of their practice.

The program is designed to be self contained, rigorous and do-able by busy supervisors. It was also designed to be undertaken either in a self-paced way as a resource or in a moderated way as professional development. Participants are able to download a ‘work book’ at the commencement of the program with guidelines and provision to make private reflective comments and with written instructions on how to access the fIRST web site so that they do not have to toggle back and forth for instructions within the online environment.

The program is an online program that is completed in small cohorts (up to 30 supervisors) with other HDR supervisors over a period of five weeks. It involves a time commitment of about two to three hours per week. This includes accessing the online web site (that can be accessed from anywhere you can get a connection, while on leave, travelling overseas, etc), responding to some reflective activities and reading a case study and posting a brief response so that the HDR supervisors in the cohort can learn from each other about HDR supervisory best practice. Supervisors do not require any training to undertake the program.

The program has had several successful iterations. As a result of HDR supervisor feedback and the continual development of the program, research is continuing on the development and testing for reliability and validity of a web based self diagnostic tool and taxonomy for HDR supervisors to assist them to become more self-aware of their operational HDR supervisory style. Such a diagnostic instrument could be used as a pre and post test for the professional development program in the future and for the matching of HDR supervisors and candidates.

**Supervisor and Candidate Reporting System**

Candidates and supervisors are required to complete six-monthly progress reports. Candidates gain access to their progress reports through the Doctoral Candidate Centre and supervisors gain access to their reports through the Doctoral Supervisors Centre. The reports require candidates and supervisors to comment on the progress of the research project and the nature of the supervisory relationship. Reports are returned directly to the program Director. Should either the candidate or supervisor raise a matter requiring attention, it is dealt with by the program Director.

The progress reports are web-mounted onto the University’s student system, known as Student One. The reports not only obtain information on the projects but are also
used to obtain continuous feedback from candidates about their overall experience in the program that can be measured and benchmarked over time.

**Publications**

In July 2004 under the leadership of Professor Alex Kouzmin and Gita Sankaran, a publication project was established with the aim of increasing the rate of knowledge diffusion from the DBA program. The cost of underwriting this project was provided by Professor Peter Baverstock from the University’s Graduate Research College. Through the GCM Publications Program, students and staff published at the following rates:

- 2005 candidates and staff published 19 articles in scholarly international peer-reviewed journals.
- 2006 staff and candidates produced two books and one book chapter, 13 scholarly journal articles and 22 scholarly conference papers.
- 2007 staff and candidates produced one book and 10 book chapters, 13 scholarly journal articles and 20 scholarly conference papers.
- 2008 staff and candidates produced three books and five book chapters, five scholarly journal articles and 17 conference papers.
- 2009 staff and candidates produced three books and five book chapters, six scholarly journal articles and 12 conference papers.
- 2010 staff and candidates produced four books and eight book chapters, 11 scholarly journal articles and 21 conference papers.

In 2007, Gita Sankaran and Associate Professor Peter Miller published an edited book, *Exemplary Practitioner Research in Management: Ten Studies from Southern Cross University's DBA program*, to showcase the level and variety of research undertaken in the DBA program. A follow up publication by Professor Miller and Dr Teresa Marchant, *Professional Doctorate Research in Australia: Commentary and case studies from Business, Education and Indigenous Studies* (SCU Press, 2009), also spread the scholarship developed in the program.

**External Recognition**

DBA programs offered by Australian Universities are diverse in terms of both curriculum and advanced standing arrangements. The SCU DBA is classified by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to be a doctoral research degree as the thesis component of the degree is a minimum of 66% of the program (that is, 16 units of 24 units of study). Most other Australian DBA programs are not considered to be research degrees as the coursework component of these degrees are much higher and in some cases candidates may submit portfolios of two research papers and are not required to undertake a major research project in the form of a thesis.

Comparisons between DBA programs are therefore difficult. However, the SCU DBA has been benchmarked against other Australian DBAs by the Australian and
New Zealand Academy of Management (ANZAM). Results show that the SCU DBA is the largest DBA program by enrolments and has the largest number of graduates when compared to other DBA programs (ANZAM 2005).

In 2005, the DBA leadership team—consisting of Associate Professor Peter Miller, Director of DBA, Ms Sue White, DBA Administrator, Ms Chantelle Howse, DBA Administrative Officer and Ms Susan Riordan, DBA Administrative Officer—was awarded the Vice Chancellor’s Award for Excellence and Achievement in the improvement in process category for the development and establishment of the web-based candidates’ and supervisors’ centres and the customer service management software developed specifically for the program.

Each year graduates from Australian Universities are asked to complete an independent Government ‘Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ)’. The report is released by Graduate Careers Australia and is aimed at providing a national picture of selected aspects of graduates’ research experience to allow national comparisons of educational quality among the 39 Australian universities.

The 2005 report showed that in respect of our post graduate research candidates (which includes both DBA and PhD graduates), Southern Cross University achieved the following rankings:

- number 1—Overall Satisfaction
- number 1—Goals and Expectations
- number 1—Intellectual Climate
- number 2—Skill Development
- number 2—Thesis Examination
- number 11—Infrastructure

The 2006 report also showed a number 3 rating for overall satisfaction.

The Melbourne Institute was formed in 1962 under the leadership of Professor Ronald Henderson. It was the first Economics research institute in an Australian university. The Melbourne Institute aims to be a major institute of applied economic and social research that is nationally and internationally renowned in academia, government, business and community groups. In November 2006, the Institute released its report titled: ‘Rating Major Disciplines in Australian Universities: Perceptions and Reality’. In that report, Southern Cross University had the highest number of doctoral completions (principally DBAs) in Business and Economics over the period. Monash was ranked second and UNSW third.

In April 2008, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (the HKCAAVQ) re-accredited the Doctor of Business Administration degree for a period of five years after an exhaustive review process that involved senior professorial staff from a number of overseas universities.

In October 2008, the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA) and the Ministry of Higher Education approved the Southern Cross DBA—the first for a foreign
University DBA in Malaysia. Equally significant was that the accreditation was accorded a Category ‘A’ approval, which is usually only reserved for PhD programs.

In November 2008, Professor Brian Stoddart, former VC of La Trobe University, presented an independent report on ‘An investigation into the structure, range of activities, performance and supervisory arrangements concerning the University’s DBA program’. The investigation coincided with the then Director of the Program stepping down from the position.

The report concluded that:

Broadly, SCU may be satisfied that the DBA program is fundamentally sound. It consistently attracts good numbers of quality students from Australia and New Zealand as well as overseas, specifically in Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. The program is conducted through a structured supervisory system that ensures students receive consistently high levels of supervision. The student support systems are excellent, with exemplary customer service readily available. Academic standards are high as attested by the time taken to complete, and by the evidence that a reasonable number of students are admitted to but do not complete the program. There is a strong process of continuous improvement imposed on the program.

In addition, the report made four commendations:

• Commendation 1—GCM is commended for the construction of a professional development program for doctoral supervisors
• Commendation 2—GCM is commended for the consistently high customer service provided to students by both academic and administrative staff
• Commendation 3—GCM is commended for having created such a stimulating learning environment for students
• Commendation 4—GCM is commended for the high level of continuous improvement shown throughout the life of the DBA program

The independent report was acknowledged as a tribute to the leadership of the program over the previous five years.

The International Centre for Professional Doctorates

The International Centre for Professional Doctorates is the organisational unit responsible for the delivery of professional doctorate programs at SCU. The genesis of the International Centre for Professional Doctorates occurred in discussions during 2005 between the then Director of the Doctor of Education program, Associate Professor John Hammond, and the Director of the DBA program, Associate Professor Peter Miller. Both thought it desirable that the two professional doctorates be administered by one organisational unit. However the idea was not supported by the then Dean and the matter was put on hold.

In April 2006, the Executive of the University approved in principal a proposal from the then Executive Dean of Business, Professor Neal Ryan to establish a new Centre attached to the Graduate College of Management. This was to be known
as the ‘International Centre for Professional Doctorates’ and would be achieved by renaming the existing DBA administration team. The VC provided $20,372 in Strategic Initiatives funding to Associate Professors Miller and Ellis to research the ‘Expansion of the SCU Professional Doctorates Program’.

In May 2006, Professor Miller established an Administrative Review Group to investigate whether changing to another structural option was feasible and practical and to consider an option of changing the structure of the program from its ‘credit’ based structure to a mixed ‘time based’ structure similar to the PhD program. The review was chaired by Ms Sue White.

The Administrative Review Group recommended a ‘time based’ structure for the thesis component of the program and this was adopted by the Review Panel.

Subsequently, the Academic Board in June 2006 established a Working Party chaired by Associate Professor Allan Ellis to investigate the expansion of professional doctorate programs at the University. The Working Party delivered its report in April 2007, making the following recommendations to Academic Board:

1. That the current DBA and EdD program rules (as revised post the recent review of the DBA program) form the basis of a generic set of rules for all professional doctorate programs. It was agreed that a course change submission rather than a new course proposal was the best and most expeditious way to proceed.

2. That the Doctor of Business Administration and the Doctor of Education programs change their schedule of units to a new three-stage structure recommended by the Doctor of Business Administration Review Panel and share core generic coursework units.

3. That the two existing DBA research units (MNG03047 Qualitative Research Methods and MNG03048 Quantitative Research Methods) be adopted as the generic research units for all professional doctorate programs.

4. That a new exit point be established in the generic rules to enable students to exit the program with an award titled ‘Graduate Certificate in Research Methods’ after successful completion of the Qualitative Research Methods unit (single unit), the Quantitative Research Methods unit (single unit) and Professional Doctorate Research Proposal (double weighted unit).

5. That the current Graduate College of Management DBA staff form the basis for the proposed International Centre for Professional Doctorates, to be located at the Tweed Gold Coast campus.

6. That the proposed International Centre for Professional Doctorates be responsible for co-ordinating the development of professional doctorate programs across the University to meet the strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan 2005–2010.

7. That the proposed International Centre for Professional Doctorates work with Academic Organisational Units to research areas for new professional doctorates and allow for co-ordinated marketing both nationally and internationally.
8. That a new sub-committee of Academic Board be established to be called the ‘Professional Doctorates Committee’ (PDC) with responsibility to be the principal advisory and working committee of the Academic Board on issues relating to Professional Doctorates across the University and the International Centre for Professional Doctorates.

9. That the course change submission for the DBA and EdD currently being considered by the School of Education Board of Studies and the Graduate College of Management Board of Studies be endorsed by Academic Board.

10. That a new category to be termed ‘Adjunct Professional Doctorate Supervisor’ be established under the policy for Adjunct, Visiting and Conjoint Appointments to recognise the contribution of academics engaged as contractors as professional doctorate supervisors. Adjunct Professional Doctorate Supervisors would normally be senior persons in their field and possess academic qualifications and expertise comparable with those expected of a University employee at this level.

The International Centre for Professional Doctorates was to be responsible for professional doctorates across the University, and is oversighted by a sub-committee of Academic Board known as the ‘Professional Doctorate Committee’, equivalent to the Higher Degrees Committee (HDC) of the Research and Research Training Committee, which is itself a sub-committee of the Academic Board. The HDC has responsibility for research masters and the Doctor of Philosophy programs across the University. The Professional Doctorates Committee (PDC) will include members of the HDC and oversight the development and quality control of professional doctorates for the University and report on a regular basis to Academic Board.’

The finalisation of the DBA review took the opportunity to change the rules of the DBA program to introduce the ‘time based’ structure and apply this structure to the approved Doctor of Education (EdD) program so that the revised structure became the generic structure for all present and future professional doctorate programs. A new Doctor of Indigenous Philosophies (DIP) was introduced using the generic structure in 2007. A number of other new professional doctorate programs are proposed. The International Centre for Professional Doctorates assumed administration of the DBA, EdD and DIP programs from 1 January 2008, with Professor Peter Miller appointed as the foundation Director of the Centre. The University Council formally approved the establishment of the Centre in its minutes of 15 February 2008, agenda item f2).

**Future Developments**

Following the establishment of the International Centre for Professional Doctorates, Professors Baverstock, Ryan and Miller had initial discussions around the desire to align the leadership, systems and administrative processes of the ICPD and the GRC to ensure that strategies were implemented to improve Higher Degree Research completion rates, student services, reduce attrition rates and implement uniform policies and procedures across the University particular for professional doctorates and the PhD program.
The GRC administers all Higher Degree Research (HDR) students, including PhD and Masters by Thesis, with the Higher Degrees Committee (Research) being the approval body for all student administrative processes. The HDC(R) is responsible to Academic Board through the Research & Research Training Advisory Committee (RRTAC) (see organisational chart attached as appendix A).

The GCM administers, markets and commercially manages all Professional Doctorate students (DBA, EdD, DIP), through the International Centre for Professional Doctorates (ICPD) with the Professional Doctorate Committee (PDC) being the approval body for all student administrative processes. The PDC is responsible to the Academic Board through RRTAC.

A significant number of functions are common to both the Professional Doctorates and HDR administration. There is a desire to align the leadership, systems and administrative processes of both to lead to synergies, lower costs, and higher quality outcomes for students and the University.

There are a number of reasons in favour of greater harmonisation of the processes used in the PhD and the Professional Doctorates programs. The objectives include:

- Ability to develop a set of best practice processes in HDR administration
- Enhanced capacity to attract candidates
- Economies of scale
- Avoiding duplication in areas such process development, student administration, information systems, supervisor training and candidate support
- Ability to increase resources targeted towards reducing attrition, increasing completion rates and, the publication and commercialisation of results.
- Improved student/supervisor service quality.

Given the potential for synergies, the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive on 18 February 2008 approved the following recommendation:

1. To establish a steering group to investigate the alignment of doctoral administrative processes across the University.
2. The steering group to have representation from the Faculties, Academic Board, the GRC and the GCM.
3. The Steering Group to report back to Executive within one month.

The Steering Group recommended that the University should proceed with the amalgamation of the two areas and to appoint a Director of Higher Degree Research (HDR) to lead the amalgamation process. The International Centre for Professional Doctorates was disestablished on 31 December 2009, in favour of having the Higher Degree Committee taking responsibility for all doctorate programs (both professional doctorates and the PhD) at the University.
Summary

The doctoral programs offered by SCU are transnational awards. Candidates for these programs come from across the globe but predominately from the Asian region. SCU has evolved its organisational structures, systems and processes to meet the demand for its doctoral programs and to provide quality delivery mechanisms. Part of this involves entering into collaborative educational partnership with overseas institutions to allow the doctoral programs to be offered at overseas locations. The chapter has provided an overview of how SCU responded to the need to globalise its doctoral awards and to provide quality systems to support its delivery strategies and business model.
References


Graduate Careers Australia. 2005. Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ)

Graduate Careers Australia. 2006. Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ)


