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The SCU and HKIT collaborative education agreement

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Chapter 2

The SCU and HKIT Collaborative Education Agreement

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Overview

This chapter traces the development of the collaborative educational relationship between the Hong Kong Institute of Technology (HKIT) and Southern Cross University (SCU) in relation to the offering of the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program in Hong Kong.

The SCU DBA is a global 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.

A brief history of the development of both educational institutions is provided and details of the quality control and management of the programs by the partners is outlined. Candidate and supervisor support systems are detailed that provide the basic infrastructure enabling the delivery of high quality doctoral education between the partners. Finally, the external recognition given to the program over the recent past is outlined.

**Key words:** DBA program, Collaborative education

We acknowledge the input of Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Meredith, AM PhD in the development of this chapter.
Introduction

Southern Cross University was established on 1 January, 1994 following the dismantling of the University of New England which had been established as a network University in 1989 and 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 enacted 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 Rivers 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.

Business studies was introduced at the College of Advanced Education in 1973 and over the iterations of the College to a College of Advanced Education and finally to a stand alone University, the Business Faculty developed to offer post graduate programs including higher research degrees.

Southern Cross University is now a dynamic Australian university situated on the North Coast of New South Wales. Its campuses are located at the Tweed Gold Coast, Lismore and Coffs Harbour, with a new campus currently being developed at the Southern end of the Gold Coast. The University has around 16,000 students and offers a diverse range of educational courses and programs, with a choice of delivery modes. There are currently around 170 DBA students enrolled and in excess of 230 graduates of the program.

The Hong Kong Institute of Technology (HKIT) dates back to 1997. It began as College of Info-Tech and became HKIT in October 2003 with the change of the English name. HKIT is the first institution in Hong Kong offering the same course in both full-time and part-time modes whilst allowing students to transfer between the two modes of study according to their employment situation. The school policies facilitate the students to continue their study whenever their employment situation.

To further enhance the development of higher education in Hong Kong, besides offering the local Associate Degree Programmes, HKIT is the first institution in Hong Kong to pursue accreditation (in addition to registration) of non-local courses.
HKIT began working with SCU in 1999 to provide quality academic programs and now jointly provides the following programs:

- Bachelor of Business
- Bachelor of Information Technology
- Master of Professional Accounting
- Doctor of Business Administration

Source: HKIT (2009)

The Educational Collaboration Agreement

The educational partnership between HKIT and SCU is governed by an ‘Educational Collaboration Agreement’ that establishes the academic and business model for the collaboration.

Under the terms of the Agreement, SCU provides the higher education program (in this case the DBA) and HKIT is responsible for the promotion, marketing and teaching of the SCU program in Hong Kong. The candidates remain enrolled students of SCU throughout their program.

SCU controls the curriculum of the program and remains responsible to ensure that the delivery of the programs is of the same high standard and quality as the program delivered at the home campus of SCU. For example, admissions to the program are governed by the DBA Committee at SCU and all assessments are sent to SCU for assessment and examination. The final thesis prepared by the candidates is sent to SCU to be examined by independent external examiners under the supervision of the DBA Examinations Committee. All teaching staff in the program are approved by SCU to ensure high quality staff are employed.

The Agreement was amended in September, 2003 to include the delivery of the DBA program after the successful delivery of the other academic programs listed above.

Organisational academic units involved in the collaboration

Graduate College of Management

The Graduate College of Management is part of the Faculty of Business and Law and offers a range of postgraduate business courses and programs, including an MBA, DBA and a number of specialist masters degrees. Our courses are delivered by highly qualified staff who possess both academic and industry relevant qualifications, skills and experience.

The large distance education program in Australia, and the personalised on-campus program attracts students from around the world. The demand for courses and programs has resulted
in these programs being offered in a number of locations in the Asia-Pacific region, enriching curriculum development and adding to the study experience of students.

Graduates are successful professionals who report a high level of satisfaction with their study experience. Courses are rated five stars for getting a job and are rated highly for graduate satisfaction (Good Universities Guide Postgraduate Guide, 2009) and the Doctor of Business Administration is consistently rated in the top three Australian Universities for overall satisfaction in research experience (Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire, 2006).

**HKIT structure and governance etc to be placed in here please.**

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**Management and quality control**

Under the terms of the Agreement, a Management Committee comprising of senior representatives from both institutions is established to oversight the arrangement. The role of the Management Committee is to facilitate full and frank discussions between the parties on any matter and to review the annual report on the delivery of the program. The Committee meets as a minimum twice per year. Outside these times, operational matters are dealt with by the DBA Director at HKIT and his staff and the SCU DBA Director and his staff.

Local doctoral supervisors from HKIT are co-ordinated by the SCU pod supervisor located at SCU.

In addition to the contractual quality control arrangements, the SCU internal quality audit team regularly conducts quality audits on educational partners and of course, the Australian Universities Quality Agency also conducts audits of international partner operations as part of their review process for SCU.

Hong Kong independent quality control is provided by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (the HKCAAVQ). The program was first accredited by the Council in ????? and was re-accredited for a period of five (5) years after an exhaustive review process that involved senior professorial staff from a number of overseas universities in March, 2008.

**The DBA program**

The Business faculty decided to first develop and launch a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program in 1996 under the guidance of Emeritus Professor Geoffrey Meredith. The DBA was one of the first business-related professional doctorate programs offered in Australia and its emergence as the dominant DBA program in Australia set the foundations
stones for the academic structure and quality of other professional doctorates to be developed and offered by the University.

The need for a professional Doctorate such as a DBA was emphasised in a discussion paper prepared for Australia’s Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Research) which identified the extent and range of professional Doctorate programs available in Australia at universities during the early 1990s. Twenty-two (22) Australian universities at the time were awarding professional doctorates and of the remaining fifteen (15) universities responding to a survey, nine (9) 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 Master Degree (including MBA) which 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 Master Degree which 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, SCU 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 SCU and the Business and Professional communities to their mutual advantage.

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 2 research papers and are not required to undertake a major research project in the form of a thesis.
Following the establishment of the DBA in 1996 at Southern Cross University, strong arguments were developed for a separate Graduate College of Management (GCM) and advantages were seen for GCM to be established on the Tweed Coast with land made available adjacent to the Tweed City Council facilities at Tweed Heads. Senior staff of the GCM 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.

When the Graduate College of Management was formally established, it assumed administrative responsibility for the academic quality and delivery of the DBA program.

The program has been reviewed many times since its establishment in 1996. The program was initially established as a ‘credit based’ award and in 2006 and had a structure as shown in table 1 below:

Table 1 – 2006 Structure of the DBA program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 x MBA units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 x Research methods units (Qualitative Research Methods and Quantitative Research Methods)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral supervisors are appointed at the near completion of the units above</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 x Preliminary units (Preliminary Literature Review and Research Proposal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 x Thesis units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 24 units</td>
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</table>

The Southern Cross 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. DBA candidates therefore undertake and produce a major thesis, usually of between 60,000 and 85,000 words. Like all doctoral research programs, the undertaking of a large and rigorous research project is undertaken by the candidate under the supervision of an experienced academic who is appointed to supervise the project.

In 2006, a Course Review of the DBA was undertaken to consider re-accreditation of the degree for a further five (5) years. The review provided an opportunity to consider the governance and structure of the other professional doctorate program then in existence, the Doctor of Education (EdD).

To take advantage of the opportunity provided by the DBA formal review, a number of committees and working groups were established to consider the University’s professional doctorate programs and in what direction the programs might go forward into the future.

The Chair of the DBA Review Committee, Professor Martin Hayden was also 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 (5) 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 ten (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 Master Degree Programs that articulate with the DBA be supported.
- That the DBA and fee paying PhD’s 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 (5) years, the panel commended the Graduate College of Management for the following achievements:-

- The extraordinary market success, as evidenced by the strong demand for the program, it’s 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.

Accordingly, the finalisation of the formal 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. The revised structure adopted for all professional doctorate programs is shown in the table below:

Table 2 – Generic Structure for all SCU professional doctorate program

| 4 x Postgraduate units relevant to the proposed research project |
| 2 x Research methods units (Qualitative Research Methods and Quantitative Research Methods). |
|Doctoral supervisors are appointed at the near completion of the units above |
| 1 x Professional Doctorate Research Proposal (2 unit equivalent) |
| 1 x Thesis units (16 unit equivalent) |

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Total 24 units
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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 Associate 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 15TH February, 2008, Agenda item F2).

The rationale to have the current Graduate College of Management DBA staff form the basis for the International Centre for Professional Doctorates, to be located at the Tweed Gold Coast campus included the excellent world class administrative support systems the team had developed but it also made available to all professional doctorate candidates and their supervisors significant learning infrastructure to support the amalgamated programs.

**Candidate and supervisor support systems**

Up until 2004, most of the DBA candidates worked predominantly 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 were 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, 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.

The doctoral candidates centre on MySCU

The Doctoral Candidate Centre on MySCU was established as a central place where all doctoral candidates can visit to find resources, network and communicate with other candidates, complete candidate progress reports and to generally assist candidates to better understand the processes and procedures that affect them. It’s main objective was to break down the isolation some doctoral research candidates encounter and create a community of scholars.

When candidates enrol, they are given access to the MySCU environment. The online centre then becomes the focal point for candidate contact with the university. Candidates are able to access an array of academic resources, to engage in discussion forums on matters affecting their candidature and establish specific forums to seek engagement from other candidates from around the globe engaged in similar research to their own research projects. Candidates also use the online centre as a portal to submit their six monthly progress reports. A screen shot of the online centre is provided in figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Screen shot of the doctoral candidate centre
On campus resource facilities

All Hong Kong DBA candidates have access to ????????????????????? describe any resources etc you have over there

University library

Access the SCU library is provided through the Doctoral Candidate Centre on MySCU. The University Library provides a range of resources, services, training, and personal assistance for locating information within the Library or obtaining information from outside the collection.

More on library services (about one para to be added in here)

Document supply

The Document Supply Service requests copies of journal articles not held in the SCU collection and borrow materials from other Australian libraries.

Documents are requested electronically are delivered in electronic form directly to the candidate’s desktop.

EndNote software

Southern Cross University is the holder of a site licence for EndNote software, enabling staff
and candidates to use EndNote to create their own bibliographies and documents or dissertations formatted with their style of choice.

The Library provides support for EndNote, including training sessions customised to user level. There are numerous resources provided on the Library web site including filters, connection files, and training materials. The web site also provides details of the training schedules for each campus, and the EndNote software itself can be downloaded from the site.

Australian Digital Theses program – ADT

SCU is a member of the Australian Digital Theses program. This is a national collaborative program which aims to establish a distributed database of digital versions of theses produced by postgraduate research students at Australian universities. Candidate’s are encouraged to submit an electronic version of their thesis so that it can be included in this national database.

Using other libraries, and reciprocal borrowing

Universities in Australia and some overseas universities extend reciprocal borrower status to students of SCU through University Library Australia.

The doctoral supervisor centre on MySCU

The Doctoral Supervisor Centre on MySCU was established as a central place where all doctoral supervisors can visit to find resources, network and communicate with other supervisors, share innovative supervision ideas, access supervisor training modules, complete progress reports for their candidates and to generally assist supervisors in their role as a supervisor of DBA candidates and to better understand the processes and procedures that effect them.

All supervisors (including overseas co-supervisors) are given access to the MySCU environment.

Once access to the Centre is established, all supervisors (including local co-supervisors) have access to:

- SCU’s extensive electronic library resources, data bases and 5000 full text online journals
- the alerting systems to enable staff to be advised of the publication of their favourite journals or authors
- an SCU email account and address

The resources provided to candidates in the doctoral candidate centre are duplicated in the supervisors centre to enable supervisors to understand and appreciate the resources provided to their candidates. In addition, supervisors are able to contribute to discussion forums on best practice supervision and to submit their six monthly progress reports.

Doctoral research symposia

The doctoral symposia are offered to all Hong Kong candidates twice per year.
The symposia offer candidates an important opportunity to mix and network with other candidates and supervisors for intellectual exchange and support. Attendance at one symposium per year (in any location) is compulsory for all DBA candidates.

The symposia often cover topics like:

- library skills,
- working with SPSS,
- doctoral supervision,
- undertaking literature reviews,
- publishing during candidacy,
- research methodologies.

but the main theme is to provide candidates the opportunity to present to their peers and supervisors about where their research project is placed and to get feedback on their direction and assistance with problems or issues.

The aims of research in progress presentations are to:

- Inform other researchers and academic staff of the status and direction of the candidate’s proposed/current research project,
- Provide candidates with the opportunity to put forward ideas and to receive critical feedback on their planned or current research project,
- Give candidates an opportunity to reflect on their research by having to prepare a presentation to their peers.

Supervisor professional development

The policy on the supervision of doctoral candidates is to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced local supervisor for all candidates. All supervisors must meet the following criteria:

- have a doctoral qualification
- be experienced in research and/or in the supervision of research higher degrees
- have relevant knowledge and expertise for the research project
- have sufficient time and access to adequate resources to supervise the research project.

All supervisors must apply to be appointed to the Professional Doctorate supervisor register on the appropriate form and undergo a rigorous review to ensure that they are experienced researchers capable of undertaking doctoral supervisory roles.

SCU also appoints a suitable member of staff to be the principal supervisor for all overseas partners. SCU utilises a ‘pod’ model whereby one principal supervisor is appointed to take responsibility for principal supervision of all candidates (and co-supervisors) at an overseas location (partner).
The principal supervisor does not supervise directly each individual candidate’s research project (this being the role of the local co-supervisor) but provides a quality control watch over the project and the local co-supervisor(s).

In addition to the quality control role with the co-supervisor, the principal supervisor has formal roles for each candidate’s project including:

- Liaison with local partner doctoral co-ordinator
- For ethics applications assists the Co-supervisor with the ethics process and forms
- Responsible to monitor progress reports from the partner’s candidates and supervisors
- Takes action where progress is not satisfactory
- Signs off qualifier programs
- Final sign off for thesis submission

All doctoral supervisors have access to an online 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. Professional development for doctoral supervisors will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

**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 2 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 Hong Kong 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 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 candidate’s and supervisor’s 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 to provide 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 (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.

Further external recognition came from The Melbourne Institute (Williams and Van Dyke, 2006), which 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, SCU had the highest number of doctoral completions (principally DBAs) in Business and Economics over the period. Monash University was ranked second and University of New South Wales 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 (5) 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 SCU 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 SCU 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 Hong Kong as well as overseas, specifically in Hong Kong, 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.

Conclusion

The Southern Cross DBA is a global award and offered in partnership with a number of overseas institutions, including the Hong Kong Institute of Technology. The overseas centres become collaborative partners with SCU in delivering the high quality research program. Candidates remain students of SCU.

This chapter has provided a brief overview of the HKIT and SCU collaborative education agreement including the educational infrastructure that underpins the success of the agreement.
References


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

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

