Staffing strategies for successful internationalisation

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Some of the conclusions from a research study financed by the UK HE International and Europe Unit and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education

To be published shortly

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Case studies from

- Glasgow Caledonian University (Oman, China)
- University of Liverpool (China)
- University of Newcastle (Malaysia)
- University of Nottingham (China and Malaysia)
- RMIT University Vietnam
- University of Surrey (China)
- Texas A&M in Qatar
- UCL (Australia and Kazakhstan)
- University of Wollongong Dubai

Questions we tried to answer

- What are universities' strategies for staffing these activities?
- What problems arise?
- What concerns do staff have?
- What pay and benefits are given?
- How is quality maintained offshore?
- What research capacity can be offered?

The context

- The growing volume of offshore activity in the UK, USA and Australia.
- Requiring staff to work overseas as:
  - Short term “flying faculty” – teaching only
  - Longer term secondments to campuses, JVs or partnerships.
  - Research collaborators, supervisors
  - Staff developers, QA, admin support etc to partners.

Staff involvement

	Home campus staff	National/ Partner's staff	International staff
Wholly owned campus	**	****	****
Partnership, JV or joint degree	*	*****	
Franchise or validation support	**	*****	
Research collaboration	*	*	

Issues with “flying faculty”

- Some reluctance to continue flying regularly (or at all) – may vary by mission group.
- The wording of academic staff contracts on mobility.
- Financial incentives often required – but at what level?
- Barriers include: absence of cover, personal factors, conditions in the partner institution, possible research impact, intensity of teaching if modules are compacted.

Issues with longer term staff

- Their role and function – managers, teachers or “culture carriers”?
- Where are management decisions taken – in UK or with a local Board?
- To whom are they accountable?
- Whose decision on pay and conditions and on whose payroll?
- Comparability of these with local partner’s staff.

Pay and conditions – longer term staff

- Uplift to base salary is very common.
- Range and scale of benefits depends on the country and international market terms.
- **Will** include air fares home for self and family, accommodation or living allowance, medical insurance.
- **May** include school fees, settling-in allowance, provision of transport.
- Preparatory leave, country/cultural induction or language training also likely.

Staff concerns

- Partner’s ability to handle all immigration, regulatory and tax issues.
- Any restrictions imposed by national legislation/culture (Dubai, China).
- Knowledge of cultural/linguistic “bloomers”
- Limitations to academic freedom and its impact on learning and teaching styles.
- Partner and national policies on IPR.

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- “I was advised to avoid discussing the three ‘T’s: Taiwan, Tiananmen and Tibet.”
- “The immediate challenges I faced were linguistic and cultural rather than political … students found it challenging to compare the relative merits of competing theories.”
- “I needed to increase my awareness of the Chinese context in order to help them apply the new concepts to issues relevant to them.”

Dr Meesha Nehru, formerly a teaching fellow in UNNC, Ningbo, China.

Some UCU concerns

- Quality of living and teaching environment.
- National security and existence of a university exit strategy.
- Recognition of professional qualifications.
- National policies on gender, sexual equality, disability, sickness leave.
- Adequacy of the university's insurance cover.

Source: UCU (2010). Overseas Working Guide.

Maintaining Quality

Policies will vary according to:

- Structure of the operation (franchise, validation, stand alone, collaborative).
- Whose award?
- Maturity and staffing quality of the partner
- Is student experience to be identical or “consistent”?
- National QA regime

Some ways of promoting consistent quality

- Have a clear quality strategy from the start of the partnership.
- Plan for staff development and mentoring support for partner if necessary.
- Involve support from faculty offices, educational development and libraries/ICT networks.
- Develop internal processes that combine QAA and national QA requirements.
- Have “link tutors”, double marking, and regular Skype/email contact with partner staff.

Main messages

1. Have an agreed staffing strategy and plan for 5 years at least.
2. Decide where HR policies on people, pay and conditions are to be made.
3. Develop HR policies for short and long term staff before your staff go offshore.
4. If UK staff are based offshore, master that country's HR policies.
5. Develop a strategy for integrating domestic and overseas QA policies/procedures.

Watch out for

A Guide to offshore staffing strategies for UK Universities.

by John Fielden and Erica Gillard

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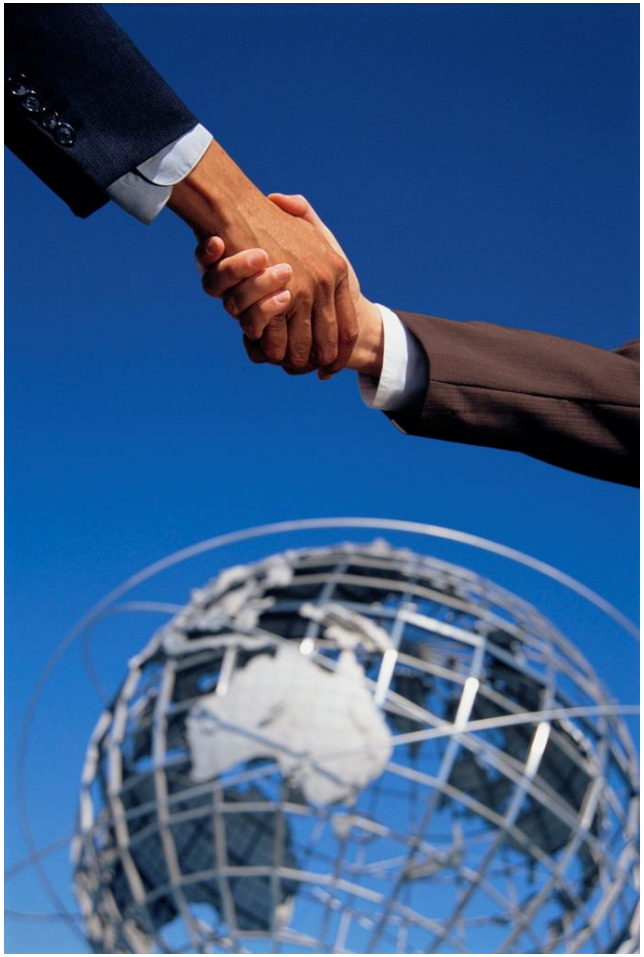

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