

Introduction

With the assistance of and support from the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching, the Australian National University (ANU) and the University of New England, the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) held the Bologna National Seminar at the ANU on 7 September 2006. The seminar was attended by approximately 150 participants from universities, professional bodies, student organisations and government departments.

The aim of the seminar was to invite stakeholders to consider the Bologna process and its implications for Australia with the objective of developing the best possible higher education sector for the country.

Opening address by the Minister

The seminar was opened by the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the **Hon Julie Bishop MP** who made two key announcements with respect to Bologna and Australia. She announced that:

To progress the important work that has been done so far, the Australian Government will provide \$400,000 for a consortium of universities to develop a single agreed template for an Australian Diploma Supplement.

And in addition:

... I will establish a high level steering group to monitor Bologna and related developments. The steering group, to be comprised of representatives of the higher education sector as well as my Department, will report to both government and the sector on implementation issues and will help to anticipate developments as they occur.

Presentations

Bologna Process and opportunities for Australia

Mr John Hesketh Richard, Charge d'Affaires, Delegation of the European Commission, and **Professor Ian Young**, Vice-Chancellor, Swinburne University of Technology, provided keynote speeches which considered the *Bologna Process and opportunities for Australia*. Mr Richard's presentation provided a valuable perspective on the European dimension. He focussed on the specific challenges that arise in seeking to implement such an ambitious agenda for change across a system that encompasses 4,000 institutions and includes a student population not a great deal smaller than the population of Australia. His final quote was encouraging as we explore how Australia might best work alongside our European counterparts in this important process:

We see the European Higher Education Area as a partner of higher education systems in other parts of the world, stimulating balanced student and staff exchange and co-operation between higher education institutions.

Professor Ian Young's keynote address on the opportunities and challenges for Australian higher education in light of implementation of the Bologna Process provided valuable insights for the seminar attendees. Professor Young provided a concise summary of the situation in Europe, as well as reference to other major educational systems and comments on how Australia is placed. This included examples of international collaboration in Europe, the United States and Asia.

Concurrent sessions

Following morning tea, the seminar participants had the opportunity to contribute to discussion on a number of issues of relevance to the Bologna Process: Degree structures and credit transfer; the Diploma supplement; Implications for the professions; and International dimensions.

Session A – Degree structures and credit transfer

Dr Peter Corrigan, Academic Manager at the University of New England (UNE);

Mr Ian Marshman, Senior Vice-Principal, The University of Melbourne; and

Professor Ingrid Moses, Chancellor, University of Canberra were the presenters in concurrent Session A on *Degree structures and credit transfer*.

Dr Corrigan's presentation on the implications for Australian degree structures and credit transfer processes in light of implementation of the Bologna Process provided an opportunity for other delegates to hear first-hand about UNE's experience with these issues, in particular the proposed UNE award structure and potential grading and student transcript models.

Mr Marshman's explanation of the context of the Melbourne model, together with his exploration of the opportunities and challenges it offers, were of particular interest to the seminar. The strategic directions being pursued by Melbourne are one response to some of the underlying trends and pressures which also inform the Bologna Process.

Professor Moses' exploration of the opportunities provided by engagement with the Bologna Process, including for internationalisation, institutional positioning, and teaching and curricular review, resulted in interesting discussions in this session on degree structures and credit transfer.

Session B – Diploma Supplement

Session B on the *Diploma Supplement* offered invited presentations by:

Professor Stephen Adam from the University of Westminster, the United Kingdom;

Ms Margaret Proctor, Director of the Professional and International Recognition Unit, DEST; and

Professor David Rich, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), UNE.

Professor Adam's presentation on the Diploma Supplement included an outline of some problems experienced in a number of European countries and how Australia can learn much from those who have already been through the process of developing their Diploma Supplements.

Ms Proctor spoke about the development of an Australian Diploma Supplement which would support the achievements of the common goal expressed in the Brisbane Communiqué arising from the inaugural Asia-Pacific Education Ministers' meeting in April 2006. This goal is to increase student and academic mobility and transferability of qualifications. Ms Proctor reported on previous DEST activities associated with piloting a Diploma Supplement and elaborated more on the future, following the Minister's earlier announcement. In order to develop an Australian Diploma Supplement a consortium of universities with relevant experience and expertise will undertake to develop a single agreed template. The project will involve consultation with stakeholders and students and will scope the implications for IT systems.

Prior to discussion among the attendees in Session B, Professor Rich spoke about the University of New England's Academic Renewal Project and in particular, on the progress UNE has made with respect to implementing a Diploma Supplement.

Session C – Implications for the professions

Associate Professor Richard Blythe, Deputy Head, School of Architecture at the University of Tasmania;

Professor Barbara Evans, National Convenor, Directors and Deans of Graduate Schools; and

Professor Brendon Parker, past President, Australian Council of Engineering Deans, all provided valuable contributions to the Session C on *Implications for the professions*.

Associate Professor Blythe's presentation highlighted three main issues related to nomenclature, funding and the growing diversity of architecture schools in Australia, particularly in response to the move to a 3+2 degree structure (ranging from just a name change to a complete restructure).

Professor Evans identified three important documents as setting the agenda for doctoral education globally: a statement by the European Commission on doctoral education; a report by the European universities on doctoral education; and a record of discussions at a European Union meeting in July 2006. Of particular interest in Professor Evan's focus on implications for the professions in Australia of the Bologna Process was her explanation that Bologna does not seek to create homogeneity, and that a recent report by the European Universities Association had in fact highlighted diversity between and within both countries and institutions.

Professor Parker highlighted that the issues confronting engineering study in Europe are the same as those in the United States and Australia. This underlined a common theme from many speakers and discussions that, irrespective of how Australian institutions choose to respond to Bologna, there are a significant number of global trends and pressures that must be considered.

Session D – International dimensions

The three presenters for Session D on *International dimensions* comprised **Professor Tony Adams**, Pro Vice-Chancellor (International), Macquarie University;

Ms Susan Bennett, Manager, International Cooperation Branch, DEST; and

Ms Lynne Hunter, Advisor, Delegation of the European Commission.

Professor Adams' contribution to this concurrent session included the points that credit transfer was not a barrier to mobility and that the aim is to 'look at' the ideas and lessons Bologna offers rather than to 'look like' Bologna. This was an important message for everyone involved in the discussion about the implications of Bologna for Australian higher education.

Ms Bennett spoke about Europe becoming a more active player with increased competition for international students, especially as a number of countries are now offering more teaching in English. She also spoke about the Brisbane Communiqué and how Australia will play a leadership role in progressing the aims of the Communiqué by chairing the multilateral senior Officials Working Group.

Ms Hunter offered information on the role of the European Commission in the Bologna Process which includes the establishment of national teams of Bologna promoters who have been successful in introducing the Bologna reforms in their institutions.

Keynote address by Professor Stephen Adam

Professor Stephen Adam's keynote address provided a valuable and comprehensive update of the state of play in Europe. The information he presented reinforced our understanding that implementation is neither uniform nor consistent across Europe and allows for institutional diversity.

Achieving university diversity: The international context and Bologna

Professor Glyn Davis AC, Vice-Chancellor, The University of Melbourne, and Professor John Hay AC, Vice-Chancellor, The University of Queensland, were the key presenters in the afternoon session on *Achieving university diversity*. Professor Davis shared his experiences regarding the changes that are being made at The University of Melbourne, together with his thoughts on the need for all providers to consider if and how they might implement change. Both speakers provided useful and contrasting perspectives of how they visualise institutions might respond to Bologna and other challenges.

Outcomes

Selected spokespeople from all the concurrent sessions presented the outcomes in a plenary session which was facilitated by Professor Richard Johnstone, Executive Director of the Carrick Institute. The information presented by each session is outlined below.

Session A – Degree structures and credit transfer

- Bologna Process initially Government driven:
 - Now institutions wanting reform of policy architecture to achieve their objectives; and
 - So too in Australia, Government needs to be willing to more flexible in policy and financing.
- Opportunities for Australia:
 - Being clear about what is good for Australia.
- Other issues:
 - Masters courses are problematic;
 - Double degrees;
 - Academic year;
 - Individual units of learning;
 - Who pays for second cycle;
 - What do professions/employers think; and
 - What about China and India?

Session B – Diploma Supplement

- Diploma Supplement has been a major success in Europe;
- It provides an opportunity to move towards best practice within institutions;
- Implementation in Australia will benefit from collaboration on shared issues (for example IT System Development/Template); and
- May have other longer term benefits:
 - Reflecting employability skills; and
 - Facilitating movement between HE and VET Systems

Session C – Implications for the professions

- (Increased) Diversity of Australian institutions versus (need for) Parity with European expectations;
- Funding for students – HECS, PhD stipend needs to be extended, second cycle degrees;
- Employability of Graduates – need for transferability of skills, industry placements, flexibility in the work place;
- Mobility of graduates; and
- Nomenclature – what becomes of the honours year, reaction of architecture schools.

Session D – International dimensions

Challenges

- European export market is like Australia in the 1980s;
- But it will quickly challenge Australia's competitiveness; and
- Latin America may follow Bologna Path.

Opportunities

- Increased students from Europe;
- Increased Australian students to Europe;
- Learning from Bologna for the Brisbane Process - a role for Australia as regional leader for the process - many benefits for Australia; and
- Working more closely with Europe on a parallel agenda.

Compatibilities/Alignments

- Diploma Supplement (Lisbon Recognition Convention-UNESCO);
- ECTS/UCTS – ERASMUS would not have occurred without it;
- Four-year undergraduate degree;
- Australian research degrees need to be highly regarded; and
- Importance of student and staff participation in the Bologna Process.

Next Steps

Ms Fiona Buffinton and Mr Colin Walters from DEST provided closing thanks and concluding comments to the seminar which emphasised that irrespective of how our institutions choose to shape their individual futures, Bologna is representative of global trends and pressures which cannot be ignored. As announced by the Minister at the seminar, a high level steering group will monitor continuing developments in higher education in Europe as well as those in the United States and in our own region. Additional funding will help to progress the development of an Australian Diploma Supplement. These activities will enable us to keep our sector informed and assist institutions in their decision making processes.

The steering group will be established by invitation to individuals with a significant contribution to offer to the debate. The first meeting of the group would consider priorities for work by the Australian Government and the sector with respect to the Bologna Process. It is anticipated the steering group will be convened by DEST and will report twice yearly.

To progress the development of an Australian Diploma Supplement, invitations were sent to universities in October 2006 inviting expressions of interest from consortia. The invitation included defined criteria associated with the composition of the consortia such as appropriate representation of university diversity (for example regional, size etc), and experience and knowledge of the area. It is anticipated the project will be completed by November 2007.