

# LEADERSHIP NEEDS IN INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA AND EUROPE

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FINAL REPORT OF A DELPHI STUDY

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DENNIS MURRAY  
LEO GOEDEGEBUURE  
HANS-GEORG VAN LIEMPD  
MARC VERMEULEN



# CONTENTS

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**3 BACKGROUND**

**3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

**4 PHASE 1**

4 Findings of Phase 1

**8 PHASE 2**

8 Findings of Phase 2

8 Context of Phase 2 interviews

8 Key professional leadership roles needing to be strengthened

12 Key internationalisation challenges facing leaders in Australia and Europe

12 Australia

14 Europe

16 Strengthening leadership capabilities and skills to address perceived key challenges

**19 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

**21 CONCLUSION**

**21 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION**

**23 REFERENCES**

**24 APPENDIX**

## BACKGROUND

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The development of advanced leadership capabilities among up and coming international education professionals is an area of particular concern to both the *International Education Association of Australia* (IEAA) and the *European Association for International Education* (EAIE). The matter was a focus of a joint symposium, *Advancing Europe-Australia Cooperation in Higher Education*, held in 2009 in Sydney.

With financial support from the Australian Government (Australian Education International), the two Associations conducted a joint empirical research study. The technical components were conducted by the LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management, The University of Melbourne (Australian partner) and Tilburg University, the Netherlands (European partner). The EAIE has supported the European component of the project.

## RESEARCH APPROACH

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The research sought to identify the generic and specific leadership capabilities required by the future generation of international education leaders in Australia and Europe. A two-phase Delphi methodology\* was adopted and a first phase online questionnaire developed. This was based on a conceptual framework (Quinn et al, 2007) which identifies eight “competing” leadership roles: facilitator, mentor, innovator, broker, director, producer, monitor and coordinator. Details of the eight roles are given in the Appendix (see p. 24).

Phase 2 was conducted in light of the findings from Phase 1. Phase 2 involved semi-structured interviews with selected respondents from Phase 1, as well as a number of other senior international education professionals and academic staff in Australia and Europe.

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\* Our research involved use of a modified Delphi methodology. The Delphi methodology is ‘a method for the systematic solicitation and collation of judgments on a particular topic through a set of carefully designed sequential questionnaires interspersed with summarized information and feedback of opinions derived from earlier responses’ (Delbecq et al. 1975:10). The research takes place in two phases. The methodology is used most frequently to integrate the judgments of a group of experts. A key feature of the methodology is that the respondents do not meet and their responses may be anonymous.

Although some flexibility exists in implementation, the core method, as described by Delbecq et al. (1975:11), is as follows:

“First, the staff team in collaboration with decision makers develops an initial questionnaire and distributes it...to the respondent group. The respondents independently generate their ideas in answer to the first questionnaire and return it. The staff team then summarizes the responses to the first questionnaire and develops a feedback report along with the second set of questionnaires for the respondent group. Having received the feedback report, the respondents independently evaluate earlier responses. Respondents are asked to independently vote on priority ideas included in the second questionnaire and mail their responses back to the staff team. The staff team then develops a final summary and feedback report to the respondent group and decision makers”.

Our research involved use of a modified form of the methodology in that for the second phase a structured interview schedule was used based on the findings of phase one. Interviewees may or may not have participated as respondents in Phase 1. Phase 2 aimed to validate and explicate the findings of Phase 1.

# PHASE 1

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The Phase 1 questionnaire focussed on the leadership capabilities that professionals in the field perceive as needed today, and in years to come. In addition, respondents were asked to indicate the key issues facing international education.

Respondents were drawn from the membership of the EAIE and IEAA. A total of 187 responses were received (a satisfactory response rate), which were distributed evenly between Europe and Australia.

## Findings of Phase 1

Full details of Phase 1 and its findings are given in the Phase 1 Report. For more information, visit [www.eaie.org/leadership](http://www.eaie.org/leadership) or [www.ieaa.org.au/leadership](http://www.ieaa.org.au/leadership).

The intention in Phase 1 was to identify if there are differences in the way international education leaders in Australia and Europe perform their roles. Additionally, it sought to identify if gaps exist between what leaders perceive as their realities and what they ideally would like their jobs to consist of in terms of a mix of the eight Quinn leadership roles. Answers to these questions could then inform the design of appropriate leadership development activities for the EAIE and IEAA, separately and possibly jointly.

Technical checking using Principal Component Analysis reveal considerable correlation between items within a subset (i.e. role). While there is some variation in differences between the eight leadership roles for Australia and for Europe, all roles are significant for both locations. Slightly higher scores for Australian compared to European respondents indicate that Australian respondents enact all these roles somewhat more than their European counterparts. This is particularly the case for the “director” and “mentor” roles, followed closely by the “broker” role.

## Leadership roles

Analysis of the Phase 1 general leadership findings indicate there is also significant agreement among Australian and European respondents about the order of importance of particular leadership roles. With the exception of the “director” and “innovator” roles (swapped across the two groups), the relative order in roles was the same for Australia and for Europe.

However, when the current and optimal mix of roles is examined, there is a notable difference between the two groups of respondents. For Australian international education leaders, the importance of the “facilitator”, “mentor” and “director” roles in an optimal situation remained the same as it is currently. Australian respondents considered themselves relatively capable in the areas of teamwork and in planning, goal setting, productivity and efficiency. Australian leaders however indicated a need to strengthen their capabilities in the “innovator”, “monitor” and “coordinator” roles, and to a lesser extent in the “producer” and “broker” roles.

For European leaders, the “facilitator” role remains the most dominant. However, in an ideal world, European leaders would like to see themselves play out more of the “innovator”, “monitor”, “director” and “coordinator” roles and less of the “producer” and “mentor” roles. They seek to improve their capabilities across a broader range than their Australian colleagues in terms of:

- flexibility, growth, resource acquisition and external support (“innovator”)
- internal processes such as information management and communication, stability and control (“coordinator” and “monitor”), and
- planning, goal setting, productivity and efficiency (“director”).

Comparatively speaking, the typology changes quite a bit from Australia to Europe, although the ‘top’ role and three ‘least’ emphasised roles remain the same across the continents.

The differences between the scores reflecting the current situation and the score for the optimal situation were also investigated. In general, the findings reveal a slightly larger gap for the Australian participants than for the Europeans. However, for most roles this gap was not significant, with the exceptions being the “innovator” and “producer” roles where the gap was marginally significant.

## Internationalisation as the context for leadership

The context of internationalisation in which leaders attempt to operate is clearly important. Empirically, this is exactly what makes such a vexed terrain for leadership. In the final section of the survey, participants were asked to identify the main benefits of internationalisation, what the key priorities for internationalising higher education are, and what the main obstacles to internationalisation might be.

## Benefits of internationalisation

By far the strongest perceived benefit was the positive impact internationalisation has on societies. Internationalisation contributes to a global, mutual understanding; increases cross-cultural awareness; creates global citizens; and contributes to helping to deal with global issues. There was no difference in the emphasis placed on this dimension from a European or Australian perspective.

A second set of benefits related to student outcomes (a better education for students, specifically developing a global perspective; providing students with an international experience; contributing to an open mindset including tolerance; and resulting in better personal development). This was closely followed by broadening the educational experience for all students (and staff), the building of networks, and preparing students for a global labour market and international careers. Again, there was little difference in emphasis or importance between Europe and Australia.

When it came to benefits that relate to institutions, a more varied picture emerged. Australian respondents saw better research through international collaboration as a

significant outcome and ranked this fifth. This dimension did not feature prominently in the minds of European respondents who focussed far more on the benefits that relate to quality assurance.

Both European and Australian respondents ranked the programmatic impacts of internationalisation as important, stressing quality and innovation, the increased breadth of programs and the reflection of the international dimension in the curriculum. The economic side of internationalisation was also acknowledged but not surprisingly featured more prominently with Australian respondents. Finally, capacity building (education for development) came up as the last major benefit with a little more prominence in Europe than Australia, although the difference was not significant.

## Priorities for internationalisation

The perceived key priorities for the internationalisation of higher education were strongly aligned with the objectives of internationalisation and perceptions about how these might best be achieved.

Student and staff mobility came up as the top priority. What was particularly significant with respect to mobility was the emphasis in the Australian responses on outward mobility and the focus on Asia.

The second key priority – building institutional relationships – related closely to the first priority. Interestingly, for Australian respondents this included a strong emphasis on the development of research collaboration, while European respondents emphasised collaboration in teaching through the development of joint or double degree programs.

The development of an internationalised curriculum and curriculum innovation, including the use of technology, featured as the third priority. This was closely followed by a set of priorities that relate back to the sociocultural benefits identified earlier.

Responses by Australian and European respondents to other matters diverged. From an Australian perspective the development and implementation of clear institutional strategies with a high level of institutional commitment were important priorities. This was much less the case in Europe, where again quality issues were perceived as far more important.

Overall, responses about the key issues for internationalising higher education were more widely spread than those about the benefits of internationalisation.

## Obstacles to internationalisation

The final section of the questionnaire sought to canvass opinions about perceived major obstacles to further internationalisation of higher education. Respondents were practically unanimous in identifying resourcing as the stumbling block. This should not be interpreted simply in the narrow sense of finances available. Rather, it reflects the broader set of human, infrastructure, administrative and financial resources needed to fully engage with

internationalisation. Resourcing was far more prominent as an obstacle than as a key priority. There were considerable differences between Australian and European views about other obstacles. Particularly problematic from an Australian perspective were issues related to government policies and regulations (especially concerning student visas) and more generally the politicisation of international education in the Australian Parliament and media. From a European perspective, subordinate obstacles related more to a lack of leadership, vision and strategy, as well as awareness of the importance of internationalisation.

Matters raised earlier in the study, such as system diversity and quality assurance, were also reflected in a further set of obstacles that again predominantly featured in Europe. These include the mismatch of educational systems (at times reflected in degree content) resulting in problems with recognition and exchange, and a series of structural impediments that reflect Europe working through the Bologna agenda.

A clear problematic issue for many Australian respondents was the tying of internationalisation to the financial imperative to keep Australian institutions financially viable. An obstacle that was clearly identified by European respondents but far less by Australian respondents was the lack of foreign language skills of both staff and students.

While Australian respondents were less concerned about leadership and strategy issues than their European counterparts, they were more concerned about the lack of support they receive within their institution for internationalisation. Lack of commitment (from the top of the institution), competing priorities, lip service to internationalisation and overall coordination problems were the most common obstacles mentioned.

Both European and Australian respondents perceived more or less equally a problem in the attitude of academic staff to internationalisation, which points to a somewhat problematic relationship between administrative and academic staff. Successful internationalisation is clearly at risk without an understanding and acceptance of the co-dependency between different groups of players in the institution.

Lastly, both European and Australian respondents noted generalised negative attitudes that appear to exist in their societies with respect to internationalisation. Described variously as an “inward looking country climate”, “ethnocentricity”, “nationalism” or “xenophobia”, these perceptions, indeed concerns, all referred to the adverse responses to ethnic and cultural diversity rife in certain parts of the Australian and European communities.

## PHASE 2

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Phase 2 of the study, the final phase, was conducted in late 2012 (Europe) and early 2013 (Australia). This phase involved a 45-minute, semi-structured interview with a range of senior higher education leaders in international education to canvass their views about the specific needs of leaders and how these might best be met. 11 senior leaders in Australia and 10 in Europe were interviewed.

### Findings of Phase 2

Full details of Phase 2 of the study and its findings are given in the two Phase 2 Reports, for Australia and for Europe.

For more information, visit [www.eaie.org/leadership](http://www.eaie.org/leadership) or [www.ieaa.org.au/leadership](http://www.ieaa.org.au/leadership).

### Context of Phase 2 interviews

As noted earlier, the context provides the vexed terrain for leadership. The Australian context of the study meant there were heightened pressures on international education leaders in Australia in the lead up to, and at the time, when the study was undertaken. These pressures included turbulence in higher education public policy settings, the implications of a decline in international student enrolments, the high cost of study in Australia and the increased academic focus of internationalisation. These contextual factors clearly influenced interviewees' responses to the issues discussed. The Phase 2 findings throw light on perceptions of the Australian respondents about current challenges and the leadership and management skills needed to address them.

Similarly in Europe, the context defined the terrain in which international education leaders worked and influenced their responses in both Phase 1 and Phase 2. The Global Economic Crisis has had a major impact on the financial situation of many institutions in most countries in Europe. The study was conducted over an extended 18-month period during which the economic crisis was not resolved, leading to turbulence and fiscal constraint, including in the higher education sector throughout Europe.

Despite the economic crisis and its impact on internationalisation of higher education, it is apparent that most countries and institutions around Europe have not been marginalised. As in Australia (see below), it has become a core issue in the mission of universities and other higher education institutions. The shifts and dynamics in the leadership and management of internationalisation as it becomes increasingly mainstreamed was seen in Europe (as in Australia) as having implications for the role and responsibilities of international education leaders and managers whether they be administrative or academic staff.



## Key professional leadership roles needing to be strengthened

In Phase 1 Australian leaders indicated that they sought to strengthen their capabilities in the “innovator”, “monitor” and “coordinator” roles, and to a lesser extent in the “producer” and “broker” roles. In Phase 1 European leaders indicated that they sought to strengthen their capabilities in four dimensions: the “innovator”, “monitor”, “coordinator” and “director” roles.

While the European interviews in Phase 2 maintained an emphasis on the four priority roles identified by their colleagues in Phase 1, there was an interesting shift from the Phase 1 findings by the Australian interviewees. The Australian Phase 2 interviewees were virtually unanimous in identifying the “innovator” and the “broker” roles as the key areas where strengthening of capabilities and skills were most needed. This was a departure from the findings of Phase 1 where the “innovator”, “monitor” and “coordinator” roles had been the top three roles identified.

As with European interviewees (see above), there was a strong sense among Australian interviewees that “traditional” international education, focused mainly on recruitment and teaching of international students, is now but part of a much broader “whole of university enterprise and mission”. The globalisation of research, expanding international business and industry linkages and the imperative of outbound mobility for domestic students were now very much part of institutional strategies involving a much broader and diverse range of senior players (Deputy/Pro Vice-Chancellors, Deans, Administrative Program Directors) as well as an increasing number of teaching and research staff across multiple academic divisions/faculties.

The need for integration of institutional strategy and practice across a broad front – described variously as “an international engagement strategy and framework” reflecting “a strategic vision emanating from the executive” – was frequently referred to in this context by the Vice-Chancellor or President.

### Broker role

In this context, brokering and relationship management were perceived by Australian interviewees as increasingly important for senior international leaders and managers. A number of interviewees commented that while their roles as monitors and coordinators were crucial, these roles are relatively less important – particularly given the shared responsibilities of senior higher education leaders generally for institutional internationalisation and the need to form and work alliances between the various senior players. Greater time and effort are needed to ensure the shifting balance of responsibilities plays out the way most international education leaders believe it should.

Brokering also requires an external focus. Many interviewees commented that their core external relations role involves identifying, cultivating and mediating contacts with a wider range of external players, within overseas institutions and beyond in the wider business, industry or research communities. Many interviewees acknowledged that while there might be a temperamental element to effective brokering, these skills can be learnt. European interviewees tended to discuss the broker role in the context of their focus on their role as “innovator” (see below).

## Innovator role

There was a palpable sense among interviewees that the world of Australian international education has changed and that the future will not be like the past. Increasing external competition challenges leaders as innovators and interviewees perceived the need to be aware of competitor trends and market shifts. In many cases, leadership roles required staff to identify new business opportunities including innovative business models and the conceptualisation, design and delivery of new educational programs.

Most Australian interviewees believed that at least some innovation skills could be taught and acquired. A number suggested that exposure to or drawing on lessons from other industries that have a strong, successful customer orientation and service culture would help lift the innovation culture in higher education institutions.

The specific insight here is that better commercial skills and capabilities are needed at all levels of the international enterprise, including underpinning successful future innovation. An adverse contrast was drawn between the quality of data and systems that underpin critical management decision making in the commercial sector and the adequacy of the data and systems used to underpin decision making in higher education institutions. More robust commercial systems are needed and middle to senior level managers and leaders need to understand, collect and use better “bottom up” data.

Some Australian administrative leaders drew attention to specific gaps in their skills as innovators. In particular, they mentioned the need to identify and broker new approaches to academic program development in the international context, or taking account of curriculum content, the student experience and graduate outcomes. They perceived their role overlapping but complementing the roles of academic leaders. They desired to work more closely with academic colleagues to conceive and design viable academic products to meet new needs and demands in international education. The symbiosis between academic and business objectives and outcomes is the relevant point.

The process of internationalisation of higher education inevitably impacts the education, research and service functions of institutions. International education leaders are conspicuous change agents. European interviewees saw effective change management capabilities as central to their role as innovators and stressed both vision as well as skills to influence and empower others and to take the initiative. Excellent communication skills (including knowledge of more than one language) were also stressed. Obstacles as the European interviewees perceived them included a mismatch between institutional strategies and the focus and interest of the internal stakeholders. Further, interviewees identified a frequent divide between a hierarchical decision making structure and influencers and the change agents at the lower levels (i.e. the lack of an institutional or organisational culture that encourages and fosters change).

Accordingly European interviewees stressed the need for professional development offerings that focus on effective change management, taking account of the institutional and organisational context of higher education institutions. Advanced (intercultural) communication skills and interpersonal skills training were also stressed.

## Monitor role

Only the European group saw the “monitor” role as being a major priority need for enhancement. European interviewees perceived a need to improve their data collection and performance evaluation skills to be able to lead and manage a successful, stable functional unit or enterprise.

Perceived skills needed include:

- the ability to build trust
- sensitivity towards other stakeholders who collect and provide data and other information
- maintaining personal credibility and accountability
- good analytic skills, and
- an ability to evaluate and manage performance of individuals and of the functional unit.

Training in high level project management skills was identified as the priority professional development need, contextualised for internationalisation purposes.

## Coordinator role

Similarly, only the European group saw the “coordinator” role as being a significant priority need for enhancement, and closely aligned to the “monitor” role. Good communication skills were seen as the key to successful coordination of a team or functional unit’s efforts. The ability to delegate while maintaining effective oversight of performance was seen as particularly important. A coordinating “structure” (e.g. documented work objectives and outcomes) was also regarded by European interviewees as necessary. A challenge to good coordination of strategic and operational objectives in some European institutions was perceived to be the centralised versus decentralised management models and structures for international activity, with sometimes the lack of an overall (“helicopter”) institutional view or consciousness.

Again, project management skills (combined with knowledge of organisational systems geared to the internal functioning of higher education institutions) as well as peer mentoring/shadowing and staff exchange among institutions of similar scale (or with similar internal structures and cultures) were identified as a need.

## Director role

The European interviewees particularly sought to improve capabilities and skills in the “director” role. The focus was dual – internally on the relevant functional unit and externally towards the wider institution overall. Clear, strategic thinking, decisiveness, diplomacy, persuasiveness and outstanding communication skills were all mentioned as essential to being effective.

Training in conceiving, implementing, evaluating and refining an institutional international strategy was highlighted as the priority need, together with related training (involving presumably the “innovator” “monitor” and “coordinator” roles also mentioned by the European Interviewees) in how to effectively manage an international office. Professional development to enhance strategic thinking, diplomatic and political skills development, change management and peer mentoring was also mentioned as needed at a more advanced level.

## **Key internationalisation challenges facing leaders in Australia and Europe**

Six key internationalisation issues were identified in Phase 1 of the study and followed up in Phase 2. Two key issues were common to both the Australian and European groups:

1. Participation of academic staff in the process of internationalisation, and
2. Perceived lack of resources for internationalisation.

In addition, two key issues were identified as being specific to each of the groups. For Australia these were:

3. The international engagement of Australian university researchers, and
4. Perceived lip service to internationalisation and ineffective coordination of internationalisation efforts.

For Europe these were:

5. Strengthening international teaching collaboration
6. Barriers of leadership, vision and strategy and the lack of awareness of the importance of internationalisation.

Because of differences between the two groups, for relevance and for ease of elucidation these issues are treated under separate locational headings.

### **Australia**

There was substantial unanimity among Australian interviewees about the key issues and obstacles facing internationalisation of Australian higher education in Australia. Comments focused essentially on issue 1 (participation of academic staff in the process of internationalisation) and on issue 3 (international engagement of Australian university researchers). These two issues were clearly related in the minds of interviewees. The other two issues identified by Australian interviewees – issue 2 (perceived lack of resources for internationalisation) and issue 4 (perceived lip service to internationalisation and ineffective coordination of internationalisation efforts) – were commented on as part of the discussion around the two primary issues.

## International engagement of Australian university researchers

The Australian interviewees identified this as a major issue for long-term internationalisation of Australian higher education. For the Australian interviewees the strong emphasis on the development of international research collaboration was seen as a particularly important component of building international partnerships. There was an explicit connection drawn between deep international research engagement and the Australian institution's international reputation broadly including in terms of position on the global university league tables.

The assumption also seemed to be that moving up the league tables would help in attracting and retaining international students, including international postgraduate students. The desire by many Australian universities to balance their international student enrolments by having a greater proportion of postgraduate research students was clearly a strong motivation.

For the most part, the interviewees commenting were not themselves researchers. However, they perceived a strong connection between their roles as leaders in internationalisation and the support they might provide to others in their institution with primary responsibility for research engagement. This was seen as part of international education leaders' crucial brokering role in international education.

The co-dependency of academic and administrative staff was recognised. Effectively this was a call to blend academic and business capabilities in some appropriate way, with fairly obvious practical implications for professional development.

## Participation of Australian academic staff in the process of internationalisation

The issue of perceived "tension" around the role and participation of academic staff in the process of internationalisation is clearly related to the first issue. Interviewees stated that tensions arise for a variety of reasons, including competing pressures on academic staff for their time and the perception by some academic staff that internationalisation is mainly about student recruitment and revenue generation. However, the issue is likely to be more deeply rooted in the culture of an institution and, for example, may be a result of the meaning executive leaders give to internationalisation and the kind of strategic objectives, directions, support and incentives executive leaders provide to progress internationalisation.

Some interviewees suggested the need to build mechanisms to foster engagement, particularly those where academic and non-academic staff might "learn together". Others suggested the need for academic staff to acquire not only business but also cultural competency skills. Others suggested that administrative staff need to improve their brokering skills to help them identify and cultivate appropriate academic staff and to be effective in managing the crossover between academic and non-academic responsibilities and functions.

Many interviewees referred to examples of good practice in the engagement of academic

staff in internationalisation and suggested that these should be more widely disseminated and better known.

European interviewees also identified the issue of engagement of academic staff as a critical priority for leaders of internationalisation (see below).

## Europe

European interviewees identified four key issues challenging leaders of internationalisation in Europe, which are outlined below.

### Strengthening international teaching collaboration

International offices in European institutions focus mainly on cooperation in the field of teaching and mobility of students. Strengthening teaching collaboration was identified in Phase 1 as a key issue in the internationalisation strategy of European institutions. The strong emphasis on the development of international teaching collaboration is seen as a particularly important component of building international partnerships.

Three barriers were identified:

- the attitude of academic staff to view engagement in international projects as a burden rather than an advantage;
- the lack of an evidence base persuasively demonstrating the benefits of international teaching collaboration to academic staff and institutional leaders;
- and the complexity of obtaining external funding support for such projects.

As with Australian interviewees (see below), European interviewees perceived the persuasive advantage of a program director being an academic who could encourage and convince academic colleagues to be involved in the program. Conversely, they also believed that non-academic staff need a better understanding of the processes of academic program development and delivery.

A mixture of skills was perceived as necessary: good communication/persuasiveness skills; a flair for innovation and entrepreneurship; and a good understanding and interaction between academic and non-academic staff.

As with Australian interviewees, European interviewees saw the issue in terms of improved training to achieve a shared recognition between academic and non-academic staff of what is required to achieve successful internationalisation.

### Lack of resources

Resourcing for internationalisation varies between European countries and may not be a key issue in some where EU funding underpins much activity. For leaders of internationalisation, resources or the lack of them posed varying challenges. Some leaders placed great priority

on having a sound internationalisation strategy as a means to successfully access the resources needed. On the other hand, some leaders were convinced about their institution's dependence on EU funding.

As a generalisation, there was a perception that in economically difficult times internationalisation leaders in Europe should re-think priorities and the means to achieve them. They could also link more effectively with local and regional business communities to access resource support. Enhancing the “innovator” and “broker” roles to foster better communication of the benefits of internationalisation – and assisting staff to identify and access previously untapped sources of support (e.g. alumni) – would presumably be important in overcoming resource difficulties imposed by institutional or governmental financial restraint.

## Leadership, strategic vision and the lack of awareness of the benefits of internationalisation

The European interviewees identified a set of related high level issues as forming the context in which they need to operate. At one level, in countries where internationalisation of higher education is part of the national agenda, institutional awareness, vision and strategy tend to follow. In this case the challenge for leaders is to articulate, plan and deliver programs aligned to their country's and their institution's strategic vision. In other cases internationalisation may not be high on the national/institutional agenda, in which case the challenge becomes more complex and includes the task of raising awareness of the need for internationalisation among institutional staff and students.

Interviewees in Europe however agreed that in all cases leaders of internationalisation need to understand and to be able to effectively articulate to others the outcomes and benefits of internationalisation – economic, demographic cultural and educational. Interviewees called for more research at an institutional, national and international level to provide the evidence base on which to raise awareness about the outcomes and benefits of internationalisation for multiple stakeholders.

## Participation of European academic staff in the process of internationalisation

The views of European interviewees around the role and participation of academic staff in the process of internationalisation were substantially congruent with those of their Australian counterparts (see above). As with their Australian colleagues, European interviewees viewed the issue of the involvement of academic staff as a critical challenge. The issue was seen to be deeply rooted in institutional culture, in particular the research focus of many academic staff, and to be influenced by the kind of strategic direction, support and incentives executive leaders in institutions provide to progress internationalisation.

As with their Australian counterparts, European interviewees suggested a number of strategies to achieve greater academic engagement in the internationalisation process,

including incentives for extra time and effort provided by academic staff and the building of mechanisms which might include joint professional development, to foster closer engagement between academic and non-academic staff in the identification, planning and delivery of international programs and projects.

## **Strengthening leadership capabilities and skills to address perceived key challenges**

A wide variety of practical suggestions were proposed by Australian and European interviewees in the final part of Phase 2 of the study. While there is some overlap between the two groups, these proposals are treated under separate locational headings. The implications for the two Associations are brought together in the conclusion to the present report.

### **Australia**

Australian interviewees suggested a wide variety of ways to strengthen leadership capabilities and skills in key priority areas, directed specifically towards particular groups of professional and academic staff. The suggestions focused primarily on different forms of professional networking and development.

#### **Middle level managers**

(Managers of sub-units within the central international structure or portfolio; Faculty/Division International Managers)

This is a group essentially of professional administrators. The group is likely to have mixed experience and qualifications. Almost by necessity many would have experience in one or more aspect of international education. Some may not have had significant experience in managing staff teams. Many would be on career paths and aspire to higher-level leadership roles.

A number of interviewees indicated a specialised Masters would probably be of interest to some middle level professionals provided they did not already hold a Masters level qualification. Most interviewees however, stressed the need for less formalised training for this group, including professional development to acquire or fine-tune specific technical skills (e.g. cross-cultural skills; negotiation and mediation skills; financial management skills; business innovation skills); peer learning and networking; mentoring/coaching/buddying; and professional development to assist understanding of the broad institutional mission and strategy and the place of internationalisation strategy within that.

#### **Executive directors of central international offices or other units having a significant international responsibility**

(e.g. Heads of International Relations Offices, Research Offices; Associate Deans International)

This group is mixed, being comprised of both senior professional administrators and academic staff designated as responsible for international matters within a faculty or



division. Interviewees were generally of the view that at this level, professional development would largely need to be individualised.

Interest in acquiring higher-level academic qualifications (e.g. a second Masters) is unlikely for members of this group, even if the qualification were a specialised one focused on internationalisation of higher education.

The trend to greater academic leadership of institutions' international activities at the executive levels poses an issue for non-academic international leaders both because they wish to maintain their current credibility and influence within their institution and because in some cases they want to advance further up the executive ladder, either in the existing or in another higher education institution. Some believed they would need to acquire a Doctoral qualification if they were to maintain their professional credibility over the longer term. For most however, the long path to a research doctorate is not a practical option.

For staff at this level, the preference of most interviewees is for other forms of professional development. These include:

- participation in executive leadership programs and networks involving experience beyond the higher education sector
- personalised, structured shadowing, benchmarking or meetings/seminars with top leaders in internationalisation
- sabbaticals spent living and working in an international context
- focused skills development training (e.g. cross-cultural skills; negotiation and mediation skills; financial management skills); and
- mentoring/coaching.

### **University executive leadership**

(Deputy/Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Deans)

This group is essentially comprised of academic staff. There is a great mix and diversity among incumbents. Some might have significant prior leadership and management experience, others less so. Most have had significant teaching background, others might come with an essentially research background. Some would have had significant international experience and involvement, some less so. Given that experience and expectations among members of this group are likely to vary greatly there is probably a need for early "role clarification" for members entering this group.

Skills enhancement at this level would need to be individualised, involving tailored programs that facilitate understanding of the changing national and global higher education contexts, drivers and trends; broad understanding of different university missions and strategies and the role of internationalisation within them; participation in executive leadership programs and networks involving experience beyond the higher education sector; role clarification and up-skilling of non-academic skills (e.g. business skills; cross-cultural negotiation skills); personalised, structured executive level shadowing, seminar programs or other familiarisation programs.

## Europe

As described above, European interviewees suggested a wide variety of ways to strengthen leadership capabilities and skills in the key priority areas.

### **Structured, targeted professional development**

Structured and targeted professional development in particular priority areas were identified, covering in particular:

- Development of an international strategy
- Practices and tools to manage an international office involving, for example
- change management, project management, teambuilding, negotiation skills conflict resolution, communication/cross-cultural skills, brokering skills and fundraising.

### **Topic specific seminars**

Topic specific seminars and workshops for groups of internationalisation professionals were also suggested, focused on:

- Understanding of the changing national, European and global higher education contexts and of the role of internationalisation within them
- Drivers and trends in internationalisation
- The variety of institutional responses to internationalisation – different university missions and strategies and the role of international education leadership.

### **Small group meetings and seminars**

Interviewees also saw value in personalised professional development for senior leaders involving meetings and seminars with top leaders in internationalisation, especially on topics involving good practice examples and theme based case studies on key priority issues.

### **One-on-one peer learning (external focus)**

One-on-one peer learning with colleagues with advanced experience was also suggested, involving colleagues and institutions either within the same country or other countries.

### **Mentoring and coaching**

Suggestions here focused primarily on different forms of professional networking and development. Interviewees were generally of the view that professional development would largely need to be individualised and focus on learning with and from their peers either in a national or international context.

### **Structured executive leadership training**

European interviewees also suggested a more formalised structure for executive leadership training involving the establishment of a specific executive leadership program focused on internationalisation within higher education, modularised to cover topics such as strategic planning, change management, project management, and human resource management.

### **Advanced qualifications**

As with their Australian counterparts, a number of European interviewees believed they would need to acquire an advanced qualification (for example a doctoral qualification) if they were to maintain their professional credibility over the longer term. For most however, the long path to a research doctorate is not a practical option.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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The present report details and integrates the research findings of Phases 1 and 2 of the joint study. The findings of the study reveal some differences but many shared concerns and interests between international education professionals and leaders in Europe and Australia. The commonalities are striking in terms of context, the challenges faced and the priorities for practical program options proposed on both sides.

Contextual similarities are strong. Professionals and leaders in internationalisation in both Australia and Europe face contexts that are ever changing, frequently turbulent in a public policy sense and increasingly business focused. In both locations the process of internationalisation is highly dependent on academic involvement. Indeed, responsibilities for internationalisation are increasingly broadening to involve a greater number and variety of institutional players, especially academic staff, fully across the teaching, research and service functions of universities. This and the trend towards the mainstreaming of internationalisation strategy and practice mean that for successful institutional internationalisation the co-dependency of professional administrative and academic staff is becoming even more pronounced. Mechanisms to foster this development are increasingly imperative in Europe and in Australia.

The key challenges faced by international education leaders are also largely similar in the two locations. A particularly important challenge in the minds of leaders in both Europe and Australia is how to effectively engage academic staff in the process of internationalisation. A further challenge is the ability to be innovative, strategic and persuasive within the institutional context to move the institution forward and to secure the high level support, and in some cases the resources, to successfully conduct the enterprise. Associated with these leadership challenges are the challenges of effective management of a functional unit, requiring specific technical skills (strategic planning, change management, project management, intercultural communication, negotiation skills and human resource management).

Although the emphasis between them and the way they manifest themselves might be slightly different in the two locations, the leadership and management roles requiring particular strengthening are largely common for the two locations. The key roles identified for strengthening are “innovator”, “broker”, “monitor”, “coordinator” and “director”.

Finally, also there is largely common agreement about the key actions needed to strengthen skills and capabilities of leaders and managers in the two locations.

Professional development of different forms and levels is required to suit participants at three different levels (middle managers, executive directors and senior executives/CEOs). For all groups there is an expressed need for improved innovation and entrepreneurial/strategic skills to meet ever changing external and internal challenges.

There is a strong shared view that the co-dependency of administrative and academic roles must be addressed in professional development, preferably through joint learning by

academic and administrative staff to foster closer engagement between them to enable successful identification, planning and delivery of international programs and projects. A blending of academic and business knowledge and skills in an appropriate way is sought.

A clear perceived need too is a focus on good practice, including good practice in the engagement of academic staff.

There is a shared view that modest formal award courses at graduate level focused on leadership and management with a particular focus on internationalisation might be of value and of interest to middle managers on a career path and aspiring to higher level responsibility. However, less formalised training at all levels is perceived as to be more relevant and clearly necessary.

Short courses/seminars to fine tune or enable acquisition of particular technical skills (e.g. change management, project management, teambuilding, communication/cross-cultural negotiation and mediation skills, brokering skills, financial management and fundraising skills; business innovation skills) are viewed as important. In addition, other less formalised training involving peer learning, networking, mentoring or coaching and buddying are viewed as being particularly valuable to middle managers. Individualised expert meetings/seminars with top leaders in internationalisation on specific topics (e.g. good practice examples and theme-based case studies on key priority issues) and one-on-one peer learning with counterparts in institutions either within the same country or other countries are viewed as being of more value to directors/ associate deans and to senior institutional executives. Australian leaders believe such initiatives are especially required between Australia and Asian countries.

Topic specific one-off seminars and workshops are viewed as valuable for groups at all levels focused particularly on understanding of the changing national and global higher education contexts and the role of internationalisation within them, the drivers and trends in internationalisation, and the variety of institutional responses to internationalisation and the role of international education leadership (all levels).

Finally, for senior university executives moving into an internationalisation role, early role clarification and familiarisation involving individualised, tailored executive leadership programs would be of value. Participation in networks involving experience beyond the higher education sector and up-skilling of non-academic skills (e.g. business skills, cross-cultural negotiation skills) would also be beneficial.

## CONCLUSION

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The findings of the research point clearly to a number of research and practical program/professional development options that the *International Education Association of Australia* (IEAA) and the *European Association for International Education* (EAIE) might like to consider in the context of their responsibilities to support and develop international education professionals in the two locations. Some options for consideration are suggested below in the final section of this report.

Some of these options will have relevance for international education professional associations beyond Europe and Australia. The desire for joint/peer learning, including with colleagues from other regions, is a feature of both the Australian and the European findings. While it makes sense initially to pursue opportunities for joint initiatives involving both the EAIE and IEAA, it may also be possible over the longer term to undertake some joint initiatives with colleagues elsewhere.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

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### Further research

The most urgent and potentially most useful further research is likely to relate to the administrative-academic nexus, particularly the co-dependency of the two groups in successful internationalisation.

Three research possibilities are:

1. Attitudes of academic staff to engagement in internationalisation across the teaching, research and service functions of universities.
2. Good practice in engagement of academic staff in the process of internationalisation.
3. The nexus between the Senior International Officer (SIO) and executive leadership of universities.

The Associations could consider a series of layered research projects under a broad umbrella project over 3-5 years, with international comparisons and jointly developed case studies. Outcomes could be published and disseminated over the course of the project as they emerge.

### Professional development

Potential professional development offerings for consideration:

- 1. Joint leaders academy**

This could possibly operate as a revolving leadership series through three-four conferences each year (the EAIE, AIEC, APAIE, AIEA). The focus would be on

sharing practice and improving capabilities and skills in the “innovator”, “broker”, “monitor”, “coordinator” and “director” roles. Offerings should be framed around a major critical job skill – e.g. decision making. Maximum 20-25 participants. It would be desirable to have a wrap-up report that encapsulates good practice and other outcomes of the academy.

**2. Young Professionals Forum/Debate**

This could possibly be offered annually at one of the major international conferences, with a focus on a major topical theme, with dissemination of the outcomes of the event.

**3. Joint-shadowing project for young leaders**

One each year in Europe, Asia and Australia involving five young leaders from each location shadowing five senior leaders in one of the other locations.

**4. Joint theme based seminars**

For executive/middle managers and leaders framed around the joint case studies to be developed by the Associations.

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# APPENDIX

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## QUINN'S LEADERSHIP ROLES\*

In keeping with the emphasis of the Quinn model on behavioural complexity and leadership as a portfolio of capabilities, the eight roles in the model are defined in terms of a set of skills necessary to perform each role:

### **Innovator role**

The innovator is creative and envisions, encourages and facilitates change.

### **Broker role**

The broker is politically astute, acquires resources and maintains the unit's external legitimacy through the development, scanning and maintenance of a network of external contacts.

### **Producer role**

The producer is task-oriented, work focused, seeks closure and motivates those behaviours that will result in the completion of the group's task.

### **Director role**

The director engages in goal setting and role clarification, sets objectives and establishes clear expectations.

### **Coordinator role**

The coordinator maintains structure, does the scheduling, coordinating and problem solving and sees that rules and standards are met.

### **Monitor role**

The monitor collects and distributes information, checks on performance and provides a sense of continuity and stability.

### **Facilitator role**

The facilitator encourages the expression of opinions, seeks consensus and negotiates compromise.

### **Mentor role**

The mentor is aware of individual needs, listens actively, is fair, supports legitimate requests and attempts to facilitate the development of individuals.

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\* Daniel R. Denison, Robert Hooijberg, Robert E. Quinn: *Paradox and Performance: Toward a Theory of Behavioral Complexity in Managerial Leadership*, Organization Science, Vol. 6, No. 5 (Sep-Oct, 1995).