

Strengthening institutional management of transnational higher  
education: Implications derived from a thematic analysis of the Cycle 2  
audit reports of the Australian Universities Quality Agency

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by  
Sally Crawford Stafford

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# Abstract

Transnational higher education (TNE) involves the offering overseas of 'home university' award courses by, or with, overseas partners, or directly through an overseas branch of the university. TNE is growing in significance in the context of the internationalisation of higher education and the increasing mobility of information and people in a more globalised world. TNE has become an important and distinctive avenue of access for many students. However, TNE is a complex and demanding activity for institutional managers.

The context for the study is the relative paucity of research on the management of TNE, compared with the teaching-learning area, coupled with my own professional interest in understanding and improving TNE management.

The study involved a thematic analysis of documentary sources in the form of institutional audit reports by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). The specific objectives were to identify and analyse the patterns and themes in AUQA's concerns and commendations, in order to draw out the implications for improving the development and management of TNE. Finally, using a strategic management perspective, the main challenges confronting senior institutional managers in TNE initiatives were examined.

A total of 204 concerns and 31 commendations were identified by a systematic review of TNE management in 27 university audit reports. The concerns and commendations were categorised using a structured, 6-dimensional analytical framework to produce a comprehensive overview of management issues in TNE. Almost half the concerns and commendations related to institutional strategy and management, with significant numbers also relating to governance and quality assurance. In relation to the 235 concerns and commendations, 21 themes, or areas of recurring concern, were identified. Major themes included weaknesses in academic and corporate governance processes, alignment of TNE initiatives with overall university strategy, and senior management oversight. For each theme, implications for improving management practice were developed by drawing on relevant literature and my own professional experience.

Adopting a strategic management perspective suggested that the 21 themes could be grouped meaningfully into 3 clusters relating to: Integrating the TNE venture into institutional structure and processes; Determining the nature and form of the TNE partnership and associated contract; and Managing and sustaining the TNE initiative. A model was developed to illustrate the interrelationship between the 3 clusters and the role of strategic leadership.

The study contributes to developing a deeper and more systematic understanding of the nature of TNE and the sources for concerns that arise from its inherent complexity and risk. The study also extends the broad knowledge base for consultants, institutional managers, practising academics and quality assurance and accreditation agencies in Australia and other countries. Finally, the study contributes to strengthening my own professional knowledge and practice as a consultant to Australian and overseas universities and private higher education institutions who are developing TNE programs.

# Preface

The data source for this study was the published institutional audit reports of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). Full details of the reports utilised are contained in the Appendix.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction to the study

Transnational higher education (TNE), the delivery of education across national borders, is an activity of growing significance in the context of the internationalisation of higher education and the increasing mobility of information and people in a more globalised world. Over the last 20 years, TNE has become an important and distinctive pathway for many students who otherwise would not have access to an international higher education experience. However, TNE is a complex and demanding activity in both educational and management terms. Notwithstanding its complexity, TNE now provides an important strand of the international strategy of universities in both 'offering' countries, mainly Western, and in 'receiving' countries, mainly in the developing world. For many years, Australia, alongside the United Kingdom and the United States, has had a major involvement in international education ventures, including the offering of TNE programs in overseas 'host' countries.

There are many definitions of TNE which vary in the scope that they encompass. For this study, **transnational education refers to the offering overseas of 'home university' award courses by, or with, overseas partners, or directly through an overseas branch of the university.** This definition is narrower than many in the field but it has been chosen because it is consistent with the definition adopted by the Australian Government:

Australian transnational education and training, also known as offshore or cross-border education and training, refers to the delivery and/or assessment of programs/courses by an accredited Australian provider in a country other than Australia, where delivery includes a face-to-face component. (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005)

### 1.1 Overview of the study

In view of the growing importance of TNE, coupled with its inherent complexity, management challenges, and hence, risk, there is a need for careful research by higher education scholars. There is also scope to draw upon the accumulation of professional experience to add a further

perspective. As higher education management has become more complex in recent years, with rapid environmental change and the impact of globalisation, assessing and managing risk has become a key focus for institutional managers. The nature of TNE programs brings a wide range of risks (including academic, financial, and reputational risks) that need to be carefully managed. However, the study of the management challenges in TNE has lagged behind the study of the educational dimension. This thesis seeks to make a contribution to improving knowledge and practice in the management of TNE, particularly at the strategic level.

This topic was chosen because of the growing importance of TNE to universities, the relative paucity of research on TNE management, and also its close fit with my own interests and experience. With more than 20 years' experience in management positions in Australian universities, most recently in senior university-level positions, my involvement and interest in international and transnational strategy and management issues have steadily grown. As director of academic projects and services at Monash University, I was responsible for managing the transnational quality assurance policies and review processes. In subsequent consulting roles, I have advised universities and colleges on international and transnational initiatives, and been a panel member of audits of offshore partnerships. TNE strategies, governance, management, and integration with broad institutional strategy and structures have become major areas of interest in my professional work.

In the light of these considerations, the management of TNE was selected as the focus of this study, with the 2008-2012 Cycle 2 audit reports of Australian universities by Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) as the source of data on transnational education (TNE) provision. AUQA was an Australian government agency that operated from 2001 to 2012. The Agency was established in 2000 in response to concerns about the status and international reputation of Australian universities, with the roles of overseeing quality processes and standards in universities (Marginson, 2007). AUQA undertook individual audits of Australian universities and produced reports, which it published and made available to the media and all interested parties. The AUQA audits were institutional-level reviews undertaken in two cycles, with specific parameters applying to the two cycles. The Cycle 1 audits, undertaken between 2001 and 2007, were whole-of-institution reviews of quality assurance arrangements across all aspects of institutional performance. Cycle 2, between 2008 and 2012, used a more targeted approach – focusing in depth on two specified 'theme' areas – and included a review of progress since Cycle 1. Internationalisation was frequently chosen as a theme for the audits and, where institutions offered TNE programs, they were the focus of special scrutiny.

The specific context for AUQA's focus on TNE, and hence the value of the Cycle 2 audit reports as data sources for this study, was provided by national policy statements identifying perceived risks to individual universities and, more broadly, to 'brand Australia' from some universities' TNE programs. In 2003, two ministerial statements highlighted concerns about the impact of the growth in TNE on Australia's reputation in international higher education and the particular risks involved, and allocated additional funding to increase the number of AUQA's audits of overseas higher education operations (Nelson, 2003a, 2003b). This was further reinforced by the statement on a national quality strategy for Australian transnational education and training (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005).

Within this context of concern about the risks of TNE, the AUQA audit reports provided a rich source of insight both into how institutions viewed themselves and into how expert panel assessments viewed the organisation and delivery of TNE. The study used the audit reports to identify the nature and sources of the *concerns* AUQA expressed, and, conversely, of the *commendations* awarded. The concerns and commendations identified provided the means to identify their implications for improving university management practice. The overall goals of the study were to gain an insight into the complexities and challenges of managing TNE; to develop my own professional expertise; and to provide practical advice to senior university managers about adopting sound practices and avoiding common pitfalls in the development and management of TNE.

The specific objectives for my study were thus:

1. to identify and analyse the patterns and themes in the concerns expressed and commendations awarded by AUQA,
2. to draw out the implications for improving the development and management of TNE in Australian universities that can be derived from AUQA's findings, and
3. to examine, using a strategic management perspective, the main challenges confronting senior institutional managers in TNE initiatives, by drawing on the research and professional literature and my own professional experience with TNE management at the university level.

The broader context for the study of the management of TNE is provided by the increasing 'globalisation' of higher education which has led to TNE strategies, and the broader and encompassing 'internationalisation' strategies, becoming central to the strategic development of many universities. As the literature illustrates, the growing importance of TNE as a major internationalisation strategy, is not confined to Australian universities; there is similar interest

and activity in TNE in many countries, both those 'supplying' ('exporters') and 'receiving' ('importers') TNE programs. An examination of the research on TNE shows that there is a range of perspectives and approaches to studying TNE. The most substantial body of literature involves the study of TNE from a 'teaching and learning' perspective. More recently, there has been an increased amount of research from a national policy perspective and from the perspective of a national accreditation, or quality, body. However, there is comparatively little research that adopts an institutional higher education management perspective, and this 'gap' in the literature provides the main focus and rationale for this study. The institutional management focus in this study is supplemented by drawing on the perspectives of national policy and those of a national quality/accreditation body. The perspective of this study also complements the teaching-learning 'lens' most often adopted in studying TNE.

The approach adopted for the study was a documentary study involving a thematic analysis of AUQA's assessments of TNE provision, as a means of identifying implications for management practice in the development and implementation of TNE. A total of 27 AUQA audits were undertaken of universities that were offering TNE programs and all the audit reports were analysed in detail for this research study, using a framework derived from higher education management theories, the structure set out by AUQA, and my own professional experience.

## **1.2 TNE as an element of internationalisation and an area of particular risk**

As higher education becomes more 'globalised', 'internationalisation' has become a key strategy of many universities around the world (Altbach and Knight, 2007).

Internationalisation involves several elements, including recruiting international students, offering programs in other countries through branch campuses or partners (transnational education), student and staff mobility, 'internationalised' curricula, and international research teams and alliances. Jane Knight has explored the conceptualization of 'internationalisation' since the 1990s and favours a 'process' view that integrates purpose, functions and delivery of higher education (Knight, 2008).

'Internationalisation', in its many forms, has become an increasingly significant component of the planning and development strategies of higher education institutions worldwide, particularly those located in English-speaking countries (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Marginson & van de Wende, 2007). With the relatively high cost of an education overseas (often including fees, accommodation and subsistence, and travel), studying in an overseas program through a transnational education (TNE) partnership has become a popular and practical option for many

students. Hence, along with other international strategies, TNE also generates significant revenue for many universities. Simultaneously, the development and delivery of TNE and other international programs provide mechanisms through which universities ensure that students, staff, research directions, and programs of study and curricula are attuned to the needs of an increasingly globalised economy and workforce. Universities are also motivated by the need to be seen as 'international institutions' in an increasingly global higher education system. Being regarded as an 'international institution' is often perceived (not necessarily accurately) as 'high quality' and this brings prestige, status and a competitive 'edge'.

All forms of international education bring new challenges for managers, teachers and quality assurance systems (Taylor, 2010a, 2010b). The nature of TNE poses particular challenges for quality and risk management. The programs are developed in one country and delivered in another, and the teaching is often undertaken by staff of a partner, rather than by staff of the institution awarding the qualification. This delivery model brings in issues of different legislative and regulatory frameworks for higher education, as well as different cultural norms and practices relating to learning and teaching. As a result, both institutions and regulatory agencies have paid particular attention to the quality of the programs, the teaching, the services, the student experience, the standards and the learning outcomes. The multi-faceted nature and the challenges of TNE lead to its common characterisation as a high risk activity.

The inherent complexities, quality challenges and 'risks' of TNE provide the rationale for this research study in which the concerns about TNE expressed by AUQA are examined. Both the national government policy and AUQA's response focused on perceived risks to quality and to the reputation of 'brand Australia' from potential failings in any one institution.

### **1.3 Background on higher education policy, quality assurance and accreditation in Australia**

In Australia, the accreditation of higher education institutions, in the sense of their licence to operate, has historically been separate from the audit of their quality assurance processes. Under the Australian Constitution established in 1901, education is a state, not national, responsibility and most Australian universities were established by state governments between the 1850's and 1990's. Under their acts of incorporation, the universities have been given a high level of autonomy, including management control of their strategy, structure and standards, and the power to accredit their own courses. However, since the 1970's the universities have increasingly come under the influence of the national government, and this

government control is largely exercised through funding allocations under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cth)*.

In 2000, a set of National Protocols for Higher Education was introduced jointly by the Australian and state governments to govern the accreditation of all higher education institutions (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2007). However, as all the public universities were founded before the National Protocols were developed and the accreditation agencies at that time were not commissioned to check the compliance of universities, the Protocols had little practical impact on universities.

More direct government impact on higher education institutions was generated from the rise of the quality movement. Stemming from a growing concern about the status and international reputation of Australian universities, and in the wake of the establishment of quality bodies in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, the Australian government established the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). Commencing operations in 2001, AUQA was given the role of conducting 5-yearly audits of universities and private higher education providers, including offshore programs, and of auditing the state accreditation agencies (Marginson, 2007).

AUQA's approach was based on auditing institutional 'fitness for purpose' and internal quality assurance and improvement systems processes, in accordance with the missions and strategies published by individual institutions. AUQA's initial approach was stated as:

AUQA does not impose an externally prescribed set of standards upon auditees, but uses as its primary starting point for audit each organisation's own objectives. AUQA considers the extent to which institutions are meeting these objectives, and how institutions monitor and improve their performance. (AUQA, 2011, p. 4)

AUQA's 'quality enhancement' approach contrasts with the 'standards-based' approach adopted by the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (2012) and also by the more recently established Australian Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (2011).

The Australian government established TEQSA in 2011 to bring together the two processes of accreditation and quality audit. TEQSA was established primarily to strengthen regulation of providers, especially small ones, in the context of 'threshold standards'. TEQSA has continued AUQA's focus on TNE through its scrutiny of 'third party providers' (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, 2015). The integration of accreditation and quality audit resulted in the

disestablishment of AUQA and removal of state higher education accreditation powers. However, as the time period relevant to this study predates this development, I will focus on the accreditation and quality assurance (QA) processes in place prior to, and during, AUQA's operation between 2001 and 2012.

For some years Australia's reputation as a 'destination' and a 'deliverer' of higher education has been a politically sensitive area. Both the national 'image' and individual higher education institutions have been vulnerable to the impact on reputation of negative publicity relating to course quality, standards, and international student safety and experience. In this context, Australian international higher education and TNE are potentially highly visible, social and political issues.

In 2003, in response to a series of Australian and overseas media challenges relating to the quality of some universities' TNE programs, the Australian Government announced the allocation of increased funding for audits to further assure the quality of Australian higher education offshore (Nelson, 2003a, 2003b). AUQA's focus on university operations overseas, and perceptions of risk associated with transnational operations, grew through the Cycle 1 audits and became central in Cycle 2 (AUQA, 2006; Woodhouse, 2006). The strengthened process was based on a set of 'risk factors' that indicated where, in AUQA's view, institutional transnational activities warranted closer investigation (AUQA, 2006).

The importance of TNE in the internationalisation strategies of Australian universities has been reflected in the growth of TNE programs. In 2013, 26% of Australia's 328,400 international students were enrolled in programs of study offered outside Australia at a branch campus or through a teaching delivery partner (Department of Education and Training, 2015). Education is currently Australia's fourth largest export (Group of Eight Universities, 2014). So, together with the social and cultural contributions of international education, the economic benefits of international higher education and of TNE are significant.

The national policy on TNE and AUQA's response highlight the national political, economic, cultural, foreign policy, and organisational context for my thesis study. As always, higher education, especially at institutional and national levels, is closely intertwined with all these dimensions.

AUQA's increased scrutiny of transnational education reflected the growing oversight, globally, of other home countries' transnational education activities and also mirrored the increased

vigilance of host countries' accrediting bodies in relation to the oversight of 'foreign' institutions operating in their jurisdictions (McBurnie and Ziguras, 2001, 2006).

#### **1.4 Purpose, relevance, and significance of the study**

Transnational education (TNE) is an area of special interest for me as it accounts for a significant proportion of my professional activities, and so forms the basis of my EdD thesis. I am keen to bring a research perspective to my professional practice. All aspects of international education pose special challenges for universities and their leaders. But because of its inherent organizational and logistical complexities, transnational education is widely acknowledged in my consulting network, as well as in the literature, as raising specific concerns about quality. These concerns have led to research into the teaching strategies, student services and experience, program standards and learning outcomes of TNE programs (Coverdale-Jones, 2012; Smith, 2010, Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015).

Turning specifically to my professional experience with TNE, I have been closely involved in the development of transnational education programs and strategies in several institutions and had extensive 'internal' quality management experience in an Australian university with a substantial TNE profile. In my work with 'external' QA and accreditation agencies, I undertook a number of transnational program reviews. Although individual reviews are confidential, reviewers who serve on audit panels form a loose network which shares experiences of issues, techniques and 'lessons' they have learnt, and so I have developed a detailed understanding of how TNE programs and quality processes operate in practice.

As a piece of practitioner research, this research will extend and deepen my knowledge, providing me with a more systematic understanding, both theoretically and empirically, of the nature of TNE and the levels, types and reasons for concerns arising in relation to transnational programs. The research will be highly relevant to me professionally in my role as a consultant to Australian and overseas universities and private higher education institutions who are developing transnational programs. My study will better enable me to provide informed advice on the development and management of TNE, and the regulatory and quality issues that need to be addressed.

Although not explicitly 'generalisable', my study's findings will also be useful to institutional academics and managers involved in the development and operation of TNE programs, and to review panel members. Given the similarity of criteria and approaches adopted by quality and

accreditation agencies internationally, and the similar concerns voiced in some other countries (e.g. the UK), the findings will also be of interest to consultants, institutional managers, and quality assurance/accreditation agencies in other countries. Potentially, the findings could have implications for the development of TNE and its assessment in other jurisdictions.

Although AUQA ceased to exist in 2011, with its incorporation into TEQSA, its influence will continue to shape institutional strategies, policy, and thinking, and to impact upon TEQSA's policies. Internationally, interest in TNE is high. Hence, the study of AUQA's approach and concerns will continue to be of interest and significance for practitioners in the field of quality assurance and TNE (Marginson & van de Wende, 2007; Taylor, 2010b). Indeed, TEQSA has signalled that it is continuing the focus on TNE as a risk area as part of its recent review of, and release of Guidance Notes on all types of 'third-party' provision by higher education institutions (TEQSA, 2015).

Transnational education is a widespread and growing phenomenon in many countries, but it has largely been treated as a practical teaching, operational management, or quality issue. In its early years, TNE was treated as a separate area of university activity and it is only comparatively recently that TNE has been placed within the broader 'internal' context of institutional strategy and management, and the 'external' context of internationalisation and globalisation. In this sense, institutional-level management of TNE has been somewhat 'under-theorised', and I hope that my research will also make a contribution to the development of new theoretical perspectives on institutional-level management of TNE.

## **1.5 Thesis structure and foreshadowing of findings**

The thesis follows a conventional structure, with Chapter 2 providing a systematic literature review of the relevant areas of literature. Chapter 3 sets out the broad methodology and the detailed research approach being utilised. Chapters 4 and 5 report the findings: first at an overall level; then through an in-depth examination of the core focus area of the study, strengthening institutional management of TNE. Chapter 6 adopts a strategic management perspective to integrate the findings.

The study identified 235 concerns and commendations relating to TNE in the reports of 27 university audits undertaken by AUQA. The concerns and commendations were categorised using a 6-dimensional analytical framework derived from management theory, AUQA's approach to TNE, and my own institutional management experience with TNE. Almost half the

concerns and commendations related to institutional strategy and management, with significant numbers also relating to governance and to QA systems. The concerns and commendations were grouped into 21 themes and, in keeping with the professional focus of the thesis, 69 implications were developed for improving management practice. Finally, a strategic management perspective was used to group the 21 themes into 3 clusters. The 3 clusters provide a consolidated 'picture' of TNE activities that aims to provide greater insight into TNE operations for university Vice-Chancellors and senior managers, as they work to address the key strategic challenges in developing and sustaining successful TNE initiatives.

The 3 high-level clusters were:

- A: Integrating the TNE venture into institutional structure and processes
- B: Determining the nature and form of the TNE partnership and associated contract
- C: Managing, evaluating and sustaining the TNE initiative

The linkages between these clusters were represented in a model illustrating how the clusters interrelate at a strategic level in the integration and management of TNE. Using this approach, the study contributes to:

1. A deeper and more systematic understanding of the nature of TNE and the sources for concerns that arise from its inherent complexity and risk.
2. The broad knowledge base for consultants, institutional managers, practising academics and quality assurance and accreditation agencies in Australia and other countries.
3. Better management practice by senior institutional leaders in the development and management of TNE.
4. My own professional knowledge and practice as a consultant to Australian and overseas universities and private higher education institutions who are developing TNE programs.

## Chapter 2

# Literature review

Key contextual questions for my research are ‘why would a researcher choose to analyse AUQA’s concerns about TNE?’, ‘where does this proposed study fit?’, ‘why does this topic have broader relevance to the higher education community?’, and ‘why does it have professional relevance for me?’. These questions have already been touched on in Chapter 1 and will be expanded in this chapter and in Chapter 3 Methodology.

This section addresses these questions in terms of positioning my study in the context of the higher education literature and identified ‘gaps’ in the literature. Punch (2006) characterises the literature review as “tying a field together and showing us the state of knowledge in an area, its trends and its gaps... what we already know ...what is contested... and what we don’t know” (p. 42).

### **2.1 Supporting literature – foundations of my literature review**

This research study of TNE is underpinned by several strands of literature, which provide the context and the conceptual and theoretical foundations for my research project. These foundations are also necessary to establish the study’s quality, validity and legitimacy (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The literature strands have some inevitable overlap in scope, but they do provide conceptual clarity in assessing a very large body of literature.

There is a considerable body of research and commentary on globalisation in higher education, policy and management and quality assurance and accreditation (such as Altbach & Knight, 2007; Clark, 1998; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007; Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2007; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Trow, 2007). As one example, in a series of discussions, Taylor (2004, 2010a, 2010b) provides a clear overview of how globalisation and internationalisation have become central management concerns to higher education institutions and for government agencies, and why quality assurance plays a central role in policy and management developments. Each of the other works I have mentioned above makes a similar, specific

contribution to knowledge in the field and provides background and context for my research questions.

The existing literature base specifically on TNE is substantial. In terms of Tight's (2012) eight levels of higher education research, existing work includes 'high-level' research, such as analysis and critical commentary on internationalisation and its impact on higher education policy and management, and also comparative studies of TNE provision (both large- and small-scale). Another level of study involves numerous institutional and program case studies focussed on specific country settings. These encompass dimensions of program design and delivery, English language teaching and student proficiency, the use of learning technologies, academic staff perceptions and staff development challenges, cross-cultural impacts and student experience (for example Chapman & Pyvis, 2012; Coverdale-Jones, 2012). Studies of this type approach TNE from the 'teaching and learning' viewpoint, examining TNE's impact on students and staff and their perspectives on it.

However, one apparent 'gap' in the literature relates to research on TNE from the perspective of institutional management – my study's focus. This 'gap' arises from the dominant approach in the literature of researching TNE from the 'teaching and learning' viewpoint (e.g. the approach adopted by Chapman & Pyvis, 2012; Coverdale-Jones, 2012). By adopting the perspective of institutional management to study TNE, my research will both offer a distinctive approach and complement the teaching-learning perspective generally adopted in studying TNE. The growth and complexity of transnational education and the ongoing expressions of concern by governments, higher education managers and 'quality' professionals demonstrate that there is a clear need to understand, identify and address areas of potential weakness in TNE provision. I believe that my study will make an original contribution to extending that knowledge base.

I am mindful of Punch's (2006) advice that a researcher needs to develop a framework for organising a literature review. The five literature strands provided a way to structure my reading and synthesise it into an intelligible 'whole'. Punch refers to the need (for both researcher and, ultimately, reader) of a "roadmap for navigating the material... that leads back to the purpose and research questions of the study" (p. 41) and also shows how a study relates to the literature that has been considered, especially by identifying the gaps in current research.

Based on Punch (2006) and Creswell's (2009) advice on building an appropriate organising framework, the structure for my literature review involves 5 interrelated, but independent, strands which will then be brought together into the final integrated focus that relates specifically to my study:

- Major environmental changes and their impact on higher education, including globalisation and internationalisation
- National policy and its impact on AUQA and institutions
- Quality assurance in higher education
- The nature and forms of TNE
- Strategic management and planning in higher education, including the management of TNE initiatives

The final strand on strategic management provides the integrating mechanism for the study's focus as the four earlier strands all feed into strategic management by virtue of the global, integrative nature of strategic management and its focus on external and internal environments.

## **2.2 Major environmental changes and their impact on higher education**

The major environmental factors impacting upon higher education have included 'globalisation' and the associated, and at times independent, national-level changes in societies, economies and government policies. Globalisation is the term used to characterise the increasing interdependence and interaction of national economies, the increasing mobility of labour, and the technological 'revolution' which has resulted in instant and ubiquitous world-wide communication made possible by technological developments, and which in turn have had major impacts on societies and on national and regional cultures (Altbach and Knight, 2007). While the individual circumstances, history and needs of countries vary, their increasing interdependence through globalisation, means that there has been increasing convergence of national policies in most areas, including higher education.

The major forces impacting upon higher education in Australia, and to varying degrees other countries as well, include:

- the impacts of the shift from 'elite' to 'mass' higher education (massification) and the consequent changes in the nature of the student population and students' needs and demands;
- changes in funding policies for public institutions, including the introduction and increase in fees associated with a shift in the government's view of higher education

from largely a public good, where benefits accrue to the broader society, to a private good, whose benefits accrue largely to the student.

- the increasing role of governments in shaping and regulating higher education;
- the impact of rapid and pervasive technological change on teaching, research and the student experience;
- the globalisation of higher education and its effects on 'cross border' flows of students and knowledge;
- the 'marketisation' of higher education to increase competition and so move higher education from a supply-driven activity to a demand-driven activity;
- the emergence of private 'for-profit' higher education providers;
- the recognition that international competitiveness has become a major determinant of social and economic progress in a globalised knowledge and skills economy;
- the adoption by government of policies focused on university research innovation, productivity, impact and 'ranking' based on research reputation, prestige and competitive external funding.

(Barnett, 2004; Coaldrake and Stedman, 1999; Keller, 2007; Marginson, 2007; Teichler, 2008).

These various forces are interlinked. The external forces of globalisation accelerated the international trend towards massification, which, in turn, created larger and more diverse national higher education systems with greater student numbers and diversity. This greater diversity drove large-scale, system-level higher education policies and concerns about standards and outcomes which led to increased emphasis on quality assurance. The marketisation of higher education has led to reduced direct government control over higher education and consequently, an increased desire by governments for greater indirect control, especially in the assurance of standards.

Just as global trends have had major impacts on the nature of higher education in all countries, internationalisation strategies have become core components of institutional planning and program development in many universities (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Under their internationalisation strategies, many higher education institutions have responded to global trends by reorienting their programs to provide workforce skills for a global knowledge economy. The 'massification' of higher education in many countries (Trow, 2007), and the increasing diversity of the student population through migration and/or recruiting international students, have led institutions to develop 'internationalised' curricula, and alternative modes of access and approaches to learning and teaching (Blackmur, 2007;

Brennan & Shah, 2000b; Knight, 2008; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). The variety of modes of access and styles of learning has enabled institutions to serve diverse, cross-cultural and massified student populations (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Blackmur, 2007). Marginson and van der Wende (2007) explore the importance of higher education institutions in “global knowledge economies... where [they] are more important than ever as mediums for a wide range of cross-border relationships and continuous global flows of people, information, knowledge, technologies products and financial capital” (p. 3).

Much of the discussion of ‘globalisation’ and ‘internationalisation’ in the literature focuses on what the terms mean for higher education and how institutions should adapt or capitalise on the opportunities that arise (see for example Mellow and Woolis, 2010; and Barber, Donnelly and Rizvi, 2013). However, the dynamics of globalisation and internationalisation and the assumptions that underlie them have been subject to less attention. A consideration of the sources and uses of power is clearly crucial in examining the impact of globalisation and internationalisation on higher education, as is generally the case in social, political and economic contexts. Within the power dynamic of globalisation, Western views tend to dominate without being questioned (Slaughter, 2001). Slaughter argues that both modern and post-modern approaches should be used to question the assumptions that underlie globalisation and internationalisation. In her view, a focus on power in international contexts immediately raises notions of Western cultural imperialism and, in the higher education field, of ‘academic capitalism’ (Slaughter & Leslie 1997, Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Altbach (2004) adopts a similar stance in his examination of universities and globalisation in an “unequal world” (p. 3). Koehn and Obamba (2014) explore the dynamics of transnational partnerships between African universities and university partners from developed nations, highlighting the impact of power and resource asymmetries on the nature and sustainability of transnational initiatives.

Teichler (2004) and Brennan and Teichler (2008) similarly draw on post-modernist critiques to reveal the assumptions underlying globalisation and internationalisation. They contrast globalisation as a mechanism for “turbo-capitalism” with globalisation as a mechanism to drive such notions as “global social cohesion”, “knowledge society”, “global village”, “global learning” and “global understanding” (Brennan & Teichler, 2008, p. 23-24). They argue against adopting a ‘managerialist’ mindset in studying internationalisation, and instead encourage a broad range of perspectives and perceptions about goals and means.

Internationalisation in higher education has been conceptualised in many ways. Knight has explored the nature of internationalisation in universities over many years (e.g. Knight 1997, 2004, 2007, 2013) and identified four basic approaches:

- Activity
- Competency
- Ethos
- Process (Knight & de Wit, 1995)

The 'activity' approach is the most common and refers to internationalisation in terms of activities such as recruiting international students, student and staff mobility, 'internationalised' curricula offering programs in other countries (transnational education), and international research teams and alliances. Knight however favours a more expansive definition where internationalisation is seen as:

a process of integrating an international, intercultural and global dimension into the purpose, functions (teaching, research and service), and delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels" (Knight, 2008, p xi).

Many authors analyse how globalisation has driven internationalisation agendas in higher education institutions. Altbach and Knight (2007) argue that "globalization may be unalterable, but internationalization involves many choices" (p. 291). These choices for institutions may involve north-south movement of knowledge, staff and students, both in a commercial context and in the more traditional context of free exchange between universities. Taylor (2004, 2010a, 2010b) discusses the development of globalisation and internationalisation as central management concerns for higher education institutions and for government agencies, and, as a consequence, suggests that quality assurance plays a central role in policy and management developments. In an era of increasing globalisation in higher education, internationalisation initiatives focussed on staff and student mobility, research training and collaboration, and the development of programs of study and curricula that foster students' 'cultural competence' have become core components of university planning and program delivery. A sound internationalisation strategy is vital to ensuring that universities are able to respond effectively to the imperatives of an increasingly globalised economy, industry and professional environment (Taylor, 2004).

All internationalisation strategies bring new complexity and challenges for institutions and quality agencies (Taylor, 2010a, 2010b). In particular, TNE involves programs which are developed in one country and delivered across national borders through a branch campus or partner institution. Hence, the teaching may be undertaken by staff of the partner, not

selected or employed directly by the degree-awarding institution. Program management and quality assurance require close oversight so that the teaching quality, curriculum, support services, and the student experience and learning outcomes are equivalent with the home institution offering (Coverdale-Jones, 2012; de Wit, 2010).

Beerens (2004) highlights the evolution of internationalisation from “a marginal activity to a central institutional issue with strategic importance” (p. 1). He also argues that internationalisation has increased the interconnectedness among universities and has fostered a relationship between universities and the State that encourages both collaboration and competition. Bartell (2003) argues that internationalisation is becoming a more “substantive, integrated and university-wide” process that must be aligned with the institutional culture (p. 43).

These considerations come together in the view that the various activities of internationalisation, such as recruiting international students and staff mobility, need to be integrated at a strategic level, and viewed as a process which embeds an international, intercultural and global dimension in all strategic planning and management.

### **2.3 National policy and its impact on AUQA and institutions**

National policy plays a key role in institutional change by acting as both a ‘driver’ for institutional change and a ‘lever’ for leaders to stimulate change. Policy changes in the external environment are used by institutional leaders to drive internal organisational change in strategy and direction. These strategic changes are transmitted through the institution by a series of internal policy, resourcing and structural changes. Bleiklie (2006) explored how external policy shifts led to higher education reforms, how those reforms varied greatly across national systems and how they were expressed by institutions within those systems – what Bleiklie refers to as the relationship between ‘policy design and institutional design’ (p. 66).

Bell and Stevenson (2006) outline a “policy into practice” model (p. 6), although they acknowledge that policy analysis is ‘not a tidy, linear process’ (p. 23). Nevertheless, their model, which shows how ‘external’, national policy formulation is enacted in institutional policy changes and implementation, describes the 4 stages of the process as flowing from 1) the socio-political environment through 2) institutional strategic direction which impacts upon, and is impacted upon by, 3) organisational principles and changes, and is informed by 4) organisational practices. Thus, Bell and Stevenson (2006) characterise policy processes and

organisational changes as a complicated mixture of external forces and imperatives with internal, organisational interests.

A related factor is the way institutional leaders use government policy agendas to justify and drive institutional strategy. Brennan and Shah (2000b) highlighted the general trend in institutions of using the 'quality agenda' enacted by governments and regulatory bodies to drive educational improvement.

Thus, the fields of national policy and institutional policy are 'tightly interwoven' and illuminate how the change in Australian national strategy relating to TNE in 2003-05 impacted directly on strategic decision-making in higher education institutions and on the operation and focus of the national quality agency, AUQA, which then further impacted upon institutional planning.

A 'groundswell' of concern about TNE ventures in Australia developed in the early 2000s with press articles and evidence to a 2001 Senate Enquiry on universities' commercial ventures. One area of concern that surfaced in this enquiry related to universities "providing their 'brand' or reputation to commercial organisations providing educational or related services without taking the appropriate steps to guarantee the quality of the educational services to be provided" (Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee. 2001, p. 246). Although not directly focussed on TNE ventures, the theme was picked up and applied to TNE by some authors (e.g. Coleman, 2003). In 2003, the Australian Government reflected the concerns in two major policy statements by the Minister for Education: "Engaging the World through Education" and "Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future" (Nelson, 2003a, 2003b). The context for these concerns was the importance of international HE to the Australian economy. The first Ministerial Statement focussed on the challenges involved in internationalising Australian education, including the particular risks of operating overseas with partners and through branch campuses. The challenges were summarised as:

Australian providers operating overseas have found hurdles such as accessing resources to provide the service, finding reputable and reliable partners, protecting intellectual property, repatriating income, and obtaining the capital required to set up and operate for lengthy periods without a return on investment (Nelson, 2003a, p. 15)

The Statement's main focus on risk related to 'risk to reputation':

The greatest risk is damage to Australia's reputation for quality. There are three main risks to quality - inadequate inputs, inappropriate processes and insufficient outcomes....Failures in one area can do damage to the entire reputation of Australian education. (Nelson, 2003a, p. 15)

The impact of these statements on institutional planning is difficult to quantify although the higher education literature adopted a more cautious approach to TNE initiatives (e.g. Heffernan & Poole, 2007). In the period after the ministerial statements, a number of universities responded by reviewing the quality and risk levels of their TNE operations which resulted in fewer, but stronger, TNE partnerships. Notably, in 2007-8 one Australian university with a significant TNE presence, the University of South Australia, reviewed and decided to exit from the majority of its TNE partnerships (Banks, Kevat, Ziguras, Ciccarelli & Clayton, 2010).

The translation of the Government's policy statements into practice at the national level was achieved through an allocation of additional funds to AUQA to expand and strengthen AUQA's audits of overseas higher education provision. At the same time, AUQA was specifically tasked by the Minister with adopting a more risk-based approach to the audit of TNE operations. Subsequently, a further policy statement in 2005, formalized the focus on TNE in the Government's National Quality Strategy for Australian Transnational Education and Training (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005).

After the 2003 announcement of additional funding for offshore audits, a reference group was established in 2004 to advise on the best way to undertake offshore auditing. Following the report of this group, AUQA received the additional offshore audit funding in 2005 (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005). In response to these developments, AUQA revised its policy and processes for auditing offshore TNE activities, and in 2006 established a more rigorous and in-depth process for implementation in the Cycle 2 round of institutional visits commencing in 2008 (AUQA, 2006, 2008a; Kristofferson, 2006; Woodhouse, 2006). The strengthened process articulated 5 'risk factors' that indicated where "particular transnational activities warrant further investigation..." (AUQA, 2008a, p.1). These factors were: materiality (the scope and scale of the university's TNE provision), TNE's strategic significance to the university, the TNE venture's perceived risk, the risk to students, and the level of regulation and oversight by the 'host' country's accreditation body (AUQA, 2008a).

AUQA's increased scrutiny of transnational education was not unique to Australia. A growing concern about TNE activities in Europe and Asia is amply illustrated in literature published by higher education researchers (e.g. Hodson & Thomas, 2001; van der Wende & Westerheijden, 2001), by international peak bodies and forums including the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education (e.g. Middlehurst & Campbell, 2003; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2004; Vincent-Lancrin & Pfothenauer, 2012), and by national quality agencies (e.g. Quality Assurance Agency, 2007, 2014). The perspective of the TNE host country is reflected in the increased vigilance of overseas accrediting bodies in relation to the oversight of 'foreign' institutions operating in their jurisdictions, as discussed by McBurnie and Ziguras (2001, 2006) and Mok (2012).

## **2.4 Quality assurance in higher education**

National quality assurance and accreditation bodies have had a world-wide impact on the way higher education institutions are managed. Institutional management is increasingly driven by institutional accountability requirements, a greater focus on outcomes and standards, and the associated links to government funding (Taylor, 2010a, 2010b). This trend has been most marked in countries that have adopted some form of market-driven approach to higher education through mechanisms such as introducing funding models that encourage competition between institutions, and loosening controls over domestic and international student recruitment. As more market-driven models have been adopted, there has been a corresponding rise in concerns by governments about academic quality, which has led to a greater emphasis on quality assurance and regulation. Thus, where governments have encouraged competition, they have seen a greater need to regulate the quality and standards in the system, and have required increased transparency including publication of data and information. The development of 'the quality movement' as an international phenomenon has been largely driven by governments seeking 'levers' to shape the development of higher education, impose greater accountability for the use of public funds, and provide increased protection of students (Barnett, 2004; Blackmur, 2007; Brennan & Shah, 2000b). The rise of quality assurance in higher education parallels, and has common features with, the notion of the 'audit society' expounded by Power (1997).

An early government-led QA initiative in Australia was a series of quality audits of Australian universities undertaken in 1993-95 by the Commonwealth Committee for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CQAHE). CQAHE was established to advise on QA issues, undertake

independent whole-of-institution audits and recommend on annual quality-related funding (Baldwin, 1997).

In 2000, the State and Commonwealth Ministers for Education approved the establishment of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). AUQA became a key driver of the increased concern for quality through its system of institutional audits based on a quality cycle which gave a central role to the processes of quality assurance and improvement, and linked these processes to the monitoring of outcomes. AUQA undertook institutional audits of the activities of Australian universities in Australia and off-shore on a five year cycle. The process involved a self-assessment and a site visit. Audit reports contained 'commendations', 'affirmations' and 'recommendations' for universities to act upon (AUQA, 2006).

In the various versions of its Audit Manual, AUQA described its role in the following terms:

AUQA is established as a not for profit company, and is the principal national quality assurance agency in higher education, with responsibility for quality audits of higher education institutions and accreditation authorities, reporting on performance and outcomes, assisting in quality enhancement, advising on quality assurance; and liaising internationally with quality agencies in other jurisdictions, for the benefit of Australian higher education (AUQA, 2008b, p. 3).

AUQA uses as its primary starting point for audit each organisation's own objectives and does not impose an externally prescribed set of standards upon auditees. AUQA considers the extent to which institutions are meeting these objectives, and how institutions monitor and improve their performance (AUQA, 2008b, p. 46).

AUQA's approach over its two five-year cycles was to identify and discuss any aspects of the quality assurance processes and standards of each institution reviewed and to make 'recommendations' for improvement, 'affirmations' about the direction of progress, and 'commendations' for good practice in institutions.

However, Cycle 2, between 2008 and 2012, gave increased attention to standards, outcomes, and academic risk (AUQA, 2008b). In the wake of the national policy statement on TNE (Department of Education Science and Training, 2005), 'internationalisation', and particularly TNE, was a prominent theme in many of the institutional audits, as discussed above in Section 2.3.

In parallel with AUQA's operation in the area of quality assurance, state governments in Australia set up accreditation agencies to register and accredit new higher education institutions (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). Despite their different history and roles, both accreditation and quality agencies tended to use a similar model – a systematic institutional self-review focusing on such aspects as corporate governance, academic governance, management, quality assurance, staffing profile, facilities, teaching and learning, and student support services – followed by an external review by an independent expert panel. In 2011, the separate quality and accreditation agencies in Australia were merged into a single national body, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA, 2012), which oversees institutional quality as well as accreditation.

## **2.5 The nature and development of TNE**

A significant strategy for internationalisation in many countries, led by English-speaking and European countries, has involved 'cross-border' activities, including encouraging student mobility through 'study abroad' or through 'international' or dual degrees taught by institutions across different countries; international research teams and alliances involving institutions from several countries; and offering programs in other countries through branch campuses or partners (transnational education) (Forest & Altbach, 2007; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2006). Studying overseas for a full degree is costly for students or for their sponsors, and so studying in a program from an overseas university offered through a 'local' transnational education (TNE) partner or at a local overseas branch campus has become a popular option for many students (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). Most recently, online learning across national borders has also increased dramatically in popularity, and forms an entirely new stream of internationalisation activity and research in higher education that is outside the scope of this study (see, for example, Forest & Altbach, 2007).

In recent years, TNE has become an important strand of internationalisation strategies in many universities. A direct benefit is to widen access to an international, often English-speaking degree, for a range of students not willing or able to travel overseas. TNE also provides an important new revenue stream for universities, which in some cases supplements the decreasing funding provided by governments. TNE's broader contributions as part of an internationalisation strategy also include providing mechanisms for ensuring that universities' 'home' students, staff, research profile, and curricula are attuned to the needs of an increasingly globalised economy and workforce (Knight, 2008).

The Australian university system has been a pioneer in developing both international student programs in Australia and TNE. As an English-speaking country, offering migration pathways, close to the main markets in Asia and with good institutional reputations for its universities, it has competed successfully against the large 'lead' countries of the UK and USA.

As a 'major player' in international education, education is Australia's fourth largest export after coal, iron ore and gold (Group of Eight Australia, 2014). In 2013, 26% of Australia's 328,400 international students were enrolled in programs of study offered outside Australia at a branch campus or through a teaching delivery partner (Department of Education and Training, 2015), attesting to TNE's growing economic importance and its role in widening access). Simultaneously, from the student point of view as well as from a 'market' perspective, studying for an award conferred by an overseas university while remaining 'at home' is an appealing prospect. Given the much higher price of an education overseas, TNE programs are an increasingly attractive option being taken up by growing numbers of students (Chapman & Pyvis, 2012)

### **What does the term 'transnational education' encompass'?**

There are numerous definitions of what TNE covers in terms of cross-border forms or models of teaching-learning or program delivery. According to one common and fairly comprehensive definition, transnational education includes:

All types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programmes may belong to the education system of a State different from the State in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national education system. (UNESCO/Council of Europe, 2001).

A transnational education arrangement is:

An educational, legal, financial or other arrangement leading to the establishment of (a) collaborative arrangements, such as: franchising, twinning, joint degrees, whereby study programmes, or parts of a course of study, or other educational services of the awarding institution are provided by another partner institution; (b) non-collaborative arrangements, such as branch campuses, off-shore institutions, corporate or international institutions, whereby study programmes, or parts of a course of study, or

other educational services are provided directly by an awarding institution.  
(UNESCO/Council of Europe, 2001).

At a broad conceptual level and also in operational terms, TNE can be either a partnership between a university and an administrative/support provider or a university-to-university partnership. TNE partnerships are often characterised as either offshore branch campuses or teaching partnerships. However, in examining TNE initiatives, it is important to recognise that there is a continuum between single-purpose teaching-only partnerships, referred to here as 'TNE teaching partnerships', and a 'fully developed' campus with research and community engagement as well. The two ends are clear, but there is substantial middle ground where different universities think about their initiatives in different ways. Of course campuses may be multi-purpose or single purpose, teaching only or research-only, but campuses are almost always characterised by a larger scale than other models. Almost all overseas branch campuses involve a partner which may be an active operational partner providing infrastructure, facilities, equipment, administration and some teaching, or they may be less directly involved in the campus activities, such as national or local governments who provide, sponsor and support campuses, but operate at a strategic rather than operational level. Some partnerships are university to university and so the relationship is a joint venture of largely equal partners, often sharing ownership roles rather than differentiating between them.

However, for the purposes of this study, the operational definition needs to reflect the forms of TNE referred to by the National Policy Statement on TNE (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005) and consequently reviewed by AUQA in cycle 2. A 'pure' distance education program, that is one in which no teaching or support is provided in the overseas country, is not included in the national strategy or AUQA definitions as the learner is located overseas and hence all the learning occurs overseas, but all the teaching and associated services are delivered from Australia. Hence, for the current purposes and for my study, an overseas partner or 'location' is essential to be regarded as TNE. Equal 'university-to-university' partnerships were also not treated by the AUQA reviews, with most of them being developed in more recent years.

As discussed in Section 1.1, for this study, the definition of TNE has been chosen to be consistent with the definition adopted by the Australian Government:

Australian transnational education and training, also known as offshore or cross-border education and training, refers to the delivery and/or assessment of programs/courses by an accredited Australian provider in a country other

than Australia, where delivery includes a face-to-face component. (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2005)

Thus, the scope of TNE for the purposes of this study is **the offering overseas of 'home university' award courses by, or with, overseas partners, or directly through an overseas branch of the university.** This definition is narrower than many in the field, but matches the definition followed by AUQA in line with the definition in the national strategy.

## **2.6 Strategic management and planning in higher education, including the management of internationalisation and TNE initiatives**

The forces of change acting on universities have been widely discussed in the literature and they provide the basis for the discussion of environmental changes and their impacts in Section 2.2 above. The impacts on management and leadership have been no less than they have been in the area of learning and teaching. Keller (2007, p. 229) captures the extent of change in his powerful statement that:

The unhurried decision making, the inward-looking and preoccupied concerns, and the frail and unobtrusive administration by university executives have been forced to yield to stronger central management, swifter and deeper changes, and the creation of new, more thoughtful strategies so that colleges and universities can respond more adequately to threats and opportunities.

An environment of rapid and continuous change has led to 'strategic management' becoming a central concept for university management, as in other fields of endeavour. In one sense, 'strategic management' is just one of many contending and overlapping theories of leadership and management that have been imported into higher education from the business world. Birnbaum (2000) charts some of the growing list of 'management fads' that have influenced higher education.

Shattock (2010) discusses the particular features of university management that arise from having teaching and research as the university's 'core business'. He echoes Keller's description of the changes in university management by using the term 'strengthened steering core', brought to prominence by Clark (1998). Keller (2007) also presents "strategic management as an integrating mechanism" for university management in times of "environmental turbulence" (p. 29).

The process of strategic planning has been widely adopted by universities as a systematic way to respond to environmental change (Gumport 2012; Toma, 2012). Its weak point has been widely recognized as the failure to implement effectively, with many strategic plans just 'sitting on shelves' in managers' offices. Strategic management addresses this weakness by equally emphasising planning and implementation, and, in fact, focusing on the ongoing decision-making process.

The core idea of strategic management has a long history, but was given impetus in the 1980s and was soon extended to the public sector. Many definitions have been developed, but a definition which fits the concept underlying this study is "the process of examining both present and future environments, formulating the organization's objectives, and making, implementing, and controlling decisions focused on achieving these objectives in the present and future environments" (Smith, Arnold, & Bizzell, 1991, p.12). Formulating a useful vision of the institution's future involves going beyond the generalized platitudes which are common, but of little use, in identifying strategies to achieve the vision. One of the most practical notions of what a good vision is has been provided by Nanus (1992) who defines vision as being a "realistic, credible, attractive future for an organization" (p.8). A practical, concrete vision can be used by a leader to inspire staff and guide decision-making about how an organization pursues its vision. Vision thus sets the direction for strategic management.

Translating this notion to the world of higher education, strategic management in a university refers to the Vice-Chancellor (or equivalent) and senior management team working within the university's governance structure and academic culture to formulate and implement institutional vision, goals and plans that are appropriate for the internal dynamic of higher education while actively engaging with the impact of changes in the environment. In particular, the need, in higher education, to balance a business model with academic goals and processes is paramount. University strategic management must accommodate the distributed power structures of universities with their collegial tradition and relatively autonomous academic cultures, and separate, but interrelated and balanced, academic and corporate governance functions (Shattock, 2010). The governance processes of universities also have their distinctive character arising from the nature of their 'core business', distributed power structures and academic cultures (Hendrickson and Lane, 2008; Shattock, 2006, 2010 and 2013; Sporn, 2007; Tierney, 2009; Ziguras and McBurnie, 2014).

Viewing institutional partnerships from a strategic perspective raises the question of institutional motivation for entering into a partnership, which always adds a degree of

complexity to both management and governance. Eckel and Hartley (2008) focus on the promise that institutional partnerships and alliances will release institutions from the 'double bind' of rigorous institutional accountability for meeting societal needs in a situation of diminishing resources. In a strategic sense, institutions collaborate because "no single partner can accomplish what it seeks on its own" (p. 614). By pooling resources, partners can open up new markets and extend their capabilities. However, alliances also bring considerable challenges; institutions enter them for different reasons, and with different capabilities and assumptions. Eckel and Hartley argue that reconciling organisational goals and developing clear and compatible expectations are essential for success.

Shaw and Holmes (2005) adopt a similar view to Eckel and Hartley of the drivers for entering into collaborations, emphasising the potential to achieve goals that neither partner can achieve alone. However, they argue that using collaborations to achieve strategic objectives is a difficult route as the partners possess different authority structures and control systems and are pursuing different objectives.

Creating new structures may bring uncertainty and bureaucracy which "stifle initiative and commitment" (p. 481). The tensions arising from differences in culture, governance, and power, may lead to a lack of trust and the suspicion that one partner is gaining more than the other. Shaw and Holmes argue that it is not the partnership structure that is important, but the strength and quality of leadership and management in reconciling differing goals and traditional academic autonomy with institutional strategy and decision-making.

Shams and Huisman (2012) discuss the particular challenges of managing offshore branch campuses. They draw on the widely recognised strategic management dichotomy of 'global integration' versus 'local responsiveness'. However, their approach brings into sharp focus an often unacknowledged tension within TNE ventures, often expressed, as discussed above, in terms of equivalence of standards and student experience, but better expressed as the "dilemma of standardization versus local adaptation caused by institutional distance (regulatory, normative, and cultural-cognitive distances) between the home and host country" (p. 114). In simple terms, a branch campus has to juggle alignment with the home institution, and hence possible accusations of cultural arrogance or imperialism, with adaptation to the norms and culture of the host country in alignment with local institutions. Shams and Huisman use the integration-responsiveness (I-R) model to bring together the fragmented literature on branch campus management in terms of key strategic decisions. They argue that the 'integration-responsiveness' tension should not be regarded as a dichotomy and can be

usefully clarified in specific cases by considering the appropriate place on the 'I-R' continuum for "curriculum, research, and staffing" (p. 119). There are no easy solutions to the dilemma of standardisation versus local responsiveness, but Shams and Huisman do provide a systematic and structured way of making informed institutional decisions about where an institution chooses to position itself in terms of integration and alignment with the home campus and alignment with the host country higher education system and student market.

## **2.7 Summary**

The literature review has been structured to position the study in the context of relevant literature and to identify 'gaps' in previous research. The review commenced with a wide-angle perspective on globalisation, internationalisation and other environmental changes which provide the broad context for change in higher education. As the data sources for the study were audit reports of the national quality agency, AUQA, the next two sections examined AUQA's role, changes in national policy on TNE, and its impact on AUQA's audit approach. This was followed by a discussion of the nature of QA and TNE within the international higher education literature. Finally, strategic management, which was the overarching perspective of the study, was used to link the other strands of the literature and so provide a suitable integrated literature base for the study of institutional management of TNE in Australian universities within the context of globalisation in higher education and national policy change.

## Chapter 3

# Research methodology

My proposed approach to this study is grounded in the notion that knowledge generated by research in the social sciences is socially 'constructed' and is highly dependent on social context. Importantly, the research process is also influenced by the "positionality" of the researcher. Thus, knowledge is not "hard, objective and tangible" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 6), but subjective, 'situated' and open to multiple perspectives and interpretations.

Cohen et al. (2011), Creswell (2009) and other 'methods' authors point out that beliefs and assumptions about the nature of knowledge have a crucial influence on research design. My review of different models of the nature of knowledge leads me to a predominantly 'constructivist'/'subjectivist' stance on research design which also seeks to respect and accommodate 'naturalist' and 'post-modernist' approaches. My approach adopts 'critical realism' as a "middle way" between "naïve realism in which reality is apprehendable" and the simplistic approach of "anti-naturalism" (Zachariadis, Scott and Barnett, 2010, p. 2).

### **3.1 Epistemological and ontological bases for the study and my perspective on inquiry**

In developing my 'stance' about the nature of knowledge, and the assumptions underlying this stance, I found Moses and Knutsen's (2007) overview of methodological perspectives and Tight's (2003) eight mixed methodological and method-based perspectives most useful. I found the three models of 'naturalist', 'constructivist' and 'post-modern' helped clarify my views. At the same time, I thought Moses and Knutsen made a strong point about the artificiality of dichotomising naturalist and constructivist, and the consequent risk of "dividing some research projects down the middle" (p. 288). As with many approaches in the social sciences, the many dichotomies that are put forward are best seen as simplifications that have explanatory value in distinguishing different approaches and perspectives, but can be dangerous if taken as clear boundaries between concepts that are actually on a continuum.

Hence, accommodating pluralism in methodology is an important principle in shaping my approach. Slaughter (2001) adopts the same stance in relation to the notions of 'modern' and

'post-modern' by arguing that a divide between them has limited usefulness and has obscured "as much as they illuminate" (p. 389). She advocates a mix of modern and post-modern approaches in the field she is discussing - comparative higher education. Accordingly, I see all the various stances on knowledge as being blurred at the boundaries and recognise the value of adopting multiple perspectives simultaneously. Following this approach, I have reviewed the three main 'approaches to knowledge' in order to identify the elements that position and contextualise my own approach to research in this study.

The 'naturalist' approach is commonly used to characterise approaches in the hard sciences. Moses and Knutsen (2007) outline 4 elements associated with a 'naturalist' approach:

- an objective, i.e. 'scientific', view of the world
- a view that knowledge is cumulative and based primarily on observation
- theory as an aid to explanation and in revealing patterns among phenomena
- truth as 'correspondence' with the 'facts' in the 'real world' (p. 287).

Overall, my reading and reflection led me to see a 'naturalist perspective' as involving several features that I drew upon in developing my overall view of knowledge and approach to research, and to this study in particular:

- Theories are 'models' or sets of assumptions that are aids to explanation and, preferably, have some predictive power.
- Knowledge has a basis in observation and is, at least in principle, cumulative so that building on the work of earlier researchers is important.
- Research is a personal, human activity that also should involve a degree of detachment or 'objectivity' with some 'distance' or differentiation between the observer and other participants.

Historically, the naturalist approach has been influential in many organisation and management theories. This is seen in the origins and development of general management theories in the 'management science' tradition, which have influenced all areas of management including higher education management and research. For example, Healey (2008), in his exploration of the extent and drivers of internationalisation in higher education, highlights the importance of rigorous operationalisation of theories and concepts in a way that allows testing.

Notwithstanding the contributions of the naturalist approach to the development of management theory and practice, there is clearly a stronger role for, and a different form of,

the 'human element' in the social sciences compared with the natural sciences, and so the 'naturalist' perspective has severe limitations in the study of people as individuals and social creatures. The next perspective on knowledge, the 'constructivist' view, was developed to reflect the nature and greater complexities of studying individuals, groups and organisations in society.

I have found the constructivist perspective particularly useful in addressing problems in the organisational and policy aspects of higher education. The cultural dimensions and the attitudes and values of staff and students, that is, the normative dimensions, are crucial to any assessment in terms of what value or weight is placed on any outcome in relation to others. Organisational and policy 'actors' (and researchers) have varying values and views about the goals of higher education. A constructivist perspective highlights these variations and the human nature of organisational and policy constructions.

I found Moses and Knutsen's (2007) characterisation of 'constructivist' to be meaningful and powerful. They set out 6 elements:

- A view of the world that is a human construction.
- A view that knowledge is overlapping and does not progress in straight lines.
- Theory is an aid to understanding and used to "reveal contingent phenomena" (p. 287).
- Truth is derived from local expressions of power and human agency.
- The normative dimension is important and should be made explicit.
- Context is central.

Organisational and policy questions seem well suited to study by a combination of naturalist and constructivist approaches, as both 'empirical' (in the naturalist sense) data and values, and perceptual data are required to answer the complex multi-dimensional problems facing higher education institutions. Some examples of constructivist studies that could complement naturalist studies of higher education institutions include Stromquist (2007) and Ferlie, Musselin and Andresani (2008). Stromquist's work comprised a case study of a west coast US university to provide a "holistic understanding of organisation processes" (p. 85) associated with the university's strategy of internationalisation. Her approach shows how in-depth case studies can illuminate a complex organisational process not susceptible to naturalist methods.

Ferlie, Musselin and Andresani (2008) worked with narratives of public sector management reform in various European Union countries to illuminate patterns and transformations in

higher education. Their aim was to connect “the study of changing patterns of higher education institutions' organisation and management with wider concepts drawn from political science, organisation theory and an emergent body of work in public management” (p. 344), arguing that “many of the organisational and managerial reforms apparent in higher education cannot be studied in isolation but have to be considered as part of a broader pattern of public sector reforming” (p. 345).

The third useful approach to knowledge is the ‘post-modernist’ which involves the questioning and critique of the established view or status quo. The dominant view of the role of universities in the twentieth century is that they were “products of, and ardent purveyors of, modernism” (Bloland, 2005, p. 121) in their quest to generate knowledge through research and disseminate it through teaching. The success of the natural sciences has led to the dominant view of knowledge being a positivist one. ‘Positive science’ was characterized as ‘modernist’ and approaches critical of it became known as ‘post-modern’. Postmodernist approaches reject the possibility of objective knowledge, in human affairs at least. Their focus is on social dynamics and the ways that power affects human conceptualisations, and, hence, the construction of knowledge.

‘Power’ is a key concept in post-modernist approaches, both as a tool for analysis and critique. Positioning power as central to social sciences is not a new idea. Bertrand Russell, writing in the 1930s, argued that power is as fundamental to the social sciences as ‘energy’ is to physics (Russell, 2004). For example, a consideration of power is clearly crucial in the study of the ‘globalisation’ and ‘internationalisation’ of higher education. Slaughter (2001) is one of many authors who highlight the potential for Western views to dominate, without being questioned, within studies of comparative higher education. She advocates mixing modern and post-modern approaches to examine critically the assumptions that underlie ‘globalisation’ and ‘internationalisation’, arguing that a focus on power in international contexts immediately raises notions of Western cultural imperialism and of ‘academic capitalism’.

Teichler (2004) and Brennan & Teichler (2008) similarly draw on post-modernist critiques when they contrast globalisation in terms of “turbo-capitalism” with a concern for "global social cohesion", "knowledge society", "global village", "global learning" and "global understanding" (Brennan and Teichler, 2008, p. 23). They highlight the need to avoid a managerialist mindset in studying internationalisation and to encompass a broad range of perspectives and perceptions.

In reflecting on my stance towards knowledge using these three perspectives, it became clear how differing approaches to knowledge have the potential to change the approach and outcomes in the research process. Formalising my views about 'ways of knowing' made me aware of the strengths and limitations of the various stances studied. I was also struck by the blurred boundaries between stances and the advantages of using a combination of approaches. Hence, during the development of the methodology for this study, my research questions and research approach were refined by viewing them through the 'lenses' of the different stances on knowledge, and so were gradually re-framed to draw on a blend of naturalist, constructivist and post-modern approaches.

Overall, my epistemological stance can be seen as 'relativist', with elements of the 'realist' notion of "independently existing real beings, relations and processes" (Benton, 2004, p. 3). The notion of 'socially-constructed' knowledge is not sufficient as it implies rejecting the possibility of knowing reality. Critical realism provides a way forward by combining a 'realist' approach with a rejection of a one-to-one connection between the 'observed' and the 'actual'. Bhaskar (1978) developed a 'stratified' ontology where events occur in the 'actual' domain but are observed in the 'empirical' domain which may not correspond exactly with the actual and may be interpreted differently by different observers. A third domain, labelled the 'real', contains the 'causal mechanisms' which may be reflected in scientific laws. As a form of realism, critical realism is "committed to the view that the objects of scientific study both exist and act independently of our beliefs about them", while the qualifier 'critical' incorporates the "socioculturally produced concepts, knowledge claims, and methods" used to try to understand them, and may also incorporate the 'normative' dimension (Benton, 2004, p. 2). Bhaskar (1978) refers to the notion of 'independent existence' as the 'intransitive dimension' and the socially-constructed concepts as the 'transitive' dimension. Hence, critical realism accepts that the world is socially constructed but not entirely so – 'reality' has some independent existence.

As set out in Section 3.2 below, I have used critical realism to provide the basis for developing my research method, employing thematic analysis based on a theoretically-based analytical framework.

### **3.2 General methodological approach**

Using critical realism as my ontological 'lens', I have combined a basically 'constructivist'/'subjectivist' epistemological approach, with 'naturalist' and 'post-modern'

perspectives, to frame a documentary analysis of AUQA reports. Analysing documents brings particular challenges in interpretation. Firstly, studying the meaning of text in a document is not the same as studying the meaning of an action. In an action, the 'author' is present, while "text is always autonomous in that respect, and the 'author' is necessarily absent." (Prior, 2003, p. 112).

The problematic nature of meaning has been the subject of much debate. Drawing on Gadamer's (1975) notion of the understanding of meaning as involving a 'translation' of the text, Prior argues that the 'meaning' embodied in the text is decoded by the translator "from a culturally formed platform" and recoded in the translator's own words (Prior, 2003, p. 112). So, rather than focus on meaning, the task is to identify what is referred to, as described by the researcher as interpreter. In the case of my study, as researcher, I am examining the text of AUQA reports by drawing on my 'insider' professional experience in management and TNE to identify in AUQA's text a series of *concerns* and *commendations* about the management of TNE.

My approach involves a 'translation' of AUQA's text but the identification or interpretation process places weight on a method which is explicitly structured to be transparent and, to some degree 'objective', as it was undertaken according to a set of rules for identifying *concerns* and *commendations* by the use of specific words and phrases.

AUQA's review approach involved the identification of concerns and commendations that relate to individual universities. My research approach was focussed on issues that were generally applicable across the set of institutions. Hence, after I had identified or 'translated' AUQA's concerns and commendations for each institution, I then used a form of thematic analysis to identify the core of the concern; that is, the element of the concerns that was recurring or common across many of the institutions. These patterns of recurring concerns, and in particular, their core or common basis, were characterised as themes. These themes were then used to develop general implications for university management practice which were thus distinct from AUQA's recommendations, as the latter were cast in a form applicable only to the specific institution under review.

The *concerns* and *commendations* for each institution were identified using a framework derived from the relevant higher education literature, from higher education management theory and from AUQA's (2008) statement of its own approach in its TNE Quality Framework. These strands were brought together through the context of my own professional practice.

Reflecting on my professional experiences with managing TNE led me to structure the analytical framework to allocate governance and management into separate dimensions and to include the faculty level management within institutional management. For example, governance and management are often treated together because of their close relationship. However, my professional experiences with TNE lead me to treat them as separate dimensions in view of the organisational complexities of TNE. My experience suggested that the governance need for organisational clarity and strategic oversight was best treated separately from the management dimension, which is often seen mainly in terms of partnership relationships. The complexities arising from differences in the goals, cultures and management systems of the partners mean that the imperatives for partner management are different from the imperatives for effective governance. Governance issues relating to the strategic oversight of partner relationships and the allocation of authority between the partners need to be given particular consideration separate from a consideration of the management relationships.

The explicit, rule-based approach of using a framework based on relevant theory and professional practice has some affinity with a naturalist approach, while at the same time, recognising that the approach is inherently socially constructed through the lens of the researcher's own positionality, values and experience. In addition, my research aims to illuminate the *concerns* and *commendations* of AUQA. This is an organisation established by the Australian government – essentially a social and political construct – “an invented social reality” (Cohen et al., p. 8), which is governed by social and political values whose actions and behaviours are open to interpretation.

Bringing a post-modern perspective to bear on the research approach also demands that all underlying assumptions about drivers or forces are examined. As the focus of the study is on the management of TNE, an element of internationalisation strategy, the notion of ‘power’ is fundamental to the study, as discussed above. Probing the assumptions that underlie the concepts of ‘globalisation’ and ‘internationalisation’ as a focus for power in international contexts immediately raises questions about the extent to which the notions and assumptions of Western cultural imperialism and ‘academic capitalism’ have unconsciously shaped the thinking of AUQA and the universities.

As a consequence, while this study focusses on the implications for institutional management and review, it is important to avoid a narrowly managerialist mindset in studying universities, quality agencies and their approaches to internationalisation.

In methodological terms, my approach adopts critical realism as a way to combine a realist approach to the existence of management issues in TNE with the socially-constructed concepts used to understand them. My approach to the analysis of documents is to adopt a view of text as separate from the author and in need of 'translation', or decoding and recoding, into the researcher's own words. Thus "what is referenced within documents" (Prior, 2013, p. 122) , as seen by the researcher, rather a notion of 'meaning' inherent in the text, is the focus of my approach to the documentary analysis.

As Prior argues, studying patterns of reference, simple content analysis is "insufficient to highlight the full pattern of referencing between objects cited in the text" (Prior, 2003, p.122). Hence, in terms of a specific method, the study adopts primarily a qualitative approach utilising a thematic approach to documentary analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Braun & Clarke, 2006), that both 'translates' the text and studies it in context. In my analysis, the statements of *concerns* and *commendations* are reported in a form that recognises their context within AUQA's discussion. This thematic approach to qualitative documentary analysis is supported by some basic descriptive statistics of the patterns of results.

The qualitative analysis involves identifying and analysing key concepts and themes that emerge from the patterns of *concerns* and *commendations* in the AUQA audit report documents. The AUQA audit reports are textually rich and some form of thematic analysis offers an appropriate approach for searching them for recurring patterns and themes, areas of convergence and instances of divergence.

In the 'methods' literature, there is a considerable diversity in the nomenclature and the ways in which authors characterise their approaches (see for example, Braun and Clark, 2006, Boyatzis, 1998, Saldana, 2009 and Schreier, 2012). After examining the range of viewpoints, my approach fits most closely with the notion of a 'theoretical' thematic analysis, which is also characterised by Schreier (2012) as a form of qualitative content analysis. This approach offers the best alignment with my research focus, research questions and the nature of my data sources. My approach is characterised by a theoretical or analytical framework for 'coding' the data which is a mixture of 'concept driven' and 'data driven'. This mixture provided a way to balance these two approaches and to make sound and defensible analytical choices which reflected the theoretical basis of the analytical framework, while also 'allowing the data to speak'.

### **3.3 My researcher position**

My professional involvement in the management and QA of TNE within institutions, and as an external reviewer, inevitably influences my role as researcher. It brings considerable benefits in terms of practical experience, but also selectively predisposes my thinking and perspectives towards certain understandings, models, approaches and conclusions.

In terms of professional background, I have been extensively involved in TNE development in several institutions and in the internal quality assurance system for one major institution. I have also undertaken several reviews of transnational programs for Australian accreditation/QA agencies. Potentially, one of the Australian universities that could have been included in the study is one where I had management responsibilities for TNE quality assurance reviews. However, as it transpired, that university was not in the data set due to the closing off of the second AUQA review cycle following the establishment of TEQSA.

The aspects of my professional background that underpin the framing and analysis in this study are drawn from two stages of my career. Overall, I have had almost 30 years' experience in higher education in Australia, England and the USA. My most recent university position was a senior position at Monash University as Director of University Academic Projects and Services. My responsibilities included: managing major University-level academic development projects; managing academic board support services and their interface with university corporate governance and management; managing the development of a structured academic policy bank; managing the integrated academic and business planning process; managing transnational quality assurance processes; and preparing advice for the University Senior Executive on implications of national and State policy issues. Specifically in relation to TNE activities, my responsibilities involved managing the university-level TNE program review process which involved preparation of self-studies by the relevant faculty and partner as the basis for an external review by a panel of staff not connected with the program, a member from outside the university, and chaired by a member of university senior executive. The focus of each review was on the adequacy of the contract with the partner, how well the program was managed, the adequacy of staffing arrangements and of the administration and support, and comparability of student outcomes and experiences.

The most recent stage of my career has involved consulting and review work in projects advising universities on institutional strategy and management; policy analysis and

development; managing institutional change; and developing and reviewing transnational education. As part of this career stage, I have undertaken internal reviews of institutional strategy and QA systems for several universities and served as panel member on accreditation reviews of transnational programs of several institutions encompassing the adequacy of contracts, management arrangements, academic standards and support. In summary, my previous experience has provided me with a detailed knowledge of how TNE processes work from a practical management perspective. This experience provided the genesis of this research study which is directed towards providing me with a more systematic understanding, both theoretically and empirically, of the nature of TNE and the levels, types and reasons for institutional management concerns arising in relation to transnational programs. Within this context, the issue of 'researcher positionality' arises for consideration.

Cohen et al. (2011) emphasise that "reflective researchers will be aware of the ways in which their selectivity, perception, background and inductive processes and paradigms shape the research" (p. 255). The authors continue in their discussion to cite McCormick and James (1988) who argue that researchers need to monitor "closely and continually their own interactions with the topic, their own reaction, roles, and biases..." (p. 225). I tried to be constantly mindful of these concerns because, since I work in the area of higher education accreditation, regulation and QA, both with institutions and accrediting bodies, I do have a level of 'vested interest' in my research and its findings. However, it is also clear that no research is ever neutral – nor is any researcher – as Cohen et al. (2011) acknowledge.

One useful way of conceptualising the issue of researcher positionality is the notion of 'insider/outsider' research. Insider research usually denotes research into an organisation undertaken by a member of the organisation (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). Within an organisational setting there are existing and ongoing power relationships between the researcher and other people in the organisation being studied, which raise ethical issues about ongoing relationships and the use of information gained in the course of the insider research (Shaw, 2003). However, the term is also used more broadly to characterise research within a cultural setting by a researcher who is part of that cultural group. In contrast, an 'outsider' researcher characterises a researcher who undertakes a study from outside an organisation or cultural group. Given that I draw extensively on my experience in higher education management and in transnational education as part of my analytical method, it is appropriate to characterise my researcher position as 'insider', as I am part of, and draw on, the broader culture of higher education management which is also the focus of my research. Savides, Al-Youssef, Colin and Garrido (2014) argue that insider researchers are "presumed to have a

better cultural interpretation and understanding” (p. 414) of the organisational or cultural setting. However, while characterisation of my study as ‘insider’ research is appropriate, there is also an element of my research that has some ‘fit’ with the label ‘outsider’. That is, I am not currently an ‘insider’ member of a higher education institution or a quality/accreditation body. Also, my method involves a theoretically-based analytical framework, and these factors together mean that I have a degree of distance from the subject of research. Thus, I have some capacity to “stand back and draw out independent conclusions or find meanings not evident to the insider” (p. 414).

This perspective on my ‘insider/outsider’ position is consistent with the view that the simple dichotomy often blurs in practice. Indeed, Hammersley (1993, p. 485) argues that often “the chances of findings being valid can be enhanced by a judicious combination of involvement and estrangement”. In a similar vein, Labaree (2002, p. 110) contends that ‘insiders’ stepping ‘outside’ have the opportunity to “gain a new understanding of the inside”. I have sought to achieve this balance between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ perspectives in this study.

### **3.4 The development of my practitioner research questions**

The structured review of the literature in Chapter 2 allowed me to focus my research into a set of three questions. The task, as Cohen et al. (2011) indicate, is to determine “how to operationalize research questions” (p. 126), and my specification operationalises the questions in the light of the ‘gaps’ in the research in the field and my professional perspectives. Research questions are often modified iteratively in the course of developing the proposal and in the light of preliminary data analysis, and this I found necessary as the initial formulation of questions was too expansive for effective research, a common situation in doctoral research according to Creswell (2008).

In 2007, AUQA implemented a modified institutional audit process that responded to the 2005 National Policy Initiative on TNE (AUQA, 2008; DEST, 2005). This development provided the driver and context for my research questions, which focus on AUQA’s approach to assessing TNE, the patterns of *concerns* and *commendations*, and the implications for improving management practice, as follows:

1. What *concerns* and *commendations* did AUQA identify in its assessment of TNE provision by Australian universities?
2. What patterns of recurring *concerns* and *commendations* could be identified across universities and across sub-groups of universities?

3. What findings does the analysis reveal for the development and management of TNE and what are the implications for both operational and strategic management practice in Australian universities?

### **3.5 Data sources and data collection**

The source of data was the suite of published AUQA Cycle 2 audit reports for all Australian universities engaged in TNE (details appear in the Appendix). These reports were 'mined' to identify the level and types of *concerns* and *commendations* of practices identified by AUQA. While researchers (e.g. Shah, Roth & Nair, 2010) have examined some of the AUQA reports as a part of a broader project, the set of reports has not been subject to previous systematic research.

The Cycle 2 audit round was conducted between 2008-2012. However the full Cycle 2 round was not completed as a result of changes in national higher education policy and approach to regulation. As discussed previously in Section 1.3, these changes involved the establishment of a single government agency, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), with combined oversight of institutional and program accreditation and quality assurance, and the de-commissioning of AUQA, and transfer of higher education regulation powers from the States to the Commonwealth. Nevertheless, most of the Cycle 2 round was completed with a total of 32 university audits being undertaken. The planned audits of the remaining 7 universities were cancelled due to the early winding up of the cycle. Five of the 32 universities that were audited in Cycle 2 did not report any TNE operations, and so they were not included in the study. The data set thus comprised the audits reports of the 27 institutions that did have TNE operations. Details of the individual universities in these various categories are contained in Chapter 4.

The Cycle 2 audit reports vary in length, from approximately 50 to 80 pages, depending on institutional size and organisational complexity. The average report is approximately 60 pages. In line with the national policy statement on TNE, the Cycle 2 audits gave particular attention to TNE. The standard AQUA format developed in Cycle 1 was continued in Cycle 2, so that each report contains an executive summary, discussion of evidence and issues, the identification of commendations, affirmations and concerns, often accompanied by recommendations for improvements. The report findings are based on the views of the audit panels that were developed through consideration of the institution's Performance Portfolio (institutional self-review) and through its site visits to each institution (including targeted visits

to offshore locations). The format of the report reflects, in part, the structure of each institution's self-review Performance Portfolio. "Within each area discussed, the report considers: the issues investigated; the auditee's objectives for this area; relevant evidence; and the panel's analysis and conclusions" (AUQA, 2009, p. 19). The final report was revised and approved by the AUQA Board and so formally became a report of AUQA, not the review panel. The Cycle 2 reports specifically reflect the evolving scope of the AUQA audit process in that they:

- Address 'progress' made in relation to selected recommendations from the Cycle 1 audit round.
- Focus on 2 themes negotiated by each institution for its self-review. These were chosen based on an assessment of 'academic risk' and negotiated by each university with AUQA. AUQA nominated international activities as one of the themes in the 27 institutions with significant international and TNE programs.
- Include comments on each institution's compliance with the National Protocols for Higher Education and on academic standards and other 'external reference points' (AUQA, 2009, p. 29).

### **3.6 Developing an approach to data analysis**

After some exploration of analytical methods, I decided to use a form of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which is also described as qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012). There are multiple approaches to searching data for recurring patterns or themes and considerable ambiguity and overlap between the nomenclature and different authors' characterisations of approach (Rapley, 2011, provides a useful examination and comparisons of alternative methods). However, 'theoretical', thematic analysis was the best suited to my research questions and the data. This approach involves coding data in relation to specific research questions while the nature of the potential themes is suggested in advance by a conceptual framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). My rationale for choosing this analytical approach was that it permits consideration of the frequency of expression of *concerns* by AUQA as well as the subtleties of meaning and connections with other issues apparent in the data.

In addressing my three research questions, I first needed to identify the *concerns* and *commendations* relating to TNE expressed in the AUQA reports. I classified these *concerns* and *commendations* into categories based on higher education management theories and professional practice. The 'theoretical, analytical framework' that I employed was based on:

1. standard higher education management theories and literature covering such topics as: effective governance, effective management, academic program delivery and quality, and assurance of standards and service.
2. the structure set out by AUQA itself for examining TNE, together with my own professional experience with TNE.

As an alternative to this approach, I considered using a 'grounded theory' approach to the analysis. However, in light of my study and experience in university management, TNE provision and QA, it would have been difficult to do so without interference from my researcher 'positionality' and bias. Simultaneously, the absence of a theoretical or professional framework to guide the research, would also have considerably reduced its usefulness to me professionally and its interest to practical managers in the field.

Hence, the balance in my analysis emerged as more of a concept-driven, theoretical approach than an inductive, data-driven approach, although the latter component is significant. This is appropriate "when you already have certain concepts in mind and want to find out whether there is any evidence of these concepts in your material" (Schreier, 2012, p. 189). Braun and Clark (2006) also support this view.

Developing a 'coding framework' and approaches to coding data to generate themes are addressed by a number of authors. These works include journal articles (Braun & Clark, 2006; Ryan & Bernard, 2003) and three very comprehensive books (Boyatzis, 1998; Saldana, 2009; Schreier, 2012). The principles expounded by these authors were used to guide the formulation of my analytical framework, the development of coding rules for identifying *concerns* and *commendations*, their classification according to the framework, and then the identification of themes. These principles are set out in Sections 3.8 and 3.9.

### **3.7 Validity, reliability, and generalisability**

Creswell (2008) and Punch (2006) emphasise that researchers need to be rigorous in approaching research design issues and analytic methods. This section therefore reviews the concepts and then the basis for considering the AUQA audit reports to be a sufficiently valid and reliable reflection of AUQA's formal views about each institution's performance in relation to all areas of the institution's operation, including TNE. Generalisability beyond the AUQA review and the Australian universities' TNE operations in the years concerned is more problematic, as with all qualitative research, but this issue is also explored.

## **Validity**

Validity is, according to Punch (2006), a complex concept with both general and specific meanings. Punch writes that a proposal for a research design has internal validity when, “as an argument, it shows internal consistency and coherence; and all of its different parts ...fit together. Especially its methods should match its research questions; its argument and logic should be clear and consistent” (p. 154).

Addressing validity in a general sense, Cohen et al. (2011, p. 179) write that, “in qualitative data, validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the participants’ approaches, the extent of triangulation and the disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher”. Part of my rationale for choosing to include the full suite of university audit reports in Cycle 2 is, hence, to ensure depth, richness and scope in my analysis.

Another aspect of validity that relates to my study is face validity, or how well an instrument or an approach actually ‘measures’ what it purports to measure. Here, I followed Schreier’s (2012) advice on how to assess face validity in inductive thematic analysis by examining the results of a pilot coding exercise. Schreier warns that unless most data ‘segments’ can be assigned to a substantive category within the coding framework, the categories “do not cover the meaning of the material”, and hence, have low face validity” (p. 187).

Content validity is most important in evaluating the validity of ‘concept-driven coding frames’ (Schreier, 2012,). Schreier suggests that the best means of ensuring content validity is to have an expert assess whether the categories in the coding frame “adequately represent ... the concepts on which the frame is based” (p. 189). In this case, an ‘expert’ colleague in the higher education management field is my doctoral supervisor who has reviewed my analytic approach to ensure content validity in terms of ‘adequate representation’ of the underlying concepts.

## **Reliability**

Like validity, reliability is a multidimensional concept. Cohen, et al. (2011) consider that reliability in quantitative research is “essentially a synonym for dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents” (p. 199). They discuss the contested nature of reliability in qualitative research, with terms such as

'credibility', 'neutrality', 'confirmability' and 'trustworthiness' being preferred. At a broad level, my own structured, detailed, reflective and iterative work in crafting my analytical approach and my supervisor's ongoing oversight all contribute to ensuring the reliability or 'trustworthiness' of my study. To ensure reliability in my data analysis, I have applied my coding criteria in an explicit and rule-based manner throughout the analysis of the AUQA reports so that my "interpretation of the material is systematic and reasoned and does not just occur at the spur of the moment" (Schreier, 2012, p. 191).

### **Generalisability**

Generalisability, as Cohen et al. (2011) write, is not a "simple unitary concept" (p. 243) and claims to generalisability or transferability need care. I am not claiming that my analysis of AUQA's concerns is 'transferable' to broader contexts globally. However, my discussion of findings draws on the broader literature in higher education management, QA and TNE, and this context provides a basis for the reader to assess the relevance of my findings and conclusions to other settings.

### **Validity, reliability, and the AUQA reports**

In broad terms, using Tight's (2012) approach to levels of analysis in higher education research, my thesis research focuses on national, organisational level issues in examining the official, formal views and concerns of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) as an Australian government organisation responding to government policy.

Using the concepts of validity and reliability outlined above, the AUQA reports can be considered to be a sufficiently accurate and precise reflection of AUQA's formal views about each institution's performance in relation to all areas of the institution's operation, including TNE. This judgment is based on the following considerations:

- Each AUQA audit panel was guided by a full-time, highly trained and professional audit director who operated as part of a group of audit directors who undertook various forms of moderation with other directors of the reports they were writing.
- The audit directors operate using a formal template and set of protocols for identifying and framing the report findings (AUQA, 2006).
- The chair and panel members undertook formal training and a majority of each panel had experience on previous panels.

- The draft audit reports were reviewed by the AUQA executive director as part of the checking and moderation process.
- The audit report was reviewed and approved by the AUQA Board in the process of becoming the official audit report.
- The institution had the opportunity to correct any errors of fact in the draft audit.

Naturally, there were some minor variations in the outcome of the process as a result of the inevitable variability across audit directors and panel members, as would be expected in any social and political context in which the individual differences of the participants play some part. Nevertheless, on the basis of the formality, systematic nature and reflective approach to undertaking the audit process and preparing the audit, it is considered that the reports provide a sound and valid basis for identifying AUQA's assessments of an institution's performance.

### **3.8 Developing the analytical framework**

My overall approach was to study concerns about transnational education in Australian universities as identified in AUQA reports in the context of national policy and the broader contexts of globalisation, quality assurance, and strategic management. Drawing on the literature review in Chapter 2, I developed an analytical framework with 6 dimensions, with a primary focus on higher education management theory and AUQA's approach (AUQA, 2008), and drawing on my own professional practice. Using the mixed 'concept-driven' and 'data-driven' method discussed above, the scope of each dimension was initially derived from the literature and then supplemented iteratively with issues and instances that appeared in the data.

#### **The analytical framework**

1. Legal and governance (including both corporate and academic governance)
  - 1.1 the nature and legal form of partnerships involved
  - 1.2 the legality and suitability and approval of contractual arrangements including copyright and licencing
  - 1.3 governance processes – corporate and academic governance structures, processes and relationships including cross-campus and partner issues
  - 1.4 the structure of the award granted and the approval pathway through the governance structure

- 1.5 policy framework, development and approval processes approval (academic and non-academic) and oversight of implementation
  - 1.6 regulatory and government relationship issues in Australia and in country of offering
2. Institutional strategy and management (includes institutional level and faculty level strategy and management)
- 2.1 strategic purpose and planning - including the 'home' university's rationale for TNE, its place and contribution within the university's internationalisation strategy and overall strategic plan
  - 2.2 risk management - all facets of internal and external risk
  - 2.3 senior-level management responsibilities - oversight of TNE operations, role clarity and alignment
  - 2.4 selection of overseas partners - types and numbers of partners
  - 2.5 negotiation and management of contract
  - 2.6 management of overseas partner
  - 2.7 management of staffing - selection, numbers, qualifications and continuity, workload planning, staff development and 'induction'
  - 2.8 financial management and viability- business planning and resources
  - 2.9 operational management - alignment of university-level policies, processes, procedures, systems across faculties, operational units and TNE locations
  - 2.10 accuracy of information in marketing and promotional materials
3. Academic
- 3.1 curriculum (including inclusion of local content and context and internationalisation of the curriculum)
  - 3.2 entry standards (academic and English language proficiency)
  - 3.3 teaching and learning processes, standards and assessment, (including moderation of assessment)
  - 3.4 quality of teaching
  - 3.5 quality of student experience
  - 3.6 academic policies as statements that define academic processes and requirements
  - 3.7 credit transfer and pathway policy
  - 3.8 academic integrity and plagiarism

#### 4. Student and staff support and resources

- 4.1 English language support
- 4.2 academic and pastoral support,
- 4.3 teaching and learning resources, facilities and infrastructure

#### 5. QA systems

- 5.1 review and evaluation mechanisms (internal and external) including responsibilities and processes
- 5.2 articulation of QA processes in an integrated system – alignment between ‘home’ and TNE site’s processes
- 5.3 the use of evaluation outcomes for continuous improvement
- 5.4 feedback on evaluation (closing the loop)

#### 6. Research, research training, and community engagement

- 6.1 TNE as a platform for developing collaborative research programs, joint higher degree training and supervision
- 6.2 scholarship and research
- 6.3 community engagement, including alumni engagement

The way these sub-dimensions evolved as the data ‘spoke’ during the analysis is discussed in the next section which also outlines how the analytical approach was utilized to structure the analysis and develop the findings.

### **3.9 Applying the analytical framework**

The analysis firstly involved the highlighting of the data elements in each report based on a simple decision rubric. The data elements covered *concerns* and *commendations* identified by AUQA in each audit report. The decision rubric was developed iteratively during its application to ensure that it was comprehensive in its capacity to cover all the data elements.

#### **Step 1: Identifying *concerns* and *commendations* as expressed in the Audit Reports**

Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise the importance of explicitly setting out the decisions made in identifying and coding data elements in documents. Examples of textual ‘triggers’ or ‘markers’ for identifying AUQA’s *concerns* and *commendations*, as they are expressed in the language of the Audit Reports, are set out below.

Data elements – phrases or sentences – were identified as *concerns* if any of the following word forms were involved:

- AUQA affirms (where an institution had already identified an issue to be addressed)
- AUQA recommends/suggests/urges
- noted the absence
- excessive number
- underscore the need for
- remain vigilant
- areas for improvement
- will need to improve/monitor

Data elements – phrases or sentences - were identified as *commendations* if the any of the following word forms were involved:

- AUQA commends
- Commendation

All the instances identified as *concerns* or *commendations* were highlighted using a colour schema of **red** for *concerns* and **green** for *commendations*.

## **Step 2: Coding the data elements using the 6 dimensions in the analytical framework.**

Having identified a phrase or section as dealing with a *concern* or *commendation*, the next steps in the analysis involved how these should be categorised and coded. In some cases, the text of the report points to or directly highlights a specific issue in the same terms as used in the analytical framework. In other cases, the broader context of the AUQA discussion was the key to identifying the nature of the issue and classifying it within the framework.

In both instances, the highlighted or ‘marked up’ text was read for fuller meaning by reference to the context of the surrounding text and discussion as part of the process of classifying it within the framework. The key consideration in ascribing a data element (that is, an issue of *concern* or *commendation* in AUQA’s view) to a particular category involved asking what AUQA

was getting at, what was the particular area of concern identified and 'how does AUQA 'see' or 'classify' each element/issue. There are, of course many 'lenses' that could be used to do this, but this study is looking at *concerns* or *commendations* through the AUQA lens. The subsequent analysis and discussion of implications for improving the management for TNE uses the 'lens' of institutional-level management and my own professional experience.

### **Step 3: The identification of themes and drawing out their implications for improving management and review practice**

The themes were identified in terms of the recurring *concerns* and related *commendations* across institutional reports, and within the set of slightly varied expressions of the *concern* or *commendation*, in order to identify the 'core' meaning in the recurring *concerns* and *commendations*. Thus, the core area of *concern* and *commendation* is seen as the central aspect within a set of recurring expressions of *concern* or *commendation* on the same topic.

An inherent part of all AUQA's *concerns* is its view on what needs to be done, what the issue requires and what is recommended as a course of action. In practical terms, each theme is best viewed as an encapsulation of the core *concern* and the associated need for improvement, cast in a form that has applicability across a number of institutions rather than for a single institution (which was AUQA's focus).

### **Implications for management practice**

Given the professional orientation of this study, identifying the implications of the findings for improving management is a core goal. The 'implications', as framed in this study, are seen as practical steps that will benefit management practice in universities generally. Hence, they can be broadly thought of as 'guidelines', 'principles' or 'suggestions'. The implications can thus be seen as a set of practical steps that will benefit practice, for me professionally, and for institutional managers developing or strengthening their TNE programs. The findings may also be of interest to reviewers assessing TNE programs for quality or accreditation purposes. The overall set of the implications will provide a practical guide or 'roadmap' about what steps should be taken or considered in relation to the area of each theme.

The implications for management practice provide guidance for improvement as I perceived and constructed them in the light of my management experience and by applying my analytical framework. As discussed above, the analytical framework embodies higher

education management literature and AUQA's own operational structure for assessing TNE, together with my own perspective based on my experience of university management and transnational program development and review.

Looking at the AUQA *concerns* and *commendations* in the context of the analytical framework, also reveals that in a small number of cases, AUQA's perspective was quite narrow and limited (for example, AUQA appeared to see risk assessment and management as essentially 'risk avoidance'). When viewed from an institutional management perspective, instead of a narrower quality assurance one, the consideration of some issues needs to be expanded, elaborated or deepened, to provide a sound basis for developing implications for management practice (see the sub-dimension on Risk Management in Chapter 6, for example). Highlighting instances of this type has been undertaken as necessary, but care has been taken not to move the discussion in the analysis phase in Chapters 4 and 5 too far from the themes I identified based on the patterns of AUQA's concerns about individual institutions. The more expansive and integrated discussion of these issues within the context of the literature and my professional experience is provided in Chapter 6 so that the discussion of the issues relating to TNE from the broader perspectives of literature and my professional management experience is differentiated from the portrayal of concerns from AUQA's viewpoint.

Casting recurring concerns into themes moves one step beyond AUQA's own analysis. Similarly, the casting of 'implications for management practice' as relating to themes contrasts with AUQA's own recommendations which relate to each individual institution under review. AUQA's recommendations were not the focus of my analysis as they related to single institutions and also were often phrased in a form that was more guarded than AUQA's discussion of concerns.

Analysis at the strategic level is undertaken in Chapter 6 by examining the implications for practice across the full set of themes from a strategic management perspective. The two stages of developing implications, firstly by theme and then more globally, will be the main area where I make a contribution to the knowledge base and to professional practice, i.e. my 'value-addition'. The task involves showing linkages to the data (that is, AUQA's own thinking), while also drawing on the literature and my professional experience in order to develop implications for practice at a more sophisticated, integrated and in-depth level than is apparent in AUQA's own recommendations for improved institutional practice.

### 3.10 The need for a three-stage approach to structuring the analysis

The actual application of the analytical framework to the data generated a total 204 *concerns* and 31 *commendations* across the set of reports. It became clear that it was not possible to analyse all these data elements in-depth equally within the scope of a study of this type. Thus, the question arose of the basis for selecting some elements and categories of elements for more detailed analysis than others. The approach developed was to adopt 3 levels of analysis and the study design was adjusted accordingly during the analysis phase:

1. overall, a first-level analysis of all 235 data elements;
2. a more detailed analysis of data elements in 5 of the 6 dimensions based on their frequency of occurrence or their theoretical or professional relevance; and,
3. an in-depth, fine-grained analysis of the largest category of data elements, which also aligns with the main area of interest and focus for the study, namely institutional strategy and management.

The first two levels of analysis are set out in Chapter 4, and the approach adopted involves an overall 'first level' analysis of all 235 *concerns* and *commendations*. This has been followed by a more in-depth analysis of the recurring *concerns* which have been analysed on the basis that frequent occurrences are likely to be of more general significance and interest than those instances that occur in one institutional audit report. *Commendations* were much less frequently given by AUQA and did not form patterns of recurring *commendations*. Their value lay in illuminating, and providing a different 'angle' on, the patterns of *concerns*. Since areas of *concern* and *commendations* may be related to each other, even to the extent of one being the 'flip side' of the other, wherever a *concern* is selected for analysis any corresponding *commendation* will also be examined and vice versa.

In the light of the large number of *concerns* (96 of 204) and *commendations* (19 of 31) in the dimension of Institutional Strategy and Management, and its fit with the theoretical and professional basis and aims of the study, it was decided to undertake an in-depth, fine-grained of this dimension in a separate chapter, Chapter 5. Finally, in Chapter 6, a consolidated 'picture' of the findings was developed by using a strategic management perspective to identify 3 clusters of themes in a form of value to senior university managers.

## Chapter 4

# Overall analysis and findings

The focus of Chapters 4 and 5 is on using the AUQA Cycle 2 Audit Reports of TNE in Australian universities to answer the following research questions, as discussed in Chapter 3:

1. What concerns and commendations did AUQA identify in its assessment of TNE provision by Australian universities?
2. What patterns of recurring concerns and commendations could be identified across universities and across sub-groups of universities?
3. What findings does the analysis reveal for the development and management of TNE and what are the implications for both operational and strategic management practice in Australian universities?

The research used an analytical framework in a 3-stage analysis:

1. a first-level, overall analysis of the 235 data elements;
2. a more detailed analysis of data elements in 5 of the 6 dimensions based on their frequency of occurrence or their theoretical or professional relevance; and,
3. an in-depth fine-grained analysis of the largest category of data elements, which also aligns with the main area of interest and focus for the study, namely institutional strategy and management.

### **4.1 Overview of the analysis process**

A total of 32 of the 39 Australian universities were audited by AUQA during Cycle 2. Seven universities were not audited in Cycle 2 due to the early winding up of the cycle as part of the transfer of AUQA's responsibilities to TEQSA. These seven universities were:

Australian National University

Flinders University

Monash University

Murdoch University

University of the Sunshine Coast  
University of Technology Sydney  
Victoria University

Of the 32 universities that underwent AUQA audits in Cycle 2, five had no TNE operations, so were excluded from the analysis. These 5 universities were:

Australian Catholic University  
Charles Darwin University  
Notre Dame University  
University of Queensland  
University of Western Sydney

The 27 universities with TNE activities were all included in the analysis and the results are presented and discussed below. The institutions are listed in the Appendix.

The *concerns* and the *commendations* identified by AUQA are presented below in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 which display the data elements contained in each institutional report according to their coding in relation to the 6 dimensions of the analytical framework. The overall pattern of results is then discussed together with a qualitative analysis of the themes that emerged from the analysis. As discussed in Chapter 3, the recurring *concerns* or clusters of *concerns* have been identified as the themes. The analysis elaborates these themes and discusses their implications for knowledge and practice. In principle, *commendations* have been treated equally with *concerns*. However in practice, there are fewer of them and they do not form patterns of recurring *commendations*. Hence, *commendations* are considered along with the related *concerns* and as part of themes. Where *concerns* and *commendations* relate to single or isolated issues, there is no recurring pattern or theme to justify further analysis.

#### **4.2 Discussion of Broad Level Findings – First level of analysis**

The analysis of the 27 institutional audit reports in Cycle 2 revealed that AUQA had identified a total of 204 *concerns* relating to TNE and had given a total of 31 *commendations*. This difference between the large number of *concerns* compared with the small number of *commendations* is consistent with the focus and priorities adopted by AUQA in Cycle 2. This finding aligns with the orientation of both the national policy statement and AUQA's second cycle audit approach, which reflect the focus on perceived risks in TNE and the need for

institutions to be reducing or mitigating risk, and adopting a more conservative stance in relation to their TNE activities. The pattern of *concerns* is shown in Table 4.1 below and the pattern of *commendations* in Table 4.2.

### **Guide to Tables 4.1 and 4.2**

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 have been constructed in a particular format to assist the reader in their interpretation of key features and differences across the reports:

1. Table 4.1 displays the areas of *concern* identified by AUQA in red text and Table 4.2 displays the *commendations* in green text. Each 'x' indicates a data element located in the relevant review report.
2. '**T**' denotes audits undertaken in the 'transitional' period when TEQSA was formally assuming AUQA's responsibility for institutional review. These audits were initiated by AUQA, followed AUQA protocols and employed AUQA auditors and staff to support the review process, with the final report being approved and published by TEQSA.
3. '\*' denotes each of universities operate overseas campuses (as distinct from teaching partnerships), so they may be identified for analysis of whether the presence of an overseas campus appears to lead to any differences in AUQA's findings.
4. '**Blue**' text denotes data elements associated with the second stage of the Cycle 2 audit of the University of Canberra which was undertaken in 2 stages (2009 and 2012). This approach was designed to assist with a major strategic review and restructuring of the University.
5. The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) had substantial TNE enrolments in 2009 although the number from Government data tables erroneously shows enrolments as '0'.
6. The names of universities have been abbreviated in accordance with common practice. The university names and the abbreviations used are spelled out in the Appendix.

**Table 4.1: TNE concerns Identified by AUQA in Cycle 2 audits categorised by year of report and institution across all 6 dimensions**

University	Report year	TNE #'s	LG	ISM	AC	SR	QA	RRTE	Concerns/report
Griffith	2008	748	xx	xx			x		5
Adelaide	2008	625	xx	xxx	x				6
Newcastle*	2008	2331		x	x	x			3
SCU	2008	2406	xxx	xxxxx	xxxx	x	x	x	15
Swinburne*	2008	2012	x	xxx		x	x	xx	8
Curtin*	2009	8476	x	xxxxxxx	x	x	x		11
RMIT*	2009	15250	x	xxxxx					6
UniSA	2009	7278		xx	xxx		x	x	7
Macquarie	2009	947	xx	xxxxxxx	xxxx		xx	x	16
Ballarat	2009	1283		xxxx			x		5
Canberra	2009/12	532	xx	xxxxxxxxx	xxxx	x	xx		18
UNE	2009	32							
USQ*	2009	0**	x	xxxx	xxx	x	x		10
UWA	2009	1618		xxx	x		xx		6
Bond	2010	346	xx	xx	x	x	x		7
CSU	2010	1860	xxx	xxxxx	xxxxx		xxxx		17
La Trobe	2010	1329		xxxxxxxxx	x	x	x		11
UniMel	2010	< 10		xx			x		3
CQU	2011	126		x	xx		x		4
JCU*	2011	3106		xxxxx	xxx	x			9
UNSW	2011	54	x	xxxx	x		xx		8
Wollongong*	2011	4954	xx	xxxxxxxxxxx	xxx		xx		17
Deakin-T	2012	145		xxx	xx				5
ECU-T	2012	1495			xx				2
QUT-T	2012	226			x				1
Sydney –T	2012	259		x	x			x	3
Tasmania – T	2012	1978			x				1
<b>TOTALS (N=27)</b>			<b>23</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>204</b>

Notes: Each data elements is indicated by 'x', TNE #'s=TNE enrolment numbers in report year (Department of Education and Training (2015), LG=Legal and Governance, ISM=Institutional Strategy and Management, Ac=Academic, SR=Support and Resources, QA=Quality Assurance, RRTE= Research, Research Training and Engagement

**Table 4.2: TNE commendations identified by AUQA in Cycle 2 audits categorised by year of report and institution across all 6 dimensions**

University	Report year	TNE #'s	LG	ISM	AC	SR	QA	RRTE	Commends/report
Griffith	2008	748		xx					2
Adelaide	2008	625							
Newcastle*	2008	2331			xx				2
SCU	2008	2406							
Swinburne*	2008	2012		x			x		2
Curtin*	2009	8476		xx				x	3
RMIT*	2009	15250		x					1
UniSA	2009	7278		xxx					3
Macquarie	2009	947							
Ballarat	2009	1283					x		1
Canberra	2009/12	532							
UNE	2009	32		xx					2
USQ	2009	0**		x	x				2
UWA	2009	1618		x	x				2
Bond	2010	346							
CSU	2010	1860		x					1
La Trobe	2010	1329						x	1
UniMel	2010	< 10							
CQU	2011	126							
JCU*	2011	3106							
UNSW	2011	54							
Wollongong*	2011	4954							
Deakin-T	2012	145						x	1
ECU-T	2012	1495		x					1
QUT-T	2012	226							
Tasmania-T	2012	1978		xx	x		x		4
Sydney – T	2012	259		xx	x				3
<b>TOTALS (N=27)</b>				<b>19</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>31</b>

Note: Each data elements is indicated by 'x', TNE #'s=TNE enrolment numbers in report year, LG=Legal and Governance, ISM=Institutional Strategy and Management, Ac=Academic, SR=Support and Resources, QA=Quality Assurance, RRTE= Research, Research Training, and Engagement

## **Discussion of the patterns in the tables**

AUQA identified *concerns* relating to each of the six dimensions of the analytical framework, with nearly half (96) of the 204 *concerns* relating to Institutional Strategy and Management (ISM). The next highest frequency of *concerns* (45, i.e. 22%) relates to the Academic dimension, with Legal and Governance (LG) and QA Systems (QA) having 23 (16%) and 24 (16%) *concerns* respectively. The two other dimensions, Support and Resources (SR), and Research, Research Training and Engagement (RE), have 9 and 6 *concerns* respectively. Each dimension covers a different range of issues according to its nature. The wide variation in the number of *concerns* across dimensions reflects the differences in scope but the overall pattern also yields guidance for strengthening institutional management.

In relation to the number of *commendations*, the highest proportion (19 out of 31, ie 59%) related to ISM, with AC, QA, and RE carrying only a small number of *commendations*. No *commendations* were given for LG or SR. The 2 major dimensions for *concerns*, ISM, and AC, were also the source of the highest number of *commendations*.

Within each of the dimensions, the number of *concerns* identified was generally spread across a considerable proportion of the institutions, but with substantial variation in the number of *concerns* for each institution. Seven institutions had 3 or fewer *concerns* and 8 institutions had 10 or more, with 3 institutions having 17 *concerns* identified.

The small number of *commendations* (31 i.e. 13% of the total *concerns* and *commendations*) is somewhat surprising, although it is consistent with the National policy initiative's focus on risk and problem areas and AUQA's parallel orientation. The number of *concerns* relating to QA is also initially surprising, but, with QA being the focus of the Cycle 1 audits and with a new focus on risk and problem areas, the relatively low number is understandable, as is the high number (47%) for ISM. The relative 'hotspot' of ISM directly reflects the focus of the National policy initiative for TNE.

## **Discussion of patterns or trends of concerns and commendations across sub-groups of universities**

This section examines *concerns* and *commendations* for any patterns by specific institutional feature or university grouping:

1. Size of TNE enrolment: It might be expected that either larger TNE enrolments could lead to larger number of *concerns*, possibly as a result of their greater scale or increased AUQA attention. Alternatively, institutions with larger numbers of TNE enrolments might attract fewer *concerns* as a result of having better systems developed from more extensive experience. However, the data shows no correlation ( $r=0.12$ ) between the number of concerns and the size of enrolment. If larger TNE enrolments are associated with better systems, then there could be an expectation of more *commendations*. However, the pattern of *commendations* also shows no relationship with size of enrolments.
  
2. Another potential relationship that was examined was the number of *concerns* in relation to the institutional group each university belongs to:
  - Group of Eight (Go8) – the most research-intensive universities
  - Australian Technology Network (ATN) – technology-oriented universities
  - Innovative Research Universities – research-oriented universities established in the 1960s
  - New Generation – established in the late 1980s and 1990s.

Again, no pattern was discernible. Six of the Go8 universities were audited, but Monash (one of the pioneers of TNE in Australia and with large enrolments) and also ANU were not audited as they were scheduled late in the cycle when TEQSA ended the audit round early when taking over from AUQA. Apart from Monash, the Go8 universities tend to have low TNE enrolments, a characteristic perhaps related to their strong research focus and associated strategy of forming university-university research partnerships rather than TNE teaching partnerships. Of the 5 ATN universities, RMIT, Curtin and UniSA have high TNE enrolments and their number of *concerns* is in the middle range (6-11) of *concerns*. The ATN group shows the full range of concerns from low to high. Similarly, the Innovative Research Universities and the New Generation universities both exhibit the full range in number of concerns with no group pattern apparent.

3. Two potential group patterns were not identified in the research questions as issues for examination but were considered in the analysis: These were evidence of any trend in the number of *concerns* by audit year, and any trend associated with those universities with overseas campuses and those with teaching partnerships only.

In relation to the audit year, no pattern was apparent in the first four years, but there was a marked drop in the number of *concerns* identified during the last audit year (2012) when TEQSA took over the audits from AUQA. TEQSA's focus was on establishing a strong regulatory regime to sit alongside the already well-established QA regime, and it can be surmised that TEQSA gave less time and resources in the last audit year processes and so identified fewer *concerns*.

The universities with overseas campuses are spread across the spectrum of university types, one Go8 (Monash), two ATN (RMIT and Curtin), and three Innovative Research Universities (JCU, Newcastle and Wollongong). Not surprisingly, the TNE enrolments are higher in universities with campuses than the average. Also unsurprisingly, the number of *concerns* and *commendations* for universities with campuses is higher than for those universities with TNE teaching partnerships only. This difference perhaps relates to the higher complexity and risk facing senior management and governance bodies in relation to the campus model. However, the data set is neither large enough or precise enough to take this analysis further than a qualitative observation.

### **4.3 Second level of analysis**

As discussed in Section 3.10 in Chapter 3, the next level of the analysis was to examine the nature of *concerns* and *commendations* expressed in the Review Reports across five of the six dimensions (leaving aside ISM for detailed coverage in Chapter 5) to identify those that occurred in a number of reports. These recurring *concerns* and the associated *commendations* became the basis for identifying the themes in each dimension.

A sample of relevant extracts from the Reports appears under each of the five dimensions discussed below. Each extract shows how each data element was coded in the analysis. The coding indicates the dimension, the data element number, and the sub-dimension number. For example, **LG2-1.3**, indicates Legal and Governance, data element 2 in the relevant university audit report, and the Sub-dimension 1.3, Governance Processes. These codings are followed by more specific categorisations, such as 'academic governance' or 'role of academic board'.

The extracts are followed by a statement of the themes or concerns recurring across institutions. Next, as discussed in Section 3.9 above, a set of 'implications for practice' have been produced for each of the themes, in the light of my own professional experience. The implications provide guidance for improving management practice as I perceived or

constructed them in the light of my management experience and by applying my analytical framework.

### **Dimension 1. Legal and Governance**

#### **1. Legal and governance (including both corporate and academic governance)**

- 1.1 the nature and legal form of partnerships involved
- 1.2 the legality and suitability and approval of contractual arrangements including copyright and licencing
- 1.3 governance processes – corporate and academic governance structures, processes and relationships, including cross-campus and partner issues
- 1.4 the structure of the award granted and the approval pathway through the governance structure
- 1.5 policy framework, development and approval processes approval (academic and non-academic) and oversight of implementation
- 1.6 regulatory and government relationship issues in Australia and in the country of delivery.

Looking at the nature of *concerns* expressed in Dimension 1, the analysis shows that the 23 *concerns* related to 13 institutions. No *commendations* were identified for this dimension. An analysis of the *concerns* revealed that there were recurring areas of *concern* expressed only in Sub-dimensions 1.3 and 1.4. These 2 sub-dimensions with patterns of recurring *concerns* are analysed below.

#### **Sub-dimension 1.3 Governance Processes**

This sub-dimension encompasses both corporate and academic facets of institutional governance which “is the overarching framework of rules, relationships, systems and processes within and by which authority is exercised and controlled in higher education providers” (TEQSA, 2014a, 2014b). It includes cross-campus, cross institutional and partnership structures and issues.

## Concerns

Ext1. Adelaide 2008 p17

*Proposals to establish or renew international agreements are considered by the Internationalisation Strategy Committee, not Academic Board's Internationalisation Committee. While this may be appropriate for some international agreements, where there are issues around the comparability of academic standards, Academic Board should have a role in assessing proposals (LG2-1.3: academic governance/AB role), although in some cases it may be important to ensure simultaneous consideration of academic and financial issues.*

Ext2. Macquarie 2009 p35

*New TNE progrms must undergo the same academic governance scrutiny as all other University programs (LG2-1.3: academic governance).*

Ext3. SCU 2008 p30

*It appears that Academic Board is not involved in some important aspects of courses taught through educational collaborations, although the Board is the principal academic body responsible for establishing and maintaining the highest standards in teaching and learning and research in the University. (LG1-1.3: academic governance/AB role) SCU's rules do not require that courses be approved again if they are being offered at a different location, so matters such as the preparedness of local staff and library resources at educational collaborations are not considered by the Board.*

*Recommendation 9*

*AUQA recommends that the SCU Academic Board take a more active role in assuring the quality of all aspects of educational collaborations..., monitoring the implementation of recommendations from quality reviews and implementing a University-wide moderation standard. (LG1 – 1.3: academic governance/AB role)*

Ext4. USQ 2009 p33

*Academic oversight by the Academic Board needs to be strengthened in the case of the partner-based students with the IEPC focusing more strongly on its monitoring role .(LG1-1.3: AB-role)*

Ext5. Curtin 2009, p35-6

*The Panel noted that there may be too many layers of authority and bureaucracy for the size of the Campus. Curtin should explore ways to simplify the governance and management system. As Curtin is moving to an offshore campus model, more formal reporting to University structures besides to individual officers (for example, the DVC (International) or the DVC (Academic), may ensure greater synergy and value-add to the Campus and to the University. (LG1- 1.3: campus-governance)*

Ext6. Wollongong 2011 p44

*...an inherent feature of the structural arrangements between UOW and UOWD [University of Wollongong Dubai] is an ongoing tension between a close relationship and one that is more independent. AUQA considers that the University Council needs to exercise greater responsibility in the oversight of UOWD (LG1-1.3: governance/council/campus-oversight) and recommends additional work is undertaken by UOW, as well as by UOWD.*

### **Discussion of Dimension 1 concerns and theme identification**

The most common area of concern in this dimension was that **TNE activities were not properly and effectively dealt with within the institution's governance processes, particularly in relation to the role of Academic Board and the associated approval pathway and review processes** (Theme 1). The principal areas of concern identified by AUQA were the review and approval processes undertaken by the Academic Board and by the university's governing body. Selected instances of AUQA's *concern* about the role of Academic Board are set out in 4 extracts (Ext1. through Ext4.), above. The particular area of concern is that TNE is often treated differently from other programs in the approval and review mechanisms of Academic

Board. This breaches the fundamental principle of academic governance that all academic programs are subject to the same processes and levels of scrutiny. AUQA recommends that TNE approval and review/renewal processes are subject to the same academic governance scrutiny through the Academic Board as other university programs. This aspect of the theme is particularly evident in both the Adelaide (Ext1.) and SCU (Ext3.) extracts above.

Although only six of the universities audited in Cycle 2 have overseas campuses, AUQA identified overseas campus operations as an important development in Australian higher education. In relation to governance, AUQA identified particular *concerns* in relation to 2 overseas campus models – Curtin University Sarawak (Ext5.) and the University of Wollongong Dubai (Ext6.). The theme relating to campus governance focusses on AUQA’s *concern* that **Campus governance arrangements did not adequately accommodate a) the intermeshing of campus governance and management with the university’s overall structures, and b) the pressure for campuses to respond effectively to local needs** (Theme 2). That is, the structural arrangements should balance integration with the broader university with a degree of independence to meet local needs. AUQA’s perceptions are that governance and senior management do not adequately accommodate the complexity of campuses and their need for a level of independence to deal with local matters. Despite the acknowledgement that campuses exhibit a degree of differentiation from the broader university, AUQA nevertheless recommended more formal reporting to, and stronger oversight of, the overseas campus’ operations by the Academic Board and the university council, while at the same time suggesting more local autonomy.

### **Implications for institutional management practice**

1. A fundamental principle in considering TNE programs is that they must be the subject of special additional approval and review mechanisms in recognition of their cross-national dimension, the partnership or branch campus organisational factors, and the differences in the student and staff profiles. However, it is also essential that the standard academic dimensions of TNE programs are ‘mainstreamed’ through the academic governance processes so that they are clearly an integral part of the university’s academic programs. This approach ensures that the university does not operate parallel and divergent sets of academic programs ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the home country that have different requirements and standards.

Following Academic Board approval, TNE programs, along with all academic programs of the university, are also approved by the university governing body as part of the formal legal and business processes of the university.

2. To achieve both the special consideration of TNE matters and their mainstreaming as an integral part of the university's academic programs, the management responsibilities for TNE need to be appropriately allocated to include not only the senior international officer and the senior business officer, but also the senior academic officer of the university.
3. It is also important that the approval and review processes for TNE activities undertaken by both management and the academic board incorporate both the special and standard aspects of TNE program in a seamless fashion. A typical approval/review process may include consideration of the special dimensions of TNE programs by the international and business offices of the university, followed by the passage through the normal academic management and governance processes.
4. Overseas campuses present particular challenges for governance and management. These challenges arise from the greater scale and complexity of branch campus operations, compared with TNE partnerships, and the need for campuses to be able to respond to local employer, student and government demands. Universities should develop appropriate governance structures that accommodate the need for formal campus-level reporting and oversight. Clear management structures also need to be developed that complement the governance arrangements as well as accommodating both strategic and local-level management. The level of independence required to deal with local matters is an operational, not a governance matter. Clearly, for a university to maintain its overall institutional integrity and coherent strategy, local matters requiring a strategic response from the university will need to be referred by the local level management to the senior university management. At the same time, the strategic role of a campus and the need for a level of independence does justify a clear and strong linkage of the campus into the governance structures of the Academic Board and Council.

## Sub-dimension 1.4 Integrity of the Award Conferred

This sub-dimension relates to the integrity of the award granted in terms of degree title and testamur. At a broader level, the issue is about consistency across all locations and forms of offering.

### Concerns

Ext1. RMIT 2009 p25

*The Panel delegation noted a discrepancy in the award title of one of the programs which was noted by the partners only a few days before the Audit Visit. Despite RMIT having conducted a review of all contracts in 2008, this discrepancy was not discovered then. (LG1-1.4: award discrepancy)*

Ext2. Canberra 2012 p27-8

*What the testamurs attest to regarding learning outcomes and linguistic proficiency is open to misinterpretation by students and the public. While the annotated testamur is given to students who do not meet the admission criteria in respect of English language proficiency, the annotation implies bilingual proficiency. The Academic Board needs to ensure that onshore and offshore standards of admission and completion are following stated UC policies.*

*Recommendation 5*

*It is recommended that the University of Canberra immediately reconsider the issues related to issuing non-standard testamurs. (LG1-1.4: integrity of award)*

Ext3. CSU 2010, p44

*Given that the arrangements for many of CSU's offshore teaching partnerships are structured around dual awards, Academic Senate needs to give explicit consideration to the circumstances under which the University will support dual awards (LG2-1.4: award oversight by Senate). The Audit Panel notes that CSU agreements with partners should identify*

*any dual award structures that will be encompassed in the partnership arrangements (LG3-1.4: award/contract specifications).*

### **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

The recurring *concern* here relates to **deficiencies in the processes for ensuring the integrity of the award across all locations and forms of offering, and, specifically, to consistency in the title, content and format of award testamurs** (Theme 3). The core task is to ensure that the degree has the same structure and outcomes across all locations and forms of offering, including through TNE. Specifically, *concerns* were identified relating to the title, content and format of award testamurs. Two instances of AUQA's *concern* about the integrity of the award conferred by the university are contained in the Extracts 1 and 2 above. Extract 1 relates to an undetected 'discrepancy' in an award title as offered through an RMIT University TNE partner. Extract 2 points to a misleading testamur which, in addition to being 'non-standard', appears to imply a higher degree of English language proficiency than graduates actually possess.

Both extracts emphasise AUQA's perception of the vital importance of the soundness of the award conferred by the university, its uniformity across locations of offering, and the need to ensure that the degree and its associated testamur accurately represent the award as endorsed by Academic Board and approved by the university Council.

Extract 3 encapsulates another, emerging area of concern, namely dual awards (where the Australian university and another higher education institution offer a program which results in two awards conferred separately by the two institutions). This *concern* extended to another award form, namely the joint award (where the Australian university and another higher education institution jointly develop and offer a program which results in a single award that is conferred by both institutions). Although not frequently occurring (2 occurrences), AUQA considered these innovative award forms as posing particular challenges for universities and for the way in which academic boards and councils exercise their oversight of such international collaborative degree programs.

### **Implications for institutional management practice**

1. Issues with the integrity of the award usually relate to the lack of policy in the relevant area or in the policy implementation. Failures in the application of policy are often associated with the different treatment of TNE and home campus activities. The

university policy framework needs to be continuously developed to cover different types of awards as well as different ways of offering them. For example, before offering dual awards or the teaching of programs in languages other than English, the necessary policy framework needs to be developed and approved by academic board. The literature highlights the increasing incidence, within university internationalisation strategies, of cross-institutional collaborations which includes new award forms and joint postgraduate training and research programs (Knight, 2004; Teichler, 2004) and these innovations need to be encompassed within a continuously evolving institutional policy framework.

2. The management of the TNE program and the review processes also need to follow standard processes of the university so that unintended breaches of the integrity of the award are prevented or quickly identified and rectified.

### **Dimension 3. Academic**

This dimension encompasses:

- 3.1 curriculum (including inclusion of local content and context and internationalisation of the curriculum)
- 3.2 entry standards (academic and English language proficiency)
- 3.3 teaching and learning processes, standards and assessment, (including moderation of assessment)
- 3.4 quality of teaching
- 3.5 quality of student experience
- 3.6 academic policies as statements that define academic processes and requirements
- 3.7 credit transfer and pathway policy
- 3.8 academic integrity and plagiarism

In relation to the Academic dimension, where there were 43 *concerns* and 6 *commendations* relating to TNE, the main areas of *concern* relate to entry standards (academic and English language) and to teaching and learning, standards and assessment. Academic integrity and plagiarism were also identified as a particular focus for TNE programs.

## Sub-dimension 3.2 Entry Standards

### Concerns

Ext1. SCU 2008 p29-30

*AUQA urges the Academic Board to monitor the academic language performance of student cohorts, especially students entering under the IELTS equivalences for offshore programs. The Board should examine any issues to ascertain whether these are due to inconsistent application of English language entry requirements or to inappropriate IELTS equivalences or a combination of factors...*

#### *Recommendation 8*

*AUQA recommends that the SCU Academic Board keep under active review the academic language proficiency of student cohorts entering under the IELTS equivalences it has recently adopted, paying particular attention to students in SCU offshore programs and ... articulation agreements. (AC1-3.2:English language entry standards)*

Ext2. USQ 2009 p31

*The student group in one location was very mixed with a couple of the students not able to comprehend even the most basic questions. Issues of valid equivalency of local language qualifications to IELTS scores emerged as an area that needs examination. There is also a need to review the adequacy of IELTS 6.0 as an entry level for a number of postgraduate courses particularly those in the social sciences and humanities. USQ has acknowledged the need to consider sector good practices in revisiting its language requirements. While acknowledging USQ's intention to review the English language proficiency requirements taking into account course demands and sector good practices, the Panel recommends the University to pay attention to the validity of the other pathways students are given to prove their entry level English language proficiency. (AC3-3.2: English language proficiency/entry requirements)*

*During interviews with students the subgroup of the Audit Panel that visited TNE partners became concerned about the English language proficiency (ELP) of the students (AC2-3.2). Further information was requested from UniSA and it showed that International English Language Testing System (IELTS) requirements apply to a small minority of students since most satisfy the UniSA ELP requirement that they have completed an award program offered in English... Therefore the necessary language requirements will need to be monitored as UniSA's own surveys have shown.*

### **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

AUQA's *concerns* surrounding admissions standards focussed on English language proficiency rather than academic entry standards. In Ext2., AUQA voiced its concerns about the appropriateness of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score required for program entry. It also questioned how IELTS 'equivalencies' were determined and applied consistently (Ext1. and Ext2.). In Ext3. AUQA pointed out that many of the entering students had completed a previous qualification in English and were, hence, not required by admissions criteria to undertake an examination to demonstrate English language proficiency. In this example, AUQA appears to imply that completion of a previous qualification in English may not be sufficient to ensure adequate language skills. Overall AUQA was concerned with **perceived weaknesses in institutional approaches to setting and validating English language entry requirements and in supporting TNE students** (Theme 15).

Ensuring adequate English language proficiency to undertake a programme is, of course, a significant and ongoing issue for all programs with international students. There are some features specific to TNE programs, such as students studying in a country where English may not be the main language, but issues relating to English language proficiency are generally university-wide and not restricted to TNE programs and hence require strategies of a general nature.

## Implications for institutional management practice

AUQA clearly identified a major, ongoing *concern* for all institutions which is the teaching of students in a language other than their native language. English is the 'lingua franca' of TNE programs in Australian universities (although a small number of courses are taught in languages other than English). The acquisition of English language skills and qualifications, and their desirability by employers, largely drives students to undertake Australian university awards – both in Australia, and through branch campuses and overseas partnerships. Hence, ensuring adequate English language proficiency at entry to, and as an outcome from, Australian TNE courses, is essential both to their academic quality and to their marketability. Current research indicates that students from non-English speaking backgrounds experience significant learning challenges in undertaking English-taught programs that impact upon both their learning experiences and outcomes (Benzie, 2010; Chapman & Pyvis, 2012). Establishing an appropriate level of English language proficiency for Australian programs, both onshore and offshore, continues to be a major challenge for institutions. Entry level tests, such as IELTS and past English experience, including a previous qualification undertaken in English, are only moderate level predictors of the English language difficulties experienced by students in TNE programs. An adequate level of English language proficiency can be diminished by the lack of daily practice in the language, both spoken and written. Daily practice in a TNE context may be more difficult to maintain in a country where English is not in daily use in the community.

1. As part of a university-wide improvement strategy, institutions need continually to review and re-assess their English language entry requirements and to monitor English proficiency during the program and at program completion. These reviews should include comparisons across entry pathways and across teaching locations. Equivalencies in entry pathways should be under continual review. To the extent that TNE programs draw students from different backgrounds, these programs may add a useful diversity to the data in reviews of English language needs.
2. Beyond entry standards, the award conferred by Australian universities implies a high level of English language proficiency. In this context, institutions need to ensure that English language requirements for TNE programs are equivalent to requirements for students studying in the same program onshore. The university should maintain direct control of student selection and admission at all locations, and should also monitor comparability of English language standards within each program area.

3. Universities need to consider carefully the language standards required for entry to TNE programs and the English language proficiency of their TNE student cohorts in each location. They then need to make explicit provision, not only for ensuring entry standards are maintained, but also that English language proficiency outcomes are ensured through ongoing English language support throughout the TNE program.
4. Ongoing monitoring of English language proficiency and student performance, and particularly the provision of ongoing language and learning support, is resource intensive, and hence costly. Institutions need to plan and budget accordingly. Good business planning becomes crucial so that program sustainability can be maintained.

### **Sub-dimension 3.3 Teaching and Learning, Standards and Assessment**

#### Concerns

Ext1. ECU 2012 p29-30

*Moderation of results from offshore programs is not occurring consistently... Staff understanding of the process is variable and how the findings from the moderation reports are used to scale marks is not clear (AC1-3.3: assessment moderation). Associate Deans (International) are aware of this problem and have a major responsibility to ensure that moderation is implemented in a timely manner.*

#### *Recommendation 5*

*It is recommended that Edith Cowan University take steps to develop a common understanding of its policies and procedures relating to the moderation of assessment in the offshore programs (AC1-3.3:moderation of assessment).*

## Commendations

Ext2. Newcastle 2008 p10

### *Commendation 4*

*AUQA commends UoN on the formal processes that are in place for teaching onshore and offshore, including a high standard and common format of course outlines, common processes for assessment, procedures for raising complaints and demonstration of the equivalence of academic programs across different campuses. (AC1-3.3: equivalent standards)*

Ext3. USQ 2009 p29

*The marking guidelines seen were, on the whole, well done. Although marking is done by USQ staff in 14 of the 27 partnership arrangements, there is a move towards increasing the involvement of partner staff in marking. Moderation of marking is carefully handled with good support and training strategies for making transitions from marking at Toowoomba to partner-based marking.*

### *Commendation 3*

*AUQA commends USQ for its effective marking guidelines and moderation procedures and for the good support and training strategies provided for partner staff to implement these procedures. (AC1-3.3: assessment processes/moderation)*

## **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

The general issue here is the concern that programs that are taught in different locations by largely different groups of staff may not embody the same academic standards. This issue affects institutions offering a program on more than one campus or site, whether onshore or offshore, and also arises with programs offered over a period of time. However, TNE programmes raise the concern in a heightened form as a result of cultural differences and

teaching staff being partly employed by the partner rather than the university making the award.

AUQA was given a mandate to review how universities ensured that academic standards were met using mechanisms across all locations that were consistent and validated on an institution-wide basis. AUQA chose to examine this issue in operational terms; largely in relation to the issue of how moderation of assessment was handled, practical matters of procedures, staff and partner roles, and delays in finalising results.

It is noticeable that AUQA does not express any broad concerns about standards, but focuses on the more specific concern about how moderation (which is a mechanism for ensuring comparability of standards) is systematically undertaken. This came about as a result of AUQA's specific brief for Cycle 2 audits, which was to review how universities ensured that academic standards were met at a whole-of-institution level. This was new ground and the Agency was careful not to overstep its brief or to stray into the specification or assessment of standards itself, but attempted to confine its review processes to the examination of university systems and processes for ensuring standards are set, validated and monitored by the institutions themselves.

In relation to inconsistent academic standards, AUQA focussed on the concern that **university mechanisms to ensure academic standards were comparable across TNE locations and the 'home' institutions were inadequate, particularly as demonstrated by deficiencies in processes for moderating assessment** (Theme 16).

### **Implications for institutional management practice**

1. Institutions need to develop clear policy statements, procedures and operational guidelines on moderation and the specific value that moderation has in TNE programmes. Particular attention should be given to how to use the results of moderation to ensure equivalence and contribute to continuous improvement.
2. Moderation needs to be monitored both at program and university levels to ensure effective implementation. Where TNE programmes are offered in more than one location, the moderation should involve home-TNE location moderation and also comparisons among the TNE offerings.

3. Another key area is ensuring that moderation policy and university and partner roles and responsibilities in moderation processes are clearly defined and communicated to both university and partner staff through appropriate professional development.
4. Since the issue of comparability of standards arises across Australian campuses and for programs over time, any moderation mechanisms developed for TNE have the potential to have broader application to multi-campus and other contexts where programs are implemented separately.

### **Sub-dimension 3.8 Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

#### Concerns

Ext1. UniSA 2009 -39

*The Panel was advised during its offshore visit that detection mechanisms in some locations remained relatively rudimentary and that for some programs Turnitin or similar instruments were not in general use.*

*AUQA affirms the actions taken by UniSA on this issue so far and acknowledges that there may be relatively few formal cases of plagiarism at UniSA at present. This may be due either to excellent education processes on academic integrity and suitable mechanisms being in place, or detection rates are relatively low. Given the significance of academic integrity and plagiarism in maintaining high academic standards, AUQA encourages the University to pay continued attention to this topic. (AC3.8- academic integrity)*

#### Commendations

Ext2. Newcastle 2008 p27

*Commendation 10*

*AUQA commends UoN on the widespread and consistent implementation of academic integrity policies and procedures to control plagiarism at all*

*teaching locations of the University but particularly at the higher risk offshore locations. (AC2-3.8:academic integrity)*

### **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

In a context where academic integrity and plagiarism were of concern to most universities, the focus of AUQA's *concern* was that the strength of the cultural differences across national boundaries in a TNE operation would magnify the scale of a ubiquitous problem. However, issues of academic integrity have particular visibility in TNE programmes because the cultural differences in Western and Asian concepts of the basis of knowledge and argument are particularly apparent in teaching environments where Western students and staff are less common.

AUQA's core concern is that **education and monitoring processes relating to academic integrity and plagiarism were not sufficiently robust to accommodate the impact of cultural differences that occur across national boundaries in TNE operations** (Theme 17).

### **Implications for institutional management practice**

1. The paramount need to educate students about academic integrity and plagiarism, implement effective assessment design procedures, implement detection mechanisms and apply sanctions applicable to all programs has particular importance in TNE.
2. Orientation and education should be given additional attention in TNE programmes in recognition of the different cultural experience in earlier education.

### **Dimension 4. Student and Staff Support and Resources**

This dimension encompasses:

- 4.1 English language support
- 4.2 academic and pastoral support,
- 4.3 teaching and learning resources, facilities and infrastructure

In the Support and Resources dimension, the most common concern of the 9 identified in the audit reports related to libraries and access to online resources. There were no commendations identified for this dimension.

## Concerns

Ext1. Swinburne, 2008, p31

*There is an issue that Swinburne Sarawak students and staff have access to only 75% of library material available to the Melbourne students and staff, mainly due to limitations on the licenses for electronic and commercial materials. Swinburne Sarawak could not be included in some licences although students are doing the same degree and are part of one institution. Swinburne needs to investigate further how Swinburne Sarawak students can have greater access to library materials. (SR1-4.3: learning/library resources)*

Ext2. Curtin 2009, p33

*... the Panel was told that some students have difficulty in accessing the Curtin Library. It was not clear whether it was a technology-related obstacle or as a result of student knowledge of how to use the system. The University is encouraged to explore the reasons for this and introduce remedies, where possible. (SR1-4.3: learning/library resources)*

### **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

The main area of concern is with restrictions for online access to university resources that may arise in TNE contexts. This arises because **institutions have not adequately provided online access to university resources to TNE students as a result of failing to resolve technology differences between the partner and university sites, failing to ensure adequate communication of access procedures to the remote students and staff, and failing adequately to respond to the country-specific nature of some commercial suppliers of library resources** (Theme 18).

### **Implications for institutional management practice**

1. There is a need for better communication about the availability of resources to TNE students and staff, and for clear instructions on how they are accessed.
2. Where licences are an issue, universities need to assess how crucial the access is, what alternative methods are available, what the cost of programme specific access would be,

and then decide on an appropriate way forward, including the costs in the budget and business case for the programme.

## Dimension 5. QA Systems

This dimension encompasses:

- 5.1 review and evaluation mechanisms (internal and external) including responsibilities and processes
- 5.2 articulation of QA processes in an integrated system – alignment between ‘home’ and TNE site’s processes
- 5.3 the use of evaluation outcomes for continuous improvement
- 5.4 feedback on evaluation (closing the loop)

For Dimension 5, there were 25 concerns and 3 commendations mostly relating to comprehensive QA systems and integration of arrangements for TNE with broader university systems.

### Concerns

Ext1. Canberra 2009, p29

#### *Recommendation 7*

*AUQA recommends that the University of Canberra develop a holistic evaluation framework and cycle within which domestic, onshore international and transnational student experience is regularly evaluated, analysed, compared and improved upon. (QA1-5.2 integrated system)*

Ext2. Wollongong, 2011, p39

*AUQA finds the University’s current contracts with partners have yet to fully reflect the new procedures and arrangements specific to each location. As an example, the contract for teaching in Hong Kong (section 4.7.6) is a standard contract that contains clauses which are irrelevant to the nature of the arrangements and a quality assurance schedule that requires much greater articulation and precision. AUQA urges UOW to complete as*

*expeditiously as possible its review and augmentation of the adequacy of its schedule of quality assurance procedures in its offshore teaching contracts.*

*(ISM6-2.5: contract management and QA1-5.1: processes)*

Ext3. CSU, 2010, p44

*The University has instituted a process to conduct regular quality assurance reviews of teaching partnerships. These reviews are internal and, in the case of academic elements, there is often no separation between the reviewers and those who are responsible for academic management of the courses. AUQA considers that, to ensure a credible and thorough process, such reviews should be conducted by academics external to the Faculty of Business...*

*Recommendation 13*

*AUQA recommends that CSU use an independent review process (QA2-5.1: external review) involving academics outside the Faculty of Business or external to the University, to review the effectiveness of academic quality assurance for the Faculty's offshore and onshore teaching partnerships.*

### Commendations

Ext1. Swinburne 2008, p30-1

*[Swinburne] policies, procedures and operations at Sarawak have become much more closely aligned with those of the University as a whole in recent years. The Panel found the quality assurance process described in the Sarawak Quality Assurance Procedure very comprehensive and rigorous.*

### *Commendation 11*

*AUQA commends Swinburne for its quality assurance arrangements at Sarawak and at the other transnational partnerships, towards ensuring equivalence of degree quality. (QA1-5.2: integrated system)*

Ext2. Tasmania, 2012, p. 26

*UTAS is commended for the quality assurance systems it has in place for offshore partnerships generally and for the implementation of the system in China in particular. The system has proved to be effective in detecting and rectifying actual or potential areas of concern (section 2.4, 2.7) and demonstrably contributes to the high standards of academic achievements off shore (data item 5.13). Satisfaction levels for international students completing the same units onshore and offshore are monitored using the same evaluation instrument...*

### *Commendation 6*

*The University of Tasmania is commended for the comprehensive and effective quality assurance system it has established for governing, monitoring and improving transnational education partnership arrangements. (QA1-5.3 integrated system)*

## **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

AUQA's principal *concern* was that **University quality assurance systems did not have comprehensive, university-wide quality assurance processes whose mechanisms/activities encompass TNE programs in an integrated way** (Theme 19). AUQA also highlighted the importance of ensuring that QA systems take into consideration the specific features of the TNE location. Related concerns included the QA system and processes not being appropriately reflected in the TNE partnership contract, and the lack of separation between reviewers and those responsible for the programs.

## Implications for institutional management practice

1. TNE programs need to be 'mainstreamed' into the institution's overall quality cycle. Hence, they need to be subject to established university policy and processes that ensure the continuous evaluation and ongoing improvement of all the institutions' programs across all modes and locations of offering.
2. There is a need to ensure that the TNE partnership contract covers QA systems and processes accurately and in appropriate detail.
3. It is important to develop and implement a review policy that ensures the inclusion of external reviewers from outside the faculty and, for major or complex programs, from outside the university.

## Dimension 6. Research, research training, and community engagement

This dimension encompasses:

- 6.1 TNE as a platform for developing collaborative research programs, joint higher degree training and supervision
- 6.2 scholarship and research
- 6.3 community engagement, including
- 6.4 alumni engagement

Dimension 6 has 6 concerns and 3 commendations, and extends beyond undergraduate teaching, which has been the traditional focus of TNE, to doctoral programs and supervision, research and community engagement.

In relation to doctoral supervision, AUQA was concerned mainly with the effectiveness of shared supervision in TNE partnerships.

### Concerns

Ex1. SCU, 2008, p21

*Offshore DBA candidates have a principal supervisor who is a member of the University's ongoing staff, although the supervision provided by this staff member is of a general coordination nature only. Offshore candidates rely for much of their advice on a local supervisor who is not a*

*member of staff at SCU. A small number of the academics in the GCM are listed as the principal supervisor of a very large number of DBA candidates, the highest currently being one principal supervisor with 28 candidates.*

*... the Audit Panel is concerned about the risks to quality and standards of this model of supervision, which means that students are very heavily reliant for effective supervision on associate supervisors who have no ongoing employment relationship with SCU.*

#### *Recommendation 5*

*AUQA recommends that SCU, through Academic Board, commission an external review of the adequacy of thesis supervision and associated risks to academic standards for professional doctorates (RE1-6.1 doctoral supervision) managed by the Graduate College of Management, particularly for offshore candidates.*

Ex4. Macquarie, 2009, p25

*The Panel finds that the University has not sufficiently monitored the professional doctoral program of MGSM, in particular the number of enrolments against overall MGSM supervisory capacity (RE1-6.1 doctoral supervision). Secondly, the Panel concurs [with the findings of 2007 independent review, cited on p24] that offering the DBA in Hong Kong presents a significant reputational risk to the University... The Panel notes that these concerns are being addressed by the University through monitoring the number of students supervised by individual staff in the context of MGSM's significantly reduced staff capacity, reduced student intake and increased use of adjunct supervisors.*

#### *Affirmation 4*

*AUQA affirms Macquarie University's decision to discontinue the current transnational offering of the professional research DBA in Hong Kong.*

## Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification

AUQA's recurring area of concern with regard to supervision related to inadequacies of supervision arrangements that can arise in doctoral TNE programs. AUQA discussed the potential contribution and advantages of shared supervision, as well as the problematic, complex nature of such supervision in a TNE doctoral program, and expressed concerns about inadequate supervision if the supervisory load was too high or if too much responsibility was placed on supervisors who were not staff members of the university. The focus of the *concern* is that **shared supervision arrangements across 'home' institutions and partners were not adequately structured and managed to provide effective supervision of doctoral students** (Theme 20).

### Implications for institutional management practice

1. The model for supervision in a TNE doctoral program needs to be carefully constructed so that university staff act as the primary supervisors and carry the main supervision load for all students, with local partner staff undertaking an associate supervisor role. In cases where partner staff are potentially qualified to supervise doctoral candidates, this should be confirmed through a formal evaluation and the staff appointed as adjunct academic staff of the university. Such staff should receive training in the university's policies on doctoral programs and supervision, and consequent expectations placed on supervisors. Supervision arrangements for joint doctoral programs between universities will need to be tailored to the needs of the particular programs.
2. The supervision load in terms of the maximum number of students that can be supervised by each staff member in a TNE program should be appropriately defined in relation to the nature of the program, the needs of the students and the role of partner staff. The level will also vary from discipline to discipline. The arrangements for supervision in TNE programs should be fully integrated into the overall university policy on supervision load and monitored on a faculty and university basis with appropriate attention to the distance nature of TNE doctoral supervision.

In relation to the development of research in TNE teaching partnerships and campuses, AUQA took the view that universities were not adequately capitalising on the opportunity to develop doctoral programs, as well as undergraduate programs, for the enhancement of research activity.

Ex2. Swinburne, 2008, p32

*Given the creation of the partnership as a strategy to deal with Sarawak's manpower requirement for skilled graduates, e.g. engineers, it was of interest to the Panel that the Board strongly endorsed the aspiration for Swinburne Sarawak to develop a research focus relevant to the local context by staff and the Malaysian partners.*

*There is a staff desire to get more credit for research in terms of workload allocation. But in reality the Panel came across many aspirational statements and there was low research productivity compared to Melbourne. To build research intensity, a program of fortnightly research forums has been introduced, and the Sarawak research program has been re-designed to give early career researchers and their mentors priority for funding. The research forums could play a major inspirational and educational role by ensuring visits by major researchers and facilitating interactions with them. Also the in-house research program could play a major staff development role. There is a need to strengthen these activities (RE2-6.2 research productivity/local context).*

Ex3. UniSA, 2009, p35

*A final observation that relates to all TNE programs concerns the strong and largely exclusive focus of UniSA's partnerships on the various teaching programs. In light of the duration of some partnerships the Panel would have expected to see evidence of stronger and broader cooperation and collaboration on a number of fronts, such as research projects and student and staff exchanges and mobility. The Panel saw little evidence of any real engagement beyond the delivery of TNE programs. Given its broader internationalisation objectives and the two years since New Horizons was launched, it would seem appropriate to suggest that UniSA broadens the scope of its engagement with those partners remaining after the TNE exit strategy is completed... (RE1-6.1 TNE/platform for research*

## Commendations

Ex6. Curtin, 2009, p40

*The Panel is of the opinion that Curtin has a well-developed research linkages strategy with a number of active projects underway, including a developing research record at Sarawak.*

### *Commendation 11*

*AUQA commends Curtin for the development and implementation of its internationalisation of research including the developing research record at Curtin Sarawak. (RE1-6.2- local context for research)*

Ex7. La Trobe, 2010, p38

#### *4.4.2 Harbin Medical University, Harbin*

...

*This program is a potential jewel in the crown of LTU's international activities as it includes both research and TNE. (RE1-6.1 TNE/research platform) It is a high-quality and high-profile teaching program in China, which is underpinned by a robust quality management system. The program is integrated and interactive with an international perspective and a research-based curriculum that promotes active student participation.... The program is recognised by HMU as an example of good partnership practice.*

*The Panel is of the opinion that the partnership has been well conceptualised as a strong partnership of equals, which has been well implemented, with high quality of research and teaching activities as outputs.*

## Commendation 5

*AUQA commends La Trobe University for the successful partnership with Harbin Medical University which is an exemplar for other University partnerships. (RE1-6.1)*

### Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification

AUQA expressed *concern* that **universities were not adequately capitalising on the opportunity that overseas campuses and TNE partnerships provided to develop doctoral programs as well as undergraduate programs, or for developing research programs with a strong, relevant local focus** (Theme 21). AUQA highlighted what it regarded to be the unrealised potential of a TNE presence to generate active research collaboration, contributing to the development of the local research environment and workforce capability, as well as to an expansion of the global 'reach' of the university's research profile. The commendations had a primary focus on the forging and expansion of strong collaborative research training programs and on the ongoing development of a research-active culture at an off-shore campus and through established TNE partnerships.

### Implications for institutional management practice

1. As part of the university's internationalisation strategy, planning for all TNE programs should include consideration of the appropriate role for the TNE program in relation to internationalising teaching, research and community engagement.
2. In the development of overseas campuses, the development of teaching, research and community engagement should be an integral part of the development plan.
3. The situation for TNE teaching partnerships will vary according to the circumstances and nature of the program and the characteristics of the partner. It will be appropriate in some cases to use the TNE activity as a platform for developing research and community engagement, while in other cases it may be decided that the program's role will only be the provision of quality education to a new group of students.
4. Where there is scope for the development of TNE partnership beyond teaching, doctoral programs may a suitable path to lead to active research programs focused on local needs.

#### 4.4 Summary discussion of patterns of concerns and commendations

This chapter is the first of two chapters reporting and analysing the findings in relation to the research questions. This chapter provides a broad-level overview of the data, and a more detailed analysis of Dimension 1, and Dimensions 3-6. The next chapter provides an in-depth analysis of Dimension 2. Institutional Strategy and Management.

A total of 204 data elements were identified as *concerns* and 31 as *commendations* and these were categorised using the 6 dimensions of the analytical framework. The main clusters of the 204 *concerns* were 96 relating to ISM, and 23 and 24 relating to LG and QA respectively. Of the *commendations*, 19 related to ISM with the others spread over the other dimensions.

The results showed no discernible pattern of *concerns* and *commendations* in relation to the size of TNE enrolment or sub-grouping of university. Universities with overseas campuses attracted a larger number of *concerns*, which reflects the greater complexity and risk levels of campuses.

The major themes (recurring *concerns*) for each dimension were inadequacies in: academic governance and effective campus governance; comparability of academic standards and English-language; inadequacies of online resources, the linkage of TNE QA to the broader institutional processes; and capitalising on the potential of partnerships and campuses for further development. Across the 10 themes, 23 implications for improving management practice were proposed.

Looking ahead, Chapter 5 continues with a detailed, in-depth analysis of Dimension 2. Institutional Strategy and Management, which constitutes the main focus area of the study. The final chapter, Chapter 6, adopts a high-level strategic management perspective to integrate and focus discussion on the key institutional challenges for TNE initiatives.

## Chapter 5

# Fine-grained analysis of Institutional Strategy and Management dimension

In relation to Dimension 2. Institutional Strategy and Management (ISM), AUQA identified a total of 96 concerns across 23 universities. This chapter contains a fine-grained analysis and discussion of this dimension, which relates to the main area of professional interest and experience shaping the study.

The focus of this chapter is on Institutional Strategy and Management, which was characterised in the analytical framework developed in Chapter 3 Methodology as a dimension containing 10 sub-dimensions. To aid readability, the structure of this dimension and sub-dimensions is reproduced below:

### **Dimension 2. Institutional Strategy and Management (ISM) (includes institutional level and faculty level strategy and management)**

- 2.1 strategic purpose and planning - including the 'home' university's rationale for TNE, its place and contribution within the university's internationalisation strategy and overall strategic plan
- 2.2 risk management - all facets of internal and external risk
- 2.3 senior-level management responsibilities - oversight of TNE operations, role clarity and alignment
- 2.4 selection of overseas partners - types and numbers of partners
- 2.5 negotiation and management of contract
- 2.6 management of overseas partner
- 2.7 management of staffing - selection, numbers, qualifications and continuity, workload planning, staff development and 'induction'
- 2.8 financial management and viability - business planning and resources
- 2.9 operational management - alignment of university-level policies, processes, procedures, systems across faculties, operational units and TNE locations
- 2.10 accuracy of information across marketing and promotional materials

Of the 105 *concerns* and *commendations* falling within the *ISM* dimension, 21 related to the Sub-dimension Strategic Purpose and Planning and 19 to Staffing Management. The remaining *concerns* were spread over the other 8 sub-dimensions. In relation to the two main clusters, the reports of nearly half of the institutional audits (13 of 27) revealed *concerns* relating to the alignment of TNE planning and operations with the institutions' internationalisation strategies and overall strategic plans (Strategic Purpose and Planning). More than half (15 of 27) the institutional reports contained *concerns* for Staffing Management.

Nineteen *commendations* were given for *ISM*, with the most common area being effective Partner Management (8 of 19) and Strategic Purpose and Planning (5 of 19).

The distribution of concerns and commendations across sub-dimensions is shown in Tables 5.1 and 5.2, respectively.

## 5.1 Approach to the fine-grained analysis process for *ISM* – the third-level of analysis

To provide the basis for the fine-grained analysis of this dimension, the 96 *concerns* and the 19 *commendations* have been categorised across the 10 *ISM* sub-dimensions to allow for a more detailed analysis. The results of this finer-scale process are displayed in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 below.

### Guide to Tables 5.1 and 5.2

1. In line with the layout of Tables 4.1 and 4.2 in the previous chapter, Table 5.1 displays the *concerns* identified by AUQA in red text and Table 5.2 displays the *commendations* in green text.
2. 'T' denotes audits initiated by AUQA but completed by TEQSA during the transition period.
3. '\*' denotes universities operating overseas campuses.
4. 'Blue' text in the Canberra entry denotes data elements associated with the second stage of the two-stage audit Cycle 2 audit undertaken at the University's request.
5. Each data element in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 below has been allocated a unique identifying number (1), (2), (3), ... ) within the Table row for each university. These identifying numbers facilitate the fine-scale analysis of Dimension 2 by allowing the *concerns* and *commendations* to be easily tracked back to individual institutional audit reports.

**Table 5.1: Institutional Strategy and Management Dimension (ISM) concerns identified by AUQA in Cycle 2 audits categorised by sub-dimension**

University	Report year	ISM	2.1 SPP	2.2 RM	2.3 SMRO	2.4 SPT	2.5 CM	2.6 PTM	2.7 STM	2.8 FMV	2.9 OPM	2.10 MPI
Griffith	2008	xx	(2)						(1)			
Adelaide	2008	xxx	(3)						(2)	(1)		
Newcastle*	2008	x							(1)			
SCU	2008	xxxxx			(1)			(5)			(3)	(2),(4)
Swinburne*	2008	xxx	(3)						(1)		(2)	
Curtin*	2009	xxxxxxx		(1),(6)			(4)		(2)	(3)	(5)	(7)
RMIT*	2009	xxxxx	(1)			(5)	(4)				(2),(3)	
UniSA	2009	xx	(1)				(2)					
Macquarie	2009	xxxxxxx	(6)			(3)			(2),(7)	(4),(5)		(1)
Ballarat	2009	xxxx		(2)		(1)		(3)	(4)			
Canberra	2009/12	xxxxxxx	(9)	(7)		(1)	(5)	(2)	(6)	(4)	(3),(8)	
UNE	2009											
USQ	2009	xxxx		(4)					(3)		(2)	(1)
UWA	2009	xxx	(2)	(1)					(3)			
Bond	2010	xx	(1),(2)									
CSU	2010	xxxxx		(3)					(5)	(4)	(2)	(1)
La Trobe	2010	xxxxxxxx	(1)		(7)		(8)	(6)	(2),(3)		(5)	(4)
UniMel	2010	xx									(1),(2)	
CQU	2011	x							(1)			
JCU*	2011	xxxxx	(2)		(1)		(4)		(3),(5)			
UNSW	2011	xxxx	(4)		(2)		(1)				(3)	
Wollongong*	2011	xxxxxxxxxxx	(1),(4),(8)	(3),(10)	(2)		(6)	(5),(7)				(9)
Deakin-T	2012	xxx						(1),(2)	(3)			
ECU-T	2012											
Tasmania – T	2012											
Sydney–t	2012	x		(1)								
QUT-T	2012											
<b>TOTALS N=27</b>		<b>96</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>

Note: Data elements have been allocated a unique identifying number (1), (2), (3), ... ), \*=institution with overseas campus, T=audit undertaken by TEQSA, ISM=Institutional Strategy and Management, SPP=Strategic Purpose and Planning, RM=Risk Management, SMRO=Senior Management Responsibility and Oversight, SPT=Selection of Partner, Contract Management=CM, Partner Management=PTM, STM=Staffing Management, FMV=Financial Management and Viability, OPM=Operational Management, MPI=Marketing and Program Information

**Table 5.2: Institutional Strategy and Management Dimension (ISM) commendations identified by AUQA in Cycle 2 audits categorised by sub-dimension**

University	Report year	ISM	2.1 SPP	2.2 RM	2.3 SMRO	2.4 SPT	2.5 CM	2.6 PTM	2.7 STM	2.9 OPM	2.10 MPI
Griffith	2008	xx		(2)				(1)			
Adelaide	2008										
Newcastle*	2008										
SCU	2008										
Swinburne*	2008	x	(1)								
Curtin*	2009	xx	(2)					(1)			
RMIT*	2009	x	(1)								
UniSA	2009	xxx	(1)							(2),(3)	
Macquarie	2009										
Ballarat	2009										
Canberra	2009/2012										
UNE	2009	xx		(2)				(1)			
USQ	2009	x						(1)			
UWA	2009	x						(1)			
Bond	2010										
CSU	2010	x						(1)			
La Trobe	2010										
UniMel	2010										
CQU	2011										
JCU*	2011										
UNSW	2011										
Wollongong*	2011										
Deakin-T	2012										
ECU-T	2012	x	(1)								
Tasmania – T	2012	xx						(1)	(2)		
Sydney –T	2012	xx				(2)		(1)			
QUT-T	2012										
TOTAL N=27		19	5	2		1		8	1	2	

Note: Data elements have been allocated a unique identifying number (1, 2, 3, ... ), \*=institution with overseas campus, T=audit undertaken by TEQSA, ISM=Institutional Strategy and Management, SPP=Strategic Purpose and Planning, RM=Risk Management, SMRO=Senior Management Responsibility and Oversight, SPT=Selection of Partner, Contract Management=CM, Partner Management=PTM, STM=Staffing Management, FMV=Financial Management and Viability, OPM=Operational Management, MPI=Marketing and Program Information

## 5.2 Analysis of ISM Sub-dimensions

A sample of relevant extracts from the Reports appears under each of the ten Institutional Strategy and Management sub-dimensions discussed below. Each extract shows how each data element was coded in the analysis. The coding indicates the dimension, the data element number, and the sub-dimension number. For example, **ISM2-2.1SPP-** indicates Institutional Strategy and Management, data element 2 in the relevant university audit report, and the sub-dimension 2.1. Strategic Purpose and Planning (SPP). These codings are followed by more specific categorisations, such as 'integration/monitoring/evaluation'.

### Sub-dimension 2.1 Strategic Purpose and Planning (SPP)

This sub-dimension relates to the strategic purpose and planning (SPP) of TNE, including the 'home' university's rationale for TNE, and its place, alignment and contribution within the university's internationalisation strategy and overall strategic plan.

AUQA identified 16 *concerns* and made 5 *commendations* in the area of strategic purpose and planning across 18 institutions. The main area of AUQA *concern* related to the position of TNE activities within the broader institutional plan.

#### Concerns

Ext1. Griffith 2008 p.35

*Noting the University's strong commitment under the Griffith 2015 strategy to the setting of 'differential targets' as the distinctive characteristic of its approach to planning and performance monitoring in virtually every other aspect of its operations (including as noted at 4.5.5 above the setting of 'precise targets for internationalisation of curriculum'), the Audit Panel makes this final audit finding.*

*Affirmation 11*

*AUQA affirms Griffith University's approach to the forward planning of transnational education (TNE) activity driven by strategic considerations, but observes that this approach could be further integrated with the University's approach to planning and*

*performance monitoring by the setting of differentiated targets for TNE activity .(ISM2-2.1: SPP-integration/performance monitoring)*

Ext2. Swinburne 2008 p34-5

*Given the growing importance of the international campus of Swinburne at Sarawak in the internationalisation goals of Swinburne, the contribution of the other strategies especially the program-wise transnational partnerships need further consideration (ISM3-2.1:SPP-contribution to vision). The Panel is supportive of Swinburne's intent to develop transnational partnerships that best contribute to its 2015 vision. However, the University should now consider the resources expended on the TNE programs and the returns they bring in terms of contribution to the internationalisation goals of the University. TNE programs that continue due to legacy reasons need a serious review. ...*

Ext3. Macquarie 2009, p35-36

*The current strategic rationale for targeted selection of TNE partners is not clear and the University has yet to develop a TNE policy. The International Agreements Policy (2008) mentions that agreements should be established with institutions that advance the University's strategic direction. Given the University's vision to improve its place in international rankings, be a research leader, and have high quality teaching and learning, the University will need to review the strategic value of all its partnerships to ensure that they are well aligned with University objectives (ISM6 - 2.1: SPP-value and alignment). In particular, the high risks and opportunity costs of TNE programs imply that all TNE activity should come under scrutiny.*

*Recommendation 12*

*AUQA recommends that Macquarie University, in the context of the internationalisation strategy and the University's goals, review the rationale for offering transnational education programs. (ISM6 - 2.1: SPP-rationale)*

Ext4. La Trobe 2010 p32

*...A number of high-priority areas include the need to:*

*Review all existing international partnership agreements to ensure that they are aligned with the University's mission and strategic directions, are of high quality and are financially sustainable and/or have demonstrable strategic value.*

*An integrated and coherent internationalisation strategy and plan is needed to deal with previous opportunistic, but not necessarily well-considered, international and transnational education activities. A new internationalisation strategy should ensure that horizontal integration (faculties and La Trobe International), and vertical integration (faculties and University leadership) are achieved (ISM1-2.1: SPP value and alignment).*

Ext5. Wollongong 2011 p39

*There is a need for the University to give more holistic oversight to its offshore teaching partnerships, to ask itself what these partnerships are doing to assist its vision for internationalization. (ISM8-SPP2.1: TNE's contribution to vision)*

### Commendations

Most of the commendations (3 of 5) in this sub-dimension related to overseas campus operations, although only 5 of the 27 institutions reviewed in this Cycle have overseas campuses.

Both of the commendations below and the Swinburne case cited in Ext2 above highlight AUQA's particular focus on how TNE more broadly 'fits' with the development of an institution's overseas campus development and, in turn, within overall institutional strategy. AUQA's commendations in this area also sit alongside the legal and governance issues for overseas campuses raised in the discussion of Dimension 1 in the preceding chapter. The size and institutional significance of an overseas campus do provide a clear illustration of the case

for integrating overseas TNE developments with overall institutional strategy, which, in part, explains AUQA's attention to overseas campus matters.

Ext5. RMIT 2009 p24

*The Panel found that the development of the Vietnam campus as part of a dual hub approach is beginning to work for RMIT. While the full potential of Vietnam as the Asian Hub is yet to be realised, the Panel was able to verify examples of RMIT Vietnam bringing advantages to students and staff in Melbourne....*

*Commendation 5*

*AUQA commends the University for its characterisation of RMIT Vietnam as a hub in Asia to facilitate two-way mobility between Vietnam and Melbourne and between the other Asian partners.*

*(ISM1-SPP2.1: potential/reciprocal contribution of o/s campus)*

Ext6. Swinburne 2008 p29

*Swinburne University of Technology considers its Branch Campus at Sarawak as a key element in its long-term strategy to internationalise. It is important to appreciate how young Swinburne Sarawak is. Given that it attained campus status only in 2004; Swinburne Sarawak has shown remarkable progress. The Malaysian members of the Sarawak Board of Directors are also pleased with progress and felt that Swinburne Sarawak is making significant contributions to the state.*

*Commendation 10*

*AUQA commends Swinburne for the rapid progress that is being made to develop the Swinburne Sarawak Campus as a major platform of its internationalisation goals.... (ISM1-SPP2.1: strategic development/local contribution)*

## **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

*Concerns* relating to Strategic Purpose and Planning were the second most commonly recurring pattern identified by AUQA. This area of concern is evident in the reports for 13 institutions with a total of 16 concerns identified. The lack of linkage between the TNE strategy and internationalisation in general and with overall university strategy was the most common area of concern in Strategic Purpose and Planning.

The need for strategic linkage is clearly seen in AUQA's recommendation to Macquarie University (Ext3.) which refers to the need to "review the rationale for offering transnational education programs" in "the context of the internationalisation strategy and the University's goals". In the case of Griffith University (Ext2.), AUQA affirmed the University's "approach to forward planning of transnational education (TNE) driven by strategic considerations". AUQA also suggests that this approach be developed by closer integration with the University's planning and performance monitoring against targets. A key element of this linkage is the need for institutions to demonstrate what contribution its TNE programs are making to the internationalisation strategy and other strategic goals of the university (as apparent in the Wollongong (Ext4.) and Swinburne (Ext3.) extracts above). By implication, AUQA was also looking to encourage the development of specific performance measures. In cases where the institution has an overseas campus, RMIT (Ext6.) and Swinburne (Ext7.), AUQA commends the university's positioning of the campus as a 'hub' or 'platform' for its broader transnational activities. A related element is the importance of making a contribution to the host country, as illustrated in the Swinburne commendation (Ext7.).

The core of this pattern of *concerns*, which has been identified as a theme, is that **TNE initiatives were not sufficiently linked to the university's internationalisation strategy and overall institutional goals, strategic direction and strategic plans** (Theme 4).

### **Implications for institutional management practice**

In the light of the pattern of AUQA concerns and commendations in the extracts, and the theme relating to linkage of TNE strategy to higher-level strategy, a number of implications for management practice have been identified by building on relevant findings in the literature and my own professional experience of institutional management and TNE:

1. TNE proposals and periodic reviews should examine the role that TNE generally, and the program in particular, have within the university's internationalisation strategy and broader strategic planning.
2. Institutions considering the development of TNE programs should not look only to the potential value and viability of the program in its own right, but also ensure that the development can be positioned and justified in terms of the program's potential contribution to the university's internationalisation strategy and to its broader goals. Consideration needs to be given to the TNE activity's potential to foster international relationships more broadly.
3. The contributions to the host country should also be considered, including increased access to higher education, improved skill levels and other contributions to the economy, and the national interest.
4. At the same time, as a program proposal is developed, a clear process should be identified for assessing the specific and university-level contributions of the proposed venture. This should include specific targets with timelines and performance measures.
5. The development of overseas campuses should be clearly considered as a major university-level development which is central to the university's development goals and should not be seen merely as a tangential TNE activity.
6. Overseas campuses can provide a 'hub' for all TNE activities in the region, so the development of the campus and of the TNE programs in the region should be considered as part of an overall coherent strategy.

Both AUQA's findings and the themes identified, and their implications for management practice, resonate with studies of TNE in the higher education literature and my professional experience.

### **Sub-dimension 2.2 Risk Management (RM)**

This sub-dimension relates to all aspects of risk, including financial, market, academic and reputational risk, and to institutional approaches to risk identification and mitigation.

AUQA identified 10 concerns and made 2 commendations in the area of risk management across 12 institutions.

### Concerns

Ext1. Curtin 2009 p11

*In general, there seemed to be a disconnection between the strategic risks considered at the Council level and the operational risks considered at a faculty level. In particular, in a review of documentation, the Panel noted that many of the risk analyses conducted for offshore courses failed to include external risks. (ISM1-2.1:RM-management disconnect/full range of risks)*

...

*A second area which will require ongoing development and attention is the identification and assessment of academic risks, including those in transnational education (ISM1- 2.1:RM-id/assessment). The Panel noted that some reference is made to this in the Portfolio. Once again, in a review of the documentation it was not clear to the Panel that it is receiving sufficient attention, nor that identified key risks were being followed up with a sense of urgency. ...*

*With the introduction of the academic standards framework document, it will be important that the faculties and the Academic Board assume a greater role and management of identifying and managing academic risks.*

#### *Recommendation 1*

*AUQA recommends that Curtin ensure that its risk management framework integrates all major external risks and comprehensively addresses academic risks (ISM1- 2.2:RM-external/academic).*

Ext2. USQ 2009 p31

*USQ is aware of the significant business and reputational risks in its international operations and has improved its contractual arrangements. It*

*has also introduced a comprehensive set of approval protocols for new partners and a rigorous process for monitoring the academic, financial and operational performance of its continuing partners. The University believes that these measures have significantly mitigated the risks to which it had been exposed...*

*The Education Partner Manual, which was very new at the time of the audit visit, has considered the sector good practices, and sets the requirements for the review of the partnerships. The Panel was advised that considerations in reviewing partnerships will include recouping full costs and reasonable contributions to overheads except in cases judged to be of high strategic value relative to a longer term objective. USQ uses improved metrics to monitor the performance of international partnerships and disseminates these to the USQ community including to Council through regular strategic alignment reports...*

#### *Affirmation 6*

*AUQA affirms USQ's actions and plans to mitigate its business and reputational risks (ISM4-2.2:RM-business/reputation) in its international operations in particular through its assessment of international partnerships ...*

#### Ext3. Wollongong 2011 p33

*However, the increasing scale of the University's international activities, both on and offshore, requires UOW to give serious attention to strategy (ISM1:2.1-SPP) development and quality assurance at senior management level (ISM2-senior level oversight) as well as at operational levels and through committees.*

*... the Audit Panel finds that increasing attention is being paid to quality assurance and compliance processes, but these processes are not yet fully integrated into a holistic and strategic overview of the potential advantages and reputational risks of such offshore operations (ISM3- 2.2:RM-reputational risk).... However it is yet to give enough attention to the actions*

*and interactions that will sustain the quality of its international reputation. Broader questions still to be considered concern the strategic role of the University's offshore operations. (ISM2-2.1:-TNE strategic role)*

### Commendations

There were two commendations in the area of risk. Both related to effective management of the termination of TNE activities based on the perception that teaching partnerships are a particularly high risk activity.

Ext4. UNE 2009 p 30

*UNE has now reduced (and almost eliminated) transnational teaching partnerships, replacing them with articulation agreements. This means that students are enrolled with the overseas partner until they complete the designated overseas qualification, and UNE has no direct responsibility for them until they come to Australia and enrol as UNE students.*

#### *Commendation 6*

*AUQA commends UNE for reviewing its transnational education partnership model and adopting a system that has a lower level of inherent risk to the University. (ISM2-2.2:risk management/partnership model)*

Ext5. Griffith 2008 p31

*[The Panel] heard of Griffith's plans to initially offer the Bachelor of Nursing (Post-Registration) and then later other Griffith health science programs in Abu Dhabi via a partnership with the Abu Dhabi Education Council. The Panel noted that this offshore venture differed somewhat from the Singaporean and Japanese programs, in that it involved the transfer of intellectual property to the overseas partner, and the permanent location of Griffith staff to work with and provide training of the partner's staff.*

### *Commendation 11*

*AUQA commends the Griffith University School of Nursing and Midwifery for the provision of service and support for their transnational education (TNE) programs in Singapore and Japan (ISM1-partner management); and Griffith International for the adoption of a more risk-aware approach to the provision of TNE programs (ISM2-2.1:RM-partnership model).*

#### **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

The core of this recurring area of *concern* and *commendation* is AUQA's perception that the **institutional approaches to identifying and managing risk did not encompass the full range of internal and external risks associated with TNE activities, including academic, financial and reputational risks** (Theme 5). This assessment by AUQA is particularly apparent in Ext1. Griffith and Ext2. USQ.

Further, AUQA observed that risk management activities are fragmented across institutional levels (Ext3. Wollongong). Risk assessment did not take place across levels, from program to university levels, including senior management, academic board and council (Ext1. Curtin, Ext2. USQ). A related area of *concern* is that universities were not sufficiently risk-aware or committed to risk mitigation, as shown by the Griffith *commendation* in Ext5.

#### **Implications for institutional management practice**

1. Institutions should adopt a holistic approach to assessing all forms of risk in a systematic and integrated way.
2. Risk needs to be considered at all levels of the institution from operational program level, to senior management level, and to academic board and council levels. These considerations need to be articulated to form a coherent process.
3. Following the assessment of risk levels, mitigating strategies need to be devised and implemented to reduce the risks to an acceptable level.

### **Sub-dimension 2.3 Senior Management Responsibility and Oversight (SMRO)**

This sub-dimension relates to the senior-level oversight and management of TNE and to the clarity and alignment of senior-management roles across the various facets of TNE activity. AUQA identified 5 concerns across 5 institutions and made no commendations in the area of senior level management of TNE activities.

Ext1. SCU 2008 p27-28

*The Audit Panel heard varying accounts of the responsibilities for international activities overall and for collaborative activities in particular but it is clear that the major responsibility for managing educational collaborations (onshore and offshore) has been given to individual schools or colleges...*

*AUQA expresses concern over a lack of University-wide scrutiny and checks and balances in these arrangements.*

*Recommendation 6*

*AUQA recommends that SCU consider a dedicated senior executive level appointment to ensure effective leadership and accountability for international activities, particularly for educational collaborations offshore (ISM1 -2.3:senior management responsibility and oversight) and onshore.*

Ext2. La Trobe 2010 p40

*...while there are some very strong, and even exemplary, partnerships found, there was a lack of consistency of approach, procedures and processes for TNE programs.*

*At the strategic and leadership levels, the University should improve central leadership supervision and monitoring of the TNE strategy and activities (ISM7-2.3:SMRO), including having senior LTU staff available to negotiate TNE agreements (ISM8-2.5:contract management).*

*AUQA finds this development [the combining of TNE-related administrative units] to be a step in the right direction, as is the University's intent for greater oversight by committees. However, the increasing scale of the University's international activities, both on and offshore, requires UOW to give serious attention to strategy development (ISM1-2.1: strategic purpose and planning) and quality assurance at senior management level (ISM2-2.3: senior management responsibility and oversight) as well as at operational levels and through committees.*

### **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

The core of AUQA's concern is that **there was inadequate university-level leadership and accountability for TNE strategy and activities and oversight** (Theme 6), as highlighted in Ext3. above where expanding scope of TNE activities "requires UOW to give serious attention to strategy development and quality assurance at senior management level". In AUQA's view, expressed in Ext1. and Ext2. above, there is a need for specific senior, university-level roles/appointments to ensure proper decision-making, review and accountability for TNE activities. It is also apparent from AUQA's line of thinking, expressed in Ext3., that it is assumed that senior-level oversight will improve the strategic alignment of TNE with the overall strategic purpose and planning of the university.

### **Implications for institutional management practice**

1. The main purpose of introducing a university-level leadership role is to ensure that the university interest prevails over the interests of faculties, departments and individuals, and is appropriately linked to university goals and directions. Secondly, a university-level leadership role ensures that decision making proceeds through an explicit formal process that is directly governed by university rules and policies. Any ambiguity in leadership and responsibility across different levels within the university is alleviated.
2. The key focus in allocating university-level responsibilities for TNE among a senior management group should be to ensure clarity of roles with no gaps or overlaps. In

establishing a new senior level leadership role for TNE, as with other areas of university management, there are 2 options: 1) to establish a new specific position to focus on international and TNE or 2) to allocate these responsibilities to existing senior positions, such as the DVC/PVC Academic, DVC/PVC International and VP Finance in a coordinated/matrix system.

#### **Sub-dimension 2.4 Selection of Partners (SPT)**

The focus of this sub-dimension is the university's selection of TNE partners across various locations, as well as numbers, 'types' and capabilities of partners. AUQA identified 4 concerns and made 1 commendation across 5 institutions in this sub-dimension.

#### Concerns

Ext1. RMIT 2009, p 29

*The policy and procedures for strategic alliances and partnerships is yet to be tested in the formation of a new international partnership. A review of partner management arrangements is underway and will assist with RMIT's intention to develop a more systematic approach to management of agreements in 2009.*

#### *Affirmation 5*

*AUQA affirms the actions being taken by RMIT to implement rigorous procedures in the strategic selection of partners (ISM5-2.4:selection of partners) and in managing contracts for transnational education partnerships (ISM4-2.5: contract management)....*

Ext2. Macquarie 2009 p35

*Potential partners in transnational programs need careful scrutiny, and contractual arrangements need to be on a solid legal footing to reduce inherent risk. Some progress has been made in developing templates and processes for considering the strategic merits of potential partners, (ISM3-2.4:SPT) and developing contracts for international agreements. As yet, many of*

*these systems are not fully operational. The Panel encourages the University to make them fully operational as soon as possible.*

Ext3. Canberra 2009 p13

*The review of UC's transnational programs ... that provided assessments of the UC transnational partnerships also urged the University to reconsider its TNE strategy and objectives. While the moratorium on developing TNE programs has been lifted following the Vice-Chancellor's recent visits to TNE partners, the University's goals and priorities in its overall TNE strategy need further clarification and communication (ISM9-2.1:SPP) to its internal community. As well, the University should give specific consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of the current TNE partnerships (ISM1-2.4:SPT) ....*

### Commendations

In its single commendation in this sub-dimension, AUQA highlighted the university's relationship with a strong partner whose strategic fit aligned well with the university's overall strategic plan.

Ext4. Sydney 2012 p44

#### *Commendation 18*

*The University of Sydney's Sydney Nursing School is commended for the quality of its offshore provision of the Bachelor of Nursing (Post-registration) program which provides a model to the University for offshore provision, paying appropriate attention to market needs, strategic alignment (ISM1- 2.1:SPP), the assurance of academic standards, and the student experience (AC1-3.3 teaching, learning, standards-3.4 student experience), and for sustaining a strong relationship with a quality partner (ISM2-2.4-partner selection)/management).*

## **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

The recurring area of concern related to a **lack of systematic processes for selecting TNE partners that utilises a comprehensive set of criteria describing what the university requires from the partnership as the basis for the assessment of strategic fit between the prospective partner and the university** (Theme 7). Ext1. and Ext2. both highlight the need for partners to be selected on the basis of strategic merit and to meet rigorous selection criteria to ensure their capability to deliver and support the university's programs. Ext3. reinforces the vital importance of a "strong relationship with a quality partner" to sustaining a high-quality TNE program.

### **Implications for institutional management practice**

1. Universities should develop a systematic partner appraisal process, possibly operationalised through university templates/guidelines.
2. Partnership selection should involve an extended discussion and review of the goals and strategic directions of each party to ensure that they are in harmony and that both see clear value in developing the TNE program.
3. The criteria for partner selection should include a wide range of factors, encompassing assessment of:
  - government policy environment in the host country
  - compatibility of the legal frameworks and the business models in home and host country
  - the strength and stability of the proposed partner
  - the partner's experience and reputation in relevant educational activities
  - the soundness of the management and governance arrangements in the partner organisation
  - market considerations in the proposed 'host' country

### **Sub-dimension 2.5 Contract Management (CM)**

This sub-dimension focusses on the negotiation and management of TNE partnership contracts.

AUQA identified 8 concerns relating to contract management across as many institutions. It made no commendations in this area.

Ext1. Curtin 2009 p 31

*A review of a number of contracts showed them to be comprehensive and to adequately address the academic quality assurance responsibilities and related processes. During the annual review of offshore programs the contracts are reviewed. The Panel noted that there was one contract which dated back about 20 years and which had not been formally renewed or updated but the partnership has continued. The Panel heard that this is an area which is being improved through greater management and monitoring.*

*Affirmation 5*

*AUQA affirms Curtin's attention to the University transnational education contract management system to ensure stringent control and regular review. (ISM4-2.5:CM)*

Ext2. RMIT 2009 p27

*In spite of the policies and procedures in place, contract management and oversight in both higher education and VET programs have slipped on a few occasions. The Panel found evidence of deficiencies in contracts and contract management in both the higher education and TAFE offshore arrangements that it selected for further follow-up (see sections 3.9.1 to 3.9.5). The University has made efforts to address these concerns through the Global Business Development Unit; however given the level of risk with these programs and the number of offshore students, these efforts need to be accelerated. (ISM4-2.5:contract management)*

*... A review of partner management arrangements is underway and will assist with RMIT's intention to develop a more systematic approach to management of agreements in 2009.*

### *Affirmation 5*

*AUQA affirms the actions being taken by RMIT to implement rigorous procedures in the strategic selection of partners (ISM5- 2.4: SPT) and in managing contracts for (ISM4-2.5:CM) transnational education partnerships...*

Ext3. JCU 2011 p 40

*There is a need for more senior level attention to this partnership (ISM1-2.3:SMRO) by JCU, a development that BJUT [Beijing University of Technology] would support, including closer monitoring of the provisions of the agreement between JCU and BJUT (ISM4-2.5 contract management) and continuation of the more frequent management meetings implemented prior to the audit. Management of arrangements appears to have been left to the faculty but not all requirements under JCU policy have been adhered to.*

Ext4 Wollongong 2011 p39

*... AUQA finds the University's current contracts with partners have yet to fully reflect the new procedures and arrangements specific to each location. As an example, the contract for teaching in Hong Kong (section 4.7.6) is a standard contract that contains clauses which are irrelevant to the nature of the arrangements and a quality assurance schedule that requires much greater articulation and precision. AUQA urges UOW to complete as expeditiously as possible its review and augmentation of the adequacy of its schedule of quality assurance procedures (QA1-5.1:review mechanisms) in its offshore teaching contracts (ISM6-2.5:contract management).*

*...From the sample of partnerships visited, AUQA is inclined to agree with UOW that many weaknesses lie in central monitoring and documentation rather than in the academic conduct of the courses.*

## **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

The core area of AUQA's concern is the **lack of systematic and rigorous processes for specifying contract terms and responsibilities, managing adherence to the contract** (Theme 8), and reviewing contract effectiveness before renewal.

### **Implications for institutional management practice**

1. Responsibilities for the development and approval of TNE agreements or contracts and their terms and conditions need to be specified to encompass the relevant range of interests: program, faculty and central levels, academic and business, and university and partner.
  
2. TNE contracts should clearly and comprehensively specify the rights and responsibilities of the parties. Drawing on my professional experience with TNE contracts and the QAA (2007) recommendations, a comprehensive contract should include the following:
  - a) Parties involved and period of the contract
  - b) Program(s) covered by contract
  - c) Legal jurisdiction of contract and provisions for settlement of disputes
  - d) Process for renewing contract
  - e) Arrangements for teach-out if program or partnership is discontinued
  - f) Joint management, liaison and review mechanisms
  - g) Specification of the roles and responsibilities of each party in relation to:
    - i. Appointment and performance management of staff
    - ii. Recruitment of students
    - iii. Selection of students
    - iv. Provision of teaching and learning facilities
    - v. Learning resources – IT and library
    - vi. Information about the programs and marketing
    - vii. Ownership of IP
    - viii. Financial arrangements
    - ix. Interface between partner systems for student records, staff and finance
    - x. Academic authority for decision-making
    - xi. Quality assurance and standards
    - xii. Delivery of programs
    - xiii. Assessment of students

- xiv. Moderation and benchmarking
  - xv. Student conduct and disciplinary matters
  - xvi. Student administration and support
3. Likewise, the allocation of responsibilities for the management of contracts between the university and the partner needs to be established.
  4. Successful contract management depends upon senior oversight of contract management coupled with clear responsibilities and management protocols at program, faculty and university levels.
  5. Effective accountability for adhering to contractual requirements and university policies depends on clear line-management from program head, to faculty associate dean international or equivalent, and on to faculty dean and the relevant senior officers.
  6. All staff need to be given appropriate professional development in relation to their responsibilities as allocated under the contract.

#### **Sub-dimension 2.6 Partnership Management (PTM)**

There were a significant number of concerns (8) relating to partnership management, but considerably fewer than for strategic purpose and planning (15) or for the management of staffing (18). On the other hand, the most substantial number of commendations (8) in this dimension was identified in the area of partnership management. Hence, discussion of findings for this descriptor focusses mainly on commendations.

#### **Concerns**

Ext1. Ballarat 2009 p 44-45

*In this regard, the University needs to make sure its partner providers are aware of the performance of their student cohorts against comparative cohorts from other locations including Mt Helen, and to discuss at program level, rather than at course level, improvements and adjustments that need to be made to ensure equivalence in outcomes...*

*Better communication on academic and operational matters is likely to be welcomed by partner providers, as this was a common area for improvement identified by offshore and onshore partners. Specifically, operational matters such as changes to semesters and examination dates need to be negotiated with all partners well in advance...*

#### *Recommendation 12*

*AUQA recommends that UB take steps to improve communication with partner providers on academic and student matters, (ISM3- 2.6: PTM-communications) including informing these providers of the comparative performance of their student cohorts and ensuring action is taken as required to improve student outcomes (QA1-5.3- evaluation used for improvement).*

Ext2. Wollongong 2011 p39

*New documentation for offshore partners is being developed but these partners had no or little knowledge of a proposed new handbook for offshore partners or of the proposed standards for student support (ISM5- 2.6:PTM-communications). The drafts of these documents appear incomplete and not yet well developed. It is still unclear how UOW policies will be applied to offshore teaching partnerships, especially regarding student grievances where local practice often prevails. ...*

*AUQA finds that the University has not yet reached a standard of uniform good practice in its management of offshore teaching partnerships, (ISM5- 2.6:PTM-uniform practice) despite the codification of good practices for transnational education that has been occurring since 2005 in Australian higher education. This is of some concern, given a recommendation on quality assurance for transnational education in the 2006 AUQA Audit Report....*

#### *Recommendation 7*

*AUQA recommends that the University of Wollongong benchmark and review its arrangements for oversight and management of all*

*aspects of offshore teaching partnerships and implement changes to ensure that it is operating in accordance with recognised good practice.*

### Commendations

Ext1. CSU 2010 p39

*CSU's arrangements with CTC and other partner institutions in China show examples of good practice in partnership arrangements. These features, which are facilitated by an external organisation, include regular meetings among CSU and the four partners, which provide opportunities for benchmarking and discussion of issues. CSU has supported academics from CTC to visit CSU on exchange and the Audit Panel suggests that the University continue and strengthen such exchange visits, which will assist in other collaborative links, including student exchange and the preparation of joint publications. (ISM1-2.6:PTM)*

Ext2. UNE 2009 p21

*The Panel recognised that this [project management] approach ensures that all aspects of the relationship are covered and recorded, and that all relevant parties are represented on the project team.*

#### *Commendation 5*

*AUQA commends UNE's attention to the management of quality in its partnership arrangements through the Integrated Project Management Framework, with a Joint Procedures Manual and a Project Team for each project. (ISM1-2.6: PTM)*

### **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

AUQA's main area of concern was with **the lack of established protocols to ensure an effective, clear, and systematic approach to university-partner communications, particularly as they relate to university academic policies, and procedures, administrative processes, and**

**student performance** (Theme 9). However, 3 of the concerns related to the management of exit/teachout arrangements for particular programs. This is important when such circumstances arise, but it provides a rather narrow focus on straightforward 'technical' issues with limited broader value. The more strategic issue is being careful in selecting partners and markets with sufficient demand, focusing on sustainability and developing solid contingency plans when unexpected events occur.

### **Implications for institutional management practice**

1. Effective partner management should involve active engagement with partners at the strategic university level as well as at program level.
2. Effective communications between the university and partner are crucial for the success of the TNE program. An effective communications strategy involves a coordinated, structured and multi-level approach to communication. There should be an established routine of regular communication at university, faculty and program levels, with structured information flows across levels. At each level, appropriate university and partner officers should be nominated to ensure that a regular pattern of communication is established. The communications strategy should cover the ongoing implementation of university policy, teaching of courses, the support of students, staffing appointments, access to library and other resources, review of student performance, benchmarking across corresponding student cohorts, and the dissemination of good practice.
3. The communication and broader partner management strategy should include staff visits and exchanges as well as regular electronic and face-to-face meetings.
4. Person to person communication should be supplemented by electronic and hardcopy access to university policy databases and specialised TNE handbooks, and partner access to student performance data across the relevant locations for comparative and benchmarking purposes.
5. For programs of sufficient size, the university should consider appointing a full time university staff member to oversee and coordinate the operation of the program and to serve as partner 'relationship manager'. Such an appointment involves additional cost,

but can also be effective in reducing the number of visits required by university staff and can significantly expedite staffing and student selection and other decision-making processes.

### **Sub-dimension 2.7 Staffing Management (STM)**

Within the ISM dimension, the staffing sub-dimension was the focus of 18 concerns and one commendation – the highest number of recorded concerns. AUQA’s primary focus in this area was on university-partner shared responsibilities, selection of staff, induction and professional development including cross-cultural training, and long-term sustainability of the staffing profile.

#### Concerns

Ext1. UWA 2009 p33

*The Panel found these guidelines [for offshore operations] to be insufficient to effectively induct staff into offshore teaching. As a strategy of risk minimisation the Panel recommends a formal and consistent approach to induction for all staff who teach offshore.*

#### *Recommendation 5*

*AUQA recommends that UWA introduce formalised induction, including cross-cultural awareness training, for all staff who are teaching offshore (ISM3-2.7:STM-induction).*

Ext2. Newcastle 2008 p30

*The Panel observed that some local support staff members demonstrate outstanding initiative, multiskilling and commitment to work hard to make the programs a success. UON Singapore also made some very good recent academic appointments to strengthen the programs. The Panel noted with some concern the relatively late recognition in the University’s self-review process of the inclusion of induction programs for new and casual*

*appointments of academic staff on the Singapore campus (ISM1-2.7:STM-induction). Steps have been taken by the Dean, Singapore Campus, to remedy this omission.*

Ext3. Griffith 2008 p33

*The 2007 audit of offshore programs performed by Griffith identified a need to improve the support for onshore Griffith staff teaching offshore, and to improve the preparation of staff recruited offshore to teach Griffith programs. On the basis of the Panel's observations ...and taking into account the University's plans to target TNE partnerships in China, India, and the Middle East, the Panel agrees.*

*Affirmation 9*

*AUQA affirms Griffith University's decision to recruit appropriately qualified local staff in overseas locations (ISM1-2.7:STM:-recruitment), and to provide increased induction and support for Griffith staff teaching offshore .... (ISM2-2.7:STM-induction/support)*

Ext4. Macquarie, 2009 p 37

*The University has yet to develop a carefully structured framework for preparing staff for TNE teaching. It is currently ad hoc. This carries risks ....*

*Affirmation 9*

*AUQA affirms Macquarie University's initial steps towards providing a suite of professional development programs for intercultural competencies, international understandings, and training for transnational teaching. (ISM7-2.7:STM-PD)*

Ext5. Curtin 2009 p 17-18

*There are a number of competing academic workload pressures which need to be considered to accommodate administrative, teaching and research demands, including, where appropriate, the onshore and offshore academic commitments.*

*The University made available during the Audit Visit a comprehensive set of documents relating to the development of the Curtin Workload Management System. The University is presently considering and reviewing these issues and other workload-related matters. ...*

*Affirmation 1*

*AUQA affirms the actions being taken by Curtin to address staff workloads through the development and finalisation of the Workload Management System (ISM2-2.7:STM-workload).*

Ext6. La Trobe 2010 p73

*The Panel finds that that the partnership is working well, but that attention needs to be given to ensuring the continuity of personnel (ISM3-2.7:STM-staffing continuity) to manage the program at ECNU and to provide some continuity of LTU teaching staff who teach on the program. A detailed review of the program was conducted in November 2008 by LTUIC. LTU should consider bringing greater stability to this partnership to reap the benefits of the collaboration and to ensure good quality in the program.*

*...*

*There is a need for succession planning of LTU key personnel to ensure continuity.*

Ext7. Deakin 2012 p 32

*Recommendation 7*

*It is recommended that Deakin University ensure more engagement between the academic staff in Australia and those responsible for teaching and tutoring programs offshore (ISM3-2.7:STM-mutual engagement).*

Commendations

Note: There was only one commendation identified in relation to the management of staffing.

Ext1. Tasmania 2012 p12

*The Panel notes in particular that staff from the offshore programs... are also provided with regular comprehensive orientation and professional development sessions in China. A number of key administrative and academic staff from SOU have participated in orientation and induction programs in Tasmania. These were highly regarded by the participants and have led to improved services for offshore students.*

*Commendation 1*

*The University of Tasmania is commended for the attention it gives to the orientation, induction and involvement of its staff, including the particular needs of sessional staff and the UTAS staff and staff from partner institutions....(ISM1-2.7:STM-induction/support)*

**Discussion of concerns and theme identification**

AUQA's concerns covered a range of staffing issues common to all higher education contexts (such as selection of appropriate staff, workload allocation and assessment of performance), as well as the particular challenges arising from the nature of TNE.

In Ext6. AUQA highlighted the need to ensure that there was both management and staff continuity at offshore locations in order to bring greater stability and long term sustainability to the program. The Griffith report (Ext3.) raised the issue of adequate offshore staff recruitment processes. Workload planning was raised as a concern in both the Curtin and Macquarie reports as illustrated in Extracts 4. and 5. In Ext7. from the Deakin report, AUQA recommended that the university “ensure more engagement between the academic staff in Australia and those responsible for teaching and tutoring programs offshore”.

A significant area of AUQA concern (8 of 18 *concerns*) is the lack of adequate staff induction and professional development for academic and professional staff, both from the home institution and from the partner/overseas campus. There is an identified need to provide ‘country’ orientation and cultural awareness training for staff of the ‘home’ institution who are teaching in TNE programs (Ext1. UWA), and to provide an effective induction for partner staff in the ‘host’ country into university policies, requirements and approaches to teaching and administration and partner practices (Ext2. Newcastle).

Two themes can be identified in the staffing sub-dimension. The first is that **the induction and professional development for both ‘home’ institution and partner staff were inadequate** (Theme 10). The second theme that has been identified is that **current staff profiles together with the recruitment processes, workload management, and continuity and succession planning were insufficient to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the staffing arrangements for TNE programs** (Theme 11).

### **Implications for institutional management practice**

Implications for practice in the management of staffing vary depending on the nature of the TNE activity; for example, transnational partnerships face somewhat different challenges from international branch campuses. In transnational partnerships, the partner ‘host’ employs teaching and administrative staff, rather than the ‘home’ university. In this model, the university may have less direct oversight of staff appointments. Another relevant factor in transnational partnerships is that, typically, the partner employs significant numbers of part-time and sessional staff, and these staff may work across a number of programs and/or university partnerships.

In branch campuses, the university will normally recruit and appoint teaching staff directly. Some branch campus arrangements may involve a local partner to provide facilities and administrative services. In such cases, the campus partner will commonly recruit administrative and support staff whose appointment may then be approved by the home university. In a branch campus situation, the 'home' university has a much greater degree of control over staff selection.

**Implications for effective practice in staffing management include the following:**

1. The university needs to ensure that 'home' university academic and professional staff involved in TNE receive a thorough induction to transnational education. An appropriate induction program includes an introduction to the aims of the TNE program and its fit with broader university goals, briefing on the higher education system in the 'host' country and professional development designed to enhance cross-cultural competencies.
2. The home university must also ensure that partner staff receive systematic induction, at the appropriate level, to the university's overall identity, its values, relevant policies and its approaches to teaching and learning.
3. Partner staff must be given professional development opportunities that are appropriately aligned with university policy on professional development and performance enhancement planning. These opportunities may include mentoring/coaching by 'home' university staff and staff exchanges.
4. The challenges of developing a sustainable staffing profile in a TNE partner, and, to some extent, in a branch campus, involve a careful selection process to ensure an appropriate balance of seniority in rank and experience, specialisation and flexibility among what may be a small number of staff.
5. In view of the relatively small number of staff and the high proportion of sessional staff, particular attention needs to be given to ensuring continuity and succession planning for key staff at the partner location.
6. Where staff from the 'home' institution undertake teaching at the partner or branch campus location, appropriate recognition of the demands of transnational teaching with

its challenges of catering for cultural differences between students and staff in the home and host countries needs to be made within university workload formulae.

7. As TNE partner staff are generally employed by the partner, the home university needs to put into place mechanisms to ensure alignment with the course requirements and university policies (e.g. numbers of staff, their qualifications and student/staff ratios).

### **Sub-dimension 2.8 Financial Management and Viability (FMV)**

This sub-dimension relates to the systematic management of TNE programs so that their level of viability is properly assessed. This involves a formula for allocating costs to programs, tracking expenditure and assessing sustainability in terms of the level of surplus generated. AUQA identified 6 *concerns* across 5 institutions and made no *commendations* in this area.

#### Concerns

Ext1. Adelaide 2008 p22

*The Audit Panel encourages the University to review the sustainability and financial viability of offshore teaching arrangements, including the willingness and availability of staff to travel consistently over a number of years for offshore teaching.*

*The University is moving towards fully-costed financial models for all its offshore teaching programs. The recent amalgamation of the former Adelaide Graduate School of Business and School of Commerce into a new Business School in the Faculty of the Professions offers an opportunity to reduce 'overload' offshore teaching and implement new funding models.*

*(ISM1-2.8: FMV-financial viability and model/ ISM2-2.7: STM-sustainability)*

Ext2. CSU 2010 p41

*In addition, the NSW Auditor General has recommended that in light of expansion plans, the University strengthen corporate governance, accounting and internal control procedures for its overseas campus. At the time of the Audit Visit, CSU was conducting an internal audit of expenditures.*

*AUQA encourages the University to ensure that it addresses the risks inherent in rapid expansion when planning the implementation of the new courses at the Ontario Campus (ISM3-2.2RM). CSU needs to be able to readily identify and track all expenditures (ISM4-FMV:expenditure tracking/control) for CSU Ontario and for other partnerships, so the true level of surplus is known.*

### **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

The core of this area of concern is AUQA's perception that **institutions did not have adequate cost allocation models and expenditure tracking mechanisms in place, resulting in inaccurate assessments of financial viability** (Theme 12).

AUQA also identifies staffing sustainability as an important issue and this is consistent with concerns expressed under 2.7 Staffing Management.

### **Implications for institutional management practice**

The implications for effective practice include the following:

1. Institutions need to develop and implement robust business planning and financial management approaches, including a model for allocating costs and the tracking of revenue and expenditure in accord with this model.
2. The academic and business planning for each program should involve the regular production of financial forecasts, which should include various 'scenarios', including variations in student numbers, fee levels and currency conversion rates.
3. Programs should be fully costed so that the costs of university and faculty overheads in supporting, monitoring and reviewing programs are allocated according to the university's cost allocation model with the appropriate level of costs being accurately captured at the program level. Consideration should also be given to the opportunity costs of undertaking a TNE initiative especially in relation to senior management time.

4. In the absence of any external considerations, each program should generate a surplus or should clearly be on track to do so within an acceptable timeframe. However, it should be recognised that the university may wish to invest in strategic goals, or operate particular programs at a loss if they provide a way of achieving strategic benefits. For example, the university may choose to subsidise its TNE operations in view of the opportunities for international experience that such programs can provide for academic staff. Such initiatives can bring benefits to the internationalisation of the staffing profile in terms of culture and skills with consequent benefits to their research and teaching. More broadly, TNE programs can contribute to, and strengthen, the internationalisation of the university. In such circumstances, the allocation of costs should reflect the balance of benefits that accrue to the TNE program and, more broadly, to the university's internationalisation strategy.
5. In assessing financial sustainability, it is important that a 3-5 year time horizon is used so that program development, start-up costs and cyclical review improvement costs are factored into the overall calculations.
6. To improve the sustainability of the staffing profile, the forecasts of staffing costs need to accommodate the potential for decreasing interest over time of home university academic staff in travelling for block teaching in the TNE location. This may involve increased expenditure in recruiting and/or rewarding staff.

### **Sub-dimension 2.9 Operational Management (OPM)**

This sub-dimension covers a broad range of operational management matters, including the implementation of the policy framework, information and management systems, communication protocols and the day to day management of students, staff and facilities. AUQA identified 13 concerns across 10 institutions and made 2 commendations in this area.

#### Concerns

Ext1. Swinburne 2008 p33

*There are a few areas related to student data management that need improvement. Enrolment processes have been a major concern to students. Introduction of pre-enrolment is a positive step, but the introduction of online enrolment should be a priority. The general issue of different software systems*

*between Melbourne and Sarawak is worthy of more exploration. (ISM2-2.9:OPM-enrolment processes and systems)*

Ext2. USQ, 2009, p27

*USQ should ensure that communication to prospective students through partners provides accurate and adequate information on the availability of tutor support. USQ should also monitor the protocols for communicating information on current and expected fee levels to ensure that students understand the basis of fee changes (ISM2-2.9:OPM-information/communication protocols) and where responsibility for changes lie.*

Ext3. Curtin 2009, p32

*The Panel noted some inconsistencies in the tables of data provided to it relating to offshore programs and encourages Curtin to assure itself that it has accurate and up-to-date information on all its transnational education activities. (ISM5-2.9:OPM-information management)*

Ext4. CSU 2010, p40

*... it is evident that CSU policies are sometimes overridden (ISM2-2.9:OPM- policy management/implementation) by local arrangements, as for example in the charging by HUC of a fee to appeal a grade.*

### Commendations

Ext1. UniSA 2009, p33

*The Panel found more broadly, for both onshore and offshore programs, a positive and responsive approach to dealing with student issues. There are several processes and activities in place that underpin this approach, namely:*

- *accessibility of UniSA staff to students during offshore visits*
- *acknowledged short response-times on the part of both academic and professional staff in handling queries from TNE students via email*
- *extensive, user-friendly written guidelines and advice to assist students*
- *through Campus Central focusing of student advice and support mechanisms at a common location on each onshore campus*
- *provision of multi-faceted orientation programs*
- *creation of opportunities for international students and domestic students to meet outside the class room.*

*In summary, the Panel found that, at many levels and in a systematic way, UniSA is conducting its interactions with students in an exemplary way.*

#### *Commendation 9*

*AUQA commends UniSA on the systems and processes in place, both onshore and offshore, for dealing with student issues. (ISM2-2.10:OPM-systems and processes)*

### **Discussion of concerns and commendations and theme identification**

AUQA's concerns in this dimension covered a range of practical, day-to-day operational and management issues relating to programs, information, and the management of staff, students and facilities.

One concern that was raised in two reports was the tendency of partners to apply their own policies rather than the university's. Concerns with data arose through poor system interfaces between the institutions and their partners, and consequent problems with basic systems, such as enrolments and data reporting. Clear communications with students is also sometimes hampered by lack of clarity and protocols for institution-partner roles.

A number of fairly disparate concerns are identified in this area, but the core concern is that **effective approaches to managing the implementation of the allocated university-partner roles and responsibilities were not appropriately systematic or well-articulated** (Theme 13).

## **Implications for institutional management practice**

The implications for effective practice include:

1. Institutions and their partners should work out an appropriate policy framework which identifies when university policies apply and when partner policies apply in the management of programs, students and staff. For example, university enrolment and fee policies apply while occupational health and safety policies may be partner-specific.
2. Both the university and the partner need to monitor the effective implementation of this policy framework.
3. Within the context of the agreed policy framework, appropriate procedures for communicating with students need to be established to avoid ambiguous or misleading information being provided to students, particularly in key areas such as fees, enrolment, timetable and course requirements.
4. Where both university and partner information management systems are being utilised, appropriate protocols and management procedures should be implemented to ensure a smooth interface and the accurate transfer of data.

### **Sub-dimension 2.10 Accuracy of information in marketing and program information (MPI)**

This sub-dimension relates to the university's responsibility to ensure that all its marketing and promotional materials are accurate and clearly understood, regardless of whether they are disseminated by the university or by its partner. AUQA identified 8 concerns across 7 institutions. No commendations were made in this area.

#### Concerns

Ext1. SCU, 2008. P28-9

*In the Audit Panel's view, SCU makes some statements in its promotional material that are open to misinterpretation. (ISM2-MPI:marketing/promotional information)*

...

*AUQA urges SCU to review the text of its marketing and promotional material and to consider centralising the monitoring of information on the websites of educational collaborators, including information provided in languages other than English. SCU also needs to be more vigilant in ensuring its logo is not used by educational collaborators without authorisation, as has occurred for example at the Hong Kong Institute of Technology for an HKIT student handbook.*

#### *Recommendation 7*

*AUQA recommends that SCU ensure that statements made about SCU and its admission requirements by the University ... accurately and unambiguously portray the University's external recognition and its rules for admission. (ISM2-2.10:MPI-program information)*

Ext2. USQ 2009 p27

*During visits to partners, communication that goes through the international partners to the students emerged as an area that needs attention. USQ needs to monitor promotional materials more closely. (ISM1-2.10:MPI-promotional material)*

Ext3. CSU 2010 p40

*The University has consistently allowed the courses to be promoted and marketed as '3+0', although for the first two years students are not enrolled as CSU students. AUQA considers this to be a serious breach of CSU's responsibilities and likely to have been misleading to students. (ISM1-2.10:MPI-program marketing and promotion)*

Ext4. Wollongong 2011 p41

*The University has established procedures for approval of marketing material and appears to observe requirements for sign-off by designated academics and managers. However, AUQA finds there is a lack of effective oversight by*

*UOW of marketing materials for offshore teaching partnerships, possibly due to responsibilities being divided between academic program directors, the Transnational Education and Alliances Unit, UniAdvice (which is sometimes consulted), and the DVC (International), so no one person has complete responsibility. As part of the larger review of responsibilities and oversight for offshore partnerships, AUQA urges the University to improve its arrangements for approval of promotional material for offshore teaching.*

**(ISM9-2.10:MPI-responsibility/oversight of promotional/marketing material)**

### **Discussion of concerns and theme identification**

The core of AUQA's concerns in this sub-dimension relates to **inadequate university control of the marketing and promotion of TNE programs by partners.** (Theme 14). Related concerns included the unapproved use of university logos by partners and the misleading representation of program structure and student enrolment status by the university.

### **Implications for institutional management practice**

1. As the university is responsible the accuracy of all marketing information about its programs in any mode or location, the university should put in place clear guidance and monitoring systems to ensure that all marketing and promotion by partners meet the same standards as marketing undertaken directly by the university itself.
2. The university needs to implement clear approval and monitoring processes for all marketing materials and publications to ensure adherence to its requirements on an ongoing basis.
3. Particular care should be taken to ensure that all information provided to prospective students is accurate and unambiguous. Special procedures should be implemented to ensure accuracy and consistency is maintained across materials published in more than one language.
4. The university should ensure that the university's role in any partnership is accurately represented by the partner. Special care should be taken in allowing the use of the university's name and logo by the partner.

### 5.3 Summary discussion of patterns of concerns and commendations

The main categories of concerns and commendations related to the sub-dimension Strategic Purpose and Planning (21) and Staffing Management (19). The remainder were spread over the other 8 sub-dimensions. In relation to these two main clusters, the reports of nearly half of the institutional audits (13 of 27) revealed concerns relating to the alignment of TNE planning and operations with the institutions' internationalisation strategies and overall strategic plans. More than half (15 of 27) the institutional reports contained *concerns* for Staffing Management.

Nineteen *commendations* were given for Institutional Strategy and Management, with the most common area being effective partner management (8 of 19) and Strategic Purpose and Planning (5 of 19).

Across the 11 themes in ISM, 46 implications for improving management practice were proposed. Together with the 10 themes and 23 Implications for practice identified in Chapter 4, the analysis has generated 21 Themes and 69 Implications for practice. These implications have been derived by applying my practical management experience and knowledge of relevant literature to provide guidance to institutions generally. While AUQA's statements of concern and commendation were often accompanied by recommendations for improvement directed to individual institutions under review, the 'implications for management practice' that I have developed derive from the general 'themes' I constructed from recurring AUQA concerns and have general relevance to institutions involved in TNE.

In order to implement the general implications for improving practice that I have developed, institutions will need to adopt a coordinated approach to developing and improving their TNE operations by allocating responsibilities at the appropriate levels within the institution – strategic and institutional-level matters should be allocated to a member of the senior management team, with more specific matters being allocated to faculty, department and program leaders. In keeping with my key recommendation on the need to integrate TNE decision-making with institutional-level decision-making, a specific senior coordination role should be allocated to ensure consistency across organisational levels.

While the 69 implications for practice are valuable in their own right, a more consolidated 'picture' of the findings is desirable, especially for the needs of senior management. This task is undertaken in Chapter 6, which integrates and focuses discussion on the key institutional

challenges for managing TNE initiatives by using a high-level, strategic management perspective. The discussion in Chapter 6 demonstrates that the implementation of the key recommendations involves a coherent approach in which TNE strategy is organised around two key processes – determining the nature and form of the TNE partnership and associated contract, and managing, evaluating and sustaining the TNE initiative. The strong and coordinating senior management role also needs to focus on strengthening the institutional-level processes for integrating TNE into institutional structures and processes.

## Chapter 6

# Discussion, interpretation, and conclusions

The origin of this study was my own professional experience in management and consulting positions in Australian universities, particularly in relation to TNE. TNE has been characterised by its inherent complexity, and the main goal of my study was to make a contribution to improving knowledge and practice in the strategic management of TNE.

In contrast to Chapters 4 and 5 which report my analysis, this chapter adopts a high-level strategic management perspective to integrate and focus the discussion on the key strategic challenges facing senior university managers in developing and maintaining successful TNE initiatives. The discussion draws on the literature relevant to the strategic management of universities and my own professional experience in university management and consulting.

Hence, Chapters 4 and 5 addressed the first two research objectives of developing

1. A deeper and more systematic understanding of the nature of TNE and the sources for concerns that arise from its inherent complexity and risk.
2. The broad knowledge base for consultants, institutional managers, practising academics and quality assurance and accreditation agencies in Australia and other countries,

This concluding chapter focusses on the remaining two objectives of contributing to:

3. Better management practice by senior institutional leaders in the development and management of TNE.
4. My own professional knowledge and practice as a consultant to Australian and overseas universities and private higher education institutions who are developing TNE programs.

## 6.1 Synthesis of the findings

The approach adopted was to examine the 21 themes, identified in Chapters 4 and 5, through the lens of university strategic management to produce a high-level, overarching synthesis of my findings. University management is a multi-dimensional, multi-level activity impacting on all aspects of an institution's goals, strategy and performance. However, adopting a strategic management perspective involves asking the question: what are the areas of decision-making that are, or should be, the focus of the attention of the Vice-Chancellor (or equivalent) and his/her deputies? Operational or routine matters will generally receive little attention from the senior leadership team. New, high-level, complex, and university-wide matters – that is, those of strategic importance to the institution – will attract the most attention. To achieve a strategic, university-level view of the 21 themes, I examined the themes for over-arching elements or concepts that would bring them together into strategic-level clusters that relate to the responsibilities of the Vice-Chancellor and the senior leadership team.

Developed in the business sector in the 1980's, strategic management is now one of the most widely used managerial practices in higher education and other parts of the public sector. Many definitions have been developed, as discussed in Chapter 2. At the heart of the notion of strategic management in higher education is the formulation and implementation of the institution's vision, goals and plans by the Vice-Chancellor and senior management team within the structures of university governance and academic culture, and in response to ongoing environmental changes affecting the future of the institution. Within the higher education context, strategic management is usually characterised by the need to balance business pressures with academic goals and processes. Strategic management must take account of the distributed power structures within universities, the need to accommodate the collegial and relatively autonomous nature of academic culture, and the need to separate and balance both academic and corporate governance functions (Shattock, 2010).

When examined as a set of 21 themes, it became apparent that the themes may be clustered together around various aspects of the high-level, university-wide management of TNE activities. The 21 themes could, of course, be grouped in many ways. They have already been categorised in this study by use of the 6 dimensions that formed the analytical framework used in Chapters 4 and 5. However, by adopting a more strategic level perspective, the themes can be grouped into a smaller number of clusters that relate to the strategic challenges of TNE

relevant to the senior leadership team. This clustering was achieved by drawing upon my senior institutional management and consulting experience with TNE over many years. From this perspective, the 21 themes were readily grouped into 3 clusters based on three core foci for the strategic management of TNE initiatives, as shown in Table 6.1:

A: Integrating the TNE venture into institutional structure and processes – 7 themes

B: Determining the nature and form of the TNE partnership and associated contract – 4 themes

C: Managing, evaluating and sustaining the TNE initiative – 10 themes

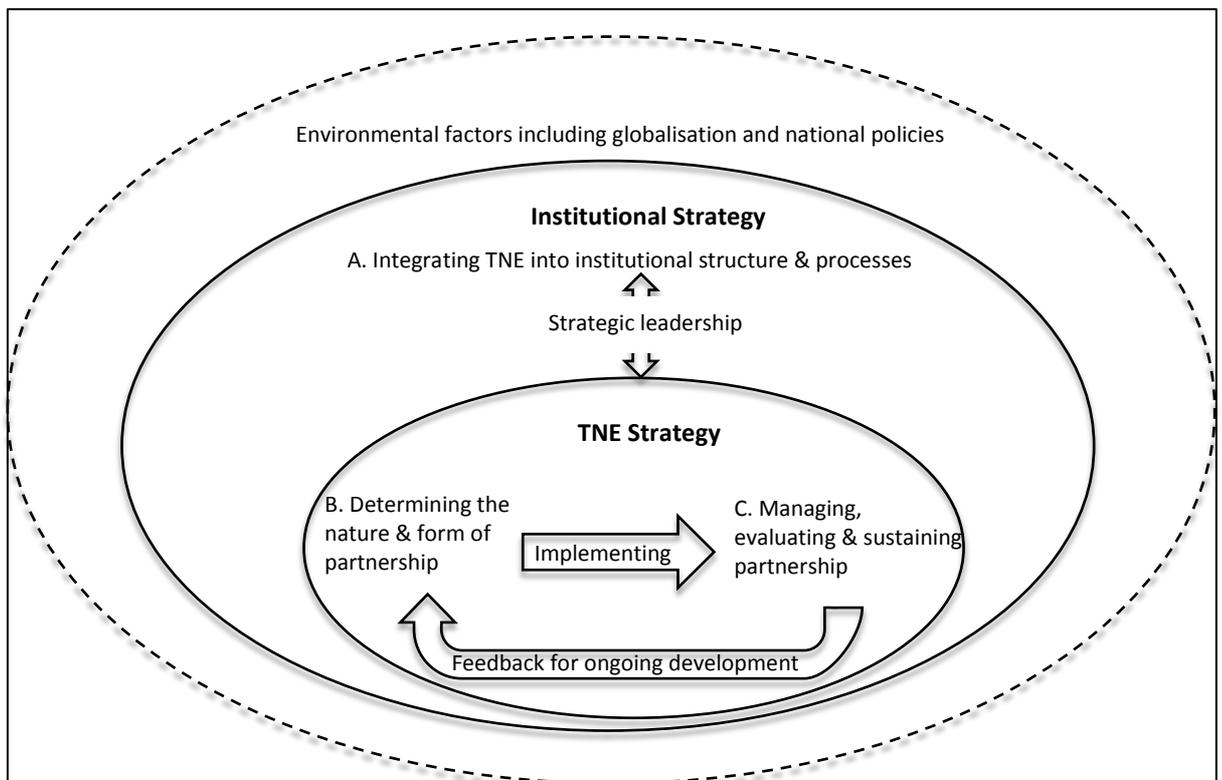
### 6.1 Table of themes in 3 Clusters

Dimension	Theme number	Theme(s) – based on recurring <i>concerns</i> or related <i>commendations</i>	Cluster A: TNE Integration	Cluster B: TNE P'ship	Cluster C: Managing TNE
1. Legal and Governance	1.	TNE activities were not properly and effectively dealt with within the institution's governance processes, particularly in relation to the role of academic board and the associated approval pathway and review processes.	x		
	2.	Campus governance arrangements did not adequately accommodate a) the intermeshing of campus governance and management with the university's overall structures, and b) the pressure for campuses to respond effectively to local needs.	x		
	3.	There were deficiencies in the processes for ensuring the integrity of the award across all locations and forms of offering, and, specifically to consistency in the title, content and format of award testamurs.			x
2. Institutional Strategy and Management	4.	TNE initiatives were not sufficiently linked to the university's internationalisation strategy and overall institutional goals, strategic direction and strategic plans.	x		
	5.	Institutional approaches to risk did not encompass the full range of internal and external risks associated with TNE activities, including academic, financial and reputational risks.	x		
	6.	There were inadequate university-level leadership and accountability for TNE strategy and activities and oversight.	x		
	7.	There was a lack of systematic processes for selecting partners that utilise a comprehensive set of criteria describing what the university requires from the partnership as the basis for the assessment of strategic fit between the prospective partner and the university.		x	
	8.	The specification of responsibilities for program management, delivery and support in partnership contracts were unclear and there were inadequate provisions for systematic review and formal renewal of partnership agreements.		x	
	9.	There was a lack of established protocols to ensure an effective, clear, and systematic approach to university-partner communications, particularly as they relate to university academic policies, and procedures, administrative processes, and student performance.		x	
	10.	Induction and professional development for both 'home' institution and partner staff were inadequate.			x
	11.	Current staff profiles together with the recruitment processes, workload management, and continuity and succession planning were insufficient to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the staffing arrangements for TNE programs.			x
	12.	There was a lack of adequate cost allocation models and expenditure tracking mechanisms resulting in inaccurate assessments of financial viability.			x

Dimension	Theme number	Theme(s) – based on recurring <i>concerns</i> or related <i>commendations</i>	Cluster A: TNE Integration	Cluster B: TNE P'ship	Cluster C: Managing TNE
	13.	Institutional approaches to managing the implementation of allocated university-partner roles and responsibilities were not appropriately systematic or well-articulated.			x
	14.	There were inadequate university controls of the marketing and promotion of TNE programs by partners.			x
3. Academic	15.	There were perceived weaknesses in institutional approaches to setting and validating English language entry requirements and in supporting TNE students.			x
	16.	University mechanisms to ensure academic standards were comparable across TNE locations and the 'home' institutions were inadequate, particularly as demonstrated by deficiencies in processes for moderating assessment.	x		
	17.	Education and monitoring processes relating to academic integrity and plagiarism were not sufficiently robust to accommodate the impact of cultural differences that occur across national boundaries in TNE operations.			x
4. Support and Resources	18.	Institutions did not adequately provide online access to university resources to TNE students as a result of failing to resolve technology differences between the partner and university sites, failing to ensure adequate communication of access procedures to the remote students and staff, and not adequately responding to the country-specific nature of some commercial suppliers of library resources.			x
5. QA Systems	19.	University quality assurance systems did not have comprehensive, university-wide quality assurance processes whose mechanisms/activities encompass TNE programs in an integrated way.	x		
6. Research, Research Training & Community Engagement	20.	The shared supervision arrangements across 'home' institutions and partners were not adequately structured and managed to provide effective supervision of doctoral students.			x
	21.	Overseas campuses and TNE partnerships were not adequately capitalising on the opportunity that overseas campuses and TNE partnerships provided to develop doctoral programs, as well as undergraduate programs, or for developing research programs with strong, relevant, local research focus.		x	

The 3 clusters identified provide the basis for the discussion and interpretation in this Chapter. Further examination suggested a structure, shown in Figure 6.1, in which the three clusters are related to form a dynamic model of the strategic leadership of TNE within the broader institutional context. The model depicts a number of relationships. Firstly, it demonstrates the fundamental need to align and integrate strategy for TNE initiatives with an institution's international and overall strategy. Strategic leadership is a key mechanism for achieving this integration and for shaping the development of TNE initiatives. Strategic leadership also provides the means for feeding 'lessons' learnt from experience with TNE back into broader institutional strategy. Strategic leadership and integrative processes sit over the two core strategic tasks in TNE management – determining the nature and form of a partnership, and managing, evaluating and sustaining the partnership so that it makes a strategic contribution to both the institution and the host country students and economy. The additional elements of institutional strategy, relating to the analysis of strengths and weaknesses and the development of a vision for the institution, cannot readily be shown in this model, but are discussed later in the chapter.

**Figure 6.1 Model of the Strategic-level Integration and Management of TNE Partnerships**



The detailed discussion of the 3 clusters in this chapter draws on the relevant higher education literature and on my own professional experience in strategic management. There is considerable literature which is directly relevant to the management of TNE within a whole-of-

university context, as well as the broader contextual literature on globalisation, policy, and QA, as discussed in Chapter 2.

## **6.2 Cluster of themes A: Integration of TNE into institution-level structures and processes**

These 7 themes have been placed in Cluster A as each relates to an aspect of the integration of TNE into institutional-level structures and processes. As the themes are spelt out in full in Table 6.1 above, only key words are used here to represent them:

1. TNE activities within the institution's governance processes.
2. Campus governance arrangements in relation to the university's overall structures and meeting local needs.
4. Linkage of TNE initiatives to the university's internationalisation strategy, and overall goals and strategic plans.
5. Institutional approaches to risk associated with TNE activities.
6. University-level leadership and accountability for TNE strategy, activities and oversight.
16. University mechanisms for comparability of academic standards across TNE locations and the 'home' institution.
19. Encompassing QA for TNE programs in university-wide quality assurance systems.

Institutional-level integration forms an overarching thread of this cluster. Themes 1. and 2. relate to the integration of TNE activities into the university governance processes. Themes 4., 16. and 19. focus specifically on elements that need to be integrated, and Themes 5. and 6. relate to the management function and management's role in achieving integration.

Integrating TNE activities into the university's internationalisation strategy and overall strategic plan within the university's governance and management systems is the key element in this cluster and is fully congruent with the notion of strategic management. The importance of strategic level planning and management of TNE activities has been discussed by McBurnie and Pollock (2000) who examined the strategic issues of opportunity and risk in establishing TNE initiatives, particularly in relation to an overseas branch campus. Drawing on their experience with the establishment of an overseas branch campus, McBurnie and Pollock concluded that key factors in success were the appropriate integration of the TNE initiative into the institutional strategic vision, academic priorities and the business planning discipline of the institution, including assessment of risk, viability and market demand. A key strategic

question is what is the purpose of a TNE initiative and how does it 'fit' within the university's overall goals and strategies, and, at the highest level, the institutional vision.

A strategic management perspective focuses attention on the challenges for leadership in the development of transnational ventures. Emery and Worton (2014) address these challenges by emphasising the need for a 'champion' for each TNE initiative, careful risk assessment, the integration of quality assurance processes into planning and management, and the need to and Pollock, they emphasise the need for the planning of TNE initiatives to be fully integrated into the university's strategic planning processes and for the governance arrangements and the financial case to be given particular attention.

The concepts embodied in these themes are crucial to the success of TNE activities within the prevailing holistic approach to internationalisation, which emphasises the need for alignment and integration of all activities with overall institutional strategy (Knight, 2004; Taylor, 2004). This cluster of themes and the literature adopting a strategic management perspective on TNE resonate with my own experience in the planning, development and review of TNE teaching partnerships and campuses. A central question is how the senior management group is structured and deployed during the project assessment and planning phase. The close involvement of the Vice-Chancellor and other members of the senior management team are important factors in the success of a TNE venture in the current environment of tight regulation, assurance of standards, stronger top-down management in universities, and financial sustainability.

However, significant challenges arise in the university context because of the overlapping of senior management roles and the generally looser organisational 'coupling' in higher education institutions. In this light, Emery and Worton's focus on a 'champion' does not seem to be an adequately comprehensive approach. Champions for new initiatives are always important, but with the dispersion of responsibilities and power within a university, it is also important to have an effective involvement and support of all the relevant parties in the senior management team and the relevant organisational units. For large-scale initiatives, such as multi-faceted alliances and campus developments, the Vice-Chancellor clearly needs to take an active role as driver of the assessment and planning process. At the same time, the academic and business dimensions of all initiatives need to be carefully planned, balanced, and linked to effective leadership structures. Ensuring the academic governance processes operate effectively in relation to TNE initiatives is often a point of weakness, as was highlighted by several AUQA reviews.

A case study of the establishment of the Curtin University Sarawak Campus (Murray, 2011) demonstrates a number of these points: the vital role of the Vice-Chancellor in leading the assessment and development process; the importance of direct involvement of the academic, international and resources portfolios; and the focus on campus governance processes. Deciding on the governance arrangements involved negotiation with the partner, the Sarawak Government, about a Malaysian company to operate as a joint venture partner. Academic matters were placed fully under the Curtin academic board and a campus council responsive to local needs was established with delegated powers from the Curtin University Council. This case study of Curtin University illustrates the more general issue of the impact that placing international developments at the centre of university development has on the role of the Vice-Chancellor and the senior management team. Senior management roles and hence skill sets are changing, and this has direct implications for recruitment processes. This issue is discussed further in Section 6.6.

From a strategic management perspective, the Curtin Sarawak case study also illustrates the main governance issues for branch campuses which relate to achieving the appropriate balance between university-level and local-level corporate governance arrangements, while ensuring academic governance is tightly controlled by the university as the degree-granting body. Local corporate governance arrangements usually involve a campus council, or board of directors for the operating company, with partner, business, and community members as well as senior university representatives.

Assessing and mitigating risk is an important component of strategic management in all TNE ventures as was illustrated in the Curtin Sarawak case (Murray, 2011). Risk is an inherent part of all activities and should be examined alongside other factors, such as estimated return on investment, or other benefits.

In my own experience, risk is often not well handled in the planning of TNE activities. In a strategic sense *Risk Management* is defined in ISO31000 as the identification, assessment and management of risks in a framework of organisational governance and management that systematically links risk management to maximising organisational success (Standards Australia/Standards New Zealand, 2009). This notion of risk management integrates risk into the broader strategic decision-making process and avoids the common tendency for concern with risk minimisation to turn into risk aversion to the point where a new venture is not

undertaken or an existing venture is discontinued purely on the grounds of a perceived high level of risk.

Risk management may involve reducing risk, deciding to take 'positive risks' or even increasing risk in order to maximise the chances of success of the organisation. Positive risk involves weighing up the potential benefits of an initiative alongside the potential damage of exercising one choice of action over another in the context of the overall strategic objectives and plans of the organisation.

This strategic approach to risk contrasts with a more restricted view adopted by AUQA in the Cycle 2 reports. For example, AUQA commends UNE for avoiding risk by effectively withdrawing from TNE provision – *“AUQA commends UNE for reviewing its transnational education partnership model and adopting a system that has a lower level of inherent risk to the University.”* (UNE, 2009, Ext4 in ISM Sub-dimension 2.2 Risk Management). The model adopted by UNE involved replacing a TNE program, with its controlled curriculum and teaching over the full course, with a credit-transfer model from a course provided by an affiliated or associated organisation. However, this latter approach brings its own, potentially higher, academic risks in terms of much reduced academic integration and articulation between the two programs and significant transition problems. The broader benefits to institutional internationalisation that a TNE program may bring, such as a location for student mobility and international experience for staff and for their research, are also precluded or severely curtailed in a credit-transfer model.

A focus on risk alone, separated from the question of strategic benefits from a venture, tends to treat risk management as a stand-alone matter and not as one factor in a university's decision-making about what activities the university engages in or avoids. From a strategic management perspective, avoidance of risk is not sufficient justification for withdrawing from, or avoiding, a venture as all activities have risks which need to be judged against the strategic goals and benefits in deciding a course of action.

The discussion of risk in various AUQA reports shows that AUQA implicitly regarded risk as inherently 'bad', and hence, viewed 'risk avoidance' as a desirable strategy. From AUQA's perspective, effective risk assessment and mitigation coupled with an assessment of benefits is not an appropriate strategy. The AUQA approach appears to derive in part from AUQA's 'mission' in relation to the national policy statement coupled with a rather naïve understanding of the nature of risk and reward in organisational strategy and decision-making.

AUQA adopted a standard definition of risk, but one that tends to encourage the consideration of risk independently of other factors. Based on the Australian/New Zealand Standard on Risk Management (AS/NZ 4360:1999), AUQA adopted the following definition of risk:

**Risk** refers to a feature of an organisation or its environment that may have an adverse effect on the organisation, including on the achievement of objectives. The term 'feature' includes actions, events or situations. **Risk** is also a measure of the possible adverse effects on an organisation of any action, omission, event or situation. This is sometimes referred to as the **degree of risk** inherent in a particular situation. It is expressed in terms of the **chance** (=likelihood, probability) of the effects occurring; and the **consequences** of the effects should they occur... (AUQA, 2009, p. 97)

Assessing risk without reference to goals and benefits is common in the literature (e.g. Wilkins & Huisman, 2012), but making decisions based on risk level alone inevitably limits an institution's options for development. A simple view of risk by AUQA, and some Australian universities, has had significant detrimental effects on Australian universities as well as some benefits from reducing unnecessary levels of risk. However, focussing on risk in isolation carries a cost as counter-balancing benefits are not considered. A narrow and unsophisticated perspective on risk overlooks the loss of the many university-wide benefits of appropriately designed and managed TNE ventures that are highlighted in the literature. Risk mitigation coupled with an active decision to proceed in view of the strategic benefits may be a better overall strategy. As examples, McBurnie and Pollock (2000) examine risk in relationship to opportunities, and Emery and Worton (2014) employ an appraisal approach based on "risk-based options" (p. 4).

From a management perspective, risk avoidance by declining to proceed with an activity carries a cost in terms of the loss of benefits and the competitive disadvantage of having others 'occupy the space', reap the benefits and capture the flow of future growth and benefits. If an institution moves out of TNE, and if, more broadly, a whole national system were to do so, market theory suggests that the 'slack' in terms of unmet student demand would be taken up by other provider countries. These provider countries would then be in a position to reap long term benefits, if, say, the overseas location becomes a strong growth area or if TNE program enrolments effectively replace over time students travelling overseas for a full degree.

The locus of power is another important issue for the management of TNE. While stronger central management is a feature of universities operating in an uncertain and globalised environment (e.g. Shattock, 2010), the continuing role of 'academic authority' in university decision-making is widely acknowledged (Bartell, 2003; Shattock, 2010; Taylor, 2004). This characteristic of higher education is often talked about by contrasting the use of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' power as if they were alternatives. In practice, a complex development initiative, such as a TNE teaching partnership, and especially a new campus, requires the sources of corporate/executive and academic/collegial power to work together. The culture of a university is a complex, subtle and powerful influence on decision-making. The importance of organisational culture for decision-making has been highlighted by Tierney (2008) and the need for an institution's internationalisation objectives to align to the institutional culture for a venture to succeed has been argued by Bartell (2003).

The development of TNE has raised particular problems for senior management in many universities as, historically, the planning and management of TNE initiatives have often been undertaken at a program or faculty level, in isolation from the university's international and strategic plans. My own experience with TNE at Monash University involved the steady development of central evaluation, approval, and QA mechanisms to bring TNE into the mainstream of university planning and development. Banks et al. (2010) discuss this situation in terms of the move away "from programme-based provision by individual faculties or departments to centralised institution-wide arrangements" (p. 8). Many of the problems with TNE in universities have been caused by a lack of articulation and integration with university plans. This has led to the current emphasis on assessing TNE proposals against a university's strategic and international plans, and on establishing appropriately balanced local-central and academic-corporate management arrangements.

One manifestation of the tendency to treat TNE in isolation from the broader university is the issue of the equivalence, or comparability, of the student experience with that of on-campus students in Australia. Discussions of this topic, for example by Pyvis and Chapman (2004) and Chapman and Pyvis (2012), tend to adopt a unitary, homogeneous view of student experience that does not adequately reflect the wide diversity of needs in a modern university. The International Education Association of Australia (2008) distinguishes between 'equivalence', which may not be compatible with the educational and cultural ethos of the host country, and 'comparability', which engages with the needs of the host country and views the TNE venture as transactional rather than one-way.

While more positive in a number of ways, this approach still misses the main strategic issue which is: What is the nature of the modern mass university and how should it meet the needs of a diverse student population? Some of the thinking about students' needs is commonly encapsulated by the term 'the student experience' which takes on a unitary dimension which derives from a time of homogeneous student populations of 18-21 year olds studying full time and coming from similar educational and social backgrounds. The challenge now facing universities is how to cater effectively for the widely differing needs of the various groups of students, and indeed of individual students. This issue of the needs of TNE students in a particular location is just one part of a much broader strategic question of how university leaders address the issue of catering for diverse needs, for example those of younger and older students, school-leavers and working adults, on-campus and on-line. Underlying these differences are the much greater differences arising from contrasting national, cultural and learning traditions.

As discussed previously, internationalisation is now a core strategy and development need for universities in an increasingly globalised world. Many universities have developed TNE partnerships as one component of their internationalisation strategy, particularly in relation to a relatively low-cost mechanism for providing their staff with international experience and exposing them to cross-cultural issues. In this way TNE can serve the broader strategic purpose of better fitting the university to the demands of a more global view of higher education.

Internationalisation and international activity may also enhance an institution's reputation where such endeavours are increasingly seen as an essential part of a university's development. In this way TNE may play a part in increasing the international visibility, reputation, and hence ranking of a university. In a less positive way TNE may also have negative effects due to the lower status and reputation of the partners, and often the programs themselves, in the host country as compared with the home country. Rankings systems, such as the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (2015) and the QS World University Rankings (2015), are becoming increasingly important within the higher education landscape, and so issues of how an international development or partnership might affect rankings becomes a relevant factor in decision-making.

Partly for this latter reason, there are signs that well established universities with strong research agendas are shifting from transnational teaching partnerships to strategic research

alliances which will likely have a strong impact on both the international and the research dimensions of their international rankings.

### **6.3 Cluster of themes B: Determining the nature and form of the TNE partnership and associated contract**

These 4 themes have been placed in Cluster B as each relates to the selection of partners, form of the partnership or the nature of the relationship between them. As the themes are spelt out in full in Table 6.1 above, only key words are used here to represent them:

7. Systematic processes for selecting TNE partners and ensuring strategic fit between the prospective partner and the university.
8. The specification of responsibilities for program management, delivery and support in partnership contracts.
9. Established protocols to ensure an effective, clear, and systematic approach to university-partner communications.
21. Capitalising on the development opportunities for overseas campuses.

These 4 themes all have a common thread that relates to clarifying and specifying the nature of a TNE initiative and then determining, in organisational terms, the most suitable form of partnership. A follow-on to this process is identifying the steps and challenges involved in specifying the organisational model and partnership contract. Theme 21 highlights the difference between a teaching partnership and the campus model, with its broader set of goals. Theme 7 relates to the processes of selecting a partner for a teaching partnership model or campus model or some hybrid of the two. Themes 8 and 9 relate to specifying the contractual terms which define and govern the form of partnership.

In exploring the nature and form of TNE initiatives, it should be recognised that there is a continuum between a single-purpose TNE teaching partnership and a full campus with research and community engagement as well. The two ends of the continuum are clear, but there is significant middle ground where different universities conceptualise their initiatives in different ways. Certainly, campuses may be multi-purpose or single purpose, e.g. teaching only, or even research-only, but campuses are mostly characterised by a broader scale than teaching partnerships. Almost all overseas branch campuses involve a partner which may be an active operational partner providing infrastructure, facilities, equipment, administration and some teaching, or they may be less directly involved in the campus activities, such as national or local governments who provide or sponsor campuses, but tend to operate at a strategic rather than operational level. Some partnerships are university to university and so

the relationship is essentially a joint venture of equal partners often sharing ownership roles rather than differentiating them.

Viewing this set of themes through the lens of my professional experience, a crucial step, which often does not receive sufficient attention, is achieving clarity of view by both parties on the initial and longer term form of the partnership. Similarly, carefully considering the suitability and strategic fit of potential partners often receives insufficient attention because of a focus on the short term goal of capitalising on an opportunity and getting a program up and running. The quality and comprehensiveness of partnerships have been the focus of considerable attention by university managers in recent years, and most contracts are now being written to capture the full set of considerations needed. However, some contracts still do not include a mechanism for assessing success, changing needs and the future development options for a partnership.

The literature on effective partnerships has expanded considerably in recent years. Major contributions have been made by many authors adopting differing perspectives and solutions to the challenge of making partnerships work. This literature has been discussed in Chapter 2, and includes the work of Eckel and Hartley (2008) and Shaw and Holmes (2005) who emphasise that partnerships provide a means of pursuing objectives that neither partner can achieve on its own. At the same time, these authors point out the impact of differing organisational cultures and processes, and the associated uncertainty about how processes in the partnerships should operate. Discussing offshore campuses, Shams and Huisman (2012) consider the tension between integration with the home institution and responding to local needs.

From a strategic management perspective, the main governance issues for TNE ventures relate to achieving the appropriate balance between university-level and local-level governance arrangements, taking into account whether the nature of the TNE initiative is a TNE teaching partnership or a campus. The need to integrate the management and governance of TNE initiatives into the broader university functions has been discussed under Cluster A above. This discussion explores the need for local alignment by accommodating local business, government and community interests, and incorporating an appropriate role and input for the local partner.

TNE initiatives that involve a branch campus often require some level of local corporate and academic governance, and the linkage of these bodies to their university-level counterparts

needs to ensure that both accountability to the university and the capacity to meet the needs of local interests, are achieved. An appropriate role and level of input for the university partner needs to be determined to reflect the particular role of the partner in the venture and the balance of integration and responsiveness.

For teaching partnerships which operate largely at an academic program level, the university needs to ensure that the academic management and standards are aligned with those of the broader university and that the academic board has the same level of oversight of TNE initiatives as it does over other forms of program offering. A particular focus for academic board oversight should be on the equivalence of academic standards and the provision of support and learning environment, suitable for the needs of the local students. The linkage to corporate governance takes place through the academic board reporting to the governing board (often the university council) and the reporting line of program head – head of department - faculty dean – DVC/PVC academic – Vice-Chancellor should operate in the same way as for other programs in terms of the accountability requirements of the governing board.

These considerations cover the need to integrate governance and management responsibilities of the TNE venture with the university level arrangements. In this sense, 'governance' acts as an overarching and integrating force for university planning and strategic management. Another aspect of TNE ventures relates to how local interests and the role of local partners are accommodated by the university and its governance structures.

One recent development of particular relevance to TNE has been the establishment of education 'hubs' in several countries to encourage clusters of foreign institutions to establish campuses or centres to benefit from attractive terms offered by the local government to encourage participation. Forestier and Sharma (2013) discuss the rationale and benefits to countries establishing hubs and the benefits and possible downside for universities establishing or joining a hub. From the university viewpoint, establishing a campus can be viewed as an opportunity to provide a 'hub' for its own activities for the broader region. In a broader sense, any partnership provides the opportunity for a university to expand its range of activities in a particular location and also to capitalise on the capacity of the partnership to contribute to a broader range of university goals. A key strategic question is whether a TNE teaching partnership serves the needs of local students, contributes to the need of local employers and generates a financial surplus that is sufficient to fit well with the university's international and strategic plans. Where a major partnership or campus is established, the purpose also needs to be defined in terms of its contribution to the university's research profile and performance, and to meeting the expectations of the local

community and industry and their economic needs through its research program. In terms of the university's educational goals, the partnership or campus should contribute to student and staff mobility and exchanges. Where a campus has the goals of developing a research profile, an initial step should involve developing doctoral programs and identifying research programs with a strong local focus and an emphasis on innovation and technology transfer.

#### **6.4 Cluster of themes C: Managing and sustaining the TNE initiative**

The 11 themes in this cluster are more operational in nature than those in Clusters A and B. From a strategic management viewpoint, the common thread is about 'making the contract work' in key areas such as staffing, finance and academic requirements, and also ensuring the partnership's long-term sustainability. As the themes are spelt out in full in Table 6.1 above, only key words are used here to represent them:

3. The integrity of the awards.
10. Induction and professional development for both 'home' institution and partner staff.
11. Current staff profiles and related processes for ensuring the ongoing sustainability of the staffing arrangements for TNE programs.
12. Cost allocation models and expenditure tracking mechanisms.
13. Institutional management of allocated university-partner roles and responsibilities.
14. Institutional controls of the marketing and promotion of TNE programs by partners.
15. The setting and validating of English language entry requirements and support of TNE students.
17. Addressing academic integrity and plagiarism.
18. Online access to university resources by TNE students.
20. The shared doctoral supervision arrangements across 'home' institutions and partners.

Themes 10., 11., 12., 13., and 17. relate to operationalising and sustaining the partnership on an ongoing basis across key areas such as staffing, financial viability and return, and academic standards and consistency

The cluster of management activities required for implementing a partnership successfully on a long term basis have also been codified and brought within comprehensive quality assurance systems within the last 15 years. 'Managing a TNE initiative' is a relatively straightforward

concept, but addressing sustainability in terms of the long term prosperity of the institution and the venture is a relatively new concept in the planning of TNE initiatives.

Developing and maintaining a suitable staffing profile is a key challenge. The staffing task in terms of long-term sustainability requires a high-quality staffing profile in terms of sufficient numbers to accommodate the ongoing difficulties of recruiting and holding suitable staff, and dealing with the loss of staff through effective succession planning, especially for key leadership staff. Professional development plays a crucial part in ensuring staff are well-prepared for the demands of their TNE roles. McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) argue that “in mature markets any transnational program that does not have high quality local teaching staff on campus will be very susceptible to competition from those that do” (p. 59). University staff at a small remote campus or teaching location may be under-provided for in term of support and professional development opportunities. In cases where staff are employed by a TNE partner, especially a commercially-oriented one, their access to support, professional development and growth may be less than that available on the main university campus. Staff recruitment and selection for a TNE venture may also not be as rigorous or strategic as on the main university campus, so again staff quality may suffer. Any weakness in staff quality tends to carry over into the quality of teaching and learning in the TNE program. A key academic issue for sustainability is maintaining appropriate academic standards, reputation and student satisfaction levels to protect the university’s brand and maintain the TNE program’s attractiveness to potential students.

These factors may impact on the marketability and competitiveness of a TNE program or campus. Promotion and marketing are operational matters that also carry a strategic element in university brand and reputation. In terms of branding and marketing, one part of the challenge comes from a high-reputation university running partnerships or even campuses that have lower status in the host country’s higher education system than the university’s status in its own country and in international rankings. For example, Australian research universities with strong international reputations and rankings have found that the position of their relatively small TNE venture or campus in the host country higher education system ranks below local institutions with lower international rankings. This can come about from the incoming university being new to the local market, smaller in scale and weaker in the development of an appropriate research profile, and by operating under a different funding structure as a private, not public, institution. In addition to these considerations, the reputation and status of the local partner may have an impact upon the reputation of the overall venture or partnership and hence the university’s status locally.

A more positive element in relation to operating a TNE venture is the impact that a transnational partnership or campus may have on the international visibility and reputation in the context of an increasingly globalised concept of higher education. Overall, this is a positioning issue – whether a university accepts lower-level visibility and status in the TNE location, at least initially, than it has in its own country. Initial positioning of a university in the host country higher education system is a crucial matter as moving up the reputation 'ladder' from a low base has always been a difficult feat. Minimising investment and risk may backfire and leave an institution with an ongoing lower status position than a more strategic quality-focused development would have achieved.

Another issue that has bedevilled the planning and operation of TNE ventures, is whether it is reasonable to operate a TNE venture on a long term basis by means of a subsidy because of the other 'intangible' benefits it brings to the university, such as international profile and political influence, meeting student and employer needs, and contributing to the internationalisation of staff. Conventional thinking is that TNE ventures should generate a surplus after a short start-up phase. However, universities have commonly subsidised core areas in the humanities and sciences on the basis that they are an important part of the basic historic model of a university and bring benefits to the more professionally-oriented areas of the university through their cultural impact and as a source of fundamental knowledge and reputation. The same reasoning could readily be applied to TNE ventures, and, indeed, small regional campuses in the home country, provided they bring benefits at a broader level to the whole university and its community. The strategic issue for a university to decide is whether it will adopt an 'every tub on its own base' model or a broader view that 'affluent areas' should subsidise non-viable areas, provided that their overall contribution to the university at a broad level is sufficient. This issue receives insufficient attention in many universities where local interests prevail by default in the absence of strong university leadership in one direction or the other.

## **6.5 Discussion and summary of key findings and conclusions**

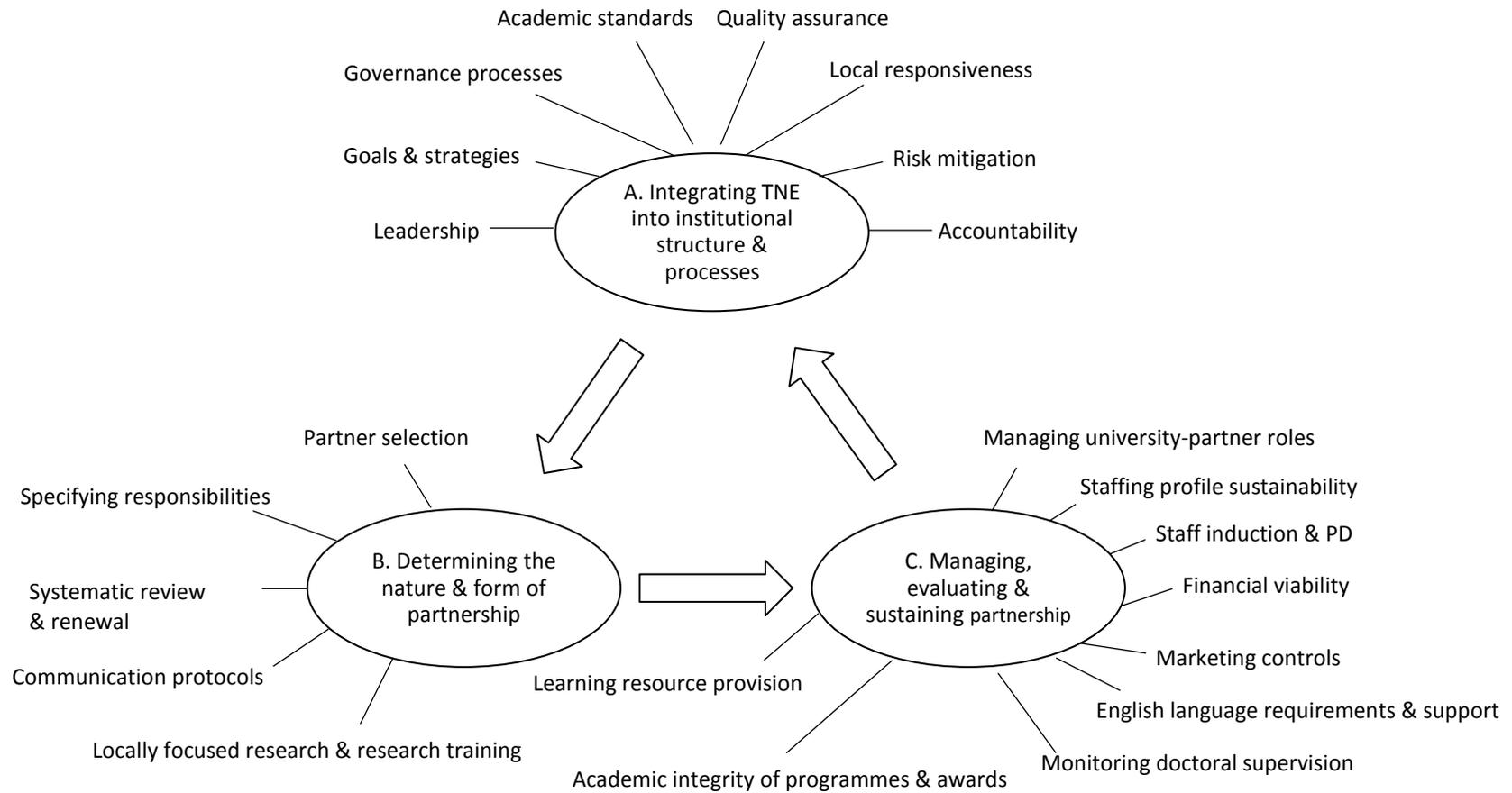
The context for the study is the relative paucity of research on the management of TNE compared with its teaching-learning challenges, coupled with my own professional interest in understanding and improving TNE management. The systematic analysis of TNE in Australian universities, derived from the AUQA audit reports, yielded an extensive range of *concerns* with current practice, including deficiencies in: academic and corporate governance processes, alignment of TNE initiatives with overall university strategy, senior management oversight,

academic integrity and standards, English-language support, integration of QA processes, and the development of TNE activities into research, research training and community engagement.

A total of 204 *concerns* and 31 *commendations* were identified and these were grouped into 21 themes or areas of recurring concern. For each theme, a series of implications for improving practice was developed from AUQA's recommendations, relevant literature and my own professional experience.

Adopting a strategic management perspective allowed me to group the 21 themes into 3 clusters relating to integrating the TNE venture into institutional structure and processes; determining the nature and form of the TNE partnership and associated contract; and managing and sustaining the TNE initiative. The central elements of the themes as they relate to each of the clusters are shown in Figure 6.2.

**Figure 6.2 Factors impacting the three summative clusters**



Overall, the study yielded a deeper and more systematic understanding of the nature of TNE and the sources for concerns about strategy and management that arise from its inherent complexity and risk. The development of a series of implications for management practice, both at operational and strategic levels, has been a key outcome of the study.

The discussion in this chapter also raises the issue of the key importance of the role and performance of the Vice-Chancellor and senior management team. The changing nature of the senior management role in universities has been widely discussed in the literature, mainly in the context of rapid change and growing environmental complexity (e.g. Middlehurst, 2013). The development of stronger institutional management has been driven by the growing complexity of the environment in which universities operate. The drivers of change have been discussed in Chapter 2 and arise from a multitude of influences including globalisation, massification, technological change and greater financial stringency. The challenges and complexities of internationalising a university are just one of the factors affecting the role of management, but are at the heart of the strategic management issues identified in this chapter. The changing role of the Vice-Chancellor and senior managers inevitably has implications for the types of skills, personal characteristics and experience that are relevant for appointment to a senior role. Throughout sections 6.3 – 6.5 the crucial role of the Vice-Chancellor, and also other senior managers, has been highlighted on a number of occasions.

In a context of complexity and challenge, selecting a Vice-Chancellor with the appropriate skill set and experience becomes a task of fundamental importance. To meet the challenges of institutional internationalisation, the Vice-Chancellor needs to have the capacity to:

- Think strategically and develop an inspirational and achievable vision
- Network effectively across cultures and develop strong relationships with strategic international partners
- Communicate institutional vision and strategy effectively within the institution and with external stakeholders
- Be an effective political operator in negotiating through the distributed power structures of universities
- Act as a champion for strategic initiatives while at the same time delegating the implementation and operational roles in a coherent and structured way

- Evaluate strategically the current effectiveness of an international initiative and its prospects for sustainable development, understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the institution.

The increasing focus on strategic leadership and the role of the Vice-Chancellor brings a parallel need for more sophisticated governance processes capable of responding to increased complexity and the particular challenges of operating across national boundaries and cultures. Governance bodies need to exercise more strategic and rigorous oversight of senior management within their traditional 'checks and balances' role. In addition, the more complex governance structures and demands that operating transnationally bring are further complicated by the broader demands that overseas branch campuses impose.

Among the many challenges of operating transnationally, effectively managing the tension between the need for institution-wide integration and the need for local responsiveness (Shams & Huisman, 2012) is a central task. Universities need to contribute to the host country as well as the home institution. This raises the ethical dimension of international operations. The 'home' and 'host' country economic divide that characterises much TNE, and the financial benefits international students bring to Western universities, raise a clear ethical imperative for Western universities (Altbach, 2004). Institutions should devote particular attention to ensuring that the host country and its student population derive substantial benefits from a TNE activity. Integrating TNE into broad institutional strategy often clashes with meeting host country cultural and economic needs and expectations, and exposes inherent and fundamental contradictions within TNE goals, and within many, if not all, internationalisation goals.

## **6.6 Reflections on my learning as a researcher and practitioner and future directions**

In this section, I am reflecting on what the thesis has meant for me as a researcher and as a practitioner. Although I have had considerable experience in university management, including the strategic level, my thinking has not been systematised or integrated across experiences and it has been relatively uninformed by the higher education literature. This study has given me a deeper understanding of relevant theoretical structures and a broader, more systematic basis for approaching strategic dilemmas and challenges in TNE and internationalisation. It has also given me a broader perspective from which to characterise problems and issues. The deeper understanding and more systematised basis will bring benefits to my consulting and governing board roles in higher education.

My on-going involvement in internationalisation also raised the need to be aware of my own 'positionality' and how my perceptions, background, biases and experiences have shaped my research. Throughout the study, I tried to be mindful of my 'vested interest' in the research and sought a degree of detachment through the use of coding rules, theoretically-based analytical framework and consistency with relevant literature.

The study has illuminated areas for my future research program, and also for other higher education researchers to pursue:

- The potential applicability of this study's findings to other internationalisation and strategic ventures by universities.
- The exploration of the integration-responsiveness dilemma to identify a range of effective strategies for minimising the tension, both theoretically and in practical terms.
- Change and continuity in viewing TNE ventures and partnerships that has resulted from the transition from AUQA to TEQSA as the national accreditation and QA agency in Australia.
- The importance of, and mechanisms for, feeding back organisational learning from experience with TNE initiatives into the core activities of the university.
- How the literature on globalisation in higher education relates to, and informs, the management tasks of developing and implementing an internationalisation strategy, especially in relation to TNE.
- How conclusions from this study might apply more broadly to university partnerships and initiatives in the context of the more integrated development of higher education institutions.

## **6.7 Contributions to knowledge and the profession**

While there is a growing literature on the management of TNE, it is still small in comparison with the literature on students and learning in TNE, and much of it is based on case studies of single institutions or small numbers of them. Another strand of the literature uses business management or other theoretical concepts and structures to discuss and systematise management challenges. This approach, although useful in clarifying thinking, lacks the touchstone of practical experience in the development of solutions or strategies.

This study draws on systematic reviews of TNE management in 27 universities using a structured analytical framework to produce a comprehensive overview of management issues in TNE and extensive practice guidance for university managers, including at the strategic level.

As well as providing guidance at a practical management level for setting and running a TNE venture, the study also advances the knowledge base by placing the practical management issues into the context of globalisation and strategic decision-making about the nature and form of TNE ventures. The study highlights the conceptual dilemma of the imperative to integrate all institutional ventures within an institutional 'umbrella' of common goals and standards versus the imperative to avoid cultural imperialism and exploitation by being responsive to local needs. This dilemma is at the heart of all TNE and indeed, international ventures, and each institution needs to determine an appropriate balance between integration with university internationalisation and overall strategic directions, and an appropriate accommodation to the educational, cultural and economic needs of host countries. Whatever balance is adopted, it is clear that tensions will remain as there are elements of the integration-responsiveness dichotomy that are essentially in conflict at a fundamental level. Sharpening the focus on this issue as both a theoretical and a practical matter of substance highlights the need for more work by both researchers and commentators on higher education and by senior leaders in universities.

## **6.8 Limitations of the study and prospects for further research**

Any research study has limitations as well as strengths. Limitations, in particular, suggest opportunities for further research. While this thesis has involved a substantial study of a large body of documents, the constraints of a professional doctorate thesis meant that the main focus of the study was purposely limited to institutional strategy and management. Only a broad level analysis was feasible for the other five dimensions: Legal and governance; Academic; Student and Staff Support and Resources; QA Systems; and Research, Research Training and Community Engagement. Further study would allow deeper analysis of these other important dimensions of TNE activity.

However, as the main area of my professional interest and the main gap in existing literature is in the area of institutional strategy and management, this is the area where I would have liked to extend the work beyond a study of documentary evidence. The limitations of a doctoral thesis precluded extending the research beyond documentary analysis. Hence, the main limitation of the research is that the data that gave rise to the insights came exclusively from the AUQA audit reports. The main opportunity for further research would involve testing and enhancing the findings by exploring the perspectives of the various stakeholders in TNE development and review as a form of 'triangulation' of the study's insights. In the light of the study's main focus, the most relevant group of participants in a further strategic management study would be the vice-chancellors and members of the senior

mangement teams in universities. The perspectives of academics and managers involved in TNE and staff members of AUQA would also add value in a further study. Interviews would allow more in-depth qualitative study and provide a 'rich' and useful type of data to set alongside the analysis of the documentary data. However, focus groups and surveys would be most suitable for the larger stakeholder groups. Another avenue for further research, suggested by the limitations of this thesis would be a more expansive comparative study of institutional management and QA agencies in different countries to place the Australian experience and perspective on TNE in a broader 'global' higher education context.

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# Appendix

## Data sources and abbreviations

### Australian University Quality Agency Cycle 2 Review Reports, 2008-2012

The Review Reports of the institutions listed below are the data sources used for this study. The reports are archived in the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency AUQA Audit Report Archive, available from <http://teqsa.gov.au/audit-reports>.

Abbreviations are those in common usage in Australia.

<b>Name of University</b>	<b>Abbreviation used in this study</b>	<b>Report year</b>
Bond University	Bond	2010
Central Queensland University	CQU	2011
Charles Sturt University.	SCU	2010
Curtin University of Technology	Curtin	2008
Deakin University	Deakin	2011
Edith Cowan University	ECU	2012
Griffith University	Griffith	2008
James Cook University	JCU	2010
La Trobe University	La Trobe	2010
Macquarie University	Macquarie	2009
University of Melbourne	UniMel	2010
Queensland University of Technology	QUT	2012
RMIT University	RMIT	2009
Southern Cross University	SCU	2008
Swinburne University.	Swinburne	2008
University of Adelaide	Adelaide	2008
University of Ballarat	Ballarat	2009
University of Canberra	Canberra	2009/2012
University of Newcastle	Newcastle	2008
University of New England	UNE	2009
University of New South Wales.	UNSW	2011
University of South Australia	UniSA	2009
University of Southern Queensland	USQ	2009
University of Sydney	Sydney	2012
University of Tasmania	Tasmania	2012
University of Western Australia	UWA	2009
University of Wollongong	Wollongong	2011

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