



# Collaborating for Success: Enhancing the Transition of Chinese Communication/Media Students into Australian Postgraduate Education

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Students and academics in China and Australia

## List of acronyms used

CUC	Communication University of China
MU	Murdoch University
VU	Victoria University
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
CUTL	Centre for University Teaching and Learning at Murdoch University

## Executive summary

This international project involved three partner universities - Murdoch University, Victoria University and Communication University of China – and a range of other higher education institutions in Australia and China. The project sought to enhance the capacity of academics and institutions in Australia and China in intercultural competency, learning support, and international collaboration and has been successful in achieving this.

As a result, on postgraduate media and communication courses associated with the project students from mainland China who are studying in Australia have begun to develop proficiency in negotiating between different academic cultures and therefore are better equipped to be successful learners in the Australian academic context. Academics in Australia and China have gained a greater understanding of cultural difference and how this influences student learning, notably during their transition from study in China to postgraduate study in Australia. The project has strengthened established international partnerships and stimulated new international relationships in higher education and industry. In the Australian partner institutions, there is evidence of an increase in capacity to provide quality international education together with more effective support for Chinese students in their transition into Australian postgraduate study.

Over a third of all international students in Australia's tertiary sector are Chinese. The recent signing of Sino-Australian Agreements in free trade and education suggests there is increasing potential for expansion in the numbers of students recruited from mainland China as well as for building and strengthening partnerships between universities in both countries. Coupled with this is recent education policy in China which places greater importance on lecturers' professional development, including exposure to international teaching strategies. These conditions will shape future collaboration between Australian and Chinese academics as the current climate of education reform in China opens new avenues for mutually beneficial engagement.

The project focuses on the postgraduate level in the disciplinary area of media and communication because, as the report contends, customised support is more relevant and effective than generic. The project approach was based on four key principles:

- **Collaboration** by academics in Australia and China in order to achieve a genuinely international educational experience that unfolded in intentional and developmentally appropriate ways.
- **Cultural inclusion**, building on the educational best practices and expectations of academics and postgraduate students in both Australia and China.
- **Customisation and embedding** of cultural, learning and language skills and materials that are critical for success in the study of communication and media at postgraduate level.

- **Professional development** of lecturers aimed at empowering academic staff teaching in communication and media, and those supporting student learning, by enabling them to learn about each other's views and expectations, and support each other's professional development, including the learning of new pedagogies.

Distinctive to this project are insights and resources derived from extensive ethnographic research conducted inside Chinese and Australian universities over an extended period by a joint team of Australian and Chinese researchers. Data collected from participant observation in both countries, content analysis of learning and teaching documents, 104 interviews with students and academics, and written feedback from 299 academics provided an understanding of the disparate pedagogical strategies, interactions and relationships associated with Chinese and Australian academic cultures.

Outputs of the project are customised resources and strategies developed for the purpose of constructing learning and teaching environments that encourage and enable Chinese postgraduate students to be confident and successful in their learning. Therefore, the focus of the project is on the professional development of lecturers through the provision of a range of training and dissemination activities, teaching sessions with accompanying materials for students, and cultural awareness-raising briefings which provide information about cultural difference as it relates to Australian and Chinese academic cultures.

Deliverables produced include **a model of best practice, a methodological approach** and a **range of toolkits** consisting of learning and teaching resources and pedagogical strategies.

- The model of best practice includes a theoretical model and conceptual framework which emerged from the findings of primary and secondary research and which informed the development of the project's toolkits. The conceptual framework identifies important features of academic cultures which influence students' learning behaviours and expectations, and also highlights priority topics which need to be addressed when developing materials to support students in transition between the academic cultures of China and Australia.
- The methodological approach is grounded in ethnographic research which enables insights into cultural experiences and meanings from the perspective of lecturers and students based in different academic cultural contexts. The project's methodology for intercultural research as well as intercultural relationship building is among the outcomes with potential for transferability to other disciplines and education contexts.
- Toolkits include:
  - Written teaching sessions with linked student materials based on topics which the research indicated are pertinent to the areas which challenge Chinese postgraduate students in media and communication
  - Culturally and socially responsive pedagogical strategies that research suggests are appropriate for working with Chinese postgraduate students
  - Sets of briefing notes for lecturers to raise awareness of cultural difference and tips for dealing with this
  - Case study exemplars of how project materials have been used successfully

- Two websites, one providing information on the project and another hosting the multi-media resources.

The toolkits are aimed at Australian lecturers teaching media and communication, Chinese lecturers preparing students for study in Australia, and tutors in student learning centres delivering either pre-sessional courses or ongoing support workshops. For the latter, a 5-day program was designed and resourced. In all, 103 documents, some translated into Chinese, are available online at <http://chinapostgraduates.murdoch.edu.au>.

The teaching sessions and strategies, and professional development training were trialled with and/or implemented in a number of universities in Australia and China, including Perth, Melbourne, Sydney, Wollongong, Chicago, Canberra, Beijing, Jinan, Kaifeng, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Xi'an. Extensive dissemination activities took place in conferences, workshops and seminars in China and Australia.

The report identifies a number of factors that influenced the success of the project including intercultural relationships, the numbers of students from mainland China enrolling on Australian postgraduate programs during the period of the research, and the need for flexibility when planning and scheduling a project as complex as this. There are positive indications that, with further research and some revisions to the resources, the potential exists for adaptation of the resources and strategies to other disciplines, to other levels such as undergraduate and pre-university, and also to executive training courses.

The project has made and will continue to make a significant contribution to knowledge in a number of important areas. These include knowledge about mainland China's education philosophy, pedagogical practices, learning behaviours and expectations, and a recommended approach to constructing and adapting research-based resources for the international learning and teaching arena. It has also advanced knowledge about the types of pedagogical strategies and resources that are effective in supporting Chinese students on their journey towards becoming proficient learners on Australian postgraduate courses in media and communication.

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# 1. The project context

## 1.1 China: an important market for Australian universities

In recent years, universities globally have experienced expansion in international student recruitment, with the People's Republic of China the main source country of international students.<sup>1</sup> The presence of international students on the campuses of four of the most popular host countries (Australia, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada) is not insignificant. They contribute fundamentally to the financial health of many higher education institutions and also are a vital source of sustainability and growth to local and national economies. By their presence, they support the creation of jobs, help to fill skills shortages, and promote a global learning environment.<sup>2</sup>

Although some Australian education sectors experienced a dip in international student recruitment after the global financial crisis, the market has seen a strong return to growth. At the tertiary level, international student commencements in Australia increased by 13.61% over 2013-14 with China continuing to be the largest origin country. Communication and media studies are emerging as popular, new areas of interest for Chinese students<sup>3</sup>. Currently almost 40,000 Chinese students are studying at tertiary level in Australia, representing 35% of all international students in higher education.<sup>4</sup> In the ELICOS sector (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students), China is again the largest origin country with student numbers up 7.47% in 2014<sup>5</sup>. Approximately 39% of English language students are generally estimated to progress on to other education sectors<sup>6</sup> with many of these students flowing through to the tertiary sector in due course.

## 1.2 Australia's engagement with China

The importance of Australia's current and future engagement with China is framed by the 2012 'Australia in the Asian Century White Paper' which highlights that it is within the nation's interest to build closer educational, cultural and people-to-people links in an ascendant Asian region. 'Stronger relationships will lead to more Australians having a deeper understanding of what is happening in Asia' and enable them to take advantage of the many opportunities that will emerge, including in one of the key areas of productivity: education and skills development<sup>7</sup>.

Currently, the Australian government focus on China involves information sharing and partnerships, including support for strategic collaboration between Australian and Chinese education, research and training institutions and 'collaboration on research into and implementation of quality assurance systems and processes [in education]'.<sup>8</sup> At the end of 2014, Australian and Chinese governments signed a Free Trade Agreement and complementary higher education Agreement. The latter opens the way for mutual recognition of tertiary qualifications, enabling greater mobility between the two higher education sectors and also presenting new marketing and recruitment opportunities in China for Australian education institutions.<sup>9</sup>

Education engagement with China is mature and includes initiatives such as Australian Studies programs offered at a number of Chinese universities (including the BHP Billiton Chair of Australian Studies at Peking University), support from the Australia-China Council for exchange programs, joint research institutes, joint university degree courses taught in China, and the long established Australia-China Science and Research Fund which supports strategic science, technology and innovation collaboration of mutual benefit to Australia and China. In 2012, Monash University established a joint graduate school campus in Suzhou, partnering with China's Southeast University. Universities Australia and The China Education Association for International Exchange have had a memorandum of understanding since 2002 with a view to advancing teaching, research, scholarship and management in their member institutions. Engagement activities include the China Australia Executive Leadership Program for senior university leaders, and the China Australia Middle Managers Program which supports senior administrators and research leaders of universities for travel and study tours of research and administration leadership. Connections such as these with foreign universities incentivise and contribute to closer relationships between academics as well as student mobility.

Australia is not alone in its education ambitions to collaborate with and recruit from China. Other countries have strong track records in attracting international students to undergraduate and postgraduate courses, including the traditional destinations of the United Kingdom, United States of America, Japan and Canada. Newer destinations are emerging such as Singapore, Malaysia and some Gulf States, such as the United Arab Emirates. Like many Australian universities, Murdoch University has explicit goals in relation to engagement with China. Its new Learning and Teaching Strategy states that it will 'look for further collaborations in China and other Asian countries in the form of partnering arrangements, articulation agreements and expanded opportunities for student exchange'. Specifically, the university states that it is committed to 'collaborative undertakings of Learning and Teaching related research, particularly with reference to the learning needs of the international on shore cohort'.<sup>10</sup>

The main drivers of international enrolment growth appear to be strong consumer demand coupled with partnerships between governments and universities<sup>11</sup> and greater open access to data and research. Activities and partnerships, such as those outlined above, determine the opportunities available for student mobility and recruitment between Chinese and Australian higher education institutions. However, if education collaboration, exchange and enrolment are to be successful, both parties need to share a willingness to learn from and about each other's national and academic contexts in order to develop greater mutual understanding. This is best achieved through the development of people-to-people relationships which inherently take considerable time to develop.

Underpinning the design and approach of this project has been a determination to work relationally. 'Collaborating for Success: Enhancing the Transition of Chinese Students into Australian Postgraduate Study in Media and Communication' has sought to build and maintain genuine intercultural relationships between Australian and Chinese academics by working collaboratively towards students' success. Chinese and Australian researchers in the three partner universities (Murdoch University, Victoria University and Communication University of China) were engaged over a period of 18 months in designing and conducting ethnographic research in both countries. The project sought to gain insights into Chinese and Australian academic cultures, to identify commonalities, differences and good practice, and use these

insights to understand the issues that Chinese postgraduates confront when transitioning into Australian postgraduate coursework study in media and communication. With this understanding, a set of culturally inclusive learning and teaching resources were developed and trialled in both countries, then evaluated and revised. The focus was on enhancing the capacity of Australian and Chinese lecturers to support Chinese students to become proficient at negotiating the transition between academic cultures, and to be successful in postgraduate coursework study in media and communication in Australia.

### 1.3 Higher education in China

China has greatly expanded its higher education system as its economy has grown over recent years, with the total number of universities and colleges more than doubling<sup>12</sup>. As the world's largest higher education system, China's potential for outbound student mobility is huge. There are 33.25 million students currently enrolled in higher education: 23.91 million at undergraduate and junior college level, 6.24 million at graduate level, and 1.71 million at postgraduate level<sup>13</sup>. Numbers are predicted to rise to 35.50 million in the next ten years, including 2 million at masters level<sup>14</sup>.

Radical development of all levels of education has become one of China's priorities. Reforms are currently being implemented to align all levels of the education sector with the goals and ambitions set out in the central government's 2010 blueprint for the future of education, and subsequent further guidelines and directives<sup>15</sup>. China acknowledges that its ideology of education, teaching methodologies and content are 'outdated', its education system is inflexible, students lack adaptability, and skilled and innovative professionals are in short supply, their 'academic and pedagogical proficiency [needing to be] boosted'<sup>16</sup>.

Alongside the need to meet changing economic and social needs, the reforms have been motivated by a combination of externally imposed standards which force China to adopt international modes of education, together with 'voluntary and even enthusiastic acceptance of foreign standards of academic excellence'<sup>17</sup>. Much of the reform and internationalisation of higher education has been based on Western models, especially those of the North American higher education system.

Although traditional teaching methods such as the transmission of information, the asking and answering of descriptive questions, and classroom presentations continue to dominate university lecture rooms, some universities such as Shanghai Normal University and Huazhong University of Science and Technology claim they have already introduced interactive teaching strategies and have received positive student feedback. For years, Chinese researchers have been studying Bloom's taxonomy, reflective teaching, critical thinking, constructivism and other Western education concepts<sup>18</sup>. A number of universities have been running critical thinking courses for some years, including Shantou University which intends to integrate critical thinking principles into 50% of their courses by 2017<sup>19</sup>.

In many instances, foreign education models have been overlaid on traditional and deep-seated cultural practices and attitudes, such as those associated with notions of 'student-centred' or 'teacher-centred' learning and the associated roles and relationships<sup>20</sup>. In some cases, interesting and innovative 'hybrid' models have developed, such as the example of Sun Yat Sen University's '*Boya Ban* Liberal Learning Scheme', a program based on local conditions

and characteristics within the context of wider national and international education trends<sup>21</sup>. Here the emphasis is less on the autonomy that characterises education in the West, but more on ‘the cultivation of students through highly articulated programmes of study ... [which include] less independent study’ while still offering some choice<sup>22</sup>.

As China seeks to change its higher education system and the individuals within it, there is evidence that transformation is taking place at varying degrees of pace across the country. Aspirations to introduce change (based on foreign models of learning and teaching) to an academic culture that is underpinned by Confucian values is not without tension and contradiction. Primary research for this project indicates that within universities and amongst lecturing staff there is considerable debate and some resistance. Alongside these are also openness and a degree of enthusiasm but this is sometimes stymied by institutional constraints, traditional summative forms of assessment and lecturers’ uncertainty and insecurity about how to actually implement new approaches to teaching.

Improvement in the quality and capacity of lecturers is a feature of China’s education aspirations<sup>23</sup>. Collaborating with foreign institutions to improve both teaching quality and the subsequent quality of graduates is encouraged. Developing exchange programmes for lecturers and students, collaboratively running programs and hiring a large number of foreign academics with excellent teaching skills are strategies proposed to help students and lecturers to widen their views, learn advanced research methods and technology and gain intercultural communication capacity.

Another feature of reform is the promotion of China as an overseas study destination. By 2020, it intends to be prominent in Asia in terms of the inbound recruitment of international students<sup>24</sup>. Currently 356,500 international students are studying in Chinese universities<sup>25</sup> with government plans to increase this number to 0.5 million by 2020<sup>26</sup>. Collaborative programs with international universities, many with campuses in China, and the development and promotion of new masters courses are key strategies for attracting international postgraduates<sup>27</sup>. For example, the Master of Arts in International Journalism and Communication at Communication University of China, and the Master of International Relations at Tsinghua University are aimed at foreign students. Curtin University’s Bachelor of Business Administration has been delivered in partnership with a southern China university using Curtin University curriculum, teaching practices and assessment methods delivered by Chinese tutors<sup>28</sup>. Currently there are 785 Sino-foreign higher education collaborative initiatives involving twinning, double/joint degree programs and branch campuses. The key countries involved are the United Kingdom, United States of America and Australia<sup>29</sup>.

Although Sino-foreign collaborative education programs comprise only a small proportion of the entire higher education system, they have an important role in encouraging the modernisation of China’s higher education sector<sup>30</sup>. Successful partnerships suggest that some Chinese universities have introduced different approaches to teaching and assessment developed through their partnerships with Anglophone universities. The introduction of formative assessment opens the way for more contemporary participative approaches to learning to be introduced, enabling lecturers to focus on developing students’ broader abilities than those required for traditional, summative assessment.

The opening up of higher education in China to international ideas which are premised on democratic ideals challenges and threatens existing political and ideological controls. This has

not gone unrecognised by the Chinese government. The Guardian newspaper recently reported on a statement by China's education minister regarding his intention to ban university textbooks which promote 'western values'. His use of the expression that teachers should 'stand firm and hold the 'political, legal and moral bottom line'' is commonly associated with support for China's authoritarian political system<sup>31</sup>. This suggests that a degree of caution and considerable adaptation may be required when Chinese universities attempt to implement foreign models.

In this climate of change with tensions and uncertainty, it becomes increasingly evident that if universities in Australia are to operate successfully in partnership with Chinese universities and academics, then the development of trusting relationships is crucial. The building of trust requires a good deal of understanding of each other's ideologies and practices in order to negotiate the political and cultural differences that have an impact on education including research. Research for this project has revealed that lecturers in China, on the whole, are keen to develop new pedagogic portfolios through collaboration with Australian academics. Their hesitation is often due to inexperience at working internationally and conforming to the protocols of international research ethics and accountabilities.

#### **1.4 Challenges for lecturers and Chinese students in Australia**

The literature on international student learning and teaching<sup>32</sup> as well as this project's primary research has highlighted that Australian academics across all fields and levels need to be supported in their pedagogical practice and interactions with international students in order to negotiate the increasing diversity they encounter in their classes. This calls for the professional development of academics, beginning with a genuine dialogue across different educational systems 'based upon a mutual respect for and recognition of contemporary Chinese and Anglophone realities, knowledge and perspectives'<sup>33</sup>. This has the potential to motivate academics to integrate different instructional methods (including culturally relevant pedagogies) into their teaching and support for students. Thus student achievement will be enhanced in Australia.

Cross-cultural research indicates that persons exposed to novel and unfamiliar cultural environments are subject to a range of challenges as they respond to those environments<sup>34</sup>. For some students, an encounter with an unfamiliar cultural environment can be a positive learning experience, presenting opportunities to develop and enhance academic knowledge and intercultural competencies. For others, the cross-cultural encounter can be a stressful confrontation that is perceived negatively, and which over time can lead to resistance to learning or self-marginalisation<sup>35</sup>. When students from a range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds enter new academic institutions, especially those situated abroad, they are exposed to multiple challenges associated with transitioning from one academic culture to another. The wealth of cultural resources and expectations they bring with them influences their ability to deal with the different academic expectations and practices of the host university, and how well they are able to cope with the academic discourse associated with their specific discipline<sup>36</sup>.

Much of the extant literature about the learning of Chinese international students has been based, until relatively recently, on a stereotypical, deficit model of learning which is pervasive among academics in Anglophone institutions<sup>37</sup>, despite counter empirical evidence<sup>38</sup>. Deficit

thinking is an oppressive construct founded on bias, whereby the student as 'victim' is blamed for failure and perceived to be lacking in ability to succeed in the new learning environment. With a focus on the individual and the inference that educability is due to limited intelligence or linguistic deficiencies<sup>39</sup>, this thinking fails to acknowledge and examine the structures, systems and circumstances that thwart optimal learning by students. In effect, certain groups of students (such as those characterised by race and language status) are pathologised and marginalised.<sup>40</sup> A further problem with deficit thinking is that it implies that teaching practices are homogeneous, such as across every region of a nation state, or across every discipline. That much of the literature based on the deficit construct has been written by 'Western instructors working with international students struggling to succeed in unfamiliar cultural and linguistic environments'<sup>41</sup> may partly explain this perspective. The deficit view is disturbing because of its potentially negative implications for the academic expectations and interactions that lecturers in the host institution have with international students<sup>42</sup>.

In contrast, a social justice perspective highlights the failure of (and need for) institutions to engage in programs and activities that lead to equity and justice for all students who experience constant marginalisation. This involves not only interventions to support students to develop the appropriate skills to attain proficiency in the new learning culture, but also training for lecturers to enable them to gain insights and strategies 'to comprehend, find and value participation of marginalised [students] other than [via] the conventional methods'.<sup>43</sup> Using a social justice perspective, the project argues that the professional development of lecturers must be accompanied by research into students' home academic culture to, firstly, identify differences and similarities and understand them from an 'insider's perspective', and, secondly, enable academics in both home and host universities to comprehend the differences between education systems and the influence of the home culture on Chinese students' transition from one to the other. Alongside this is an onus on Australian academics to interrogate their own social realities, their belief systems associated with learning and teaching, and the ideologies that underpin them. To this end, the project employed ethnographic research methods to identify difference and similarity, and challenge deficit thinking. The research drew attention to the role of the power relations, negative stereotypical thinking and lack of cultural sensitivities that are intrinsic to many university cultures. It was found that many Chinese students are denied or forfeit the opportunity to maximise their abilities in the postgraduate learning context in Australia.

It is only in the last decade or so that empirical research has been published that sets out to understand the experiences of Chinese postgraduate students in Anglophone universities<sup>44</sup>. Particularly informative have been studies by Chinese scholars writing about the comparative experiences of Chinese students and lecturers<sup>45</sup>. These studies offer hints about the nature of Chinese academic cultures and their influence on the strategies that students use to transition from home to host academic culture. Most of the research is based on studies of Chinese students once they have arrived in the host university and the issues they encounter there, with little published research conducted inside Chinese universities, through interviewing lecturers and students and extended observations of learning and teaching practices.

A number of studies have sought to understand the reasons for Chinese students' motivations to study abroad and hence the contextual influences on their decisions, expectations and ambitions. Aside from limited higher education opportunities within China (despite the rapid expansion of its tertiary sector), there is a general lack of confidence in the quality of Chinese



education<sup>46</sup>, an increasing demand for 'a non-Chinese world perspective'<sup>47</sup> and a perception that students have better skills and prospects having studied abroad<sup>48</sup>. With pressures from family and society to be successful, many return home disillusioned by what they consider to be their less than distinguished performance in universities abroad. Recent research reports that Chinese students felt constantly to be 'inadequate in relation to the expectations they encountered' in Australia, even though many had achieved positive learning results in their earlier studies in China.<sup>49</sup>

While a lack of proficiency in English and disciplinary language may compound learning difficulties,<sup>50</sup> a number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors have been found to influence the process of transition - and development of competency - between different academic cultures. These factors relate not so much to students' prior knowledge of the discipline area, or the curricula offered by their new course of study. Instead, personal resilience and motivation are important factors together with the ability to develop supportive friendship networks.<sup>51</sup> Also, vital is preparedness in relation to knowledge about the host country, its education system and practices.<sup>52</sup> However, the crucial factor in students' success is extrinsic: the supportiveness and openness of the academic cultural context in which students are studying. When an academic culture is socially and culturally supportive, then student learning is greatly enhanced.<sup>53</sup>

The consequences for student achievement and ambition are profound when the academic cultural context is culturally insensitive. For starters, there is an effect on individual identity and self-esteem, with many Chinese students internalising deficit descriptions of themselves<sup>54</sup>. This can lead to a distancing of themselves from learning<sup>55</sup> and from developing proficiency in the new disciplinary discourse.<sup>56</sup> The overall outcome is a less than successful experience.

From a social justice perspective, Australian universities have a duty of care to all students, including the Chinese students they recruit. Therefore, it is the responsibility of institutions as well as individual lecturers to construct an environment that encourages and enables *all* students to be confident and successful in their learning. This begins with what Bodycott terms a 'cultural mind shift'<sup>57</sup> whereby the contribution of international students is acknowledged to be significant in the extent to which it enriches the intercultural experience of all students and lecturers. Writing about the struggles of Chinese students in foreign universities, Ryan made the point that lecturers in Australia have tended to adopt 'western' and ethnocentric pedagogical practices by default<sup>58</sup>. To overcome this problem, Bodycott recommends that academics - just as much as international students - need to develop intercultural competencies and sensitivities. He argues that higher education institutions need to ensure that 'the embedded cultural understanding and needs of different cultural groups are infused into policy-based procedures, professional development for staff and support programmes for students'<sup>59</sup>. Likewise, Valencia's challenge to change deficit thinking argues that education institutions must make conscientious efforts to create 'an optimum learning environment', one no longer characterised by negative stereotypes and one that is accessible to all<sup>60</sup>. It is argued then that when universities make a commitment such as this the result is confidence and proficiency by Chinese students in negotiating the expectations and practices of the Australian academic culture, and success at the postgraduate level. There is also an enrichment of the class as a learning environment together with enhanced learning by the lecturer and non-Chinese students in the cohort.

Success, therefore, is not down to the individual student alone. It is also a responsibility of the university - linked to its policies, structures and actions – as well as the pedagogical strategies and support offered by academics. The notion is encapsulated, to some extent, in Norris and Tsedendamba’s<sup>61</sup> recent reconceptualization of Agar’s languaculture model<sup>62</sup>. This has been adapted further by this project for the Chinese-Australian academic contexts (see below) whereby cultural negotiation is shown to be a process involving members of both home and host universities. It occurs in a transition arena between the two different academic cultures. In this arena, mutual responses are made to events, experiences, and broader external forces (such as changing university policies, structures, practices etc.). Debate and conflict occur in this arena, as well as responses such as withdrawal or denial, resistance or engagement. Mutual understanding may evolve in this arena, leading to relationship building and the development of cultural competencies by both students and lecturers. These are encouraged by the targeted interventions of academics who are knowledgeable about recognising and dealing with difference. Within the context of this study this has been a focus, i.e. equipping academics to become knowledgeable about difference.

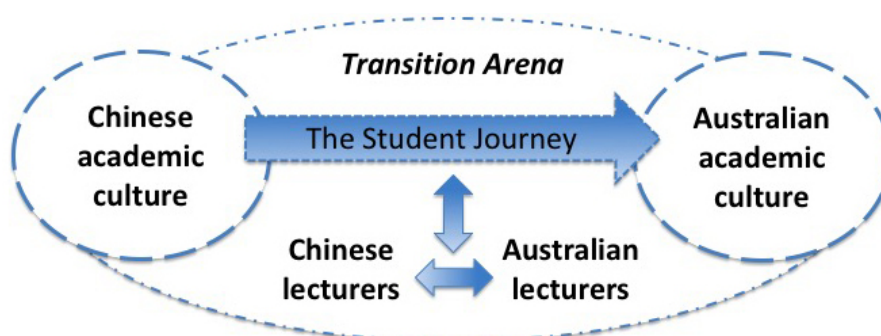


Figure 1: The student journey and the transition arena

In the model, students’ transition into higher education in Australia is reflected by the large arrow within the transition arena. The two-way arrows indicate mutual influence, interventions and interactions during the transition process and through the course of study, involving students and lecturers. It highlights that the process of meaning making in the transition arena requires mutual understanding and change, not only by students but lecturers in both countries. The model has emerged from the literature review and is also informed by primary research. It is foundational to the conceptual framework (see Appendix B) which informed the development of the project’s set of resources and pedagogical strategies (i.e. the toolkits). It provides a rationale for the project approach and the four key principles on which the aims and deliverables are based (see Section 3.1).

## 2. A focus on postgraduate students studying media and communication

Many of the learning challenges outlined in section 1.4 are pertinent also for undergraduate students. However, for postgraduate students the transitional and adaptation challenges of intercultural learning are greater because they are already acculturated into the practical knowledge and expectations of an academic community situated in a national and institutional culture that differs from that of the host university. In addition, postgraduate students have only a short period (sometimes only three semesters) to become accustomed to the learning and teaching practices of the host university, unlike undergraduate students whose adaptation period is less compressed. For these reasons, there is a need for ongoing and comprehensive learning skills and language support from the moment of their arrival<sup>63</sup>.

The distinct challenges faced by international postgraduate students, and specifically Chinese, are often overlooked when research recommendations are made and learning and teaching practices are developed which aim to benefit a universal international student body. These problems are better addressed when research places postgraduate students at the centre of attention, and also when inquiry and the subsequent development of teaching and learning resources are less ethnocentric and more interculturally attuned. The value of this project lies in its capacity to address these issues both theoretically and practically.

The project focuses on the disciplinary areas of media and communication, themselves underpinned by the humanities, social sciences and the arts. The decision to concentrate on a relatively narrow field is based on the notion that there is variability in what different disciplines identify as the essential skills for success and how these should be taught.<sup>64</sup> For the resources to be effective, they needed to be discipline specific and customised rather than generic across all disciplines<sup>65</sup>. Postgraduate course titles in the field of media and communication include media and film or screen studies, journalism, public relations, communication management, strategic communication, communication studies, broadcasting, and media production. It is possible to identify some core skills that postgraduate students studying media and communication in Australia should have developed on graduation.<sup>66</sup> These include *inter alia* the ability to think and practise creatively, critically and reflectively; to be skilled in understanding and deploying the discourse specific to media and communication; to be able to interpret, communicate, and exchange ideas and arguments across complex personal, professional and disciplinary settings; to be able to work independently and with initiative; to be competent in conducting critical and ethical inquiry, including exercising critical judgement; to be able to analyse and synthesise complex information, problems, concepts and theories; to be able to apply theory to practice. These are incorporated into the learning outcomes of the project's resources, notably the teaching sessions.

## 3. Project approach and methodology

The project is a response to the identification of significant learning and teaching issues related to intercultural competencies and learning support that currently have an impact on the Australian higher education system.

### 3.1 Four key principles

The project approach was based on four key principles:

- **Collaboration** by academics in Australia and China in order to achieve a genuinely international educational experience that unfolded in intentional and developmentally appropriate ways.
- **Cultural inclusion**, building on the educational best practices and expectations of academics and postgraduate students in both Australia and China.
- **Customisation and embedding** of cultural, study and language skills and materials that are critical for success in the study of communication and media at postgraduate level.
- **Professional development** of lecturers aimed at empowering academic staff teaching in communication and media, and those supporting student learning, by enabling them to learn about each other's views and expectations, and support each other's professional development, including the learning of new pedagogies.

### 3.2 Process and procedures

A distinctive aspect of the project was the emic (or 'insiders' view') and also the iterative approach to conducting the various phases of the project whereby all academic participants sought to work cooperatively and creatively to examine the findings and evaluations, reflect on their own experiences and actions, and provide feedback on the toolkits in order that change would be introduced for the better in the various institutions. Acknowledging that 'reality is constructed by human beings in interaction with each other and the meanings that they give to their own and others' actions'<sup>67</sup>, the methodological approach prioritised meaning over scientific explanation by selecting an interpretive epistemology with qualitative, ethnographic techniques. Researchers therefore sought to become active sense-makers, using the research process – which continued throughout the course of the project, not only in the needs analysis phase - as a means of learning and generating knowledge with informants. In effect, this transformed the investigation into 'a civic, participatory, collaborative project ... that join[ed] the researcher with the researched in an on-going moral dialogue'<sup>68</sup>.

This openness within the research process was motivated by the need to ensure that the views and voices of those interviewed or observed were privileged, rather than distanced as in quantitative research. Interview participants not only provided useful data but also, where possible, were encouraged through probing to interpret some aspect of it, such as explaining what a particular way of learning or a specific source of motivation meant to them. The project therefore is grounded in the 'rich, thick' data that are associated with interpretive,

qualitative research, highlighting the subtle and complex nature of social phenomena in their context<sup>69</sup>.

The research sample was purposive and continued to expand through the course of data collection as new issues to follow up were encountered, new ideas emerged, and new opportunities for access arose. It also continued into the latter evaluation phases. Interview participants and those involved in providing qualitative evaluative feedback (through the mechanism of written open-ended questions) were academics and postgraduate students in China and Australia. In all, data were collected from 403 participants who included 104 students and academics in China and Australia interviewed for the needs analysis, and 299 academics in both countries who submitted written evaluative feedback. Amongst the Chinese students interviewed were two cohorts who were interviewed on arrival in Australia (as part of an initial pilot study), and later towards the completion of their second semester. Having gained early ethics clearance for this project prior to confirmation of the OLT funding, the project teams began interviewing in 2012 before the project's official commencement. The qualitative approach, with its iterative process of collection and analysis, afforded the opportunity for this pilot study to inform the main project.

The various phases of the main project's research and resources development began with the needs analysis in the first half of 2013. Data analysis took place simultaneously with data collection. The foundations of materials development began in the middle of 2013, continuing through to the beginning of 2014. By early 2014, the first materials were being piloted and the first website designed which provides information about the project, research and dissemination. Interviewing continued throughout 2014. Qualitative evaluative comments from lecturers involved in trialling materials and strategies, or those exposed to the dissemination activities were collected during 2014. Revision of resources, and production of additional materials, took place through 2014. The second website (which hosts the teaching and learning materials and links) was created in the second half of 2014 with the final versions of written documents uploaded in 2015.

The process of generating meaning through cooperation and reflection extended to the wider research team whose members included academics from universities in Australia and China. Taking a cue from the ideas of Shi-xu<sup>70</sup>, the project sought to engage in 'critical intercultural dialogue', by having the members of the team attempt to explain and interpret the different understandings of the data in order to learn from each other about the different cultural traditions and paradigms of education. To this end, interviews were transcribed (and translated where necessary) and compared with data derived from observations, document analysis, published articles and the project team's individual reflective notes. Among the research team, discussions were conducted about the cultural meanings and differences in the concepts and analytical codes that were derived iteratively from the research. These are documented as 'key features' in the conceptual framework found in Appendix B. The framework highlights key findings from the research and was used to inform the development of the toolkits (i.e. the set of resources and strategies).

The toolkits consist of teaching and learning materials: briefing notes for lecturers, teaching sessions and accompanying materials, and recommended pedagogical strategies. These were developed through repeated phases of inquiry, planning, implementation and review. While distinct phases were identifiable, it should be noted that some improvisation occurred for a

number of reasons including changes in team membership and unexpected issues regarding team availability, constraints on project plans and scheduling due to student recruitment issues, and new opportunities for access in China as well as to different, but still relevant, target groups in Australia (such as industry and executive training, undergraduate orientations, and cross-disciplinary teaching). The ability to be flexible and take advantage of unplanned opportunities is not unusual within this methodology<sup>71</sup> which encourages researchers to spiral in and out of all the data, materials and developing teaching resources while at the same time generating new understandings and questions. Improvisation was highlighted in the original project submission as likely to occur due to the complex nature of the project.

Research was carried out by members of the project team who included an Australian-based, Chinese researcher fluent in Chinese and English, and a China-based counterpart, fluent in Chinese and proficient in English. Interviews and extended periods of participant observation were carried out in China and Australia (the Australian Chinese-speaker spending time in China, and the Chinese researcher spending time in Australia). The data sources were:

- Transcripts from individual interviews and focus groups with academics and students in Australia and China
- Notes from participant observation of lectures and seminars in both countries, staff meetings in both countries, and informal meetings with students in social spaces on Chinese campuses
- Documents such as unit guides, textbooks and other teaching materials which were content-analysed
- Personal reflective notes about the observations, trialling experiences and learning which were written by members of the project team
- Qualitative feedback following trialling of professional development sessions with lecturers in both countries and also at Murdoch University's campus in Singapore where there are large numbers of Chinese students
- Qualitative comments from academic participants to research seminars in Australia and China
- Qualitative feedback following the use of project materials in executive training workshops at Murdoch University
- Published articles in English and Chinese, including those only available in China.

Throughout, researchers wrote reflective notes and research memos, recording their observations and interpretations. For example, a Chinese researcher wrote that having undertaken participant observation of an Australian seminar, the discussion seemed to be 'heated' and 'easy' (in other words, informal rather than simple) and the tables in the seminar room were 'movable'. These aspects she interpreted as symbolic of the less structured, less hierarchical relationships and more spontaneous, informal modes of communication in Australia, in contrast to those of the Chinese teaching environment. In China, one of the Australian researchers reflected about the value of memorisation, having taken photos of students spending hours in a garden at daybreak speaking aloud passages from textbooks in order to remember them. Following a discussion with a Chinese academic who had studied in the UK, she subsequently wrote in her notes that memorisation helped to organise ideas: '[The informant] told me that in the UK, there is a weak link between topics in units. In China,

a teacher will teach history from the beginning and get a clear map of the continuum/progress of history. You memorize many things and can organise them in your mind.’

In summary, the ethnographic approach to research, which also underpinned the development of the toolkits, enabled the project to gain unique insights into the meanings that students and lecturers use to determine and explain their experiences, behaviours and aspirations. It facilitated an understanding of the cultural meanings and social formations of culture in Chinese higher education and their inter-relationships. It also ensured that the project findings and resources were not abstracted from their natural context, thus adding to the originality and distinctiveness of the project’s outcomes.

### **3.3 Linkages to other OLT projects**

To inform its development, the project drew on a range of ALTC and OLT projects which are listed in the Appendix C with a note on how they informed the project. In many cases, the ideas and materials developed for these other projects were extended and adapted for postgraduate learning. Resources available from the British Higher Education Academy Teaching International Students Project also informed this project.

### **3.4 Reference group, project advisors and their roles**

The reference group consisted of five experts in the areas of internationalisation, research, government relations with China, communication industry, and second language acquisition. Based in Western Australia, New South Wales and Victoria, they engaged with the project in various ways according to their availability and the needs of the project team. Some were more involved in the design and early development stages, others participated continuously through the various phases of development, offering strategic ideas, feedback and critique. Most members provided input into how trialling and dissemination activities might be conducted and also provided contacts and links for further dissemination. One member was instrumental in providing an assessment of the accuracy of translations from and to Chinese. To accommodate the busy schedules of reference group members, individual rather than group discussions were found to be more productive.

In addition to the reference group, four project advisors were appointed to add specialist knowledge and support. Based in Murdoch University, The University of Sydney and Communication University of China, their expertise was most valuable in the first year when research was being conducted and data analysed. The Chinese advisors - based in China and Australia - helped the Australian teams to understand cultural nuance, the intricacies of the Chinese education system, and assisted with enhancing comprehension of issues pertinent to Chinese media as well as culture.

Some advisors had considerable experience of carrying out qualitative research internationally and of managing large intercultural projects. Their advice encouraged the project teams to assess and reflect on issues of ethics and quality in the conduct of data collection and analysis. They also advised the project leader on managing the complexities of the project. The advisors provided feedback on the potential significance of the nascent findings; this informed the development of the conceptual framework that underpinned the toolkits.

In the second year, advisors provided input on the development of student learning materials. Some were involved also in debates on the appropriateness or otherwise of endeavouring to blend different cultural pedagogies. Over the course of the project, then, the teams in both countries were advised and supported by a range of experts who contributed in a variety of ways and at different phases to ensure that proposed outcomes were satisfactorily achieved.



## 4. Project deliverables

The project sought to enhance the capacity of academics in both Australia and China in intercultural competency, learning support, and international collaboration in order that they might empower Chinese postgraduate students to develop proficiency in negotiating between different academic cultures and achieve success. Through research conducted in China and Australia, the project sought to facilitate greater understanding by academics of the cultural differences between the education contexts of China and Australia including how these influence student learning. The project also aimed to develop customised, research-based pedagogic strategies and learning and teaching resources, characterised by innovation and cultural-relevance, in order to support Chinese students in their transition to study in Australia.

In this section, the deliverables are outlined. The intended outcomes are presented in Section 6 where the extent of alignment between deliverables and outcomes is identified.

### 4.1 A model of best practice

The model of best practice for maximising the academic success of Chinese postgraduate students in Australia consists of three complementary aspects: a conceptual framework, the methodological approach, and toolkits.

**4.1.1 Conceptual framework.** The needs analysis and subsequent research conducted in both China and Australia provided insights into the Chinese higher education system from the perspective of lecturers and students based there. For example, understanding was gained about the experiences of students at the beginning, middle and completion of their studies in Australia. The data also revealed the issues that Australian lecturers consider are relevant when teaching multicultural cohorts, especially when teaching Chinese postgraduates on coursework programs in media and communication. From an analysis of the data, the project constructed a conceptual framework which fed back into the research and which also informed the design, structure and production of the teaching strategies and materials, i.e. the toolkits for lecturers.

The full conceptual framework is included in the Appendix B. It is based on the model set out in Section 1.4 which shows that it is in the transition arena between two disparate academic cultures that targeted interventions can make a difference to student proficiency and success in postgraduate learning. Indicated below is the top line of the conceptual framework to show the three-column structure which highlights differences between the academic cultures of China and Australia. Positioned in the middle section – i.e. the arena where students make sense of their transition experiences – are listed the relevant topics and strategies which need to be addressed, and by whom.

Chinese Students in Culture 1 (China)	Transition Arena of Meaning-making		Chinese Students in Culture 2 (Australia)
	Priority topics to address when developing materials to support students in transition between Cultures 1 and 2		
<i>This column highlights key features identified in the research which are pertinent to the development of toolkits and support materials</i>	<p><b>Audience: Lecturers in China, lecturers in Australia, students before leaving China, students on arrival in Australia</b></p> <p>Topics able to be operationalised in the following contexts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In China, prior to students’ departure</li> <li>• In pre-sessional programs, on students’ arrival in Australia</li> <li>• In Australian support workshops which complement discipline teaching</li> <li>• Embedded within communication and media teaching program</li> </ul>	<p><b>Audience: Lecturers in Australia</b></p> <p>Additional topics and sensitising information able to be operationalised in a variety of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As information for Australian universities</li> <li>• As resources for lecturers in student learning and teaching centres</li> <li>• As resources for lecturers on courses in media and communication</li> </ul>	<i>This column highlights key features identified in the research which are pertinent to the development of toolkits and support materials.</i>

Table 1: Extract from the conceptual framework

The conceptual framework focuses on a number of important areas of difference which influence students’ learning behaviours and expectations, and which can lead to difficulties when entering and during their studies in Australia. The main topic headings follow. In the conceptual framework, each is divided further according to various features and outcomes (see Appendix B):

- The purpose and experience of education
- Assessment
- Authority: The teacher and the textbook
- Learning
- Modes of communication.

The value of the conceptual framework is in its highlighting of difference, and its ability to be operationalised so that resources and strategies can be customised. Without doubt, there are similarities in the two education systems, for example, in lecturers’ aspirations for their students and in some (but not all) definitions of success. Despite some similarities, however, there is considerable disparity between the academic cultures of China and Australia, both generally and in the disciplines of media and communication. It is this disparity which leads to students experiencing multiple challenges when they enter higher education in Australia. The conceptual framework explicitly sets out key areas of difference which are addressed in the toolkits for lecturers, discussed under the next deliverable.

**4.1.2 The methodological approach to conducting research, building intercultural team relationships, and the process of developing materials.** The model of best practice includes not only a research-based conceptual framework to inform activities and production of resources, but also a methodological approach. In an earlier section of this report, and also in the initial project submission document, the importance of conducting research that takes account of the view of ‘insiders’ was highlighted, i.e. those involved in teaching and learning within the identified academic cultures. It was pointed out that to do this requires an ethnographic approach which too few studies have employed to date. Instead, much research has been based on questionnaires, with questions set in

advance by the researcher/s<sup>72</sup>. This approach does not allow for probing and questioning of responses in order to drill down, clarify and really understand cultural nuances. Also, the data are rarely contextualised to the specific situation. The value of the project's approach is multiple including the ability to draw on a variety of data sources which increases the rigour of the research and contributes to the building of greater cultural understanding. By employing this qualitative approach, the project team was able to work iteratively, simultaneously collecting data, analysing them, using them to inform the development of materials, collecting more data – exploratory as well as evaluative - and feeding all this back into the revising, trialling and further development of resources. This methodological approach has enriched the toolkits and built cohesion within the project teams.

## 4.2 Toolkits for lecturers

The model of best practice (which is the first deliverable) includes toolkits of recommended pedagogical strategies and learning and teaching resources. Because the toolkits are intended to be a standalone deliverable we describe them here in a new section rather than presenting them in Section 4.1. as part of the model of best practice. The toolkits consist of research-based written, online and audio-video materials and implementation guides for lecturers in Australia teaching courses in communication and media, and also support tutors teaching on study skills programs in student learning centres, as well as for lecturers in China who are preparing students for transfer to Australian postgraduate courses. The toolkits comprise the following which are discussed in the below numbered sections:

- 4.2.1 Teaching sessions
- 4.2.2 Additional linked student materials
- 4.2.3 Research-based pedagogies
- 4.2.4 Briefing notes for lecturers
- 4.2.5 Case study exemplars
- 4.2.6 Two websites

The original intention was to develop a toolkit of various written and multi-media resources and teaching strategies. The project achieved more than planned with an extensive set of toolkits produced, trialled in a number of universities, and revised accordingly. The research suggested that it was advisable to use the term 'toolkit' in its plural sense and enable multiple toolkits for different purposes for different audiences. Toolkits therefore differ, as appropriate, for discipline lecturers and support tutors.

Academics teaching in media and communication seminars indicated that packed curricula result in less time for support activities within seminar teaching. Rather than spend a whole session on developing competency in a specific area of academic or cultural literacy, they prefer a short injection into their regular teaching. Therefore, project materials allow lecturers to choose either a complementary teaching session around a particular topic (such as academic writing, or critical thinking and argumentation) or a single, short learning activity supported by a particular teaching strategy.

Tutors based within student learning centres, on the other hand, may be seeking to support students as part of a pre-session course or ongoing workshops through the course of the

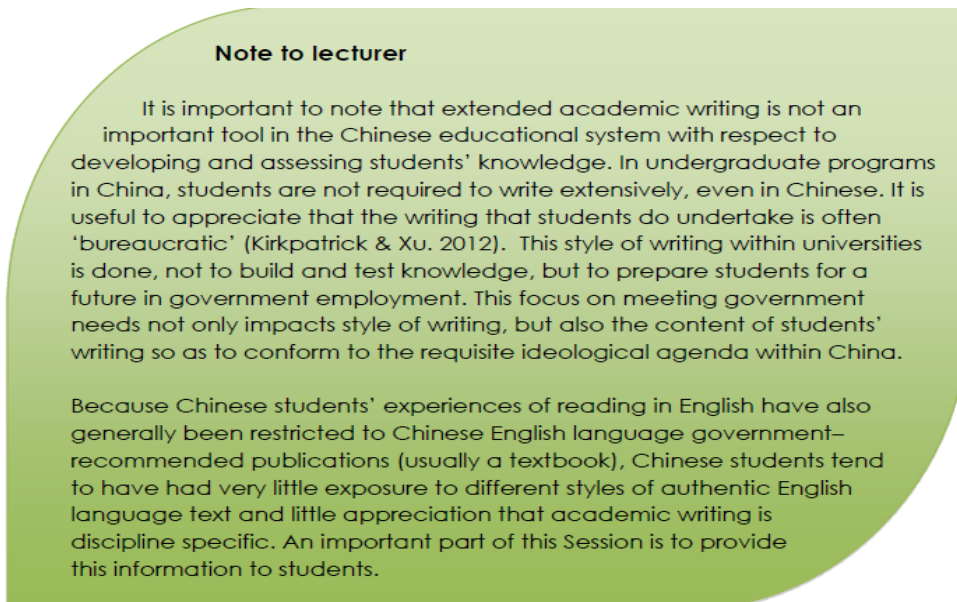
semester. Pre-sessional programs often run over a whole week so this has been taken account of with teaching sessions building upon and advancing on basic introductory skills.

The interest of Chinese lecturers working on pre-departure programs (where the data show that the current emphasis is on disciplinary content rather than the learning process) is likely to be in a basic toolkit which includes cultural information, and introductory activities and materials. The strategies and resources devised for these audiences are extensive allowing for Chinese lecturers to select and customise a toolkit from across the whole range of resources to suit their particular teaching focus.

The research-based written, online and audio-video materials and implementation guides comprise one hundred and three English language documents - well in excess of what was originally envisaged – plus some translated Chinese-language documents. The resources are listed in Sections 4.2.1 to 4.2.4.

**4.2.1 Teaching sessions** are based on topics which the research indicated are pertinent to the areas which challenge Chinese postgraduates in media and communication. While most of these topic areas are relevant for all students, these were identified in research as key areas for support to enable Chinese students to negotiate successfully the transition into Australian postgraduate study and become proficient in academic literacy.

Each teaching session guides lecturers in how to implement activities related to the topic, with specific instructions together with information about other complementary sessions. Culturally relevant examples related to media and communication are introduced into each written document. Teaching notes embedded in the text alert lecturers to why the topic area may be problematic for Chinese students, as indicated in the below example.



**Note to lecturer**

It is important to note that extended academic writing is not an important tool in the Chinese educational system with respect to developing and assessing students' knowledge. In undergraduate programs in China, students are not required to write extensively, even in Chinese. It is useful to appreciate that the writing that students do undertake is often 'bureaucratic' (Kirkpatrick & Xu. 2012). This style of writing within universities is done, not to build and test knowledge, but to prepare students for a future in government employment. This focus on meeting government needs not only impacts style of writing, but also the content of students' writing so as to conform to the requisite ideological agenda within China.

Because Chinese students' experiences of reading in English have also generally been restricted to Chinese English language government-recommended publications (usually a textbook), Chinese students tend to have had very little exposure to different styles of authentic English language text and little appreciation that academic writing is discipline specific. An important part of this Session is to provide this information to students.

Figure 2: Example of a teaching note within the teaching session on academic writing

Where relevant, sessions also include complementary student handouts, powerpoint slides, and embedded links to associated videos for teaching.

The teaching sessions for discipline lecturers are as follows, and can be accessed at <http://chinapostgraduates.murdoch.edu.au/lecturers-media-comm/>:

<b>Developing participation skills</b>	<b>Developing reading skills</b>	<b>Developing writing &amp; research skills</b>	<b>Thinking critically</b>
Preparing to participate in lectures & seminars	Reading: skimming, scanning & previewing	Academic writing	Critical thinking & argumentation
Participating in group discussions	Reading critically	Referencing & academic integrity	Critical thinking & synthesis
Note-taking for lectures & seminars	Reading & summarising formal language	Organising ideas through summary & synopsis	Organising & writing an essay
		Connecting theory & practice	

Table 2: Teaching sessions for communication and media lecturers

Teaching sessions for those working in student learning centres whose support is complementary to that of discipline lecturers is set out in the form of a five day pre-session program with sessions numbered to indicate how each session is foundational to, builds upon or complements others. These can also be used by learning support tutors in workshops over the course of a semester.

<b>Day 1: Teaching &amp; learning in Australia</b>	<b>Day 2: Developing participation skills</b>	<b>Day 3: Developing reading &amp; writing skills</b>	<b>Day 4: Developing writing &amp; research skills</b>	<b>Day 5: Critical thinking &amp; feedback</b>
1.1 Setting the scene	2.1 Preparing to participate in lectures & seminars	3.1 Skimming, scanning & previewing	4.1 Organising ideas, summary & synopsis	5.1 Critical thinking & argumentation
1.2 Communicating across cultures	2.2 Participating in group discussions	3.2 Reading critically	4.2 Connecting theory & practice	5.2 Critical thinking & synthesis
1.3 Learning in a different cultural context	2.3 Note-taking strategies for lectures	3.3 Academic writing	4.3 Referencing & academic integrity	5.3 Organising and writing an essay
1.4 Being in control and reflecting				

Table 3: A Pre-session program

In summary, the teaching sessions which are focused on developing student learning techniques and practices, are customised for the communication and media discipline at postgraduate level, and have been built on insights from the needs analysis and ongoing evaluative research into the little-known Chinese higher education context.

**4.2.2 Additional linked student materials.** A distinctive feature of the project is its focus on the provision of resources for lecturers who then direct students in the use of complementary exercises and materials, rather than creating materials for students'

independent access and study. However, two documents for students were created in order to provide an overview and more general information about learning and teaching. The two briefing notes for students are entitled:

- Commencing study in Australia: A quick reference guide for Chinese students
- Developing skills in turn-taking, discussion and critical dialogue

Eight videos have been produced. These aim to alert potential students and those who have just arrived in Australia to some of the expectations and learning behaviours common to the Australian academic context. The videos are linked to the relevant project web pages and thus are embedded within the teaching sessions. They are available on Vimeo and also the Chinese version of YouTube, YouKu, allowing direct access by students and lecturers. The topics are:

- Differences and challenges in studying in Australia. Interviews in English and Chinese with current students.
- Note-taking. Examples of how different students take notes in a lecture.
- An Interactive Lecture. Students ask questions and respond critically in a lecture.
- Participating in a seminar.
- Working in a team.

**4.2.3 Research-based pedagogies.** Core to the toolkits is the culturally and socially responsive teaching strategies that research suggests are appropriate for working with Chinese postgraduate students. Each teaching session includes strategies for encouraging the development and practice of academic literacy, with instructions on how to implement the recommended activities included in the teaching documents. Lecturers are pointed to specific cultural information relevant to the topic, in the form of briefing notes (see below).

An overview of some of the strategies used in the teaching sessions are highlighted in a compilation briefing note entitled 'Collaborative and interactive teaching and learning strategies'. This outlines the type of teaching practices that are effective for working with Chinese students and multi-cultural cohorts. Many of these are foundational to good teaching in higher education, such as 'Think, pair, share', a strategy requiring individual reflection on a question, context or viewpoint, then an exchange of opinions in pairs before presenting to a class. Although these strategies may be generic, their employment within the project frames them in the discourse of media and communication. Explicit throughout the project resources are instructions to take care not to expose new students to advanced, highly interactive strategies in teaching on pre-session courses and at the beginning of the academic year. This is because the contrast with Chinese teaching and learning approaches may be too sharp when a student first arrives in Australia and has not yet built a level of confidence in a more interactive learning environment.

One of the principal aims of the project's early thinking was to devise culturally blended pedagogies which took the best practices from each country and blended them in order to provide culturally responsive teaching. Primary and secondary research highlighted that this was not appropriate. The project context set out in Section 1 alluded to the traditional approaches to teaching and learning that are common in China, the type of teaching practices

employed there, and the Chinese government's explicit acknowledgement of the need for change. While the project identified examples of good pedagogic practice in China, it appears that many of these practices draw on Anglophone models. For this reason, the project decided it was more appropriate to devise strategies that were not blended but *complementary*, addressing the negotiation of difference. In this way, future pre-departure programs in China which aim to prepare students for study abroad might attempt to add some interactivity to traditional forms of teaching, and teaching sessions in Australia might start out with less interactivity than they might normally employ, based on a sensitivity to the different learning behaviours that students bring with them.

**4.2.4 Briefing notes for lecturers.** Once the project had begun to analyse the data, it became obvious that the creation of teaching resources and strategies would be insufficient. Lecturers in Australia and China also needed information on China's cultural and academic contexts in order to sensitise them to the disparity between the two academic cultures and systems. To this end, a comprehensive set of 15 research-based briefing notes was developed to:

- Highlight key issues and differences in Chinese and Australian learning cultures
- Explain why these contribute to challenges for Chinese students on arrival in Australia
- Point out challenges for Australian lecturers in a multi-cultural classroom and how to change teaching practices to better support Chinese students
- Recommend how Chinese lecturers might adapt some of their teaching practices in order to better prepare students for study abroad
- Illustrate to students arriving in Australia from China how to negotiate difference in order to be successful in their studies in Australia.

These briefing notes stand alone as awareness-raising, support documents to be read alongside relevant teaching session documents. They point to where and why difficulties occur both for students and lecturers and add cultural information relevant to each teaching session. These have been translated into Chinese for ease of use by lecturers in China.

Based on a recommendation and an original design by Northwestern University in Chicago, United States of America, the project also produced a summary brochure as a quick overview of all the briefing notes. This became an integral part of course team training on the journalism course in Medill School of Journalism, Media and Integrated Marketing Communications at Northwestern University. In 2015, this was rolled out to all faculties involved in teaching Chinese students in Northwestern University. In Australia, the summary brochure has been distributed in 2015 to audiences at all project presentations and professional development seminars.

The briefing note titles are:

- Summary: Working with students from mainland China
- Chinese group learning versus western group learning
- Collaborative and interactive teaching and learning strategies
- Common English language challenges
- Critical and creative thinking, and asking questions

- Developing student skills in turn-taking, discussion and critical dialogue
- Intercultural communication
- Knowing about your Chinese students: A quick reference guide
- Participating in seminars
- Postgraduate study abroad. Information for academics in China
- Rehearsal and performance in Chinese academic contexts
- Supervising Chinese postgraduate students
- Understanding the concept of face and how this impacts interactions with Chinese students in Australian universities
- Why Chinese students struggle with listening, speaking, reading and writing in English
- Why do Chinese students often appear passive?
- A China-focused teaching session: How findings have been used for teaching in another discipline.

**4.2.5 Two websites.** These are hosted by the School of Arts, Murdoch University. For ease of access, it was decided to complement the project information website with an additional site which hosts the teaching and learning materials. The development of the second website through the use of WordPress software was an unexpected and positive learning experience for the School's webmaster with valuable outcomes for the School itself. All documents and videos are available publicly at <http://chinapostgraduates.murdoch.edu.au> where there are sections for media and communication lecturers, lecturers in student learning centres, students and Chinese speakers.

From this website a link is made to the project information site which is at <http://www.murdoch.edu.au/Research-capabilities/Collaborating-For-Success/> Here information about the project teams, presentations, reports and other research documents are sited.

A screen shot of the introductory pages of both websites showing the various sections and dropdown menus is included in Appendix F.

An unexpected and positive outcome occurred during the development of the websites when the webmaster selected a platform that was new to him but which promised efficiency and ease of ongoing maintenance. His experience of using the WordPress platform for the project 'laid the groundwork for the design, installation standards and management of all future School-hosted websites. This comes at a very opportune time, as we are becoming increasingly reliant on the internet to showcase our research and deliver our educational offerings.' (Email to the Dean, School of Arts, Murdoch University from Michael Done, Audio and Web Officer). Through experimenting and gaining experience with WordPress for the design and development of the project websites, he was able subsequently to create a standard (and fully documented) WordPress installation procedure to enable others to rapidly create similar websites in the future. He also created a standard WordPress operating environment on the school's web server thus minimising and streamlining any ongoing infrastructure maintenance and troubleshooting. Further, he produced a simple User Guide for academics to enable them to maintain their own website content without depending on external technical support.



**4.2.6 Case study exemplars.** Two case studies were produced to illustrate the use of materials. These are entitled:

- A China-focused teaching session: How findings have been used for teaching in another discipline
- Case study: showing how these materials were used in public relations and communication. The case study was written by Dr Maree Keating at Victoria University to illustrate how she used the teaching session 'Connecting theory and practice' in a public relations and communication unit. It is available on the website. An extract is below.

**Extract from 'Case study: showing how these materials were used in public relations and communication'.**

Although there was very little time to do the last part of the exercise, students expressed their appreciation at seeing how adding simple words and phrases, changes to word order, expression or structure could make the written paragraph much clearer. In the post-session evaluation, the students in both groups commented that the whole session was extremely useful for them, both because it taught them how to organise their notes in a systematic way and also because it gave them an experience of drafting a piece of academic writing with structure and support. Later in the semester, when units were evaluated, domestic and international students in both groups again commented that this session was particularly valuable to their learning because it helped them to read and take notes in a focussed way, and to apply ideas to examples using academic conventions and structure.

### **4.3 Trialling, development and dissemination**

More dissemination activities were achieved than originally planned. Opportunities arose from Year One to present at conferences, in training programs, and education networking seminars so dissemination activities began earlier than originally planned and continued to the end of the project. Although some of the conference presentations named in the original application have not yet taken place (although are planned for 2016), nevertheless dissemination has occurred more widely and effectively through additional or alternative outlets.

Trialling of the materials with students and also with lecturers in professional development training took place through most of 2014. Universities involved were based in Perth, Melbourne, Sydney, Wollongong, Chicago, Canberra, Beijing, Jinan, Kaifeng, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Xi'an. At Murdoch University, trialling took place in classes on MA Communication Management and BA Public Relations courses situated in the School of Arts. Materials were also trialled on summer school courses for visiting Chinese students at Murdoch University's campus, and in an orientation course for AusAid (the Australian government's aid program). At Victoria University, trialling occurred in the Master of Communication in the College of Arts, and Master of TESOL Education in the School of Education.

A number of other universities participated to various extents in trialling materials, reading and commenting on the documents as they were developed, and hosting dissemination

activities. As the project progressed, three new participating universities became involved after expressing an interest in the project following attendance at one of the project's conference or seminar presentations. They were Edith Cowan University, University of Wollongong, and a Chicago-based university, Northwestern University. Materials were then trialled in Australia on the following programs:

- Master of Communication, Graduate Diploma of Public Relations, Bachelor of Communication (Public Relations), School of Communication and Creative Arts, Deakin University
- Master of Science in Journalism, Medill School of Journalism, Media and Integrated Marketing Communications, Northwestern University, Chicago. Used for orientation of and continued use by instructors supporting a Chinese-student cohort.
- Master of Health Communication, Department of Media and Communications, The University of Sydney
- Learning Development support workshops, University of Wollongong.

Feedback from the trials assisted with the revisions and adaptation of materials. It should be noted that because of the limited number of Chinese students on postgraduate courses at the above universities, materials were trialled in almost all cases with multi-cultural cohorts, in some cases with undergraduate students and also in tutorials with individuals or pairs of students. It has been noted already that some of the teaching strategies may appear superficially to be relatively generic. However, they were designed on the basis of research which highlighted that the areas the project has addressed are those which are key to ensuring the success of Chinese students studying media and communication in Australia. That they are also applicable in some cases to work with multi-cultural groups and also undergraduate students attests to the potential of their transferability.

Here is an example of feedback from a learning development lecturer:

- When I read the resources I figuratively put myself in the seat of the lecturer who is time and/or energy poor. I felt that the resources were not too onerous to read or too prescriptive if one wanted to adapt them to a different discipline. However, if one was an inexperienced educator there was sufficient information to provide a direction and activities with which to begin. In my experience, lecturers are not looking for 'fun' *per se*. The resources are attractive but they are not a triumph of style over substance – the exact opposite, which is what you want. They offer ways to help Chinese students navigate the different cultural & educational terrain of learning in an Australian university. You would hope that educators could use these resources and maybe put their own flavour, in terms of style of teaching, to them. (Dr Celeste Rossetto, University of Wollongong)

In the spirit of exploring transferability, the project trialled some of the strategies and resources with students from disciplines other than media and communication. In some Australian and Chinese universities, media/communication courses are situated in schools of management or business. For example, at Communication University of China, the project team worked with academics in the School of Economics and Management who teach courses in media management. Some of the original interviews conducted for the needs analysis

involved students taking majors in these areas. The project team also facilitated successful workshops with business undergraduates at Beijing's Central University of Finance and Economics, and business diploma students at Henan University. All the workshops were evaluated positively by students and lecturers. On the Murdoch University campus, the team ran workshops for Shenyang Institute of Engineering students on a summer school prior to entry into Murdoch's engineering masters, and for students on a summer school from Northwestern Agriculture and Forestry University. For these courses, teaching examples were changed to be relevant for the appropriate discipline. Feedback indicated that the pedagogic strategies and resources, although originally designed for media and communication students, continued to be effective. This suggests that the materials – with little adaptation – have the potential to be transferable to other disciplines and to some extent to undergraduate levels. (See also Section 10 for more on transferability.)

Although some participating universities were unable to undertake trialling (for reasons of staffing changes, course closures, and restructuring), they continued to have an ongoing interest in the project, offering insights and some research data to complement our own, commenting on the website as it developed, and hosting dissemination activities related to professional development. For example: Edith Cowan University hosted two seminars for lecturers teaching on journalism and other courses in communication, education and creative arts. The Universities of Sydney, Wollongong, Charles Sturt and Canberra hosted seminars which included participants from media, communication and education schools as well as other disciplines, learning centres, and also attendees from other institutions: Australian National University, University of Technology Sydney, University of Western Sydney, Macquarie University, University of Canberra College, and Australian National University College. Feedback from all these institutions was overwhelmingly positive. The text of an email reproduced below demonstrates the power and pertinence of the seminars, as well as the need for ongoing dissemination.

- A number of our teachers attended the session 'Innovative Teaching Strategies to Engage International Students' that you delivered at the Learning Centre, Sydney University, and they found it extremely interesting and informative, especially given the fact that 90% of our students are from China. Many of the teachers who attended said that yours was the most useful PD session they'd ever been to! (Email from Katherine Olston, Deputy Director / Education Manager (Graduate Programs), Centre for English Teaching, The University Of Sydney)

In all, 37 dissemination events for lecturers were held in Australia and China consisting of conference presentations to the broader national and international academic communities, seminars and workshops within and across local universities, seminars and presentations in Australia for Chinese academics visiting Australia, and networking presentations. At some events, materials were also workshopped. All Australian and Chinese team members participated in dissemination activities. A list of these is in Appendix D. Much of the dissemination work was opportunistic as well as planned.

Links from internal and external sites drive traffic to the two websites. Murdoch University has links from its OLT/ALTC pages and also from the Centre for University Teaching and Learning's webpage, section 'Preparing to Teach'. Victoria University's Learning Management System has a link which has contributed to a higher visibility of the project within Victoria

University's Academic Support and Development unit. There is a link from Wollongong's Business Faculty Learning and Teaching site. The links enable interested parties to find either the teaching and learning resources, or information (on the second linked website) to information about the project including project team membership, newsletters, photographs from China visits, presentation slides and other research information.

Through personal contacts, the website, conference presentations, emails to Listservs and education networks plus an article about the project in *University World News*, an international as well as national audience has developed for the project ideas. For example, the project has been contacted by and held discussions about the research and development of the toolkits with academics in the United Kingdom at Bradford University, Royal Holloway University of London, Goldsmiths University of London, and UVerse, a college of the National University of Ireland.

## 5. Using and advancing existing knowledge

The project has drawn on extant knowledge in published studies to enable an understanding of the context in which the project is situated (as outlined in Sections 1 and 3 of this report) and an understanding of how to develop and adapt resources for an international arena. As well as scholarly journals in English and Chinese, the project drew on a wide range of OLT and ALTC projects which are listed in Appendix C. The project has synthesised and built on this knowledge, extending it through the findings of extensive, ethnographic research. This has highlighted the disparities between the academic cultures of China and Australia, and the need for a social justice perspective in research and teaching, rather than a deficit perspective. Through its resources and dissemination, the project has drawn attention to the ethical role of academics in home and host cultures to be culturally attuned to difference as well as similarity, and in doing so, to interact and intervene constructively to support the development of students' proficiency and success in Australian postgraduate studies. It has advanced knowledge about the pedagogic strategies that are likely to be most effective when teaching Chinese postgraduate students. In particular, the project has made a significant contribution to knowledge about education philosophy, pedagogical practices, and learning behaviours and expectations in Chinese universities, an area where there is currently limited information. It has also made a significant contribution to knowledge about the types of pedagogical strategies and resources that are effective in supporting Chinese students on their journey towards becoming proficient learners on Australian postgraduate courses in media and communication.

## 6. Outcomes

The deliverables were successful in achieving most of the intended outcomes. The outcomes as articulated in the original application are now listed. These sought to demonstrate innovation in learning and teaching.

### **6.1 Better prepared students (both pre-departure from China and post-arrival in Australia) for study on masters coursework programs in media and communication in Australia**

It is difficult to assess the extent to which this outcome has been achieved because of the limited numbers of students from China who enrolled in the two Australian partner universities at the start of the project. Further, due to the revision and therefore later than expected completion and uploading of documents to the website, the uptake of resources has been slower than originally anticipated. However, feedback indicates that lecturers who worked on the project or were exposed to its findings and resources through dissemination activities are teaching more effectively. Therefore it is likely that students will have gained an understanding of the experience of transition between the two academic cultures, and may also have received some practice and preparation before departure from China. For example, the following quotations from Chinese students indicate both an enthusiasm although some uncertainty about learning techniques for success in Australia.

- After attending your class, I intend to ask more questions about information I have learned. The tips you given to utilize for critical thinking really work. In the past I used to believe in others, which might be wrong. But now I realize that what I need to do is to be cynical, and voice my own ideas. It is useless to worry about whether people would say no to me, just say it out in proper circumstance. In this way I take the first step of think, (*sic*) or I am nothing but a library of information. (Written feedback from a Chinese student following pre-sessional seminar based on project's critical thinking resources.)
- The class is very good and it is exciting to have a debate at class although I got nervous when knowing this. (Written feedback from a Chinese student following pre-sessional seminar based on project's critical thinking resources.)

### **6.2 Greater understanding by participating Australian and Chinese academics of the learning goals/ambitions of postgraduate students who transfer from China to study in Australia, the intercultural challenges they face and given this, how academics might assist students to succeed in a new culture of learning and teaching**

Within the discipline of media/communication in China and Australia as well as in management, and also within some Chinese departments of Foreign Language Teaching, there is evidence that many lecturers and some teaching teams have developed a greater understanding of the issues faced by Chinese students transitioning into postgraduate study in Australia. They also have come to appreciate the different education contexts and their

impact on student learning, together with the need to explicitly address difference and how to negotiate it. These are indicated in the following quotations:

- Personally, I think the project 'Collaborating for Success' is a creative teaching project, which has strong practicality in Communication University of China and other universities in China. ... It has provided an opportunity to work collaboratively with academics in Australia so that each has gained a greater understanding of the teaching philosophies and practices of each country. This will benefit Communication University of China students going to Australia to study on postgraduate courses. (Extract from an email: Professor Jin Xuetao, Deputy Dean, Academic Affairs Office, Communication University of China)
- We introduced what we learned from the project to my colleagues at Communication University of China, and they were quite interested in sharing our research findings. From our presentations, they got to know the challenges faced by Chinese students abroad and the different teaching practices in Australia, and they also tried to explain the reasons behind these phenomena from their own perspectives, which could help us understand Chinese students and Chinese education better (Extract from an email following seminar in China, Associate Professor Yu Haixia, Communication University of China)
- I found this presentation really inspired and made me think about my own teaching. (Comment on an evaluation form following presentation to academics in China: Lecturer, Hubei University)

At Victoria University's partner universities in China the briefing notes which have been translated into Chinese have been useful for lecturers in their own preparation for study abroad. At these universities, whilst the students are undergraduates, the teachers themselves are postgraduates looking to go abroad for further studies. They have commented that these materials have enabled them to understand the differences they themselves might face going from China to Australia.

Feedback from participants in seminars and workshops indicates that this outcome has been achieved in Australia. For example:

- In the last two semesters, I have had a steady increase in mainland Chinese students and it has been a struggle for both parties to understand each other. While I teach mainly UG at the moment, I suspect that many of the teaching approaches employed at Chinese universities are also used in secondary schools. It was fascinating and extremely useful to hear about the strategies used by other Australian academics to engage Chinese students.' (Anonymous feedback from Australian lecturer.)
- I think this session raised more questions for me which is a great thing. I'm very excited to look at the materials. (Lecturer, Alphacrucis College)
- I had a workshop with a Chinese PG student (amongst others) this morning who was completely out of her depth. I will revisit some of my approaches to supporting her. (Lecturer, University of Technology, Sydney)

The resources have been embedded in the professional development of lecturers as well as their teaching support for cohorts of Chinese students at Northwestern University's School of

Journalism, Media and IMC. 'The material was exceedingly valuable and has become part of our regular protocol for instructors who will encounter, many for the first time, multiple numbers of Chinese students.' (Professor Bill Handy, Coordinator, Global Journalism Residency program, Medill Northwestern University)

In addition, the Project Leader has been invited to conduct training for Phoenix Academy, an institution involved in professional training for lecturers from a number of higher education institutions in China.

### **6.3 Changed teaching practices in both Australia and China that incorporate a culturally inclusive approach which blends complementary pedagogical principles, methods and cultural understandings**

A key finding of the project is that the aim of developing an approach that *blends* pedagogical principles and methods is inappropriate. The primary research indicated that the Chinese and Australian education cultures (values, practices, expectations, goals) are widely different, and that because difference is the distinctive aspect, the project's approach needed to acknowledge difference and its negotiation.

The data indicate that different teaching practices have been incorporated into teaching in China in only a limited way for a number of reasons: changing embedded behaviours is a long term process requiring systemic change in education philosophy and policy and includes practices such as teacher and student assessment. None of the Chinese universities indicated their interest in establishing the type of pre-departure program that concentrates on cultural and learning competencies instead of the conventional disciplinary content knowledge. For Chinese lecturers to deliver pre-departure programs that would be effective in preparing students for study in Australia would require considerable professional development, ongoing implementation and regular student attendance. There is no evidence that this has occurred. Feedback from senior academics at Communication University of China and also individual lecturers suggests that there is an enthusiasm at an individual level to learn about different teaching techniques. However, there are multiple institutional constraints and also a deep-seated academic culture based on traditional values and approaches which have not facilitated take-up at this point in time.

Nevertheless, the evaluative feedback from academics who attended the project's professional development seminars in China indicates that the overwhelming majority intend to use some of the information and strategies which they learnt from the project. For example, 21 lecturers at Shanghai Jianqiao University attended a project seminar entitled 'How to prepare your students prior to their departure for study in Australia'. Nineteen agreed or highly agreed that they would implement their new learning into their teaching with only two attendees unsure. Similar feedback was received from all professional development seminars run for Chinese lecturers in other institutions. It was illuminating to see that Henan University, which has been working with Victoria University for some ten years, is much further advanced in its willingness to adopt more contemporary teaching practices. For example, an English language lecturer stated in 2014 that she definitely intended to 'target third year students with the project resources in order to support their English and prepare



them for going overseas'. Having recently won an Australian scholarship, she has subsequently moved to Melbourne to join a doctoral program to study language learning and communication.

An example of how practice has changed at an individual level is that of a lecturer at Communication University of China who had attended seminars delivered by Murdoch University lecturers over the course of the previous two years. She asked if one of the Australian lecturers would observe her class and help enhance her teaching skills. The class was employing a method called 'Leaderless Discussion', a method of student presentations and information transmission that has its roots in 1940s European military leadership assessment. The Australian lecturer worked with her Chinese counterpart to find strategies that would be more appropriate for her cohort, strategies that would encourage more spontaneous participation by the whole class.

Writing about her experience of training lecturers at Henan University in critical thinking, an Australian team member wrote a reflective note in 2015 stating that:

- I delivered the teaching session on 'Critical thinking and argumentation' as an activity to promote opinion, then defence of opinion then amalgamation of various opinions to assemble an argument in a non-threatening oral way, as a forerunner to writing. Teaching staff [at Henan University] 'loved' it for both the content and the action! In their evaluations they asked for more "interactive demonstrations" next year which I will do.' (Dr Fiona Henderson, Victoria University)

In Australia, there is evidence of changed teaching practices (and also greater cultural awareness) at an individual level although these have not yet rolled out across program teams.

- Having discovered from both student comments and [project] briefing notes that Chinese students are inexperienced in writing for a range of different genres really helped me to work through the problem area with students. The briefing notes 'helped me to connect the dots' because up to then I couldn't figure out what the problem really was for the students. They also made me aware that I had to show them how to analyse readings and give them more explicit instructions throughout the unit. (Australian lecturer, Murdoch University)

In many instances, the impact of the project work has not been formally recorded. Following presentations, the project teams have received invitations for follow-up seminars or been contacted for ongoing discussions about the project's ideas and their applicability. It has been possible often to assist an individual lecturer to deal with a particular learning and teaching problems by exploring the issue on the telephone and then pointing them to relevant resources which they have told us have been helpful in teaching. This indicates a measure of impact and some change in teaching practices. It also highlights the importance of cultivating personal contacts and building relationships if dissemination is to be successful in the longer term. An unexpected impact has been the embedding of the teaching session on note-taking within an undergraduate unit in Marketing Principles 101 delivered at Australian School of Management.

That there has not yet been an uptake of new teaching practices right across postgraduate media and communication program teams is perhaps understandable due to the delayed availability of resources and the website. However, at Victoria University, a training session will take place in 2015 for all lecturers on the MA Communication program alerting them to issues concerning the transition and progression experiences of international students, and drawing their attention to the project's resources. At Murdoch, learning from the project will be incorporated into the soon to be launched Teaching and Learning Certificate (see next Section). As more dissemination activities take place during 2015, it is likely that the achievement of this outcome will be more demonstrable.

#### **6.4 Enhanced institutional capacity in intercultural competency, learning support and international collaboration**

In terms of institutional capacity, there is evidence of greater cultural understanding and awareness of appropriate strategies for dealing with cultural differences in Murdoch and Victoria Universities at the level of teaching teams, department heads, student learning centres (i.e. Murdoch University's Centre for University Teaching and Learning (CUTL) and Victoria University's Academic Support and Development) and also in Murdoch University's International Office and at a strategic level among the senior executive team. The Pro-Vice Chancellor Teaching and Learning at Murdoch University has stated that the project's outputs and recommendations 'sit perfectly' with the latest strategy to develop cross-functional teams with discipline academics and those based in CUTL jointly delivering professional development training. The project team has worked closely with the International Office and is also building a support relationship with the university's offshore campus at Singapore.

The project has already achieved a direct, positive impact at the University's campus in Singapore, where there are increasing numbers of Chinese students studying for a Murdoch University degree. Project team members identified a need for training of local affiliate lecturers, most of whom come from industry backgrounds. Recently a series of seminars was initiated, starting with 'Interactivity in learning and teaching in Asian university contexts'. This focused on research findings and resources. Murdoch University's Singapore Dean reported that 'the seminar was highly enjoyable but also provocative and challenging.' In evaluating the session, 100% of participants said their confidence in teaching international students had increased as a result of attending the seminar.

A wealth of evidence has been gathered about an increase in intercultural awareness and competency by Chinese academics involved in the project, and those exposed to the project in Communication University of China and other participating universities. However, there is no evidence yet of change at an institutional level in China. This takes time, especially as it involves intercultural relationship building. Below are some indicative quotations:

- China's education system is deep rooted and cannot be changed overnight. The change requires time and patience. (Lecturer in China)
- It gives us an international perspective of education; critical thinking and active study should be cultivated. (Lecturer in China)
- The Chinese university leaders did not disguise their admiration for the Australian academic who raised with sincerity and openness many issues that they had never thought of before. For them, the project was a real eye-opener. (Dr Yibing Liu,

Translator for seminar delivered to Chinese academic leaders on CHAMMP program for Universities Australia.)

In student learning centres at Murdoch and Victoria Universities, there are indications of enhanced capacity although this is yet to be worked through. Resources will be drawn on by Murdoch's Centre for University Teaching and Learning (CUTL) for the new Teaching and Learning Certificate which will be offered later in 2015 for academics new to Murdoch:

- CUTL's role involves us in encouraging the revival and renewal of learning and teaching practices across the university. The CFS project is helping us to think through and deliver innovative ways to equip new and established teaching staff with ideas and skills for learning and teaching. Within units on the soon to be launched Teaching and Learning Certificate, together with the development of content and materials in the area of student learning support, the project's recommendations concerning effective pedagogies will be useful for lecturers working with on-shore and transnational cohorts of international students. (Mike Bryant, Associate Director, CUTL, Murdoch University)

In terms of enhancing international collaboration, the project has increased understanding by lecturers, administrators and international managers of the differences between Chinese-Australian education contexts and differences in approaches to collaborative interactions. It has strengthened established international partnerships and stimulated new ones in higher education and industry.

- The project ('Collaborating for Success') is ground-breaking in that it is informed by extensive qualitative research. This research has provided my office with valuable insights into the Chinese academic system; this understanding is critical as Murdoch engages with new and established partners in China. (Phil Payne, Director, External Engagement, Murdoch University)
- VU's current focus is on consolidating existing international partnerships. Our involvement with the development of resources for this website helps to demonstrate to our Chinese partners our genuine interest in our jointly "owned" students. (Professor Tarquam McKenna, College of Education, Victoria University)

## **6.5 Increased capacity to provide quality international education in the Australian context**

There is evidence of increased capacity in the partner institutions at a policy level, in international institutional relationships, in student learning support, and at an individual academic level, as discussed in the previous sections of this report. It is difficult to assess the achievement of this outcome beyond the project partners at this stage. However, the potential of the project to increase institutional and individual capacity is huge and will probably depend on the flow through of interest and uptake from current and future dissemination activities together with the maintenance of relationships developed nationally and internationally among partner and participating universities.

Extensive dissemination has already taken place and future dissemination plans will continue this effort. Seminars, conference presentations, media reports and informal, individual

briefings and meetings have provided information for lecturers and managers about different learning contexts, values and behaviours, and recommended strategies for dealing with these. The websites provide a comprehensive resource for both professional development and student learning and these are publicly available with links continuing to be made to drive academics to the sites. The theoretical principles and the conceptual framework on which the project is based have been communicated widely at conferences and within partner institutions, as well as within a wide range of institutions. The potential exists – together with interest expressed by scholars at other institutions - for these to inform further research on learning and teaching in international contexts. Publications in scholarly journals are planned 2015-16 (See Appendix E). University international offices and student learning centres have been emailed with a summary report and web links. It is expected that attention will continue to be drawn to the websites through further dissemination activities in 2015, with a resulting uptake of resources and increase in institutional capacity. The project's approach which provides a model for engagement internationally can be drawn on not only for research collaborations but also for more effective engagement with China by international offices.

Project achievements to date are significant, and are situated within the context of government ambitions to develop stronger higher education relationships with China, and both enhance and promote the quality of international education. There is thus a strong imperative for further uptake across the higher education sector in order to continue to advance the capacity of institutions to provide quality international education.

## 7. Impact on team members

The project team consisted of members with a complementary range of skills and disciplinary knowledge: media and communication, education, management, applied linguistics, student learning support, professional development, and curriculum development. Added to these were the expert knowledge of the project's advisors in relevant disciplines and project management. The nature of the project created opportunities for learning from and about these perspectives. The cooperative and intercultural nature of the project provided unique opportunities for reflection and discussion about the academic cultures of the institutions involved in the project. The project enabled qualitative research skills to be developed and fine-tuned, and encouraged partners to gain confidence in participating in different cultural environments. For example:

- I realized although academics [in Australia] had got many connections with Chinese students, still there might be some misunderstandings and more communications need to be done. I was glad that I was there to explain things and help avoid misunderstandings. (Email from Associate Professor Yu Haixia, Communication University of China).

In 2014, the project leader received the Educator of the Year award, presented by the Public Relations Institute of Australia. This award was based on the project leader's work over the last three years, including leadership of this project, as evaluated by academic peers, communication industry professionals and students.

## **8. Factors influencing the success of the project, and lessons learnt**

### **8.1 Intercultural relationships**

For a project of this nature to be effective, it is essential that its foundations reside in trusting, well-established relationships. Victoria University's ten-year relationship with Henan University has involved annual teaching and learning conferences with individual connections between academics. Therefore, when the project team visited, there was a genuine openness to exploring new pedagogies and resources developed by the project, and a depth of engagement by teaching staff. The relationship between Murdoch University and Communication University of China had been in existence for three years by the start of the project. While less well established, the relationship enabled a freedom of expression and engagement of Chinese academics beyond the various visits by Australian team members. The Chinese team members were confident and forthcoming in their contributions. Working across cultures requires certitude of this nature.

However, the intention to work collaboratively in all phases of the project was not really achieved although the teams did work cooperatively. This was likely due to the unfamiliarity of Chinese researchers with qualitative research and with codes of scholarly conduct related, for example, to Western/international perspectives on accountability and research ethics and procedures. In an article on scholarly communications, the Monash University-based education scholar, Rui Yang, wrote that: 'The frequency, consistency and effectiveness of collaborations with China were not significant.' Stating that 'real collaboration in research and teaching has been limited', he claimed that collaboration with China requires 'more than passion' because it is affected by various factors at multiple levels which are often out of the control of researchers.<sup>73</sup>

In the development of project resources, despite Chinese partners' willingness to be involved and the value of this input, the initiative and onus of development was placed on the Australian teams. The shift from cooperation to collaboration may occur over time with greater experience of working together. Nevertheless, future research teams should be mindful of these issues and ensure that opportunities for learning about and reflecting on the nature of collaboration are built into the project from the start.

### **8.2 Contribution in kind from Murdoch University for web development**

When originally budgeting, the project had not taken account of the extensive work that would need to be done in creating two websites and uploading over a hundred documents and various links. Without this in-kind support, it would have been impossible to have achieved the deliverables within budget. Future projects should explore the capacity of the host university to supply web support.

### **8.3 Finances**

The project was complex involving travel across two countries, extensive research and the development of more resources than originally anticipated. Probably a larger budget should have been calculated and applied for in the first place. However, the biggest factor was that the project was required to involve – as a condition of funding - another Australian partner although no additional funds available for this. Consequently, some of the planned face-to-face meetings and seminars with participating universities and the reference group had to be carried out via email which had an impact on *inter alia* project cohesion. The partnership with Victoria University was probably most affected notably by limiting their access as an equal partner. Future projects should ensure that funds for face to face activities are built into budgets.

### **8.4 Unanticipated events affecting team membership**

A member of the Murdoch University team was replaced midway through the first year with a Melbourne-based, independent curriculum developer to support the team in Year One in laying the foundations for the creation of the resources. The change enhanced the team positively because it added a skill base previously lacking. During Year 2 an unexpected event affected the Murdoch University team at a point where resources were being finalised and dissemination was in full swing. This required scheduling to be amended. Future projects should allow some leeway in their scheduling.

### **8.5 Planning**

The richness of the data is due not only to the research methodology but also to the extensive data collected for the needs analysis and subsequent evaluation. Transcribing, translating and analysing the data proved more lengthy than anticipated although this extensive process ensured that our approach was both integrated and highly relevant. Further, the development of the toolkits took up to a year to produce, trial and revise (including ensuring they were informed at all points by the data). Ideally, the overall length of the project should have been three years to enable the project teams to continue to work with - and track the progress of - those keen to include on a more permanent basis the teaching strategies into their pedagogic portfolios. Unless a large team is involved, similar future projects should build in at least one additional semester as a contingency.

### **8.6 Student enrolment**

A major impediment to the success of the project was that Chinese student numbers were lower than expected in all the Australian partner and participating universities, contrasting with previous years when some programs had consisted only of Chinese cohorts (e.g. MA Communication Management at Murdoch University). The USA and UK appeared to be the preferred destinations for most outbound students from the Chinese universities over the period of the project. This prevented the tracking of different cohorts and undertaking peer mentoring as originally planned.

## 9. Potential implementation beyond the current focus

This project has produced a sound model for collaboration and culturally specific resources which will be valuable over time. They have relevance and the potential to be adapted beyond the current disciplinary focus. The fact that the toolkits are evidence-based provides rigour and transferability for implementation elsewhere. Although the report argued earlier that there is little value in trying to support international students with generic techniques and materials, it would appear that there are some distinct concerns that need to be taken into account when Australian lecturers teach Chinese students. This is because of the influence of the home academic culture on students' learning behaviours and expectations in a host country. More research and trialling needs to be done in this area but there are positive indications that the key topic areas which are highlighted in the briefing notes and the key concerns addressed in each of the teaching sessions are distinct to all Chinese learners whether on media, communication and management programs, or in other disciplines.

Therefore, it is likely that toolkits are amenable to implementation by:

**Other disciplines.** Trials have already taken place in engineering (at Murdoch University), in education (at Murdoch and Victoria Universities), and in business (Australia and China). For example: 'I will be using some of the information in my Orientation presentation next year [2015] for Business students'. (Dr Celeste Rossetto, University of Wollongong). The success of these trials – where the materials were adapted primarily by using different, relevant examples – attests to the value of our toolkits for working with Chinese learners more generally.

To illustrate how project resources have been used already within education, see the below example:

### **Example of Transferability of the Materials**

In Semester Two of 2014, materials from the project were used to inform the development of a new unit in Murdoch University's Master of Education course. The unit entitled *Different Englishes: interpretations of language, culture and identity (EDU604, EDU619)*, critically examines the language of English within different social milieu and within the context of a globalised world. Data from the project and the tools that were developed through the project were fundamental in informing design and construction of a China case study that then became an integral element within the unit. Language, culture and identity - and how these phenomena 'worked' for Chinese speakers in China, and English-speakers in Australia - were able to be interrogated through ideas associated with transition, enculturation and power.

This unit was a coursework unit and there was a significant proportion of Chinese students enrolled. Students engaged with the key ideas academically and personally. They were able to reflect on their own experiences and reference them against core ideas in the unit, many of which were directly supported by the data and experiences of this project. What we saw was that the materials and ideas do have transferability and utility beyond the original scope of the project.



**Undergraduate and pre-university courses.** In future, providing some contextual research and revision are undertaken to ensure relevance, there is no reason why the resources recommended for pre-sessional courses might not be usefully employed in teaching at levels below the postgraduate. To this end, some materials have already been trialled on undergraduate courses at a number of institutions, and following the dissemination activities great interest has been shown by those teaching on pre-university and undergraduate courses. This indicates the potential for implementation beyond the current focus.

**Executive training.** There is potential for adaptation and wider dissemination for executive training for Chinese managers. The project has already conducted training as part of the leadership program run by Western Australia's Department of State Development, and these sessions are scheduled to continue through 2015. Of particular interest to Chinese managers are strategies that address cultural awareness and communication for negotiating difference. In future, these topics could drive the development of discrete, short courses for Chinese executives interested in gaining skills in intercultural communication within an international business context.

## 10. Sustainability

The sustainability of the project can be measured in a number of ways, including the planned, continued use of the resources via on-and-offline linkages by university course teams and student learning centres. In addition, both the resources as well as the expertise that has now emerged within the project team will continue to develop beyond the life of the project.

### 10.1 Sustainability in teaching within the Australian partner universities.

The project teams will continue to promote the resources to lecturers within faculties and student learning centres, and employ the materials in their own teaching. For example, shifting the focus of the materials from media and communication, Murdoch University's Masters of Education already draws on - and will continue to adapt and implement - the pedagogic strategies, sessions and briefing notes as examples of good practice for the teaching of international and domestic postgraduate students. The unit is taught at Murdoch's Perth and Dubai campuses. Murdoch University's Centre for University Teaching and Learning will launch a Teaching and Learning Certificate later this year which will draw on ideas and resources from the project.

On the Master of Communication program at Victoria University, resources will be used in a new unit which is launching later in 2015. Elements of at least three Teaching Sessions developed by the project will be directly integrated into this unit – for both online and classroom teaching - as well as into several new research support units for delivery in 2016. A focus will be on critical thinking, reading and writing skills.

Currently, a new course for 'Alternative Entry PhD students' is under development at Victoria University. One of the compulsory units is 'Advanced English'. Into this unit, the teaching sessions and materials designed for pre-sessional courses will be selectively incorporated. The unit will be taught by an Academic Support and Development lecturer.

### 10.2 Sustainability through extensions

Discussions are underway for a number of extensions to this project. To date, the project has focused on empowering academic staff (both communication and media lecturers as well as those supporting student learning in student learning centres) through developing their intercultural awareness and up-skilling them in teaching and use of research-based resources. The intention has not been to provide a study skills or cultural awareness course for students to use autonomously. Instead, students are required to use the project materials under the guidance of lecturers. However, there may be merit in adapting and rewriting the materials to enable the *online* delivery of a pre-masters course for Chinese students. To this end, Victoria University is considering the possibility of developing a set of adapted materials that students on the Master of Communication program – and potentially also external students - can access online under their own initiative. These materials by necessity would be at an introductory level as they would be offered without accompanying face-to-face lecturer explanations and contextualised interactivity. Nevertheless, their value would be their specific communication focus as related to the challenges Chinese students need to negotiate

during the course of their studies. In this way, the materials would differ from the generic, online study skills offered by student learning centres in most Australian universities.

Further testing of the transferability of the resources is under consideration by Murdoch University. The first potential project extension at Murdoch University is to test an adapted toolkit for the professional development of engineering lecturers and learning support for Chinese students, in both Australia and China. Some pilot sessions have been run with students from Shenyang Institute of Engineering where there is a relatively new partnership agreement in place for the articulation of students on to Murdoch University's engineering courses. There is evidence that lecturers at Shenyang Institute of Engineering are keen to learn about Australian methods of teaching. Similarly, Murdoch University's engineering lecturers are interested in finding out how to be more culturally attuned to the needs of the cohorts of Chinese students who will be transferring in to engineering courses on a twice-yearly basis. Murdoch University's international office is exploring how project resources and knowledge might be effectively utilised to enhance this new Australia-China relationship.

Recent discussions with Murdoch University's Director of External Engagement, and Manager of International Engagement indicate that the project's achievements will be sustainable more broadly, including in new directions. The university is keen for every articulation with a Chinese university to include a professional development unit for Chinese academics, as well as a pre-departure short course, both of these employing toolkits from the project. The tailoring, coordination and implementation of these resources to suit the professional development needs of each university would be managed by the Murdoch University team. Further, the success of last year's workshop on Murdoch University's Singapore campus where deans and affiliate lecturers were introduced to the project research and issues of teaching Chinese students has led to an invitation by the Dean of Singapore campus for a twice-yearly seminar in order to enhance teaching quality there. These seminars will employ the project's briefing notes to sensitise participants to issues in the development of student learning, and project materials to enhance teaching practices. These plans to draw on the project to increase effective international engagement are well advanced and have been described by Murdoch University's Manager International Engagement as 'a unique strategy that I think we all agree is a more sustainable approach to building real partnerships with Chinese university partners'. The plans indicate that there is support at a senior level for the future sustainability of the project's aims, and recognition of the value to the university for marketing, student recruitment, support for learning, enhancement of the quality of teaching offshore, and enrichment of international relationships.

Another possible area of extension currently being explored is in relation to other international academic contexts. For example, there may be value in examining other Asian cultures, as some of the feedback has indicated: 'The crossover to my Korean students is significant and it has affirmed some of my [teaching] approaches along with adding other tools. [The resources] are quite adaptable for different class sizes and fields of study' (Lecturer, Alphacrucis College). Further, Dr Lindy Norris is an expert on education in Indonesia, a speaker of Indonesian, and a supervisor of Indonesian students studying in Australia. She has provided anecdotal evidence to the project team that Chinese and Indonesia students face many of the same challenges when transitioning into study in Australia. There appears to be potential, therefore, to extend the project by employing a similar methodology for the Indonesian and some other Asian contexts.

### **10.3 Sustainability through industry linkages**

Recent discussions between Murdoch University and South West Institute of Technology provide a strong indication of how the project learning and resources might materialise in the international commercial arena. A joint venture has been set up between Bunbury-based film production company, Vue Group, and Shanghai Hippo Animation to co-produce international movies. Already contracts are in place worth \$160 million for animated films. It is expected that each year, around 150 Chinese students from a yet to be named Chinese university will arrive for training at the Vue studios. Discussions are underway to involve South West Institute of Technology and Murdoch University in course provision in Australia. The potential exists for the project team to be involved in delivering training for professional development purposes for lecturers at the Chinese university. Discussions have begun to this end. This is an example of a proposed collaborative, intercultural relationship between Chinese and Australian universities, the TAFE sector and the international, creative industries that could have huge economic and cultural significance for Western Australia. It suggests that the knowledge and expertise gained from working on the 'Collaborating for Success' project may have much wider potential and impact than originally anticipated.

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# Appendix A

## *Certification by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (or equivalent)*

I certify that all parts of the final report for this OLT grant/fellowship (remove as appropriate) provide an accurate representation of the implementation, impact and findings of the project, and that the report is of publishable quality.

Name:  ..... Date: 15/4/2015

Professor Sara de Freitas  
PVC Learning and Teaching

## B. Conceptual Framework

**Chinese students' expectations and experiences in China and Australia, and what we need to do to support them to transition successfully into postgraduate coursework study in media and communication**

Chinese Students in Culture 1 (China)	Transition Arena of Meaning-making		Chinese Students in Culture 2 (Australia)
	Priority topics to address when developing materials to support students in transition between Cultures 1 and 2		
<p><i>This column highlights key features identified in our research which are pertinent to the development of toolkits and support materials</i></p>	<p><b>Audience: Lecturers in China, lecturers in Australia, students before leaving China, students on arrival in Australia</b></p> <p>Topics which are able to be operationalised in the following contexts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In China, prior to students' departure</li> <li>• In pre-sessional programs, on students' arrival in Australia</li> <li>• In Australian support workshops which complement discipline teaching</li> <li>• Embedded within communication and media teaching program</li> </ul>	<p><b>Audience: Lecturers in Australia</b></p> <p>Additional topics and sensitising information able to be operationalised in a variety of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As information for Australian universities</li> <li>• As resources for lecturers in student learning and teaching centres</li> <li>• As resources for lecturers on courses in media and communication</li> </ul>	<p><i>This column highlights key features identified in our research which are pertinent to the development of toolkits and support materials.</i></p>

**PURPOSE AND EXPERIENCE OF EDUCATION**

**Purpose of university education in China:**

- Develop professional and social connections instrumentally that will support future employment
- Gain a degree

**Consequences**

- Chinese lecturers place fewer demands on students
- The university experience is more relaxed

**For lecturers in China and Australia:**

- The reasons why students go overseas - i.e. to gain cross-cultural experience - but the fact that their undergraduate degree experience (especially their English language learning) does little to connect them to the idea of interculturality or to the cultures of English speaking communities.

**For students:**

- The meaning of 'intercultural' and how they can get the most out of being in Australia.
- Activities that support their engagement with interculturality and the cultures of English speaking communities.

- Alert lecturers to the goals and activities involved in studying in a Chinese university and how these influence students' attitudes and expectations on arrival in Australia
- Workshop activities that address interculturality and the Australian context.

**Purpose of university education for Chinese students starting an Australian postgraduate course:**

- Gain a degree
- Develop professional skills
- Gain cross-cultural experience
- Family prestige

Chinese students think Australian lecturers have high expectations of student engagement.

University experience is relaxed. It's about 'being there'. The pressure part is over – that was school.

- Video that depicts the journey/experience of a Chinese student studying in Australia

- Alert lecturers to what Chinese students are expecting on arrival and why.

University experience is pressured (can be stressful for Chinese students)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video of lecturer talking about what is expected on Australian courses</li> </ul>		
University life involves lots of student-run social activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video at orientation or pre-departure from China highlighting differences in university activities, environment and living arrangements.</li> <li>• Video or photographs to show the types of clubs, societies available on Australian campuses, with voices from Chinese students currently studying in Australia.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alert lecturers that Chinese students are used to a more holistic university experience – semblance of boarding school – with less emphasis on independent, ongoing study and formative assessment.</li> </ul>	Chinese students feel isolated and few make friendships outside their cultural group. Many do not have the language and cultural skills to form relationships beyond their own (or Asian) cultural group.
Dependent on a range of lecturers, advisors, year tutors and dormitory supervisors to organise them and deliver information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students may not have a mentor / tutor figure in Australia</li> <li>• Need to be pro-active and independent both in the academic and social contexts</li> <li>• Video of Chinese postgraduate in Australia discussing experiences</li> <li>• General information about the Australian university context</li> </ul>	<p><b>Recommendation to universities: provision of postgraduate advisor:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian universities need to provide an international advisor/advocate who is like a first year advisor + need for this person to be aware of the mentoring / guiding role of the tutor in China.</li> <li>• This person to be a broker for other services in the University eg counselling.</li> </ul> <p><b>Sensitising information for lecturers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chinese students will expect</li> </ul>	<p>Chinese students are confused and few know how to be independent in their studies or in university life outside their cultural group.</p> <p>They are reluctant to seek assistance from student learning centres on the basis that this can be thought to be shameful – also their belief that they should be able to sort their own problems out themselves with persistence. They rely on their cultural group for information/support.</p>

		to be able to see/ask questions of lecturers and tutors outside the classroom. If not, they will try to sort problems out on their own without seeking support from student services.	
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>			
Exams (end of semester) are a core part of the testing regime in China. Exam-driven teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The role of different forms of assessment, noting the different role of exams in Australia and China</li> <li>The purposes of formative and summative assessments, and how feedback from formative assignments should inform summative assignments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alert lecturers to the understandings of Chinese students regarding assessment, and their lack of familiarity with continuous assessment and also criteria for marking</li> <li>Little expertise in essays, reports, critical presentations, in-class participation.</li> </ul>	Chinese students are unfamiliar with the purposes, types of, and relationship between forms of formative/summative/open/continuous assessments which are ongoing through the semester
Hard work = good marks Students are able to use strategies such as memorisation to very good effect (both with respect to content area and also English language learning).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working hard versus working smarter</li> <li>Audio of student comments on assessment</li> <li>Audio/video on lecturer talking about working smarter/deeper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alert academics to the Chinese perception of 'working hard'</li> <li>Audio of student comments on assessment</li> <li>Strategies for engaging with:</li> <li>Anglo-Western forms of critical thinking</li> <li>Reading/note-taking</li> <li>Participation, discussion and critical dialogue</li> </ul>	Successful students 'work smarter' / 'work deeper' using a range of techniques and cultural knowledge which Chinese students recognise they do not have access to. The strategies that they were able to depend on in China are not adequate in the Australian context.
Giving 'the right answer' (this is tied to perceptions about the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different forms of knowledge and different perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alert academics to the Chinese orientation towards</li> </ul>	No correct answer/openness. Need to deal with divergent perspectives and

nature of knowledge but also to face)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anglo-Western forms of critical thinking</li> </ul>	<p>'right' and 'wrong' answers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cultural differences regarding face, group work, and perceived passivity</li> </ul>	opinions not 'facts'.
No assessment criteria and no feedback provided for assessment. 'Feedback' means a mark and, after presentations, 'encouraging' comment only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information about how knowledge and work is assessed included together with examples of assessment criteria.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explanation of how assessment is carried out in China and expectations of Chinese students about this area.</li> </ul>	<p>Criteria/feedback related to criteria. Students often don't know how to interpret the marking criteria outlined in courses and how this relates to unit goals and outcomes</p> <p>Chinese students remark that Australian lecturers do not 'praise' or 'give feedback'. This is probably related to the fact that verbal feedback in China is 'encouragement'.</p>
<b>AUTHORITY: THE TEACHER AND THE TEXTBOOK</b>			
Students depend on lecturers for explicit and factual information and interpretation. Lecturers may offer after-classroom support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How university life (study) is different, roles of the lecturer/tutor in Australia, and different types of support available to students on Australian campuses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectations around the role of the lecturer in the classroom and independent, critical thinking</li> </ul>	Chinese students are expected to develop their own understanding and perspective based on their reading and writing, with guidance from the lecturer.
<p>Reliance on a single textbook. The textbook is considered the authority and knowledge is not contested. (Speaking and discussion are much less authoritative)</p> <p>Little interest in or requirement for accessing wider reading</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How university life (study) is different in Australia</li> <li>Video of students challenging a lecturer in the classroom</li> <li>Australian expectations about the need to read widely and why.</li> <li>The need to take control of one's own learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why students have difficulty in accessing electronic texts, and their lack of understanding about why wide reading is required (e.g. problems in China of accessing databases, out of date books, the authority of</li> </ul>	The need to go 'beyond the textbook'. It is challenging to use a library, access/navigate electronic databases and use a variety of readings (some independently found). Also problematic initially to have to discuss these critically and develop one's own stance.

because it does not impact assessment.		the single text	
<b>LEARNING</b>			
<p>Chinese students describe themselves as 'passive' recipients of discipline knowledge.</p> <p>Traditional styles of teaching involve content input. PowerPoint is used extensively and there is little student / lecturer interaction. Mostly lecture based.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key principles and approaches to learning and those approaches which will contribute to effective learning in the Australian context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contrasts between Chinese students' and Australian lecturers' expectations about learning. In particular, critical and creative thinking and asking questions.</li> </ul>	<p>Chinese students realise they are expected to be active in life and learning – and many genuinely want to do this - but find this difficult to operationalise in the Australian context.</p> <p>Some Chinese students can't cope with lecturer as facilitator rather than expert.</p>
<p>Few tutorials and seminars</p> <p>Learning in China is lecturer-, textbook-, exam- and rules-driven</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explanation of interactive and independent forms of learning. Include focus on turn taking, group discussion and critical dialogue.</li> <li>• Need to go 'beyond the textbook'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contrasts between Chinese students' and Australian lecturers' expectations about learning. Highlight participation in seminars, and interactive teaching and learning strategies.</li> </ul>	<p>Tutorials and group discussions</p> <p>Learning in Australia is based on opinion and application, underpinned by reading multiple texts</p>
<p>Mono-cultural group work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explanation of how Chinese group learning differs from Western group learning</li> <li>• Strategies for participating in group discussions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice on the 'how to' of group learning to support all students.</li> <li>• How learning in a group is constructed and its criticality in the West</li> <li>• Intercultural communication</li> </ul>	<p>Multi-cultural group work</p>
<p>Concerned with 'face'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of cultural differences around 'face', plus skills and understandings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The concept of face and how this influences interactions with Chinese students</li> </ul>	<p>Chinese students feel ashamed or embarrassed if they have questions. They are concerned to maintain the</p>



	associated with participation to reduce 'face threatening' contexts		lecturer's face so do not wish to challenge. Unsure of how to use readings to inform opinion and then to challenge/debate. In Australian classroom, they see other students having little issue with 'face' and who are able to embrace risk.
Relationship with lecturer involves after-class questions. Students wanting good marks seek to communicate with lecturer out of class.	Remind about the role of the lecturer as a facilitator of learning, not 'the expert'. Reinforce importance of independent learning. Point out lecturers' appointment times. Identify individual lecturer preference for contact.		Relationship with lecturers involves making formal appointments to meet. Chinese students want more informal, relationships.
<b>MODES OF COMMUNICATION (from an English language learning perspective)</b>			
<b>Listening</b> To the teacher and remembering.	Rationale and strategies for note-taking including how notes assist with learning.	Information on why listening is particularly problematic: speed, accent, informal and spontaneous communication.	<b>Listening</b> Need to be active and effective listeners in Australia but Chinese students find it difficult to listen and interpret because of speed of English, accent, can't commit to memory, and the need to take notes (they have to learn how to do this).
<b>Speaking</b> Discussion is not a regular part of academic life. Oral language is rehearsed and then performed.	Importance of and strategies to address: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation skills</li> <li>• Reading skills</li> <li>• Writing skills</li> </ul>	Strategies for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation and preparing for tutorials</li> <li>• Skimming and scanning when reading</li> </ul>	<b>Speaking</b> The need to use English fluently and effectively for academic and social discourses poses huge challenges for Chinese students This is because there

<p>Chinese identification of 'Mute English' (speaking generally not assessed and functional language not practised).</p> <p>English teachers in China who teach, grammar, literature, and linguistic analysis enjoy greater prestige than those who teach the students to speak English for communicative purposes. (Cheng&amp; Wang, 2012, p.29)</p> <p>This focus has an impact on students' language use.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical thinking and argumentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic writing</li> <li>• Critical thinking and argumentation</li> <li>• Advice on the common English language challenges facing Chinese students, reasons for this, and how to deal with these in assignments</li> </ul>	<p>has been so little emphasis in China on speaking in English in school and at university. The little that is done is one-way and not interactional.</p>
<p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>Mostly textbooks with little broad reading. Reading is not critical. Texts may not be authentic (even core English language textbooks) with many being adapted and 'Chineseified'.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explanations about reasons for reading beyond a single textbook including how knowledge is constructed and contested.</li> <li>• Strategies for reading.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alert lecturers to differences in reading requirements and also that students' may be unfamiliar with the language of the discipline, even if they might have high IELTS scores.</li> <li>• Strategies for reading related to the requirements of the unit.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reading</b></p> <p>A lot of reading is required including beyond the textbook including other types of text. Critical reading is a fundamental requirement.</p> <p>Chinese students can find themselves overwhelmed, especially is they are unused to the language of the discipline, and also because they often endeavour to translate word for word rather than skimming and scanning.</p>
<p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>Most writing in English as L2 with a grammar / syntax focus (language as code not social</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice and information on how to write academically in the discipline.</li> <li>• Need to start with the paragraph as the basic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alert lecturers to differences between students' experiences in China and course requirements in Australia regarding length</li> </ul>	<p><b>Writing</b></p> <p>Essays in English as an L2 are long and expressed in genre that require both knowledge of specific conventions and</p>

<p>practice)</p> <p>Essays in Chinese are usually short. Essays in English as L2 even shorter and very formulaic. (200 words) to satisfy CET and IELTS tasks.</p> <p>Requirement to acknowledge sources and evidence is not emphasised as much as in Australia.</p>	<p>building block</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify structure and conventions within specific genre</li> <li>• Strategies for use of evidence in argumentation</li> <li>• Mechanics of referencing</li> <li>• Avoidance of plagiarism</li> </ul>	<p>and type of written work, and reasons for citing and academic integrity</p>	<p>a critical perspective. In many instances, Chinese students have not been exposed to these aspects before and skills can take a long time to develop.</p> <p>Referencing and citing is important. Chinese students require explanations and strategy development otherwise can be faced with accusations of plagiarism.</p>
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## C. Links to previous ALTC/OLT Projects

<p><b>2005 Assessing Group Work in Media and Communications</b> Author/s: Greg Battye, Ian Hart, Coralie McCormack, Peter Donnan University of Canberra (Lead), Macquarie University, The University of New South Wales <a href="http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Assessing+Group+Work+in+Media+and+Communications">http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Assessing+Group+Work+in+Media+and+Communications</a></p> <p>Tensions and issues associated with group work and its assessment are identified in this project</p>
<p><b>2010 Finding Common Ground: Enhancing Interaction Between Domestic and International Students</b> Author/s: Sophie Arkoudis, Xin Yu, Chi Baik, Shanton Chang, Ian Lang, Kim Watty, Helen Borland, Amande Pearce, Josephine Lang The University of Melbourne (Lead), RMIT University, Victoria University <a href="http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Arkoudis+2010">http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Arkoudis+2010</a></p> <p>The generic findings from this study informed thinking about the particular obstacles faced by staff in facilitating interaction between domestic students and Chinese postgraduate coursework students in media and communication.</p>
<p><b>2007 LiFE - Learning interactively for Engagement: Meeting the pedagogical needs of refugee students in two Western Australian universities</b> Author/s: Jenny Silburn, Jaya Earnest, Linda Butcher, Gabriella De Mori, Katerina Reitzenstein, Naranchimeg Tsendendamba, Jeanne Dawson, Marian Dias, Shelley Laing Murdoch University (Lead), Charles Darwin University, Curtin University <a href="http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Learning+interactively+for+Engagement%3A+Meeting+the+pedagogical+needs+of+refugee+students+in+two+Western+Australian+univer">http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Learning+interactively+for+Engagement%3A+Meeting+the+pedagogical+needs+of+refugee+students+in+two+Western+Australian+univer</a></p> <p>This project provided information about design principles and project management experiences.</p>
<p><b>2005 Assessing Students Unfamiliar with Assessment Practices in Australian Universities</b> Author/s: Margaret Jackson, Kim Watty, Lynn Yu, Lillian Lowe RMIT University (Lead), CPA Australia Ltd, Hong Kong Management Association (Hong Kong), Singapore Institute of Management (Singapore) <a href="http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Jackson+2006">http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Jackson+2006</a></p>
<p><b>2010 Internationalisation at home: enhancing intercultural capabilities of Business and Health teachers, students, and curricula</b> Author/s: Anita S Mak, Michelle C Barker University of Canberra (Lead), Griffith University <a href="http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Internationalisation+at+home%3A+enhancing+intercultural+capabilities+of+Business+and+Health+teachers%2C+students%2C+and+curricula">http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Internationalisation+at+home%3A+enhancing+intercultural+capabilities+of+Business+and+Health+teachers%2C+students%2C+and+curricula</a></p> <p>There are resonances between this project and 'Collaborating for Success' in relation to the concept of intercultural capacity building within a discipline specific tertiary environment.</p>
<p><b>2007 Addressing the on-going English language growth of international students</b> Author/s: Judith Rochecouste, Rhonda Oliver, Denise Mulligan, Martin Davies Monash University (Lead), Curtin University, Deakin University, Edith Cowan University, Macquarie University, The University of Melbourne <a href="http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Addressing+the+on-going+English+language+growth+of+international+students">http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Addressing+the+on-going+English+language+growth+of+international+students</a></p>
<p><b>2007 Strategies and approaches to teaching and learning cross cultures</b> Author/s: Jie Lu, Juan Yao, KL Chin, Jitian Xiao, Jun Xu University of Technology, Sydney (Lead), Curtin University, Edith Cowan University, Southern Cross University, The University of Sydney</p>

<http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Lu+2010>

This report identified challenges for Asian students studying in Australia.

**2008 Investigating the efficacy of culturally specific academic literacy and academic honesty resources for Chinese students**

Author/s: Paul Whitelaw, Fiona Henderson, Penny Jose, Li Defeng, Gao Cuiming, Shi Wenjie, Li Qinx  
Victoria University (Lead), Central University of Finance and Economics (China)

<http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Investigating+the+efficacy+of+culturally+specific+academic+literacy+and+academic+honesty+resources+for+Chinese+students>

This project influenced resource design and to some extent informed thinking in respect of transition for Chinese students and some of the specific challenges they face.

**2014 Good Practice Report: English Language Proficiency**

Author/s: Sophie Arkoudis, Lachlan Doughney

Lead Institution: The University of Melbourne

<http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-library?text=Good+Practice+Report>

## D. Dissemination activities: conferences, seminars and workshops

Date	Location	Event
2013 Sep	Beijing	“Global Development of Higher Education in Media and Communication: The Age of Web 2.0” International Conference at Communication University of China on global development of media and communication education: research presentation. (Daymon)
Sep	Beijing	Research seminar on findings and reciprocal learning with media, communication and language lecturers. (Daymon, Norris and Yu)
Sep	Beijing	Seminar on English language learning at Communication University of China to language lecturers. (Daymon and Norris)
Oct	Perth	WA State Department, Australia China Natural Gas Technology Partnership Fund, Chinese Executive Leadership Group. Two executive workshops using project resources. (Daymon and Norris)
Nov	Adelaide	Public Relations Institute of Australia Annual Conference: research presentation. (Daymon)
Nov	Adelaide	Public Relations Institute of Australia Annual Conference: workshop on teaching strategies. (Daymon)
Nov	Melbourne	Association of Academic Language and Learning 11th Biennial AALL Conference: Research presentation. (Norris)
Nov	Melbourne	Dissemination Seminar and Workshop at Victoria University to audience of academics from Melbourne universities. (All Australian partners)
Nov	Perth	West Australian Network for Dissemination Forum: poster presentation on project overview and findings at University of Notre Dame.
Dec	Perth	Participation in AALL regional seminar at Murdoch University (Norris)
2014 Jan	Perth	Teaching and Learning Forum: presentation on findings and resources at University of Western Australia. (Norris)
Feb	Perth	Centre for Research in Entertainment, Arts, Technology, Education and Communication at Edith Cowan University: research seminar. (Daymon, Norris and Yu)
Feb	Melbourne	Presentation of project research and findings to academics at Victoria University. (Keating, Henderson and Yu)
Feb	Perth	Presentation of findings on Chinese language learning to staff at Murdoch Institute for Technology (Norris)
Feb	Perth	Networks Enhancing the Scholarship of Teaching: findings presentation at Murdoch University, plus workshop to introduce materials. (Daymon, Norris and Yu)
April	Perth	Workshop using resources with staff from Northwestern Agriculture and Forestry University held at Murdoch University
May	Singapore	Presentation and workshop using project strategies and resources to affiliate lecturers and deans at MU Singapore campus. (Norris)

May	Beijing, Shandong, Kaifeng	3 week visit to 4 universities: CUC, Shandong Jianzhu University, Henan University, Central University Of Finance and Economics. 6 professional development seminars and workshops for lecturers (plus 16 student workshops). (Norris and Henderson)
May	Melbourne	Participation in an OLT seminar at Victoria University on 'Learning Without Borders transnational education (TNE) professional development program'. Introduction of project findings. (Henderson)
July	Perth	Asian Studies Association of Australia Biennial Conference: 'Contesting Borders' Conference. Research presentation at UWA. (Norris)
July	Perth	Shanghai Jianqiao University: presentation to staff on resources. Held at MU. (Daymon)
July	Perth	WA State Department, Australia China Natural Gas Technology Partnership Fund, Chinese Executive Leadership Group. Two workshops. (Daymon)
Sep	Perth	Murdoch Masterclass Series: workshop for lecturers using project strategies and resources. (Norris and Daymon)
Sep	Perth	West Australian Network for Dissemination Forum Seminar at Curtin University. Poster presentation. (Daymon)
Sep	Perth	Murdoch Education fair: poster session. (Daymon)
Oct	Perth	WA State Department, Australia China Natural Gas Technology Partnership Fund, Chinese Executive Group. Two workshops. (Daymon)
Nov	Perth	Australian Universities' CHAMPP program. Seminar on project findings and resources to Chinese university research leaders and administrators. (Daymon)
2015Mar	Canberra	University of Canberra: workshop on use of resources and strategies with academics in Canberra universities from a range of disciplines and Schools. (Daymon and Norris)
Mar	Wollongong	University of Wollongong: workshop on use of resources and strategies with academics from a range of disciplines and Schools. (Daymon and Norris)
Mar	Bathurst	Charles Sturt University: workshop on use of resources and strategies with academics from a range of disciplines and Schools. (Daymon and Norris)
Mar	Sydney	University of Sydney/University of Technology: workshop on use of resources and strategies with academics from a range of disciplines and Schools from Sydney universities. (Daymon and Norris)
Mar	Sydney	Alphacrucis College: workshop on use of resources and strategies. (Daymon and Norris)
April	Melbourne	Victoria University: Workshop with teaching team MA Communication (Keating)

## **E. Journal articles**

### PUBLICATIONS IN PREPARATION

- Tensions in teaching global public relations: Chinese students in Australian universities
- Rehearsal and performance as embedded learning behaviours in Chinese communication studies
- Inside the Chinese university: How China's academic culture affects Chinese students' expectations and experiences of postgraduate study abroad
- Managing academic skill development and English language learning and use: the case of Chinese postgraduate coursework students studying in Australia
- The appropriation of English in contemporary China: language ideologies and 'authenticity'
- Acknowledging difference and debunking deficit: the transition of Chinese postgraduate students into Australian coursework programs in media and communication



## F. Screen Shots of Websites

<http://www.murdoch.edu.au/Research-capabilities/Collaborating-For-Success/Latest-News/>



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### Collaborating for Success: Enhancing the Transition of Chinese Students into Australian Postgraduate Education

This collaborative project which ran between 2013 and 2015 aimed to address the following key questions in order to assist Chinese students to transition successfully into postgraduate coursework studies in communication and media in Australia.

- How can lecturers in China and Australia most effectively prepare Chinese students for postgraduate learning in Australia?
- How are media and communication students taught in China and how does this compare with Australia?
- What does it mean to be a successful student in China and how does that compare with Australia?
- What challenges do Chinese students experience transitioning from study in China to postgraduate coursework in Australia?

The project investigated the tertiary teaching and learning environments in China and Australia, including the learning experiences of Chinese students in both countries. Findings from the research informed the development of teaching strategies and learning resources for use by lecturers teaching cohorts that include Chinese students studying in Australia and China.

[Click here for LATEST NEWS.](#)

*Support for this project/activity has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views in this project/activity do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.*

#### Project information



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#### Research



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#### Resources



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#### Quick links

- [Asia Pacific Centre for Media Economics and Communication Management - Murdoch University, Australia](#)
- [Victoria University - Australia](#)
- [Communication University of China](#)
- [University of Canberra - Australia](#)
- [Deakin University - Australia](#)
- [University of Sydney - Australia](#)
- [University of Wollongong](#)
- [Medill Northwestern University - Illinois, USA](#)



## Postgraduate learning in media & communication

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[给老师和学生的简要信息](#)

**Lecturers**, are you interested in finding out what teaching strategies will best prepare your Chinese students to transition successfully into postgraduate coursework studies in Australia?

- What are the differences in the learning cultures of China and Australia?
- What challenges confront Chinese students when they try to negotiate these?
- How can you help new Chinese students to become competent in dealing with the academic expectations of your masters program?



On this website, you'll find a range of teaching sessions and strategies, learning support materials and also background information tailored to the discipline of media and communication. The aim is to use the materials prior to the start of a masters course or during the first semester in order to develop cultural, academic and study skills. The focus is on students from mainland China, but the resources can be used also with multi-cultural groups.

**Media and communication lecturers:** Use the 'Pick up and go' materials as interventions into your regular teaching to develop students' skills specific to the needs of your unit.

**Learning support lecturers** running pre-semester or orientation courses: The materials listed under the heading 'Pre-sessional' form the basis of a five-day program or ongoing workshops to complement discipline learning.

**Briefing notes** sensitise you to some of the differences between learning and teaching in China and Australia, including skills, expectations and challenges.

*These resources have been developed by the OLT-funded project **Collaborating for Success: Enhancing the Transition of Chinese Students into Australian Postgraduate Education**. Support for this project has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views in this project do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.*



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Contact



## G. Evaluation report



### **Office of Learning & Teaching Innovation and Development Grant**

*Collaborating for success: enhancing the transition  
of Chinese communication/media students  
into Australian postgraduate education*

(Ref: ID12-2442)

# **Final Evaluation Report**

This report effectively covers the funded period of this 2 year project.

# 1. Introduction

## **About the Project**

The project **Collaborating for Success: Enhancing the Transition of Chinese Students into Australian Postgraduate Education** is a project funded by a two year Australian Department of Education, Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) grant of \$200,000. The project was originally conceived at Murdoch University but by the time of application involved Murdoch, Communications University China (CUC) as a Partner, and a number of Participating Universities. For the application to be approved, the OLT required an Australian university partner so Victoria University was brought into this role.

The purpose of this project is discussed in detail in the main report written by Associate Professor Christine Daymon. Essentially the project sets out to support Chinese postgraduate students studying in postgraduate communications and media courses in Australia, through the development of evidence-based resources and pedagogic strategies for lecturers in Australia and China to use either within discipline teaching or in Student Learning Centres.

## **Context and importance**

It is worth noting that according to the most recent Australian bureau of statistics data (for the year 2010) the largest cohort of foreign students studying in Australia is the cohort from the Peoples Republic of China (hereafter simple referred to as Chinese students). In that year 242,000 Chinese students enrolled in Higher Education courses in Australia (undergraduate and postgraduate). That was an increase of 7.3% over the previous year. The cultural and economic impact of such a large number of students choosing to study in Australia should not be underestimated. It must also be pointed out that students coming from a different educational environment in a foreign country, face considerable cultural, social and educational obstacles when they commence study in Australia. This project set out to understand the Chinese education context and its influence on how students coped with study abroad, and to directly address the challenges that Chinese postgraduate students face when studying in communications and media courses in Australia. It was reasonable to expect that if the Chinese student experience of studying in Australia could be improved then such things as retention rates, completion rates, student and satisfaction scores would be better. A more positive experience by these postgraduate Chinese students would most likely also give the relevant teaching staff in Australia a more positive experience. Finally, it would also bring more revenue into Australia. It is relevant to note here however that the primary focus of this project was to provide support and associated resources for the teachers of postgraduate Chinese students studying in the disciplines of communications and media. This was the true context in which this project was conceived. The project was aimed at helping Chinese postgraduate students in both pre-departure preparation (in China) and post arrival preparation (in Australia).

Of the 242,000 Chinese students who commenced study in Australia in 2010, only a very small proportion were postgraduate HE students in the disciplines of communications and media. This number, although no hard data exist on this matter, would be a small total. It would be less than 1% of all Chinese postgraduate students in all disciplines. In one way this highlights the very narrow target group in this project. However, looked at in another way it also indicates the great potential for the outcomes and deliverables achieved in this project to be extended, in future projects, to cover the broader group of all postgraduate and undergraduate foreign students in all HE disciplines. This project can validly be looked upon as a test case for a much bigger market of foreign students. There is scope for the same methodological approach to be used in relation to other cultural and disciplinary groups.

## **Establishing a solid foundation for the project**

In the first year of the project, a comprehensive Needs Analysis was undertaken (as reported in the Interim Project Report). Considerable effort went into this Needs Analysis to find out about the Chinese education system and its influence on student learning behaviours and expectations, to identify the key challenges that students faced on transitioning into Australian postgraduate education, and the reasons for these challenges. Emanating from the Needs Analysis was the production of a Conceptual Framework that is provided in the main body of the Project Report. Much of the first year of this project involved work on the Needs Analysis

and the development of the comprehensive Conceptual Analysis. This took longer than originally estimated. The benefits of this painstaking groundwork meant that the Project Team was more easily able to make progress when the time came to start designing and producing the support materials for both postgraduate teaching staff and the Chinese postgraduate students.

### **Partner and Participating Universities**

The Partner Universities included Murdoch University in Western Australia, Communication University of China and Victoria University in Victoria. Staff from these 3 universities formed the nucleus of the 'Project Team', headed by Associate Professor Christine Daymon, the Project Leader, from Murdoch University. The Project Team members are named in the Project Report. A significant number of Participating Universities were involved in various aspects of the project as it evolved. These universities included: University of Canberra, Deakin University, Edith Cowan University, Monash University, University of Sydney and the University of Wollongong. These are all Australian universities. As the project unfolded the Medill Northwestern University in the United States also made a contribution. The contribution from Participating Universities included such things as hosting presentations and workshops, offering suggestions and advice on materials development and trialing some of the materials developed.

### **Unexpected changes and modifications to the original project plan**

Like most large scale projects of this kind, there were unexpected factors that arose now and again that impacted on the originally conceived project plan. These unexpected factors are detailed by the Project Leader in the main report and do not require repetition here.

Modifications to the project plan had to be made as a consequence of these impacting factors. However, it is the opinion of this evaluator that the expected outcomes and deliverables for this project were not seriously compromised by these forced changes to the project plan.

### **Reference group**

The Project had a Reference Group consisting of 5 expert individuals who offered advice both collectively and individually to the Project Team, namely to Associate Professor Daymon. The far-flung physical locations of the 5 members of the Reference group and their busy schedules made joint face-to-face meetings practically impossible and most communication was by emailing and by telephone, or in individual face to face meetings. The Project leader was generally happy with the input provided by the Reference Group as a whole but in her words:

“ There is no doubt that reference group members did not feel part of a cohesive group and did not benefit from building on (the) insights of other experts.”

The Reference Group members participated in the evaluation interview with the exception of one person. The reason for this was not given. It was evident from the feedback received from the other members of the Reference Group that they were not necessarily familiar with all aspects of the project. Perhaps their individual expertise lent itself to familiarity with certain aspects of the project. However, 4 quotes from the Reference Group responders exemplify the extent to which they were enthusiastic and positive about the project overall. There were no negative comments from the Reference Group members.

“This project has been an important demonstration of commitment to a significant section of our student market. Many institutions – inside and outside participating countries – have much to learn from the insights and evidence-based approach of this project. It has been a privilege to have assisted in the development and implementation of this project.”

“This has been an innovative and important project from the beginning and it has been an interesting and rewarding task to act as part of the Reference Group. Although distance was barrier to group meetings the Project manager was able to involve all member of the Reference Group at strategic points as the project as it unfolded.”

“This project has been an important demonstration of commitment to a significant section of our student market. Many institutions – inside and outside participating countries – have much to learn from the

insights and evidence-based approach of this project. It has been a great experience to assist this project to achieve its objectives”

“As far as the ‘Deliverables’ are concerned these have been successfully achieved in the main. There is now a state of the art toolkit with effective, easy to use materials for staff in either country to use with students. I would also like to see a book made of these resources. I would be very keen to participate in (producing) such a book.”

### **The involvement of the External Evaluator**

As the External Evaluator my role is primarily to confirm that:

- the project was implemented as originally outlined in the approved project application;
- the project funding was used in an appropriate manner and that value for money was achieved;
- all the expected outcomes and the proposed deliverables have indeed been addressed as comprehensively and as successfully as possible.

To do this I have found it useful to keep in regular contact with the Project Leader (Associate Professor Daymon) and to a lesser extent the Project Manager (Linda Butcher) and Dr Lindy Norris. I also met once with Professor Rick Cummings from Murdoch University who was very helpful in providing advice about the role of the Evaluator. Professor Cummings has in the past written a document, still available on the OLT website, expressly commissioned to assist OLT Project Evaluators. His input was very much appreciated.

Contact with the Project Leader has been by telephone and email but has also taken the form of face-to-face meetings at roughly 3 monthly intervals. The substance of my report is substantially due to the information I have been able to acquire from the Project Team. To authenticate this information a wide variety of people associated with the project have been interviewed. These people were emailed a set of questions about the project. The quotes obtained were very useful to me as the Evaluator and a selection of these quotes are embedded throughout the Evaluation report. The feedback received was a critical information source by which I have been able to authenticate the information made available to me by the Project Leader. It has helped to ensure that the Project Report written by the Project Leader is indeed a true and accurate reflection of the facts.

The core of this External Evaluator report is an analysis of the extent to which the project expected outcomes were achieved and the extent to which the proposed deliverables were in fact delivered. In addition, the dissemination methods have been evaluated.

### **The email interview**

The 7 questions asked of the majority of people contributing to this project are shown below.

1. In a just a few sentences, or less, how would you describe your involvement in the project?
2. In your opinion, how successful has the project been in meeting its target objectives? *To help you here the original project **Outcomes** and **Deliverables** have been included at the end of this email simply as points of reference*
3. Are there any issues or concerns that you think compromised the effective completion of the project or the success of the project?
4. Are there any particular comments that you would like to make that exemplify the success of the project?
5. If you have seen the Toolkit of resources/materials, please comment on these. In particular, how comprehensive are they and how effective do you think they will be in serving the needs of staff and students in China and/or Australia
6. If you have used the project websites (there are two of them), how effective do you think the web sites are for both staff and students?
7. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make about this project? Any comments here would be appreciated. For example: perhaps you could comment on the potential impact that this project might have on any future international post graduate students studying in Australia.

These core evaluation questions were sent to all relevant project participants. In a few cases a modified set of questions were sent. The Project Leader, the Project Manager, the Reference Group members and several people who were regarded as ‘useful links’ at Murdoch University, were given customised questions that better reflected their association with the project. Altogether 27 emails were sent and 23 replies were received. Responders were all guaranteed



anonymity with respect to feedback provided. Consequently, any quotes used in this Evaluator report are simply attributed to 'Partner University academic', 'Participating University academic', 'Reference Group member', 'Project Executive members' (Project Leader and Project manager), 'Useful link' persons at Murdoch University' etc. The one exception to this 'confidentiality clause' was the use of quotes from the Project Leader. These quotes are clear and obvious in this report. This was decided as acceptable because much of this was taken from the open project report that she has written in conjunction with input from other members of the Project Team.

### **Summary of the sections in this External Evaluator Report**

The External Evaluator report covers the areas shown in the summary of sections below:

1. Introduction (this section)
2. Evaluation of Expected Outcomes
3. Evaluation of Deliverables
4. Evaluation of Project Dissemination
5. Budget status at the time of submitting this report
6. Concluding remarks (under three sub headings)
  - Achievement of outcomes and deliverables and the success of project dissemination
  - The sustainability of the project's impact on Higher Education
  - Suggestions for the OLT and the Higher Education sector

## **2. Evaluation of Expected Outcomes**

Each expected outcome has been faithfully reproduced here from the revised Project plan as approved by the OLT. Beneath each expected outcome is the Evaluator's comments indicating the judged success of this Project in achieving that outcome. In some cases the Evaluator's comments simply refer to the level of achievement discussed in detail by the Project Leader in the main Project Report. In some cases, to enhance readability, the details in the Project report have been paraphrased or summarized here. Then, against each expected outcome, quotes from relevant people in the Partner Universities, the Participating Universities or the Reference group have been included to add a balancing perspective to the words of the Project leader and myself. These quotes can be seen as a way of confirming and/or questioning the achievements stated by the Project Leader. Finally, the Evaluator's conclusions are essentially a judgment statement taking account of all sources of information.

The original expected outcomes are show below in italics.

*This project will demonstrate innovation in learning and teaching through outcomes that include:*

- *Better prepared students (both pre-departure from China and post-arrival in Australia) for study on masters coursework programs in media and communication in Australia.*

With the considerable amount of work done by all people involved in the project there has been definite progress in this regard. This outcome is a continuum and it is only possible to judge that the project has achieved enough in the time provided and with the financial and human resources available to it. It would be reasonable to say that this project has been successful in this regard.

It is a fact that there have been a few unanticipated issues with partner universities both in China and in Australia as this project evolved. This has to be considered quite normal in a complex project such as this. However, in spite of changes to the project Partner Universities (outlined in some detail in the Project Report written by the Project Leader) it would be right to say that pre-departure students in China and Chinese postgraduate students studying in Australia now have a better array of supportive materials to assist their studies in Australia. There has also been a significant number of university staff at the participating universities who are also in a better position to understand the problems faced by postgraduate Chinese students and to thereby provide meaningful assistance. The seeds of success have been planted by this project but for ongoing success to occur there

will need to be continued efforts by people in the partner and participating institutions. Some form of follow-up project would be most worthwhile.

“There is no doubt in my mind that the output from this project has the potential to significantly improve the experience of Chinese postgraduate students in communications and media courses in Australian Universities. Dissemination of information will now be the key ingredient in enabling this promise to be fulfilled”.  
(Participating University academic)

“It may also be that the website resources are utilised more comprehensively in China, in pre departure exercises and in pre semester orientation courses. This won't be known until the site is fully operational and dissemination through publication is complete.” (Partner University academic)

- *Greater understanding by participating Australian and Chinese academics of the learning goals/ambitions of postgraduate students who transfer from China to study in Australia, the intercultural challenges they face and given this, how academics might assist students to succeed in a new culture of learning and teaching.*

It is very obvious from the extensive feedback received from all academics involved in this project that there has been a salutary change in both their awareness levels and their knowledge base concerning post graduate Chinese students embarking on postgraduate studies in Australia.

“Chinese higher education is currently going through major reform with a view to becoming more internationally focused, and in (University named) this involves curriculum changes and professional development. Personally, I think the project “Collaborating for Success” is a creative teaching project, which has strong practicality in (University named) and other universities in China.”  
(Chinese Partner University academic)

“There is evidence from workshops, and communications from scholars involved in the project, that there is now greater understanding of the aims and challenges for Chinese students.”  
(Australian Partner University academic)

- *Changed teaching practices in both Australia and China that incorporate a culturally inclusive approach which blends complementary pedagogical principles, methods and cultural understandings.*

It has been a major finding in this research study that a blended Australian/Chinese approach to the issue of postgraduate Chinese students studying in Australia will be virtually impossible to achieve. The education systems in the two countries are so fundamentally different that a common method for assistance for the postgraduate Chinese students is a most unlikely goal. As the Project Leader has said in her report:

“Changing embedded behaviours is a long term process requiring systemic change in education philosophy and policy and includes practices such as teacher and student assessment.”  
(Project Leader)

Instead, this project has identified that the embedded cultural differences need to be acknowledged and that the production of materials and methods to assist these students needs to be a negotiated process. This will no doubt happen in any case where ‘lighthouse individuals’ can make an impact but as a ‘system wide influence’ it will require ongoing efforts. Hopefully this project has highlighted the need for continuing inter-university consultation to achieve success.

This issue of changing attitudes and methods is not restricted to China alone. There is clear evidence that while individual Australian academics have begun to use teaching practices that assist students adapting to a new educational environment it is less obvious in teaching/program teams.

“(This project) has provided an opportunity to work collaboratively with academics in Australia so



that each has gained a greater understanding of the teaching philosophies and practices of each country. This will benefit (Chinese) students going to Australia to study on postgraduate courses.”  
(Chinese Partner University academic)

“A cautionary word here. This (outcome) is tricky to judge as pre and post teaching has to be observed for it to be genuinely evaluated”.  
(Australian Partner University academic)

“The resources that have been produced through this project are unique and have the potential to make a significant positive difference to future cohorts of Chinese postgraduate students. In terms of uniqueness, the resources will be easily accessible and easy to apply since the focus is not on providing information for support staff in university Learning Centres Learning but on providing concrete resources for the discipline academics, and the students themselves.”  
(Australian Partner University academic)

- *Enhanced institutional capacity in*
  - *Intercultural competency*

This project has had an impact on both Australian and Chinese academics who have been affected by cultural differences between Australian and Chinese Universities. At Murdoch University this has been noticeable of individuals, teaching teams, department heads and in Murdoch’s International Office. The Project Leader also believes that there is now greater cultural awareness at Murdoch’s offshore campus in Singapore. At the very least, the feedback from the seminar held in Singapore shows engagement with the ideas and that shows in the strategies now being used for dealing with these cultural differences. There is evidence that the same trend has occurred at other Australian Universities that have been involved with the project.

“The Project Team’s research has built a deeper understanding of the differences between the two countries’ approaches and expectations for success in and through higher education. This knowledge fed into the production of excellent briefings for Australian academics and a useful and extensive set of resources for working with Chinese postgraduate students during their study in Australian universities. The Chinese academics expressed deep interest in Western pedagogic approaches and the evaluations clearly demonstrate their engagement with the opportunity to meet and discuss educational issues with visiting team members.”  
(Project Team member)

“If attention is paid to the materials produced as part of the project then I am confident that there will be enhanced institutional capacity in intercultural competency, learning support and international collaboration.”  
(Australian Partner University academic)

In the case of participating Chinese academics it is clear that they now have a greater awareness of cultural differences between the Australian and the Chinese educational systems and this no doubt has affected their attitude to the problems and issues faced by postgraduate Chinese students studying in Australia and perhaps also abroad in other Western academic systems such as the UK and USA. In general the Chinese academics involved in any way in this project have shown a clear and obvious willingness to learn about how Chinese postgraduate students can better transition to the Australian setting. However, it is less obvious in China that these attitudinal changes have impacted at institutional level.

“However, the aim of Chinese preparation classes fully preparing Chinese postgraduates before their Australian study experience (using the project’s resources) will require more work and staff development.”  
(Project Team member)

The Victoria University experience can be taken as a benchmark case study here. They have been working with a Chinese University for roughly a decade and the involvement of that University in assisting students coming to Australia is now considerable.

- *Learning support*

As the Project Leader has written in her report, there is evidence that because this project was focused on the disciplines of media/communication some teaching teams have become better equipped to assist postgraduate Chinese students in Australia. There is also some evidence that in China, in media/communications and within some departments of Foreign Language Teaching, some teaching teams have a better understanding of the problems faced by Chinese students transitioning into postgraduate studies in Australia.

It would be true to say that while Student Learning Centres in MU and VU are well aware of this project, the project is yet to make a significant impact on the teaching emanating from those Centres. It would also be fair to say that Student Learning Centres are more likely to get involved when the project is finished and all the relevant findings and materials are known. It is also likely that Learning Centres will become more interested when the materials provided can be reformatted into a more generic format. As all resources are released under a creative commons license these resources can be adapted by users to their local context or needs. This would thereby give the materials greater currency beyond just communications and media postgraduate students.

The Project Leader has indicated in her report that there are specific plans at Murdoch University for the uptake of resources and provision of short courses for academic staff involved directly with postgraduate Chinese students in Australia. It is reasonable to expect that the Student Learning Centres would be focusing their attention on students in various disciplines not just the disciplines that formed the core of this project. This broader approach will require some effort on both methods and resources to become a main stay of the Student Learning Centres at any university in Australia. This need for more research and adaptation to a more generic across discipline approach to the issue of postgraduate Chinese students in Australia is quite probably one of the most fertile opportunities for a follow-up research project. Indeed, this also could be broadened further to cover ANY foreign postgraduate student trying to cope with a transition to studying in Australia.

It is expected that target students will need tutor support to get the most from the array of toolkit materials. However, it is also possible that some higher education staff might also need professional development intervention to appreciate and effectively deploy the web-based materials with their students.

“There is significant potential impact from this project both with respect to Chinese postgraduate students, but also to international students from other countries. There would need to be adaptation to suit different conditions and contexts but this would be possible.”  
(Australian Partner University academic)

“As a classroom lecturer in the target disciplines, I do have some reservations about the capacity of many postgraduate HE lecturers to fully utilise the materials in the mixed classroom setting, an issue which I have shared and robustly debated with fellow members of the project team. Having said this, I think many lecturers will find ways to incorporate the website materials into their practice in innovative ways. It may also be that the website is utilised more comprehensively in China, in pre departure exercises and in pre semester orientation courses. This won't be known until the (toolkit materials are finished and the) web site is fully operational and dissemination through (presentation and) publication is complete.”  
(Australian Partner University academic)

- *International collaboration*

Genuine collaboration between academics and learning support tutors from the students' home institutions in China and academics from the host institution in Australia has occurred. All participants in the project have worked collaboratively towards students' success thus moving more closely towards a truly international educational experience.

The international Collaboration that permeated this project is best exemplified by direct quotes from project various stakeholders in the project.

“Personally, I think the project “Collaborating for Success” is a very creative teaching project, which has strong practicality in CUC and other universities in China. It has provided an opportunity to work collaboratively with academics in Australia so that each has gained a greater understanding of the teaching philosophies and practices of each country. This will greatly benefit CUC students going to Australia to study on postgraduate courses.”

(Chinese Partner University academic)

“This project has opened my eyes to the difficulties faced by postgraduate students commencing studies in Australia. I’m sure that others associated with this project have had a similar realisation. It has become obvious that collaboration and sharing is required between academics to get the best results from the production of any resource materials. Collaboration has occurred in this project and has involved academics in China as well as Australia. All of this cannot but help to improve the way local universities serve the social, intellectual and educational needs of Chinese postgraduate students as they experience studying in Australia”

(Australian Partner University academic)

“The strength of the project is the collaboration between China and Australia so that there is a collegial understanding of teaching and learning rather than a privileging of Western education over Eastern. If Australia continues to accept Chinese students into this education system we need to have a greater understanding of their previous educational background and their culture of learning. They also need to understand what the expectations of our educational system are. This project seems to have addressed these issues through the pre- and post-arrival workshops, and online resources. These ensure students are offered every opportunity to succeed.”

(Participating University academic)

“If attention is paid to the materials produced as part of the project then I am confident that there will be enhanced institutional capacity in intercultural competency, learning support and international collaboration.”

(Australian Partner University academic)

“This project is groundbreaking in terms of international education collaboration. As part of the project dissemination, (the Project Leader) gave a presentation to a group of leaders of China’s top universities. I attended and interpreted. When chatting with those delegates after the presentation, the Chinese university leaders did not disguise their admiration for the Australian academic who raised with sincerity and openness many issues that they had never thought of before. For them, the project was a real eye-opener.”

(Project Interpreter)

“I flew to Australia (twice) to do class observations, interviews and presentations and helped organize the class observation, interviews and workshops at CUC and I learned a lot from participating in this project. I think every participating academic in this project (Australian and Chinese) was (and is) very serious about what this project can achieve. (All participants) made great efforts to come up with productive results. I admire their dedication to this project very much. Collaboration was mutually beneficial.”

(Chinese Partner University academic)

- *Increased capacity to provide quality international education in the Australian context.*

This project has provided a large body of helpful information and useful resources for lecturers about different learning contexts, values and behaviours. It has also developed strategies to cope with these. The theoretical principles on which the project is based have been communicated extensively to academics at conferences and in partner institutions, and in a wide range of institutions. Therefore, capacity has been increased at levels of individual lecturers in the discipline of media & communications, support lecturers in Student Learning Centres, teaching teams, and international offices. Furthermore, the development of toolkits and websites provide a comprehensive resource for both professional development and student learning.

The following quote is from a senior staff member at Murdoch University who is Director of External Engagement. This quote shows quite clearly that senior executives are also

very conscious of the need for better, more targeted international education in Australian universities.

“Murdoch has recently identified China as the number 1 priority country for international recruitment and partnership building. The China international strategy includes a plan of regular communication and marketing with key agents and university partners both in China and onshore in Australia. As part of this plan, Murdoch is establishing a dedicated China office (in Shanghai), which will provide a base for development of further opportunities for Murdoch in terms of recruitment and flows of Chinese students, identification and development of Chinese university partners and roll out of potential future academic programmes such as a pre departure programme for Chinese students bound for Murdoch (or other) universities in Australia. We will work with (the Project Team) to examine ways in which the outcomes of this project could inform the work of our China office in its role of preparing students for study in Australia.”

In addition, the project has facilitated the professional development of relevant lecturers aimed at empowering academic staff teaching in communication and media, and those supporting student learning, by enabling them to learn about each other’s views and expectations, and support each other’s professional development, including the learning of new pedagogies.

Every academic in the Partner Universities and the Participating Universities who responded to the email interview provided feedback that this project has had a positive influence on themselves in their role of teacher supporting Chinese postgraduate students. This opinion was without exception. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that this project has collectively increased the capacity of universities (those associated with this project) to improve the quality of international education provided within those universities.

“The project has been highly successful. It has raised awareness among many people about a whole range of issues and challenges faced by Chinese postgraduate students at the start and throughout their study in Australia, as well as faced by teachers who are involved with teaching these students. Many teachers have very limited understanding of the experience of these students and especially their expectations about study in Australia. A project such as this has been long overdue and should improve the capacity of Australian Universities to cater effectively for Chinese postgraduate students studying in Australia.” (Australian Partner University academic)

“I can see this project as the beginning of a new era where all foreign students at all levels (not just postgraduate) can look forward to a more satisfying, more pleasurable and more productive experience while studying in Australia. It’s time for change if Australia is to remain competitive in the international student market.” (Australian Partner University academic)

“(Through this project) Australian academics will gain understanding of Chinese learning and teaching culture and the problems associated with Chinese students. This will enable them to more accurately interpret Chinese students’ needs and to adjust their teaching approaches to achieve the best outcome. At least they should now know ‘what’s happening’ with their Chinese students and this may lessen the frustration that both they and the students commonly experience.” (Chinese origin Interpreter and Murdoch staff member)

### 3. Evaluation of Deliverables

This section will follow the same logic outlined at the beginning of the section on Expected Outcomes. In essence this means that it will be a mixture of references to relevant comments in the Project Leader’s Report, a summary of those comments, quotes from relevant people in the Partner and Participating Universities and finally the Evaluator judgment on the extent to which the deliverable has been delivered.

The original proposed deliverables are show below in italics.

- *A model of best practice for maximising the academic success of cohorts of Chinese postgraduate students studying communication and media in Australia.*

As has been stated before, considerable effort was put into the task of developing a conceptual framework at the outset of this project. This conceptual framework has been a very mature underpinning to the whole thrust and purpose of this project. It had a considerable influence on the design of all materials and resources that comprised the web sites and the toolkits produced. Refer to the report by the Project Leader to see just how seriously the development of a conceptual framework was taken. The Project Report includes some detailed information that addresses this deliverable. The evaluator concludes that the model devised and used in this project has been grounded in very sound research methodologies.

Although this project is focused on a relatively narrow discipline context and only addresses Chinese postgraduate students it is the opinion of the Evaluator that the model used could easily be applied to other disciplines and other cultural groups with some research and careful but probably not very difficult contextualized planning to adapt all the resources.

The Project Report clearly indicates that this unique project has resulted in a methodology that can be claimed as 'best practice'. It is also the opinion of the Evaluator that this Deliverable has been achieved.

- *An accompanying toolkit which will include:*
  - *a set of written, audio-video and online materials including a website and Wiki, written exemplars and implementation guides (in English and Chinese) for implementing culturally and socially responsive teaching and learning in this field, and will include:*

There has been extensive work on written, audio-video and online materials. The Project Report goes into considerable detail about these resources and no repetition is needed here. These resources are made available to both academics and students in a website that has been constructed to make access easy and to embed these resources in a logical and educationally sound context. This particular Deliverable is probably one of the most critical intended outputs from this project. The ultimate success of this project will have a lot to do with the quality of the resources referred to above. It is not just the quality of each resource at stake here but the strategies suggested for their most effective use. The term 'Toolkit' evolved into a plural definition whereby Toolkits differed subtly for different target groups. As the Project Leader says in her report:

*"Toolkits therefore differ, as appropriate, for discipline lecturers and support tutors. Rather than spend a whole session on developing competency in a specific area of academic or cultural literacy, they would prefer a short injection into their regular teaching. Our materials allow for lecturers to choose either a complement teaching session around a particular topic (such as Academic Writing, or Critical Thinking and Argumentation) or to select a single, short learning activity supported by a particular teaching strategy."*

The Project Leader goes on to say:

*"These teaching toolkits have been trialed and revised over the course of the year and all are now uploaded onto a teaching-specific website. This is a unique and innovative set of resources (over 100) that include recommended pedagogical approaches for negotiating difference in relation to China-Australia learning and teaching. I am immensely satisfied with the production of these resources."*

Thought has also been given to the use of 'toolkits' in the Chinese context.

*"Similarly, Chinese lecturers working on pre-departure programs (where our research shows the emphasis is always on content rather than learning process) are unlikely to disrupt their lectures with extended teaching about learning competencies. Instead, their interest is in a basic toolkit which includes cultural information, and introductory activities and materials. The strategies and resources devised for these audiences are extensive allowing for individual selection from*

across the whole range, enabling each audience to select and customise toolkits to suit their particular teaching and learning needs.”  
(Project Leader)

The breadth and quality of these strategies and the resources in the toolkits are perhaps best proven by the following quotes.

“Very comprehensive (materials) and well thought through regarding topics and the content presented within the topics. The bilingual notes are a great innovation.”  
(Australian Partner University academic who trialed the materials)

“The materials are of relevance to both staff and students, postgraduate and undergraduate.”  
(Chinese Partner University academic)

“We found (the materials) to be both impressive and useful.  
(Participating University academic who trialed the materials)

“This project has been well-conceived and executed as it provides useful resources for students and staff alike about learning in the Australian context. Whilst the focus has been on programs in media and communication, there is much that can be adapted to assist in other faculties.”  
(Participating University academic)

“I have systematically evaluated the resources from an academic literacy and learning perspective, and while many of my colleagues produce exceptional resources, this project is integrated with co-curricular teaching, embedded resources that are used in face-to-face University teaching. This holistic approach demonstrates how a quality education is offered.”  
(Australian Partner University academic who trialed the materials)

“I think the Toolkit (materials) are very specific which covers many useful tips about reading, writing, communicating, psychology, culture and etc.  
(Chinese Partner University academic)

“I have ..... reviewed the literature around inclusive pedagogies and academic support to international students in mixed classroom settings. I have drafted and written three sets of the materials and rigorously trialed one of these in two classroom settings at (University named), providing extensive feedback in written and oral form (to the Project Leader), as well as a short narrative on the experience of using the materials, for inclusion in the online materials.”  
(Australian Partner University academic)

“Having the opportunity to trial materials in a number of institutions in China was also an enriching and useful experience in terms of tool development and refinement, and developing a significant understanding of context and its impact.” (Australian Partner University academic)

“It is interesting to note that the post-graduate students in China themselves were generally more receptive to the materials and ideas than were Chinese faculty staff members. It is evident that any systemic change will take time.” (Australian Partner University academic)

“As many of our Chinese students fail to research expectations of Australian universities, the workshops and seminars (and toolkit resources) can familiarize them with what they will meet in an Australian classroom. The resources are all housed on one web site, which means students and staff can move methodically through the scaffolded exercises. The exposure to academic literacies begins to develop skills that students can transfer to other subjects within a course and to the organisations of their future employment.”  
(Australian Partner University academic who trialed the materials)

An additional development relating to the toolkits was the decision to produce ‘briefing notes’ that were aimed specifically at teachers using the toolkit resources with their students.

“These briefing notes are standalone awareness-raising mechanisms and are also interwoven into the teaching materials in order to point out where and why difficulties occur both for students and lecturers. We developed 15 documents which draw on our primary data as well as the literature. These have been translated into Chinese.”  
(Project Leader)



It has been universally acclaimed by participants in this project that the briefing notes added value to the resources available on the website. More details about the 15 sets of briefing notes already produced can be seen in the Project Report.

The enhancements to the original concept of a toolkit of resources did not stop there either. The production of a summary brochure and some relevant videos has also added value. The brochure has been very useful at dissemination workshops and presentations. The videos, in production at the time of writing, will also add a new dimension to the useful information available to both academics and students alike.

*“The 8 videos are scheduled for release in mid 2015.”* (Project Leader)

It is clearly evident that the wealth of materials and resources available now, plus those scheduled for release in 2015, will far exceed the original project brief.

- *student learning techniques and practices that are customized for the communication and media discipline at postgraduate level, and built on insights from a needs analysis of the little-known Chinese higher education context.*

The Project Leader has indicated quite clearly in her report that this expected outcome has been achieved.

It is worth mentioning again that in the first year of the project a very comprehensive Needs Analysis was carried out to underpin all the subsequent work on this project. The materials produced by this project, while specifically aimed at Chinese postgraduate communications and media students, do offer the prospect of translation into other formats suitable for other disciplines and students from other foreign countries. In some cases this may require no more than contextualised examples to make the materials useful across discipline boundaries and other cultural groups. In due course the OLT may consider approving a project that looks more widely at other disciplines and other foreign students.

The quotes below do confirm the judgment that this deliverable has been delivered by the project.

*“Considerable robust debate and considerable effort across the Partner Universities in particular has been applied to the task of producing exemplary resources for postgraduate Chinese students studying in the media and communications discipline areas in Australia. These resources have been informed by considerable research and an impressive needs analysis carried out in the first year of this project”* (Australian Partner University academic)

- *Culturally blended pedagogies appropriate for lecturers preparing students in China to transfer to Australian postgraduate courses, and lecturers in Australia on study skills programs and also courses in communication and media. Depending on the findings of our needs analysis, these will develop student skills in academic literacy and include (but will not be restricted to):*
  - *Debating and argumentation, critical thinking, analysing case studies, participating actively, academic writing that addresses the conventions of the specific text-types of the discipline, note-taking, integrating into the academic community.*

The Project team concluded that developing ‘culturally blended’ pedagogies was not appropriate because of the disparity in education contexts. Instead, pedagogical strategies that took direct account of differences were considered a better approach. This approach was then used to devise materials in debating, argumentation, critical thinking, analysing case studies, participating actively, academic writing, integrating into the academic community and in addition, other students’ skill areas in academic literacy. Even a cursory scan of the materials

available from the website shows quite clearly that the aim to deliver 'blended pedagogies has been addressed successfully in a different way to the original intention.

- *An early, comparative report of tertiary learning contexts in communication and media in China and Australia to support the formulation and development of the model.*

This expected outcome was not achieved because of multiple circumstances that impacted on the project, particularly in the early stages. These circumstances have been mentioned elsewhere and do not require repetition here.

As a consequence of the above it was deemed necessary to focus on materials development and the development of 2 websites in year 2 of the project. The Murdoch team has indicated that the production of a comparative report should become a feasible goal later in 2015. This again highlights the need for (and importance of) succession planning. The above changes to the original project expectations are considered by the Evaluator to be a just and reasonable overall modification.

- *Strategic ongoing development through:*
  - *Workshops, presentations and professional development sessions for academics in Murdoch University, Victoria University (VU) and Communication University of China (CUC) including involvement of Murdoch's Professional Development Centre (Organisational Capability Centre) and in collaboration with VU College, and the Australian universities' student learning centres (Student Learning Centre at Murdoch, and Student Learning Unit at VU).*

This has been achieved with a wide variety of workshops, presentations and professional development sessions conducted at multiple universities. The Project Leader in her report outlines the extent of this work in some detail. The following direct quotes bear testament to the nature, extent and quality of these activities.

"Lecturers in the School of Economics and Management and across the (University) have participated in workshops and seminars about the project's research findings. This has given them the chance to learn about Australian teaching strategies in the disciplines of media and management, and English language teaching. We have been encouraging teachers to deliver their courses as well as use more interactive skills such as group discussions, open debate, and group investigations since 2008. Through learning from overseas universities, we are setting up new teaching system combining the theoretical teaching during the spring and autumn and practical teaching during the summer." (Partner University academic in China)

"We are glad to see that more and more other universities began to take part in our workshops and seminars. Teachers from other universities also got benefit from this project and practiced the new teaching methodologies in their courses. We do believe that this project will produce wider impact not only in (our University), but also in other universities." (Partner University academic in China)

"I invited the (Project Leader) and her research team to (University named) to address participants during one of our research seminars in February 2013. There were just under twenty participants and (the Project Leader) and her team explained the reason for the project and the predicted outcomes. We were presented with a model of best practice for maximising the academic success of cohorts of Chinese postgraduate students studying communication and media in Australia." (Australian Participating University academic)

"Our contributions involved collecting and analysing data in the first year, and presenting at three cross institutional seminars, one in China and two in (City named), inputting and guiding the work of the (University) curriculum development expert .... and providing our regular inputs into team debates about topics for inclusion, structure of materials and activities for the postgraduate cohort and in the discipline context." (Australian Partner University academic)



“On May 2, 2014, in Singapore, Dr Lindy Norris presented a workshop based on her study with Dr Christine Daymon in Singapore. The workshop included teaching and administrative staff of Murdoch Singapore (subsidiary of Murdoch Australia) and the Singapore Manufacturing Federation's Institute of Higher Learning. The workshop was expertly delivered and the feedback from all participants (which I reviewed) was among the most positive I have read for professional development workshops such as this. Participants were unequivocal in their praise of Dr Norris and the way in which the research findings provoked a rethink of how we evaluate, assess and communicate with Chinese international students.”

(Dean and Managing Director of Murdoch's Singapore Institution)

- *Pre- and post-arrival workshops, presentations and tutorials for students in Australia and China to support the development of study skills and students' meta-cultural awareness, specifically tailored to the disciplines of media and communication. This integrated approach will have high relevance to their studies.*

Perhaps one of the most unfortunate consequences of unexpected impacts on the evolving project schedule has been the fact that student trialing was delayed and then somewhat limited. The primary cause for trialing problems was the much longer time it took to develop the relevant materials. The reasons for this considerable pressure on the materials development schedule are discussed by the Project Leader and need not be repeated here. The lack of enrolled postgraduate Chinese students at both Murdoch University and Victoria University also complicated the good intention of trialing materials in the Partner Universities in Australia.

“I have drafted and written three sets of the materials and rigorously trialed one of these in two classroom settings at VU, providing my extensive feedback in written and oral form, as well as a short narrative on the experience of using the materials, for inclusion in the online materials. (my institutional colleague) has edited and provided feedback on the website itself as well as ongoing feedback around the pedagogical issues involved in academic support to this cohort of students. In addition (my colleague) accompanied a member of the WA team to China to disseminate the materials and the research findings to our VU partners there.”

(Australian Partner University academic)

However, in spite of the obstacles faced by this project and the pressure expected outcomes and deliverables, the Project Leader has written:

“... this extensive (materials design) process ensured that our approach was both integrated and highly relevant?”

Where this trialing was done, the feedback from staff involved and from trial students was generally very positive.

- *Seminar with participating (non-partner) universities for early formative evaluation and dissemination at a national level: Sydney, Deakin, Canberra and Fudan.*

This was achieved by holding a seminar with participating (non partner) universities at Victoria University in 2013. The main focus of this seminar was to review progress to date and reach better consensus on the 2 year project schedule. Not all participating universities attended because of funding difficulties but it did involve the Melbourne universities and Fudan University, in China, dropped out of the project soon after the project commenced. This formative evaluation 'check point' proved to be very valuable for all participants and gave the Project Leader a better insight into the issues faced by the participating universities.

- *A Wiki and a website which hosts all resources including reports, learning and teaching guides, and instructions for how to use the materials. These will be publicly accessible.*

The decision was taken early in this project not to produce a Wiki but to produce two web sites instead. One website specifically contains information about the project and is available to all academics. A second website was then designed and produced that contained all the relevant resources for an academic teacher to assist Chinese postgraduate students transitioning to studies in Australia. In addition to academics, students can also access this website (ideally under the direction of teaching staff) and they can easily find and download the extensive resources provided. Comprehensive briefing notes are also included in this website. The materials are not just provided as stand alone resources (although they can be used that way) but have been devised for coordinated use. The project team claims that students will get best value from the website if they do so in consultation with their academic supervisor. There are already over 100 resources available online.

The websites are not just a function of the content and how good that content is. The quality of the website also has much to do with its visual appeal and its navigational efficiency. Since I have had considerable experience in graphic design, website design and web programming it is my opinion that the two websites have been designed in a very intuitive way. The ease of navigation within the websites is commendable and would definitely assist both academics and students alike to find the resources required with minimum likelihood of frustration or failure. To find any resource on this website, it takes a maximum of '3 clicks' to achieve success. A website that is just 3 layers deep is regarded as efficient. The fact that Murdoch University has agreed to service the website beyond the life of this project is also a huge benefit to both staff and students.

The websites are discussed in considerable detail in the Project Report and that coverage will not be repeated here. It is sufficient for me to judge that the 2 websites are easy to access, easy to use and full of extremely useful resources. Quotes from participating academics show clear evidence of the quality of these web sites.

"The materials on the project websites are clearly cited and explained. I think it is easy for both staff and students to make use of them." (Chinese Partner University academic)

"I am personally pleased with the accessibility and appearance of the website as well as the accompanying background briefings which (Lindy Norris) has written, and think the project has made a significant contribution to postgraduate education in the contemporary Higher Education context." (Australian Partner University academic)

"This project's materials available through the Internet are extremely useful and I will recommend it to colleagues. The content on group work suggested that Chinese students prefer to work with each other. However in my small group meetings the Chinese students stated that they preferred to work with local students to improve their English and knowledge of Australian culture. This could be an anomaly that might somehow be accounted for in the web site." (Participating University academic)

"The web site materials are quite simply excellent!" (Partner University Adviser)

"The two web sites are very thoroughly designed; the contents are well presented and the web sites are easy to navigate." (Partner University Research Assistant)

"I have reviewed the two web sites. They are very user friendly and have some extremely rich detail." (Participating University academic)

However, some people were constructively critical of some aspects of the website:

"My biggest issue is that there is perhaps TOO much material. Given teaching loads many people may not have time to familiarise themselves with all the resources, let alone use them extensively." (Participating University academic)

"As a classroom lecturer in the target disciplines, I do have some reservations about the capacity of many

postgraduate higher education lecturers to fully utilise the materials in the mixed classroom setting, an issue which I have shared and robustly debated with fellow members of the project team.”  
(Australian Partner University academic)

“For my first time use I had to hunt to find the websites. They didn't come up easily on a Google search. It would be good to fix that. The Websites resources are rich, the resources look useful and the sites were easy to navigate.”  
(Reference Group member)

- *Findings presented at two conference streams (2013 and 2014), one specifically for potential adopters (tutors and course directors on communication and media programs) organised by the Public Relations Institute of Australia.*

This has been discussed in the body of the report and it can be stated that this deliverable was successfully achieved.

- *A final report and a discussion paper regarding the refinement and potential adaptation of the model and toolkit by:*
  - *Other types of postgraduate courses in social sciences and humanities such as management and professional writing.*

Some of this work towards this report has been done but the process is ongoing. Some seminars involving other disciplines have already occurred. Part of the dissemination tour in mid March involved discussion with academics from other disciplines. The model and the toolkit materials have already been demonstrated and discussed with some industry executives. Further industry engagement is planned. TAFE level involvement through MU's international office and the SW Institute of Technology is also expected to occur in 2015.

- *Online courses.*

This is being pursued but most progress is probably yet to come. In any case, this should only be a subtle variation on how on campus students and classes would use the resource materials. As academics become more aware of the wealth of materials in the resource rich website, the application to online courses will be a naturally occurring outcome.

- *Similar undergraduate subjects, thus assisting the transition of Chinese students from undergraduate to postgraduate study.*

The Project Leader has indicated in the Project report that trialing with undergraduate students has already commenced at Murdoch University and elsewhere. Victoria University in particular has tried some of the materials with different groups of students and the feedback has been positive.

There is considerable interest by the Partner and Participating Universities to adapt the model devised in this project to make the websites and material resources relevant to undergraduate students.

“The materials are of relevance to both staff and students, postgraduate and undergraduate. (However) the format may not be engaging enough for students to pursue the development of a particular skill (without support from their tutors).”  
(Reference Group member)

“This project has focused on postgraduate Chinese students (commencing studies in Australia) and all resources have been produced with that in mind. However, it would not be a large or difficult jump to adapt the resources for undergraduates as well. In fact, undergraduate and postgraduate students face a number of very similar issues when they study in a foreign country. I can see this project being a lighthouse study that will spark interest in many academics who work with foreign students studying in Australia.”  
(Participating University academic)

#### 4. Evaluation of Project Dissemination

*The dissemination strategy aims to build relationships and engagement with participating academics throughout the project, as well as build a climate for the uptake of the project's model and toolkit in participating and other interested universities.*

***Academics, support tutors, students and institutional leaders at participating universities***

- *Feedback workshops and presentations in 2013 and 2014 as well as trialing of the toolkit in the participating universities.*

Workshops and presentations have been mentioned before. These occurred throughout 2013 and 2014 and to-date a total of 41 dissemination activities have taken place. Feedback from these workshops and presentations (some in China) were universally positive with great interest in how the project outcomes and deliverable could be modified for use in other contexts (other countries, other disciplines and at undergraduate levels as well as postgraduate). The Project Report documents the workshops and presentations done in 2013 and 2014.

In addition to the above, the Project Leader and Dr Lindy Norris completed a very recent dissemination tour through the eastern states of Australia in mid March 2015. Presentations were made in Canberra, Wollongong, Bathurst and Sydney. Eight universities and three colleges (one of which is currently seeking University status) were represented with 110 participants in total. The following quotes are representative of the host of overwhelmingly positive feedback comments received.

Dissemination of information about all aspects of this project has been extensive and well targeted. The Project Leader has been particularly interested in 'spreading the word' and has been very successful in this endeavor. I also believe that with so many participating academics showing a very positive attitude to all that has been achieved, this project will continue to be disseminated within the higher education community in Australia. There are also signs that the Chinese academics involved in this project will enthusiastically continue to disseminate information about the project findings and the resources produced.

The project report gives a good coverage of the extent of the dissemination that has already occurred and the plans for future dissemination.

*"This was wonderful in terms of the ideas it generated ... I am very interested in the application of the resources for work with Indonesian postgraduate students and in the STEM disciplines." (University of Wollongong)*

*"Great project – needs to go further. Get more funding. Will have a look at the website and see what can be used." (University of Sydney)*

*"A very interesting session which has many implications for the way I teach and the design of the curriculum in my institution... Will be able to explain things to my students more confidently and knowledgeably in the future." (University of Sydney)*

*"The resources look very good. I shall send them to various subject coordinators to use." (UTS)*

*"Excellent presentation – very interactive and engaging. I will be sharing these resources at ANU College where I teach in the Access English program, preparing international students (predominantly Chinese) for postgraduate study at ANU." (ANU)*

*"Well presented – a good range of issues raised. The crossover to my Korean students is significant and it has affirmed some of my approaches along with adding other tools." (Alphacrucis College)*

- *Reference group members will assist in providing contacts for dissemination/cascading of the model of best practice and its toolkit.*

This has been achieved. This was achieved primarily by individual discussions between the Murdoch team and the members of the Reference group.

- *A brief document outlining main findings of interest will be circulated to university leaders, International Offices, and Educational Partnership Offices at participating universities.*

This will be done later in 2015. The Project Manager has indicated that (with sanction from the OLT) there will be sufficient carry over funding for the completion of a few residual tasks.

- *Through Student Learning Centres of Murdoch and VU, and Murdoch's Organisational Capability Centre, workshops for staff and student development, plus additional presentations by participating academics in other universities to raise awareness across course teams and wider disciplines.*

Some professional development workshops have already been undertaken. Discussions are underway for MU's Centre for University Teaching and Learning (CUTL) to embed the toolkit materials into their professional development workshops. Similar approaches have been made to the sister Professional Development/Learning Centre at Victoria University.

#### **National academic community**

- *Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) will disseminate project information, outcomes and materials to accredited communication courses via Mr Kenny on the reference panel, and also via PRIA blogs at state level. At the annual PRIA conference in November 2014, a stream will be (was) dedicated to the project outcomes with the aim of encouraging future adoption of the model under guidance and mentoring from Murdoch and VU teams. This will be attended by all accredited university courses and thus is a major feature of our dissemination strategy.*

This was partially achieved. Because of some unforeseen and serious team availability issues and because of the delays in producing resources some of the above expectations did not happen. However, Associate professor Daymon did attend the 2013 annual PRIA conference and presented a paper titled 'The intercultural Challenges of Chinese and Australian lecturers on Public Relations Programs'. At this 2013 conference she also facilitated a workshop on the early development of resources in this project. In addition, Associate Professor Daymon attended the PRIA conference in Brisbane in November 2014 and was awarded the Australian Public Relations Educator of the Year award. This was awarded partly in recognition of her impressive work on this project.

- *Nascent findings presented in the China stream (convened by Daymon) of Australia and New Zealand Communication Association annual conference hosted by Murdoch in Fremantle July 2013.*

Although a China stream was not convened at the ANZCA conference, Associate Professor Christine Daymon presented the nascent findings at the conference. This deliverable has been achieved.

- *Feedback workshops and presentations to interested academics within the local geographical areas eg through NEST (Networks Enhancing the Scholarship of Teaching) and WAND (West Australian Network for Dissemination to Curtin, Notre Dame, Edith Cowan and University of Western Australia) and through contacts provided by the reference group.*

Several workshops and presentations have been implemented, including through the auspices of NEST and WAND. Both of these relate to all WA universities and are a popular

medium for educational conversations between Western Australian academics. Some dissemination has also occurred through contacts provided by members of the Reference Group.

- *Report on the findings circulated to PEN, the group linking all OLT support teams in universities, CADAD for staff developers and also via Murdoch's Director International Student Liaison and Recruitment to counterparts at Australian Universities' International Directors' Forum.*

This deliverable has not yet been achieved but is planned to take place shortly after the completion of the project. This report is scheduled to be completed by mid 2015.

- *Presentations to education conferences by end of 2015: e.g. HERDSA, ISANA (International Students Advisors Network of Australia), AIEC (Australian International Education Conference), AALL (Association of Australian Academic Language and Learning).*

This has been partially achieved to date. Academic project team members at both Murdoch University and Victoria University have presented at several conferences in the past 2 years. Because of the project delays mentioned elsewhere it is only now becoming a viable prospect for further conference papers to be written. A number of people associate with this project are very keen to work on conference papers and I have no doubt that this will happen throughout 2015.

*"I anticipate being involved in academic publications arising from the project, and plan to run a further workshop in late 2014 (or early 2015) with postgraduate lecturers."*

*(Australian Partner University academic)*

- *A report on project information and outcomes will be sent to national education communities such as NLC (National Liaison Committee for International Students in Australia) and the Public Relations Educators network.*

This is also planned for 2015 and since remnant project funds will be available (as discussed elsewhere) this can be expected to occur later in 2015.

- *A written case study on the project and guidelines on how to use the resources and links to the project website sent by personal email to contacts in Teaching and Learning Centres in universities across Australia and to lecturers who have expressed an interest in the project.*

Changes to project personnel in the immediate future make this an 'unknown'. However, it is expected that information will be sent out by mid 2015 in the 'after life' of this project.

- *Media releases via the corporate communications department of Murdoch, and also professional/industry articles driving traffic to the website.*

There have been media releases sent out through the Corporate Communications Department at Murdoch University, and also a number of media articles published over the last two years. Professional/industry articles that highlight the website have not yet eventuated and this task may be something that the 2015 follow on to this can address. This is unknown at this point in time but I do believe that there are enough interested academics, who have been involved in this project, for such follow up activities to occur.

- *Project website will provide access to the online repository of written and audio-visual materials. This will be hosted by the Asia Pacific Centre for Media Economics and Communication Management Research, with links to Murdoch's prestigious Asia Research Centre.*

The project website (for participating and interested staff) has been implemented and already has substantial resources, easily attained. This will be an ongoing endeavor and

again the issue of succession planning needs to be addressed as project funding draws to a close.

The decision had been made quite early in the development of the website that it should remain autonomous and be served by technical assistance from a suitable webmaster from within the School of Communications and Media at Murdoch University. The cost of this support will continue to be covered by that School.

The website has been discussed in detail in the Project report and elsewhere in this report.

- *We plan to seek institutional funding from the participating Australian universities to hold an invitational conference in 2014 or 2015 to bring together academics and researchers in media, communication, management, education, language and linguistics and other key stakeholders at participating and other universities to disseminate findings and consider implications for pedagogy in higher education generally and the role of preparatory and support courses and resources for international students.*

When the proposed project funding extension runs out (some time in 2015) it will be difficult to implement events such as the 'invitational conference'. This conference is now unlikely to happen.

#### ***International academic community***

- *Dissemination of findings to the academic research community through presenting papers at international education and communication/media conferences in 2013 to 2015. Indicative conferences are International Academic Forum Asian Conference on Education, Annual Conference of ELLTA (Exploring Leadership and Learning Theories in Asia), the International Communication Association, and other communication and media conferences in Europe.*

Funding restrictions meant that dissemination of findings was restricted to conferences within Australia.

- *Final report and materials linked from the site of the Association for Academic Language and Learning, and also the British site for Teaching and Learning for International Students, as well as this project's own website which will be online from Phase 3 onwards.*

This is primarily a matter of website development and it will be a natural evolution of the current project web site. The Project Leader has indicated that relevant international links will be implemented in March 2015. Success in this endeavour and all on future maintenance of such links will be dependent upon a post project plan and no doubt some form of funding. There is remaining funding in the budget to pay for a web designer to take on this task. The website will be maintained within the resources available within the School of Arts at Murdoch University.

- *Articles developed for later submission to journals e.g. Australian Journal of Education, Australian Journal of Communication, Journal of Higher Education, Studies in Higher Education, Research in Higher Education, Higher Education, Journal of Studies in International Education, Journal of Intercultural Education, Journal of Communication Management, Asia Pacific Media Educator.*

The Project Report describes several publications that have either been delivered or are 'in the pipeline'. It must be acknowledged that the most fertile period for articles about the project is at the end of the project and after the project is completed. The Evaluator is satisfied that articles emanating from this project will be a major way by which information about the project is disseminated to the academic community in both Australia and China.



## 5. Budget status at the time of submitting this report

**Remainder in account** **\$24,296.71**

As per budget summary 9/4/15 – see the final project report for more details.

### **Commitments to be deducted from the above remainder**

Translation of documents into Chinese	\$1000 (to be invoiced in July)
Web work & uploading	\$2000 (increased to accommodate additional work)
Project Management	\$5000
Evaluator	\$6000

**Estimated remainder after commitments have been deducted** **\$10,296.71\***

\* Still to be deducted are the travel and accommodation costs of the dissemination trip to the east coast in March, the cost of printing report documents and a few incidental expenses.

As can be seen from the above budget summary, the project has expended almost all of the \$200,000 allocated budget, with just a small amount left to cover the cost of any final or follow up activities as mentioned in the final project report.

The management of the project budget has been very good indeed.

## 6. Concluding remarks

### **Achievement of outcomes and deliverables and the success of project dissemination**

This project has now completed the 2 year funding period implicit in the OLT approved project application. The charter given to this project by the OLT has now reached the official time of reckoning. In those 2 years, over 20 people from Partner Universities, Participating Universities and a Reference Group have collectively worked to make the project the success that it has been.

There have been some significant obstacles to overcome along the way. Changing personnel, lack of availability of some key people through circumstances that could not have been predicted, lack of target group student numbers at Murdoch and Victoria Universities and time required for the Needs Analysis exceeded expectations because of the volume of data collected and the time required to analyse that data. The anticipated sequence of 'work' and the goals set in this project were necessarily modified because of these obstacles. This is not unusual in a big project such as this. What is critically important however is that the project be modified accordingly – with valid justifications. In the opinion of the Evaluator, this has been done.

There were some inter-institutional issues that temporarily affected progress in this project. It is worth noting this here because there are a few important lessons that were learned along the way and these could benefit future OLT projects. The relationship between Murdoch University and Victoria University was at times a little strained. The root cause of these 'strained relationships' was that Victoria University was brought into the project as a Partner University virtually at project commencement (after initial project approval in principle) and at the specific request of the OLT (to add another Australian Partner University). However, no additional funding was provided. This scenario left Victoria University effectively underfunded and time poor as the two contributing staff members conscientiously tried to work within the project. I believe that because funding for VU was expended mostly in the first year of the project, it left VU in the position where further participation in 2014 was often voluntary. This was not so easy for them and in hindsight VU required either more funding or perhaps a better spread of funding across the 2 years of the project. I think that there is a strong message here for any partnership between universities and also for the OLT when project approval and project funding is being determined and when the funding is being spread across the life of the project.

"I think regular communication would have improved some of the project's outcomes such as



development and trialing materials with a wider audience.” (Australian Partner University)

“There was always pressure on people heavily committed to this project to find time and funding to complete tasks. This is no doubt common in large projects such as this but in hindsight we may have made things easier for ourselves if we had spread the funding more uniformly over the 2 years of the project.” (Australian Partner University academic)

While the above quote shows a level of inter-institutional frustration I believe that both Murdoch and Victoria University participants worked hard for the good of the project and the end result was not seriously compromised. The following quotes from the same VU academic show that commitment to the project at Victoria University was very professional, substantial and very positive.

“The project was/is clearly needed and valued by (teaching) staff and students who see themselves going abroad for further study and who wish to be successful in what they know will be an unfamiliar and potentially highly challenging environment. VU’s partner in Henan will use some of the materials with offshore to onshore transferring Business degree students.”

“(The toolkit of materials is) very comprehensive and well thought through regarding topics and the content presented within the topics. The bilingual notes are a great innovation.”

“I think the resources can be picked up and tailored by a range of discipline and academic language and learning (ALL) lecturers either for use within scheduled curriculum or as slightly more standalone activities. There is sometimes more effective learning when both discipline and ALL lecturer can do this as a team teaching exercise but the discipline lecturer is not always willing to do this. Dissemination so that the site is known is the now (the) critical factor (in the uptake of resources).”

The Project Leader chose, during 2014, to get directly involved in the writing and production of some of the toolkit resources. This was partly done to ensure that there was a strong media and communications focus in the materials. With additional funding for this project another qualified person could have shouldered this burden and left the Project Leader free to concentrate on other things. In hindsight it is possible that the Victoria University project team members could have been more involved in this pursuit. They seemed willing to oblige but funding is again an issue that the project Leader had to contend with. It is also possible that mention of communication ‘issues’ in a few of the email interview responses would have been less likely if the project Leader was not so burdened with the production of materials.

One point worth adding here is that most issues in any project relate strongly to the difficulties (time, availability, financial cost) impacting on regular face to face meetings. This project is no exception. In hindsight it is highly likely that more use of audio and video conferencing would have helped this project.

The project has achieved almost all of the expected outcomes and the deliverable written in the project application and the dissemination phase has been impressive. A few of the outcomes and deliverables were not achieved but this has been justified in view of the obstacles mentioned and the major thrust in the latter stages to complete the resources and to make them available in the appropriate website. In some cases a logical and practical decision was made NOT to address a few outcomes and deliverables. For example a WIKI was rejected as a suitable end goal). In other cases the expected outcomes and deliverables will continue to be addressed beyond the ‘official end’ of the project. The dissemination methods applied in this project have been both extensive and very successful. To date the work in this direction has been very impressive and backed by very positive feedback. Dissemination is still in progress and will have to remain a major focus for the impact of this project to be both long term and lasting.

### **The sustainability of the project’s impact on Higher Education**

This project has been a near perfect test case for ways and means of improving the experience of a narrow target group of foreign students, in a narrow discipline field in postgraduate studies in Australia. While this project has undeniably addressed the needs of relevant academics and relevant students it’s greatest achievement may turn out to be what could now

follow. The sustainability of the impact made by this project is considered by the Evaluator to be a critical issue. Suffice to say that the model used and the significant resources resulting from this project are an ideal start for a broadening of the target group (to more, or even all foreign students in Higher Education) and a broadening of the discipline base beyond just communications and media studies.

There are probably four critical remaining domains of influence that would consolidate the success of this project. If the proposed funding of a project extension is approved by the OLT, the Project Leader needs to address the following:

- (1) Ensure that all remaining 'unfinished business' implicit within the original expected outcomes and deliverables is completed. Possible funding for this has been suggested above.
- (2) Ensure that extensive dissemination of the project findings happens throughout the Higher Education sector.
- (3) Ensure the sustainability of the project outcomes and deliverables as achieved to date by this project.
- (4) Confirm with the OLT that this project may just be a starting point for a much broader attempt to address the needs of other foreign students studying in other disciplines in Australia.

The Project manager, in her project report, has extensively covered the importance of sustainability. She has made numerous suggestions about how this might be achieved. It is my opinion that with the right attitude and input from stakeholders this project will almost certainly have a considerable positive impact on future foreign students studying in Australia.

#### **Suggestions for the OLT and the Higher Education Sector**

1. Accept this project as an exemplary case study of a well managed and well lead project, despite the requirement of overcoming some significant issues.
2. Encourage other academics in the Higher Education sector to look on this project as a model for possible future projects that deal with foreign students other than PKR Chinese students (postgraduate or undergraduate) and with discipline groups other than just communications and media.

"There is significant potential impact from this project both with respect to Chinese postgraduate students, but also to international students from other countries. There would need to be adaptation to suit different conditions and contexts but this would be possible. (Partner University academic)

"I think the resources can be picked up and tailored by a range of discipline and academic language and learning (ALL) lecturers either for use within scheduled curriculum or as slightly more standalone activities." (Australian Partner University academic)

"The application of the outcome and deliverables in this project are still small (narrow) in scope and I hope our research (findings) can be known and adapted by more people in other disciplines." (Chinese Partner University academic)

3. Carefully consider amendments to a project plan at the critical time of project approval so that sufficient time can be given to suggested changes. In particular the matter of funding must be carefully thought through in order that project participants (original and new) can be treated equitably and fairly.

"With hindsight, I would say that the relationship between Murdoch University and Victoria University (the 2 Australian based Partner universities) worked satisfactorily but was inhibited by finances and time constraints placed on team members on both sides of the partnership. If I were to design the project again, I would request sufficient finances to enable equal input by all members, to ensure that the extent and type of input was clarified before the start of the project, and to enable more face to face meetings. Moving forward, joint publications are in preparation, written by the MU-VU teams, and it is anticipated that the same partnership will be involved in further future projects." (Project Leader)

4. This project involved both interstate and international participation. This naturally created an obstacle to easy face to face communication. This was especially so in this project because it emanated from Western Australia, with Perth being the most isolated city on the planet. This problem is one of time constraints (time required to travel), availability issues and financial constraints. To compensate for this it is critical that such projects make effective and efficient use of audio and video conferencing. This project did use skype sessions at various times to allow participants to communicate in group sessions. Although not as good as face to face contact, it must be acknowledged that audio and video conferencing is highly likely to enhance group cohesion and project success generally. The OLT could more actively promote the use of these communication tools and perhaps support this with access to relevant professional development.
5. The OLT should also accept that travel costs will be different for projects based in different parts of the country and funding should be adjusted accordingly. Some form of 'isolation loading' would be fair and reasonable in budget allocations.

### **Postscript**

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation for the way in which the Project Leader, Associate Professor Christine Daymon and the Project Manager, Linda Butcher for assisting me throughout this project. These two people in particular have been my 'window' into this project. They have been diligent in terms of providing information and agreeing to meet with me, in person, at regular intervals.

My deepest respect goes to Lindy Norris for her dedicated and educationally grounded input into the design of the briefing notes and other materials.

My deep appreciation must also go to the people in the Partner Universities (CUC and VU) for their considerable inputs throughout the project. In feedback provided to me I found a high level of professional involvement from the relevant academics in the two Partner Universities.

In addition I must thank all the other people associated with this project who provided feedback when asked. This feedback gave me access to a very large supply of quotable material that was very useful as a means of enhancing, authenticating and in some cases constructively 'suggesting' areas in the project that might require improvements in any future spin off activities.