

INDUCTION FOR TRANSNATIONAL TEACHING TEAMS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Induction is one of the most important aspects of establishing expectations and a mutually beneficial relationship between members of transnational teaching teams. While institutions will recommend varied teaching and learning practices, all new and existing members of transnational teaching teams will need to establish responses to the following questions.

Has my role been formally defined by my institution?

“They threw me in and I swam”

Feedback obtained in surveys of teachers involved in transnational teaching regularly includes reference to the need and importance of role clarification as early as possible in transnational relationship development.

Where is the course / unit guide? Where does the course fit into the overall program of study?

“I didn’t get off to a good start”

Sometimes staff may be asked at short notice to take on course/unit responsibilities without an appropriate handover. A simple guide to the course/unit/program structure and associated documentation will facilitate a smooth transition.

Can I make changes to the course/unit guide?

“Freedom is good, as long as the topics are covered ... it doesn’t have to be the exact same thing as Melbourne”

Although some institutions expect identical curriculum to be offered in all locations, others will encourage a flexible approach to the notion of equivalence, customization and contextualization of course/unit content. You will need to understand the views of your institution, course/unit coordinator and teaching team.

Will my students come from diverse cultural backgrounds?

“There’s all kinds of assumed cultural knowledge implicit in the language used. In the context of Australia, it’s common sense but it can put our students at a disadvantage”

Team members in some campuses may have very diverse student cohorts while others may teach a cohort from a single cultural background. Assumptions should be clarified as early as reasonable to provide time for appropriate adaptation, contextualisation and customisation of course material.

Where is the course / unit delivered and what existing resources can I access?

“Really? I’ve never heard of a Shanghai offering”

Where an institution has multiple campuses in various locations significant potential exists for cross-campus sharing and enrichment of curriculum and class activities. Providing staff with an understanding of the geographical range of course/unit offerings can support the development of a richer transnational teaching team.

Who are my counterparts in other campuses, and what is their professional and academic background?

“It would have been easier if we had known each other”

Without appropriate introductions and discussion of about the professional backgrounds and skills of transnational team members misconceptions can easily arise.

Can I add my own material?

“The most important thing is context”

Assessment of course/unit learning outcomes is undertaken after appropriate opportunities have been offered to students to achieve the learning outcomes. While many transnational courses/units rely on shared content, cultural and contextual factors may require the development of content that addresses the learning needs of specific cohorts.

What does the institution expect me to do before the semester begins, during the semester and at the end of the semester?

“The number one thing that both sides need to understand is that we run on different timetables”

In every institution professional and academic staff have distinct roles which determine their activities before, during and after semester. While there are many similarities in these roles between institutions there may also be significant differences which, if unacknowledged, can result in a sudden, unexpected build-up of duties.

The publication of clear guidelines with associated semester dates and deadlines for all campuses will facilitate shared understandings across campuses

of roles and responsibilities, review and reporting obligations, peak workload periods, turnaround times.

What opportunities and expectations are there to engage with teaching staff and students in other campuses?

“Staff should be encouraged to teach with technology”

Transnational projects, blogs and wikis are examples of cross-campus student activity, which provide students with authentic transnational learning experiences. Before significant planning is undertaken to develop these opportunities transnational teaching teams should establish whether semester dates, international time zones may align. Logistical issues associated with both synchronous and asynchronous teamwork may need to be addressed before these activities are introduced.

How are assessment tasks and marking rubrics developed, assessed and moderated?

“We cannot do anything unless Melbourne says ‘yes’”

Although tasks may differ across cohorts, assessment in all locations is expected to measure the achievement of course/unit learning outcomes. Some transnational arrangements require staff in all campuses to contribute to the development of assessment tasks and marking rubrics and to moderate papers across locations. It is advisable to clarify the endorsed practice before the semester starts to ensure that course activities and outcomes are clearly aligned with course assessment regimes.

What professional development opportunities are available to me and in what medium (online, F2F, blended?)

“Some of us look and think: ‘I’m not sure that this is as good a course as it could be’”

Institutions should provide appropriate instruction to all members of a teaching team. Early access to professional development can support an enhanced understanding of the potential richness offered by transnational teaching arrangements.

Who can I approach for teaching and learning support?

“No one told me and I didn’t ask”

Peer observation, mentoring, and communities of practice can provide new and continuing academic staff with opportunities to develop, maintain and enhance their practice. For many, the first step may be in knowing who to approach in the organisational structure!



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FAQ CHECKLIST FOR TRANSNATIONAL TEACHING TEAM MEMBERS

Write a brief response to each question and update incomplete information.

QUESTION	RESPONSE
Has my role been formally defined by my institution?	
Where is the course/unit guide? Where does the course fit into the overall program of study?	
Can I make changes to the course/unit guide?	
Will my students come from diverse cultural backgrounds?	
Where is the course/unit delivered and what existing resources can I access?	
What does the institution expect me to do before the semester begins, during the semester and at the end of the semester?	
Can I add my own material to the existing content?	
Who are my counterparts in other campuses, and what is their professional and academic background?	
What opportunities and expectations exist to engage with teaching staff and students in other campuses?	
How are assessment tasks and marking rubrics developed, assessed and moderated?	
What professional development opportunities are available to me?	
Who can I approach for teaching and learning support?	