SUMMARY

SAS/Exchange programs, research placements and/or a combination of these experiences are integral to BPhil (Hons). In the wider context of increasing and reciprocal internationalization of study, primarily at undergraduate level, the academic, personal, cultural, economic and institutional benefits of this experience will become more nuanced, visible and meaningful.

UWA has a well-established and highly successful program for SAS/Exchanges and joint research opportunities suitable for BPhil (Hons) students with a range of partners; new opportunities are developing. There is, however, no University Policy on the purpose of international study: this paper offers a framework for international study in BPhil (Hons).

Maximizing such opportunities within the degree will depend on tracking student feedback, maintaining liaison with academic/research colleagues to develop a network of appropriate research mentors, co-ordination with International Centre and Faculty colleagues, preparedness to manage both successes and challenges. There are strong arguments for extending institutional research undergraduate programs to the BPhil (Hons) cohort.

BPHIL (HONS) AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

The Bachelor of Philosophy (Hons) degree is distinguished by particular research-intensive and high-level communications elements, in addition to those included in units contributing to the other mainstream degrees. BPhil (Hons) also emphasizes UWA’s commitment to educating global citizens who are able to value both their own and different cultures. These
features are codified in the rules around the degree: for example, **Degree Rule 10 for BPhil (Hons)** states “[a] semester of study outside of Australia (that may include a research placement) must normally be undertaken after the Level 1 units are completed and before the Level 3 units are completed.”¹ There is also, potentially, a combination to be made between Degree Rule 10 and **Degree Rule 7 for BPhil (Hons)** which states “[a]t least one of the units in the Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) degree course must normally involve the study of a language other than English.”²

**PURPOSE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDY**

There is, currently no University Policy specific to international study at UWA: there is a very successful set of processes, operated by the International Centre, to manage academic international placements for students. BPhil (Hons) poses a question about the purpose of such study within the context of an undergraduate research degree.³

In addition to the academic, employment and personal benefits of studying overseas study identified for UWA students,⁴ this experience of learning supports “a requirement to study aspects of the globalised and culturally diverse environment in which graduates will live and work” that is emphasized in **Education for Tomorrow’s World: Courses of Action Report of the Review of Course Structures The University of Western Australia** (Sept 2008).⁵

In fact, **Education for Tomorrow’s World** conceptualizes the BPhil (Hons) course with the Study Abroad experience as integral:⁶ requiring appropriate educational preparation as well as financial support.⁷ Less overtly, but perhaps just as important, is UWA’s recognition that “[s]tudents who avail themselves of the opportunity to study abroad can enlarge their sense of community so that it includes immersion in a foreign culture and allows them to develop peer networks in an international context.”⁸

More recently, the Vice-Chancellor’s “UWA Futures” paper⁹ includes as **Proposal 4: That the University develop its study abroad program, with the goal of doubling the participation of undergraduate students by 2020.**
BACKGROUND

In 2011, a paper titled Facilitating Study Abroad For Undergraduate Students (F31167)\(^\text{10}\) noted the requirement to balance two principles in relation to SAS/Exchange programs: the impetus “to provide better opportunities for students to develop an international outlook” in NC 2012 while acknowledging that “it is also vital that arrangements for studying overseas should not weaken the integrity of a student’s chosen major.” This paper identifies the benefits of international study as, primarily academic and, thus, Section 3 details constraints on SAS/Exchange programs and proposes rules for guiding the management of academic structures and international study programs.

Another dimension to the purpose of international study was canvassed in 2009 when Universities Australia commissioned *The Nature of International Education in Australian Universities and its Benefits.*\(^\text{11}\) This report argues, “of the many benefits of international education, its effect on Australia’s international relations has been least researched” and “includes an attempt to remedy this by providing some original research on the impact of international education on Australia’s public diplomacy” (3). The report uses “international education” to refer to the billion-dollar industry ($15.5 in 2008) that brings international students into the Australian tertiary sector. The argument — that firsthand experience is a building block of public diplomacy — readily applies to domestic students studying overseas as much as to international students studying in Australia. There is “simply no substitute” for domestic students studying in other global locations to enable young Australians to “make up their own minds” about the world outside their national borders (1).

CURRENT DRIVERS

There is a wider context here that is worth noting. *The Financial Review* (Education, Mon 8 Oct) carries two front-page articles on the internationalization of the tertiary sector: Tim Dodd reports on an address by UWA’s Chancellor, Michael Chaney, delivered at the International Education Advisory Council (IEAC), Fri 5 Oct\(^\text{12}\) and, separately, on Alan Olsen’s analysis of increasing international study undertaken by domestic students.\(^\text{13}\) These two
articles represent two sides of the same phenomenon that provides the context for SAS/Exchange programs at UWA, in general, and BPhil (Hons), in particular.

Internationalization is a reciprocal process despite the economic differentials: international students studying at Australian universities represent a $bn industry (Financial Review, 24) whose current downturn is causing considerable consternation; domestic students’ international study is up (4.6% in 2007 to 7.6% in 2010) with 32.7% of students choosing Asia as their academic destination in 2011. While researchers, like Olsen, are quick to point to the support provided by the federal government’s OS-HELP scheme ($25.3M in 2011 up from $8.6M in 2007) and the expected impetus from Dr Ken Henry’s Australia in the Asian Century report14, analysis of the economic benefits of domestic students’ international educational experience are less visible.

**DYNAMIC FACTORS**

BPhil (Hons) will be in its first iteration between 2012-2015. During this time, 2-3 cohorts will plan and undertake SAS/Exchange programs. The first BPhil student to undertake such a program has enrolled in CHIN2801 China Field Study for Dec-Jan 2012-13. Feedback from students will expand our understanding of the benefits and challenges posed by international study for undergraduate research students. Challenges for the degree are emerging as the current students progress. For example, the potential for congestion at L3 has become visible; so too the potential difficulty of finding equivalents within the tight 8-unit structure for degree-specific majors and 14-unit structure for the Biomedical Science double major.

Students’ thinking about SAS/Exchange will also be influenced by their experiences here at UWA. For example, students’ participation in events such as the In The Zone Conference (26-27 Nov 2012),15 sponsored by Rio Tinto, and meeting Chinese students in the UWA-USTC Research Training Program (10 Aug 2012)16 will provide a more nuanced framework for decision-making.
The 2012 BPhil (Hons) cohort includes 4 international students and the number will increase incrementally; as well, some students have already had international study experience. BPhil students have a strong cohort identity and have been keen to explore opportunities to develop and extend their connections within the cohort. Conversation within the cohort will be an important factor in deciding about SAS/Exchange programs.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

BPhil (Hons) might usefully explore the option of a SAS/Exchange program that focuses on research, for small cohorts as well as individuals, with institutional partners.

A number of opportunities are already being developed for which BPhil (Hons) students might be applicants. For example, the University of Alberta Research Internship Program\textsuperscript{17} for which one BPhil (Hons) student intends to apply in 2014. The National University of Singapore has also developed an undergraduate research program.\textsuperscript{18}

Joint research laboratories, at which BPhil (Hons) students might undertake research placements, are already established: for example, Joint Research Laboratory in Genomics and Nutriomics (2004-05, Zhejiang University);\textsuperscript{19} Centre of Excellence for Ecohydrology (2011, Zhejiang University);\textsuperscript{20} in Geomechanics (Modelling Pipe Pile in Clay project conducted by A/Prof Barry Lehane and Xiangtao Xu, n.d. HoHai University).\textsuperscript{21} Although there are some disadvantages in the disjunction between highly specialized and specific projects and BPhil (Hons) students whose research knowledge and training will, necessarily, be both more general and more limited. However, the model offered by these joint laboratories is useful.

One project that recommends itself for development is to facilitate student exchange with UWA partners in China offering select-entry undergraduate degree programs that focus on research. Colleagues in International Relations (Eva Chye) and the International Centre (Milly Ingate, Kelly Smith, Margaret Anderson) have identified the following universities:

1. Zhejiang University
2. Nanjing University
3. Harbin Institute of Technology
4. University of Science and Technology China
5. Tsinghua University
6. Shanghai Jiaotong University
7. Peking University
8. Xi’an Jiaotong University
9. Fudan University

This project requires detailed planning, a staged schedule for implementation and resources. However, student feedback confirms that it is an attractive option. But there is added impetus to develop partnerships for select-entry degrees since, as is emerging, BPhil (Hons) students have an advantage in being selected for placements made on a competitive basis; especially given the need, on the one hand, for equity of access for all UWA students and, on the other hand, the benefit of maintaining exchange agreements.

RESOURCES

Financial and staff resources will be critical to developing and maintaining regular SAS/Exchange programs, international research placements and (very likely) programs that combine both elements for BPhil (Hons) students. The International Centre has a highly developed set of processes and staff with extensive knowledge and experience in place; Carolyn Wood has already been designated as the contact for BPhil (Hons) students. The Faculties have, similarly, developed processes to manage SAS/Exchange programs, often with designated administrators to manage students’ requests for approval.

While BPhil (Hons) is not envisaged as a large degree (full cohort approximately 200 students), co-ordinating approvals for SAS/Exchange and/or research placements managed by the International Centre and Faculties with requirements of the BPhil (Hons) Degree Rules, University Policy and the best educational outcome for students will require development and resourcing of appropriate processes. For example, the more complex such
international experiences become, the more prepared UWA will need to become to manage both the successes and potential difficulties of such programs.

Assoc. Prof. Jenna Mead
BPhil (Hons) Academic Co-ordinator
8 Oct 2012; revised 25 Feb 2013

1 http://rules.handbooks.uwa.edu.au/rules/UGDegreeCourseRules/Part4
2 http://rules.handbooks.uwa.edu.au/rules/UGDegreeCourseRules/Part4
3 This gap is noted in Undergraduate Course Administration: Issues For Consultation (New Arrangements as approved by Academic Council – R89/11) Process for Implementation Proposed by Academic Policy Services. Page 5 notes Academic Policy Services to monitor progress of discussion papers through the committee system with a view to formulating a University Policy on Student Exchange and Study Abroad, in consultation with the International Centre and the BPhil co-ordinator.
4 The benefits of studying overseas are many:

**Academic benefits**

- You can take courses related to your degree that are not available at UWA, for example The University of Otago offers courses in Native Title Law.
- You’ll study at universities that are leaders in their areas of research.
- You may find that exchange is an opportunity to improve rapidly at a foreign language (depending on where you go), because of both everyday exposure and intensive language programs that are offered.

**Employment benefits**

- Your achievement in a different academic and cultural environment will show to employers that you are flexible, that you are adventurous and are a self-starter.
- You’ll be able to gain invaluable experience for future employment through vacation internships in your area of study offered by some universities.
- Exchange will allow you the opportunity to establish not only friendships, but also a global network of students, many of whom will be entering the professional world very soon. These friends you make may be able to provide you with local knowledge on professional and educational opportunities in their home country.
Personal benefits

- You’ll be able to travel within the host country and further afield with local students or other international students.
- You’ll meet people from around the globe and develop new friendships.
- You’ll gain independence and confidence.

http://www.studyat.uwa.edu.au/study-abroad-and-exchange/study-overseas

5 Education for Tomorrow's World: Courses of Action Report of the Review of Course Structures The University of Western Australia (Sept 2008), Executive Summary, point 3

6 Recommendation 4 [re BPhil (Hons)]
   d. That it provide support arrangements for a Study Abroad experience; (vol. 1 34)

Recommendation 15
   d. That the Board of Coursework Studies ensure that the structure of every undergraduate course will permit the possibility of at least a semester of study abroad.

Education for Tomorrow’s World: Courses of Action Report of the Review of Course Structures The University of Western Australia (Sept 2008), (vol. 1 37)

7 Features of BPhil (Hons) course “The “Study Abroad opportunity” needs not only scholarship assistance and academic affiliation arrangements but also appropriate educational preparation.” Education for Tomorrow’s World: Courses of Action Report of the Review of Course Structures The University of Western Australia (Sept 2008), (vol. 2 46)

8 Education for Tomorrow’s World: Courses of Action Report of the Review of Course Structures The University of Western Australia (Sept 2008), vol. 1 11-12


10 Prepared by the Senior Academic Reviewer, BCS, October 2011
   http://committees.intranet.uwa.edu.au/__data/page/42357/102011_BCS_Agenda.pdf and
   http://committees.intranet.uwa.edu.au/__data/page/42359/102011_BCS_Minutes.pdf This paper and BCS notes provide guidance on approving unit choice, structure and assessment in SAS/Exchange programs and WAM calculations.


12 Program at
   https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:7SCl9b0VHG0J:www.aiec.idp.com/pdf/AIEC2012%2520Program%2520OVERVIEW.pdf+&hl=en&gl=au&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESinsdlE7iM3pgq8vcr9gddSfrR70AVCULJuxu75pdY79BnPXXn5pqNhr310UA9MrHK6BBRFRdMXae72aPutaJXkE8WWsJ0ILhHVte3pcvoLeKzX305e80gxvQl88Nmss0pru-&sig=AHIEtbSw8D6xnCCob2efxWfJgbtx NA2tLQ


