Ensuring wholesome Learning outcomes for international joint-dual degree graduates: The case of Swinburne (Australia)-Northeastern University (USA) Joint Degree Program

Abstract

This poster depicts the key processes and outcomes of the highly successful Global Leadership program (GLP) which is an international, collaborative arrangement between Swinburne and Northeastern universities offering joint-dual masters in leadership and business (Accounting, International business, Marketing, Finance & Banking). Given the argument that higher education must become more globally focussed as contemporary political, social and business institutions increasingly seek for students, citizens, employees and leaders with an international orientation, the Swinburne-Northeastern joint-dual degree arrangement is widely considered the ‘way forward’ and ‘best practice’. The program has sustained for 8 years and has produced over 300 international dual degree graduates who are now adding value to public, private and third sector organisations across the world. The program’s unique governance structure, cross private movement of both students and the faculty, market-relevant curricula and highly engaged alumni are the pillars of its enduring success. The poster highlights the joint-dual degree structure, key outcomes and guidelines for best practice.

Goals

• To develop and sustain a novel joint-dual degree model involving cross boarder movement of both students and the faculty
• To develop graduates ‘global intelligence’ harnessing the synergy of two Master degrees and two educational cultures
• To impart graduates with competencies required to lead private, public or third sector organisations in the global context
• To promote Australia-USA soft power across the globe by producing graduates who could act as ‘cultural ambassadors’ for the two universities and the two countries

Consequently, higher education institutions worldwide have been experimenting novel content delivery and cross-institutional models with a view to inculcating a ‘truly global’ mind-set as well as a skill-set among the graduates. An international dual degree program is an innovative concept in which students can acquire two degrees from two institutions in two different countries, often in the same timeframe. As a general rule, students are required to meet the curriculum requirements of two majors. The sole purpose of an international dual degree is to offer students two academic streams, yet complimentary to each other, and cross-cultural immersion that will prepare them for a global job market. Collaboration via dual degrees benefits students academically, while institutions share resources, internationalize their academic staff, campus and research endeavors, and even enhance their prestige (Asgary & Robbert, 2010). In 2007, the Global Leadership Program (GLP) was launched in Australia as a joint dual degree offering, collaborative arrangement between the Northeastern (CPS) and Swinburne Universities. Students can obtain two Masters Degrees within two years. Swinburne offers 4 Master degree options in International Business, Marketing, Professional Accounting and, Finance & Banking while Northeastern offers Master of Science in Leadership. GLP has sustained for 8 years and has produced over 300 international dual degree graduates who are now adding value to public, private and third sector organisations across the world. This poster aims to highlight the key processes and outcomes of this unique international collaborative arrangement.

Guidelines for Best Practice

Based on the SUT-NEU experience, following guidelines for best practice can be highlighted:

• To ensure success of international joint-degree programs, the partner institutions must be ambitious, flexible, resourceful, creative and committed long-term to internationalization and the dual program.
• Participating universities need to invest at all levels (e.g. Launching an annual joint conference by Swinburne and Northeastern)
• Participating faculty members must involve themselves in institutional development, research and networking, going beyond their routine teaching tasks.
• Students enrolling into joint-dual degree programs should be high achieving, hard working, positive thinkers and actuarial students. Periodic review of the degree structure, logistics, students’ learning outcomes, curricula and the industry demand need to be undertaken to maintain the relevance of the program. Phasing out of double degree suites with low demand and introducing new degree programs having high demand must be in the medium-term program review agenda.

Key Outcomes

Program Level Outcomes:
• SUT-NEU joint-dual degree program has produced over 300 graduates since its inception in 2007
• Very active dual degree alumni network connected through the official Facebook page ‘LoCus Leadership’
• Expanded the number of double degree suites offered under this program to 4
• Annual Global Leadership Conference in 2014 in Melbourne, which serves as a platform for current students, Alumni, academics, industry practitioners and thought leaders to connect and share their views on leadership. This conference is to be hosted by the two institutes every alternate year in Melbourne and Boston.
• Every year a group of students travel to Boston to enhance their international experiential learning

Unique Skill-set of graduates
• SUT-NEU international business graduates find it easy to engage in leading cross-border business operations. They are highly likely to be shortlisted for undertaking international operations with a leadership role.
• SUT-Professional accounting graduates are competent to lead global or regional accounting operations and consulting assignments. Apart from their accounting skills, they possess leadership competencies that offer them a competitive edge over single degree graduates.
• SUT-Marketing graduates say that they are asked by their employers to perform leadership role addition to performing their marketing tasks. Also, many graduates have reported to have experienced an upward trajectory in their careers
• Most of the past graduates say that the dual degree qualification help improve their career prospects
• When they face a job interview, the fact that they earned a masters degree from two countries, significantly improves their employability.

References


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