

## Cross Credit Arrangements amongst Tertiary Educational Institutions in the South Pacific Region

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Universities and technical institutions are major providers of tertiary education and training. Traditionally university education and training have been more theoretical in nature while that of the technical institutions have been more practical. Often the feedback from the industry is that graduates from the technical institutions are more effective in the real world work environment, at entry levels, than their counterparts from the universities. Also, graduates from different countries experience difficulties in finding jobs abroad. Often for the purposes of further education and/or employment graduates have to repeat those courses that they have already completed in their home countries. This is a serious waste of a student's time and money.

Initially, universities, technical institutions and the industries in the South Pacific region can work together to develop curriculum and assessment tools, follow common moderation procedures, and use resources conforming to at least a specified minimum standard. When successful, this model could be extended to include countries outside the region, and ultimately become a global system.

If such an initiative is successful, then great savings can be made on the time and money that students have to spend on their education and re-training. Their qualifications will have international recognition and therefore they will have little difficulty in finding jobs outside their home countries. Tertiary institutions will benefit from sharing of resources, knowledge, experience and expertise. Duplication of effort could be minimised if not eliminated. Industries will feel happy employing graduates in that would become efficiently effective in their

jobs.

An example of an effort that has been successful is the cross credit arrangement between Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Fiji Institute of Technology (FIT), and The University of the South Pacific. Recently FIT revised its stage-based Diploma in Business Studies and implemented a new unit-based Diploma in Business with majors in Accounting, Applied Computing, Economics, Management, and Office Administration. The structure of the diploma requires a student to obtain 120 credit points from compulsory core units, 120 credit points from optional units and 60 credit points from industrial attachment.

This diploma was developed by FIT in collaboration with AUT, USP, Fiji's Government and its local industries. This effort was funded by the New Zealand Government through its agency: Overseas Development Assistance and Trade (ODAT). AUT made available curriculum development experts, USP specified its requirements for FIT's diploma to qualify for maximum cross-credits, and Fiji's local industries helped with the currency and relevance aspects of the curriculum. This is a good example of people from relevant sectors coming together to work as a team towards the development of education and training.

Now FIT's Diploma in Business graduates get one year cross-credit towards USP's three-year Bachelor of Arts and one and half year cross-credit towards AUT's four-year Bachelor of Business degrees. With the interest shown by some tertiary institutions in New Zealand and TAFE institutions