

THE MODEL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH TRAINING IN ASIAN COUNTRIES BY A FOREIGN UNIVERSITY – CASE STUDY VIETNAM

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Abstract

The RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia is a major supplier of international education with more than 14,000 international students studying in Australia and overseas. The RMIT University established a presence in Vietnam in 2001; this entity is known as the RMIT International University Vietnam (RMIT Vietnam). Its aim is to contribute to the sustainable economic, social, and environmental development of Vietnam.

In 2002 the Office of Research and Innovation at the RMIT University embarked on a program of developing partnerships with Vietnamese organisations in an effort designed to develop research projects and research training with members of these organisations. Workshops on water (2002) and food technology (2004) were held in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) were signed with a number of organisations.

An initial cohort of 9 students came to RMIT to study for their Master of Philosophy degree. Scholarships were funded by the Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation. Since this time other research students have followed and agreements with the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) have provided access to Vietnam government scholarships. Vietnamese students from many organisations now study under this program for Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy degrees.

Many obstacles and complicating factors have had to be overcome in the establishment of the research training programs in Vietnam. It is only now that the fruits of the labour are evident. This paper charts the development of this research training and outlines the key aspects that have led to the success of this program.

History of RMIT in Vietnam

1. Introduction

The RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia is a major supplier of international education with over 14,000 international students enrolled at any one time. Most of these

students study coursework programs while an increasing number of research students are training at the RMIT University in direct response to the ever increasing research profile of the university. In 2001 the university established a presence in Vietnam and now has campuses in Hanoi and South Saigon. This on-the-ground presence has provided a sound base from which to develop research training activities in Vietnam.

2. History

The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) was established in 1887 and now, as a university, provides vocational and professional education and training for Australian and international students. It is one of the largest universities in Australia with over 65,000 students¹. It is a technology-oriented university which focuses on outcome-related research and consultancy services to industry.

RMIT first developed associations with Vietnam back in 1992 through education, business and development in engineering, information technology, communication, finance and telecommunications.

In 1998 the Vietnamese government invited the RMIT University to establish a fully foreign-owned University in Vietnam.

In 2000, RMIT Vietnam was granted a licence by the Ministry of Planning and Investment to deliver undergraduate and postgraduate education, training and research in Vietnam.

RMIT University degrees, recognised by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, can now be undertaken in Vietnam. Programs began in 2001 in Ho Chi Minh City and 2004 in Hanoi. The university now has over 4,000 students studying in Vietnam. State-of-the-art facilities are provided for students who study the same degrees as those delivered at RMIT's campuses in Australia.

3. RMIT Research Profile

RMIT Vietnam has provided over 470 scholarships for Vietnamese students since it began operation. An increasing number of scholarships are associated with research training at the Master of Philosophy or Doctor of Philosophy level. Research has, and is, being undertaken in the following fields: Environment/Water; Biotechnology; Food Safety and Technology; Geosciences; Education; ICT Aerospace/Aviation; Globalisation/Climate Change. Research projects must be relevant to the economic and social development of Vietnam.

Parallel to the development of research training is the development of cooperation with organisations in Vietnam. Partnerships have grown through regular contact and formal agreements have now been made with over 20 research oriented organisations allowing the way for collaborative research projects to be undertaken.

Building the foundation

1. Workshops

The initial research foundation was laid in August 2002 when RMIT staff from the Melbourne campus organised three workshops entitled “Water and Waste Treatment and Quality, an Urban Development Focus”. Workshops were held in Hanoi, Hue and Ho Chi Minh City. The themes varied depending on the location. The themes were:

Hanoi workshop:

- Education and Training, including exchange programs for staff and graduate students in environmental science and technology
- Investment, infrastructure and policies on water resources
- Solid and liquid waste treatment technology
- Water quality assessment and monitoring (including bio-monitoring)
- Wetland conservation and management

Hue workshop:

- Assessment and Monitoring of Water Quality in Central Vietnam’s river systems
- Staff and Student Exchange
- Water Resource management

Ho Chi Minh City workshop:

- Bioaccumulation, transport and impact of agricultural chemicals in the Mekong Delta
- Education and Research Training, including staff and student exchange
- Environmental awareness and Community Education projects in rural communities in the Mekong Delta
- Groundwater quality, use and impact in rural areas of Ho Chi Minh City and surrounding provinces
- Providing clean water and improving sanitation in the Mekong Delta during flooding

After these successful workshops, follow-up work continued with the aim being to establish working relationships with the organisations represented at the workshops. Subsequent trips to Vietnam involved a number of high level meetings with Vietnam government officials and university staff.

With the development of research projects in the priority area of water and waste treatment well established, it was time to establish links with partners in the second priority area of food science. To this end workshops were held in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in 2004.

Themes for both workshops were:

- Dairy Science
- Food Microbiology & Food Safety
- Lipid Biotechnology
- Nutrition
- Physical & Chemical Analysis of Foods
- Sensory Evaluation
- Soy & Fish Product Development

These new workshops opened up cooperation between experts in the food sciences and required input from key RMIT staff to keep the momentum going.

2. Staff involvements

Establishment and development of research links with personal within the relevant organisations in Vietnam required a good deal of commitment and energy input from a number of RMIT staff. The following groups could be considered as vital to the successful growth of the research ties:

- i. Pro-vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation who instigated the program and led the high-profile delegations to the targeted organisations and government departments in Vietnam
- ii. Staff in the RMIT Office of Research and Innovation who managed the administrative affairs
- iii. Heads of academic groups who were prepared to release staff time for the Vietnam initiative
- iv. Academic staff presenting at the workshops
- v. Academic staff prepared to instigate and/or undertake research in Vietnam
- vi. Academic staff prepared to supervise Vietnamese research students
- vii. Academic staff prepared to act as ‘Researcher-in-Residence’ in Vietnam
- viii. RMIT research students in Melbourne prepared to mentor Vietnamese students

The challenges in developing research and research training agreements with organisation in Vietnam meant that repeat visits and regular communication was required with key participants to build trust and acceptance. To facilitate this, a researcher-in-residence program was introduced.

3. Researcher-in-Residence program

The “researcher-in-residence” was an academic whose primary role was to mentor any research students residing in Vietnam. The period of attendance in Vietnam was two to four weeks during which time the academic would visit organisations, run courses in research methods, provide individual guidance on scientific research, undertake a needs analysis for each student and generally undertake pastoral care of the students. This approach was needed as the initial cohort of research students were removed from their Vietnamese organisations and relocated to the RMIT campus in Ho Chi Minh City. This

proved to be a very isolating arrangement for individuals in terms of specific research contacts but it did allow strong bonds to be created between the students. The students were all provided with scholarships that covered their tuition fees and living allowance. RMIT staff were also funded to travel to Vietnam to mentor the students. The source of the funding was the Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation.

4. Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation

The Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation founded by Charles F Feeney has a mission to bring about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people. This foundation funded tuition and stipend scholarships for the initial cohort of Masters by Research students, to research in areas of strategic importance to Vietnam. The students' three key discipline areas were: Water and the Environment, Food and Food Technology, and Information Technology and Telecommunications. The students were jointly recruited and selected from all over Vietnam.

This initial funding provided the impetus for the development of associations with other organisations within Vietnam. Vietnamese universities, in particular, are keen to develop ties with foreign universities so that their staff and postgraduate students can receive an international recognised research qualification.

5. Vietnamese Institutions

Many Vietnamese educational institutions have now signed Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the RMIT University to formally recognise mutual strengths and to state support for the creation of long-term, two-way flows of teaching and research between the institutions. This is a necessary initial step which comes after the negotiations have reached a point where there is mutual acceptance that such an alliance is beneficial to both parties. Once an agreement is signed research projects can be arranged between the organisation and RMIT. Vietnamese staff may also enrol for research training at the RMIT University.

To date research MOU's have been signed with the following organisations²:

- Centre for Analytical Services and Experimentation
- Food Industries Research Institute
- Hanoi University of Education
- Hanoi University of Technology
- Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology
- Mekong Development Institute (part of Can Tho University)
- Nonglam University
- Thai Nguyen University
- Vietnam Academy of Science & Technology
- Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences
- Vietnam National University (Hanoi)

6. RMIT Vietnamese visiting fellows program

Having established agreements with key organisations in Vietnam a visiting fellows program was started as a show of good will. Key staff in the various Vietnamese organisations were identified and invited to visit the RMIT University in Melbourne. The trips were fully funded by the RMIT University and the requirement was that the staff member endeavour to develop research projects with relevant RMIT University research staff. A number of working relationships have developed out of this initiative in key research areas.

7. Key research areas

Six years after the initial water workshop, collaborative research is now being undertaken in the following fields:

- Agricultural Management
- Biotechnology
- e-commerce
- Education
- Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Information Technology
- Food Safety
- Geospatial Science
- Water

The key to the successful partnerships has been the enthusiasm of particular staff for working with their Vietnamese colleagues in the research areas of mutual interest. Strong professional bonds have been formed. Vietnam is a country which is and will benefit greatly from applied research activities. What is needed is research training so that Vietnamese nationals can lead the research initiatives in the future. The RMIT University has vigorously sought providers for research scholarships and has worked with the MOET and key Vietnamese universities to identify suitable research students.

Higher Degree by Research Students from Vietnam

1. Research Training in Vietnam

The vast majority of higher degrees available through Vietnamese universities are based on coursework programs. A number of staff working in higher education in Vietnam have travelled abroad to countries such as Germany, Russia, USA, England and Australia to gain their research degrees (Master or PhD) before returning to take up positions of leadership at universities across Vietnam. The Vietnamese government and foreign governments provide scholarships for research training. The RMIT University has established quality research training programs that are available for suitably qualified Vietnamese citizens to undertake.

2. Masters and Doctor of Philosophy programs at RMIT

Research at the RMIT is driven by practical application and outcome. In keeping with this approach the research associated with the research training, Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy, is also based on the practical application of the theory and has outcomes relevant to industry. These characteristics make RMIT University degrees highly desirable in the Vietnam context.

The purpose of the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Masters by Research degrees is to³:

- a) Provide the community with graduates of enhanced ability, knowledge and diversity of experience; particularly in the skills of problem solving, creative endeavour and presentation of original research;
- b) Provide an opportunity for suitable candidates to develop their potential for research and to extend the boundaries of knowledge;
- c) Assist industry and the community by providing them with access to technical and educational facilities for the purpose of applied research;
- d) Encourage academic staff to play an active part in research and to maintain an awareness of developments in their areas of expertise;
- e) Further the interaction of academic staff, candidates and professional members of industry, commerce and the community on research matters of mutual interest.

For the initial cohort of Master of Philosophy students from Vietnam their enrolment was considered non-standard and hence there were many administrative hurdles to overcome. An approach has now been developed to allow students to undertake their research degree in joint on-shore and off-shore modes so a student can begin their studies at the RMIT in Melbourne and then return to Vietnam to continue their studies while residing in Vietnam. The student then returns to the RMIT University in Melbourne to write-up and submit their thesis. The success rate associated with the initial cohort of research scholars from Vietnam has encouraged RMIT to expand its research training program for Vietnam.

3. Students

For the initial cohort of research students, RMIT Vietnam called for expressions of interest from prospective and well qualified students in Vietnam. A selection process was held and initially 9 students were selected.

This particular series of scholarships represented the first such research scholarship initiative driven via RMIT Vietnam with 3rd party funding. As already stated the Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation generously provided funding for full scholarships. Of the initial cohort of nine Masters by Research students, researching in areas of strategic importance to Vietnam, seven students completed their studies on the following topics:

- Biomonitoring of trace metals in Saigon River.
- Detection and antibiotic sensitivity of enteric pathogens in raw food samples from Vietnam.

- Efficient Handoff Strategy for Real-time Multimedia Applications in Mobile IP Networks.
- Fairness of MaxNet in Transient Network
- Registration of multiple 3D views using global optimisation.
- Software agent - agent interaction flexible protocols - a logic approach.
- Sustainability of water infrastructure in Ho Chi Minh City.

Two students, Ms Thi Thu Hao Van and Mr Quang Duc Pham went on to complete their Doctor of Philosophy degrees.

The success of this cohort of students, and the increased restrictions on funds for research places in Australia, has led to the RMIT University seeking to build its research training activities in Vietnam.

4. Strategic recruitment of HDR students

The funding of research training places at Australian universities has changed significantly over recent years. No longer is there adequate funding for research. Academic staff are now required to generate research funds for the university through applying for competitive grants and through seeking industry assistance. To grow a research student cohort the university has had to attract students who bring to the university scholarships from sources outside of the university. For international students this means scholarships provided by their own government or industry sponsors. For students from Vietnam the scholarships have, in recent times, been provided MOET.

5. Ministry of Education and Training Scholarship Students

RMIT University has developed a strong program of exchanges and scholarships that enable students to conduct high-level research in Vietnam and Australia. Building on the funding model outlined above an agreement for the collaborative scholarship funding package has been formally ratified between RMIT and the Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam. The agreement builds on the established project partnerships with a number of institutions in Vietnam, which followed on from the series of research workshops.

More research students have come from Vietnam and have recently entered into research training agreements with the RMIT University, mainly under the MOET scholarship arrangement. Some current research topics are:

- Different approaches to controlling bacterial infections in catfish
- Antibiotic resistance in food pathogens
- Examination of alternative food sources for catfish
- Improving food safety in the production of nem chua
- Agricultural Management System Designed to Determine the Capability of Farm Land in the Mekong Delta

To qualify for enrolment at the RMIT University in a higher degree by research training program a student must have a suitable level of academic achievement and aptitude, they

must be funded, they must be accepted by a research active discipline area at RMIT that will provide the supervision and they must satisfy the English language requirements.

6. English-language training

The RMIT University has a minimum English language requirement that all students must achieve before they are able to enter into any program, including research programs. Students must achieve at least an average of 6.5 International English Language Testing System (IELTS) for reading, writing, listening and speaking. The RMIT International University of Vietnam provides once only tuition for prospective postgraduate students.

The English language training is usually the last obstacle that the student faces before they can enrol at the RMIT University. The challenge for the RMIT University was to provide for the students a research training program that had built in flexibility which allowed the students to study both in Australia and in Vietnam. This twinning program approach has allowed students to avail themselves of resources at RMIT and also back at their home organisation in Vietnam. It is possible for international students to apply for other scholarships which may provide more support during their candidature.

7. Scholarships - Funding

International students planning to undertake research training at the RMIT university have available to them a number of scholarship options. The RMIT University makes available a limited number of scholarships as does the Australian government. For Vietnamese students the Vietnam government also provide many scholarship opportunities through MOET. Some key scholarships are outlined below.

RMIT University International Research Scholarships

The RMIT University each year makes available the **RMIT University International Research Scholarships (RUIRS)**.

RUIRS awards are awarded to international postgraduate research students with excellent academic performance. All applicants wishing to apply for the RMIT University International Research Scholarship must have received an offer letter for an RMIT postgraduate by research program.⁴

Endeavour IPRS Scholarships

The Australian government each year releases a limited number of **Endeavour IPRS Scholarships**.

The Endeavour IPRS program provides approximately 330 new scholarships each year and enables international students to undertake a postgraduate research qualification in Australia and gain experience with leading Australian researchers. *(As specified by the Australian government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations)*

Endeavour IPRS scholarships are available for most international Masters by Research or Doctorate (PhD) degree students who will undertake quality research in RMIT's areas of research specialisation. RMIT University has particular expertise in these areas, has concentrated research resources and attracts grants from outside sources. Successful applicants usually become members of a research team working under the direction of senior researchers⁵.

Vietnam Government - MOET Scholarships

The MOET Vietnam Scholarships Program (Project 322) awards scholarships for studies overseas. These comprise scholarships for doctoral programs; scholarships for Masters programs; scholarships for non-degree programs and scholarships (full and partial) for undergraduate programs.

All three scholarship types for higher degree by research studies are provided through a competitive process based on academic results.

8. Tuition Fees

The RUIRS, Endeavour IPRS and MOET scholarships all come with their own set of conditions and criteria. The following text provides an indication of the monetary value of each scholarship type in relation to the tuition fee and living allowance.

For the RUIRS, the RMIT University will provide⁶:

- The annual tuition fees in a higher degree by research program at RMIT University
- A living allowance for successful candidates of the RUIRS for the standard duration of the program. As a guide, RMIT University recipients of the RUIRS 2007 were awarded a living allowance of approximately AUD\$19,000 per annum for the standard duration of the program – two years for a Masters by Research degree or three years for a Doctorate by Research degree.

All other expenses, such as research infrastructure and supervisor travel/living in Vietnam are covered through RMIT Vietnam during this time.

In relation to the Endeavour IPRS, the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) will provide⁷:

- the annual tuition fees in a higher degree by research program at RMIT University, in a course included on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) for the standard duration of the program; plus
- the cost of a standard Overseas Student Health Cover policy approved by the Commonwealth Government Department of Health and Ageing and which covers the student and their spouse and dependants (if any) for the period of the Endeavour IPRS.

In relation to the MOET scholarship the Vietnamese Government will provide⁸:

Funding for PhD candidates for 3 years, with:

- USD 15,000 tuition fees per annum (Band C Research Higher Degree tuition fees)
- USD 860 per month living expenses
- Medical insurance for first 3 years
- Travel cost return airfare Vietnam/Australia

All scholarship types are designed to pay for the tuition fee and to provide a living allowance which is adequate and should remove the need for a student to obtain employment to fund their studies. Vietnamese research students also benefit by the twinning arrangement which allows them to live at home in Vietnam for part of the time while studying for their RMIT University research degree.

9. Enrolment, accommodation and other issues

The admission and enrolment process for Vietnamese research students may be non-standard by virtue of the fact that the student may study part of the time in Australia and also in Vietnam. This means the enrolment may not fit neatly in with existing procedures. In such cases the student will not enrol through RMIT International as is the case with other international students. The student is classified as an off-shore student and enrolls directly through the RMIT Portfolio of Research and Innovation. Despite this causing some administrative issues it has been possible to develop a new procedure to be followed for such students.

10. School and supervisor involvements

Each research student is allocated a research supervisor from a particular discipline unit (School) within the university. There are a number of different stages in the development of the research training. The School and supervisor involvement at each stage can be identified as follows:

Stage	School	involvement
Supervisor involvement		
Funding model/ Strategic need	n/y	n/n
Student enquiry/ Student Identification	y/n	n/n
Supervisor connection	y	y
Project set-up	n	y
Enrolment	y	n
Project Start-up	n	y
Candidature Management / Pastoral Care	y	y
Completion / Celebration	y	y
Follow-up	n	y

Once the student is enrolled, and all administrative tasks have been attended to, it is up to the School, through the supervisory team, to make sure that the required resources are

provided to allow the research to proceed smoothly. Quite often a researcher from Vietnam is chosen to co-supervise the student. The Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures document³ provides a very detailed description of the different processes, along with the responsibilities of the supervisors and the student.

11. Student induction

It is expected that all Vietnamese research students will enrol in person at the RMIT in Melbourne even when the majority of their research may occur back in Vietnam. Ideally they stay in Australia for at least 3 months during which time they enrol, complete a student induction program, undertake a research methods course and develop their research proposal under the guidance of their RMIT supervisor.

Since many Vietnamese students have no experience with research, and this may be their first time in a foreign country, it is important to provide them with a student induction that is tailored to their needs. The key aim of the induction is to build community amongst the Vietnamese students and between the students and the RMIT research staff, so that there develops a strong support foundation for every Vietnamese research student studying at the RMIT Melbourne.

The induction program is designed not only to familiarise students with the geography of the university and the approach taken in relation to administrative and academic matters, it is also designed to provide them with an understanding of Australia and its cultural values.

An induction package has been designed for this purpose and consists of five stand alone modules. The modules are designed to introduce new Vietnamese higher degree by research students to the RMIT University, Melbourne and research training at RMIT. At the conclusion of the induction program it is hoped that the student will bond with other students in forming a group with a strong research culture. The modules can be combined to suit a variety of circumstances.

12. Research methods course

All enrolled higher degree by research students must complete a formal research methods course, which introduces them to the elements of the scientific approach to enquiry. This course is based on module 3 of the induction session. The course is particularly important for students coming from Vietnam as they may not have been exposed to the independent learning approach required in research. It is important to be aware of the cultural requirements and background of foreign students, for example, European case studies, or examples, should be replaced by those that are relevant to the Asian context. Completion of the course should result in the student being able to:

- Describe the historical development of scientific research
- Describe the research design process
- Describe the components of a research project
- Critically analyse existing research related literature

- Communicate effectively in both written dissertation and oral form
- Describe the key aspects of data
- Describe the basic statistical techniques which lead to a summary of data values
- Design a Critical Path Analysis structure
- Describe the role of examiners and the process of thesis examination.
- List future prospects for higher degree by research graduates

Such a course should be completed in the first six months of a candidature thus allowing the candidate to apply this knowledge to their own research project.

13. Candidature management

The academic and administrative aspects of the research training must be managed carefully so that the student successfully completes their degree in a timely manner.

The following guidelines underpin the candidates study program:

- The students will be enrolled by RMIT University.
- All aspects of student and research project management will be conducted according to RMIT University policy and quality assurance.
- The students will spend up to one semester in Australia, followed by time in Vietnam and then up to one semester in Australia at the end of their candidature.
- All primary supervision will be the responsibility of academic staff from the RMIT University. It is expected that the School will take responsibility for the management of these students as part of their higher degree by research cohort.
- Where appropriate, qualified ‘associate supervisors’ may be appointed from partner universities in Vietnam.

The above management approach applies while the candidates are managed through the RMIT Universities, Melbourne. It is envisaged that as the RMIT International University, Vietnam grows it will take on many of the task related to higher degree by research candidature. For this to occur a research presence would need to be established at the South Saigon campus.

Future Developments

1. The changing face of Vietnam

The rapid change happening to Vietnam is summed up in the following excerpt from the BBC⁹:

“Thirty three years after the end of the American war in Vietnam the transformation in the country is quite remarkable. Marshes are being drained and buildings are being erected around the expanding cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Min City. Middle class Vietnamese such as Communist Party officials and private sector managers are now moving in to new housing estates and foreign companies are building and occupying large office buildings. Bicycles have given way to motorcycles and these in turn are being replaced by motor cars. The resistance to economic change from the revolutionary generation has weakened and change is happening with ever increasing momentum which would be difficult for any government to stop. The government has embraced economic reform and the country now has one of the fastest growing economies in Asia. The government shows more religious tolerance than in the past and America is now its biggest trading partner.”

2. RMIT International University, Vietnam Research Agenda

The RMIT International University, Vietnam,(RIUV) is now well established and is expanding rapidly in line with other businesses in Vietnam. The RIUV has developed a research agenda which provides the basis for the transition from Melbourne to South Saigon of the management and administration of higher degree by research as it relates to Vietnam.

The RIUV Research Agenda aim is to assist the RMIT University to make a significant economic contribution to Vietnam in line with the challenges identified by the Government of Vietnam and the World Bank. According to Emeritus Professor David Wilmoth¹⁰, some of the ways this may happen are to:

- provide training, education and research geared to community needs, the government and private industry, with a particular emphasis on technology
- produce graduates, improve skills and competencies, develop trainees and support human resources development
- operate as a good model in technological education, using new teaching and learning methods, know-how and management
- take part in the development of the greater Mekong region, especially the southern delta region of Vietnam
- strengthen the links between Vietnam and other Australian communities and organisations
- provide employment for Vietnamese people and promote cooperation among international and Vietnamese staff and students
- develop campuses that are examples of international best practice environmentally and socially.

If research is to be developed by RMIT through its campuses in Vietnam then a research hub must be established as a point of reference for all such activities.

3. Research Hub – RIUV

A key stage in the development of a research presence in Vietnam is to establish a research hub which will become a focal point for all research activities associated with

RMIT Vietnam. The expectation is that the research hub will be established under the following guidelines:

Rationale

- To be a Hub for RMIT's collaboration with its Vietnam partner institutions
- To focus on key research and development issues of importance and relevance to Vietnam,
- To undertake a range of initiatives aimed at enhancing the capabilities of staff and students from Vietnam partner institutions,
- To provide a rich experience for visiting scholars from the RMIT University as well as from Vietnam partner institutions.

Management:

- Operate within the rules and regulations of the RMIT International University Vietnam,
- Be managed by a research active academic in collaboration with the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) of RMIT university (or nominee),
- Receive advice, as appropriate, from key leaders of the partner institutions in Vietnam, particularly around matters of research priority and focus.

Research & Development Related Activities:

- Collaborative research projects involving researchers from Vietnam partner institutions and RMIT researchers,
- Hosting of Australian Masters and PhD candidates working under the RMIT/Vietnam "twinning" model.
- Regular seminars and workshops will be held to establish the Centre as a research hub.
- Short course technical training programs, as required and appropriate, to enhance the capabilities of the people of Vietnam.
- The Researcher-in-Residence from Australia to be located at the Centre during their stay at the RMIT International University.
- Other Australian researchers visiting Vietnam will be invited to the Centre to present seminars.
- A Research Methods course will be run for Vietnamese students through the Centre.
- Post-doctoral Fellows and Research Assistants associated with successful research grants to operate out of this office.

Concluding comments

RMIT University (Australia and Vietnam) is working with partner institutions in Vietnam to deliver research outcomes of relevance. A core of these collaborations is researcher and research student exchanges designed to build networks between Vietnam and Australia institutions.

To date an innovative research student program has been established with a first cohort of masters students (researching in Vietnam and Australia) and series of research workshops (2002, 2004 and 2006) leading to project partnerships, involving a number of Institutions in Vietnam, in the areas of Environment/Water, Information Technology, Biotechnology, Food Safety and Technology, Education and the Geospatial Sciences.

A collaborative scholarship funding package has been formally agreed with the Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training involving tuition, living stipend and English language training with support from both RMIT Australia and Vietnam supplementing that provided by MOET. This agreement has now been formally ratified with a number of Vietnamese universities, with further agreements in train for universities in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. It is expected that these agreements will peak with support for a cohort of ca 50 Masters and PhD students.

RMIT and RMIT Vietnam are now collaborating towards the establishment of a Research Node at the RMIT South Saigon campus. This Node will provide a base for research activities aligned to RMIT's emerging Research Institutes.¹¹

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