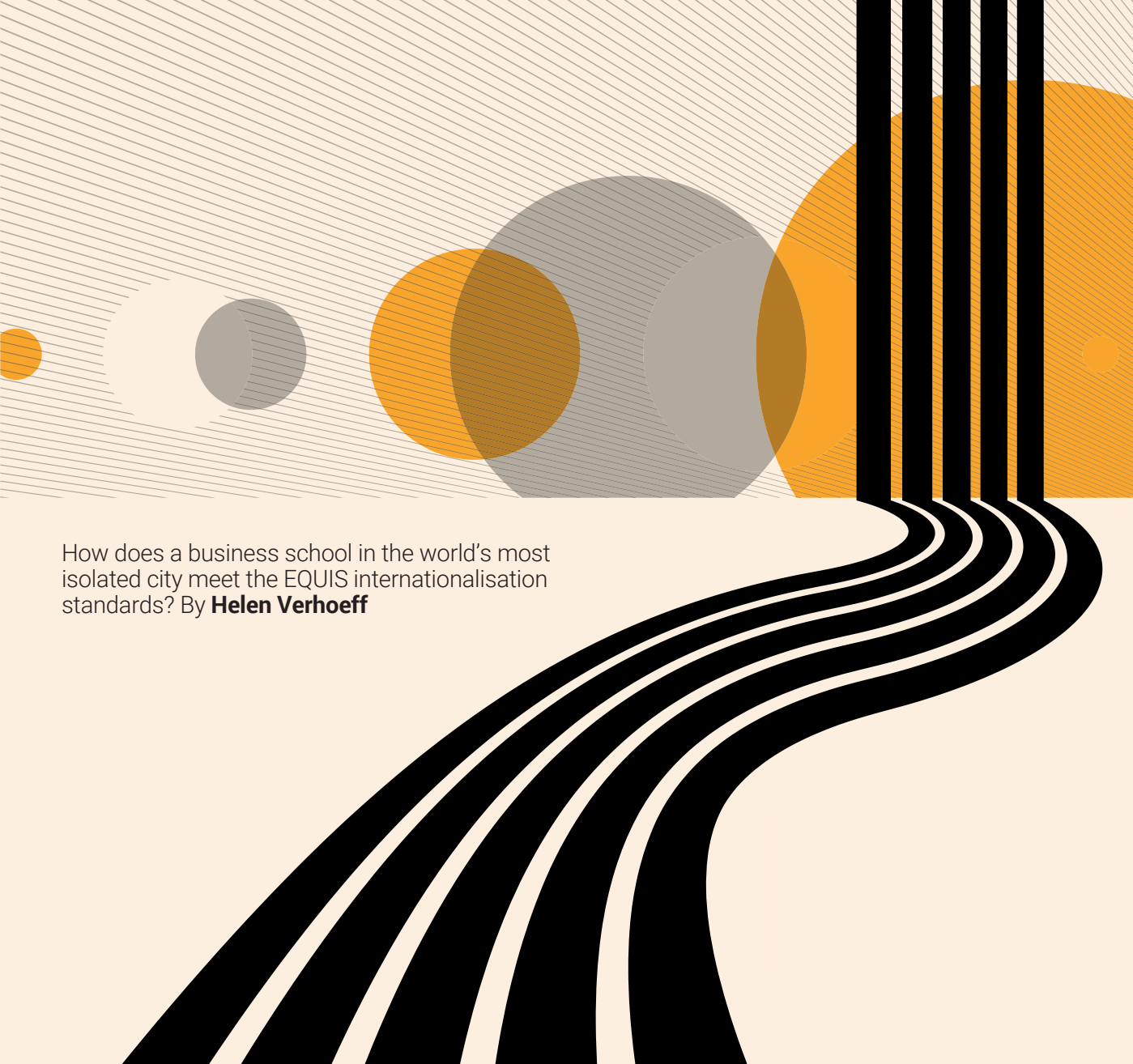


One school's journey to internationalisation



How does a business school in the world's most isolated city meet the EQUIS internationalisation standards? By **Helen Verhoeff**

2015

Curtin Business School started its
EQUIS accreditation journey in 2015

Curtin Business School, both in our mission and in practice, is a business school that is responsive to the needs of the communities we serve. We work closely with industry, government and community stakeholders to anticipate and respond to emerging business needs. In the process, we prepare students for successful careers in Australia and internationally. Our strategy is focused on achieving excellence and global impact by fostering the values of responsible entrepreneurship, a cosmopolitan outlook and the practical application of knowledge. We are striving to build a culture that encourages innovation, embeds ethical thinking in everything we do, and promotes diversity and openness to new ideas.

When Curtin Business School started its EQUIS accreditation journey in 2015, we viewed ourselves as an authentically international business school. Closer to Jakarta than Sydney, we had a multicultural faculty, a long history of attracting international students to our Western Australian campus, and a large number of students studying with us at Curtin Global Campuses. We were an Australian pioneer in transnational education, entering into our first international twinning program in Singapore in 1985 and by 1992 we were teaching courses in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore.

EQUIS Internationalisation Standards

Imagine our surprise when a gap analysis against the EQUIS standards identified this was one of our weakest areas of achievement! We lacked the multi-dimensional approach to internationalisation required for EQUIS accreditation, with:

- Low levels of student mobility
- Most of our overseas born faculty were dual nationals or Australian citizens
- Few visiting academics and those we did host were generally not engaging with students
- A negligible number of strategic international corporate partnerships.

We set about implementing some short-term strategic initiatives to address the gaps. This included applying for grants to support student mobility and ensuring that visiting academics engaged with students. We also refreshed our global study tours to include offerings that had strong appeal to students, such as a tourism and hospitality tour to UNESCO World Heritage sites and an innovation tour to Silicon Valley. We also used our recently acquired AACSB accreditation to enter into agreements enabling our students to participate in high profile mobility programs, such as the Stanford International Honors Program and the Silicon Valley Innovation Academy.

Becoming strategic in our approach

But we needed something more holistic to move us forward. So, in 2019 I facilitated a brainstorming session on internationalisation with the Senior Leadership Team. The session was based on the EQUIS Assessing the Degree of Internationalisation of a Business School position paper, which they read in advance. They worked in small groups on a blank sheet of paper to brainstorm indicators of achievement for each of the 12 EFMD-defined dimensions of internationalisation. Once the indicators had broad agreement they determined what 'high', 'medium' and 'low' looked like in our Australian context. Table 1 provides an example of the indicators and levels of achievement they agreed on for two of the dimensions.

Using these indicators, I was able to assess what our level of achievement had been when we started our EQUIS journey in 2015, where the initiatives we had already put in place had positioned us at the time of our EQUIS accreditation Peer Review in 2020, and more importantly where the Senior Leadership Team wanted the School to be in 2025. This informed both short- and long-term strategic initiatives to achieve their 2025 ambitions.

Did it help?

Without a doubt, this approach helped our school to be more strategic and holistic in our approach. By spending the time brainstorming, the Senior Leadership Team considered many aspects of internationalisation and were able to think deeply about what was strategically important to us.

For example, a KPI for student mobility led to us ensuring that study plans for all undergraduate students have space for a for-credit global mobility experience. We proactively apply for Australian government grants to help support student travel costs, which are significant when you live in the world's most isolated city! COVID-19 travel bans interrupted our progress, but the strategies we implemented have kept us on track to achieve our mobility goals.

Recognition/Reputation – what is the competitiveness and recognition of the school and its programmes in international markets?	
Scale	Indicators of achievement
3. High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ two globally recognised accreditations, e.g. EQUIS, EPAS, AACSB, AMBA • Rankings – business school and / or subjects in top 100 / first tier • Research recognised as above world standard • Faculty recognised by international academies • MOOCs / Executive Education with demonstrated global appeal • ≥ 25% of students international • International prizes – school, faculty or students.
2. Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ one globally recognised accreditation • Rankings – business school and / or subjects in top 100 - 300 / second tier • Research recognised as at world standard • ≥ 15% of students international.
1. Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No global accreditations • Rankings outside of the top 300 / third tier • Research largely below world standard.
Students/Exchanges/Alumni – what is the intercultural mix of degree-seeking and exchange students, and of alumni?	
Scale	Indicators of achievement
3. High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 25% of students international • ≥ 20% of learners have an international mobility experience • ≥ 25% of alumni living abroad • Active international alumni chapters in key sending markets • Wide diversity in country of origin of inbound exchange students • Facilitation of student participation in international competitions / forums.
2. Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ≥ 15% of students international • ≥ 10% of learners have an international mobility experience • Support international alumni chapters • Able to attract inbound exchange students.
1. Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few international students • Mobility negligible and not actively promoted by School • Little connection with international alumni.

Table 1. Assessing Internationalisation: Defining Indicators of Achievement in the Australian Context





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The Leadership Team worked in small groups on a blank sheet of paper to brainstorm indicators of achievement for each of the 12 EFMD-defined dimensions of internationalisation

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Going forward, data-informed indicators of success mean that we know where we are in terms of our own expectations and can set challenging, but realistic key performance indicators for future achievement. The process was also very helpful in terms of drafting the internationalisation chapter of our Self-Assessment Report as we had thought deeply about the standards, our level of achievement and our future goals.

Our initial Peer Review Team were satisfied that we met or exceeded almost all of the Internationalisation standards. Those that we didn't are (strategic) works in progress, we have a road map to achieve them, and we know what success will look like when we arrive.



About the Author

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