



Australian Government

AusAID

*Thank you to all concerned. This has been an excellent process and is already yielding good results. GR.*

## Minute

File No. Pending Date 19 November 2009

Subject QAE Report for the University of the South Pacific Partnership 2010-2012

For Judith Robinson *21/11/09*

Through James Sweeting *[Signature] 19/11/09*

cc Rosalyn Morgan

### Purpose

This minute seeks your approval of the final QAE report for the University of the South Pacific Partnership (USP) 2010-2012, and authorisation to finalise the design and proceed to implementation.

### Background

2. On 28 October 2009 you gave your approval for the Design Summary and Implementation Document and the QAE for support to USP 2010-2012 to proceed to peer review and agreed to chair the Appraisal Peer Review (APR) during the week of 16 November. The APR, which you were unable to attend due to illness, was held via teleconference on 17 November 2009 with participants from Suva Post and relevant areas in Canberra including: Pac Education, Operations and Policy Support and the Gender Unit.

3. In your absence, the meeting was chaired by James Sweeting, and participants provided input on the assessment of the Design Summary and the QAE based on the established quality criteria. Participants raised issues, and actions to improve in key areas were discussed. The APR also discussed the quality ratings in the QAE report. The outcomes of the meeting were agreement by the participants on the final quality rating assessment and actions to improve. ✓

4. Following the APR an outcomes document was prepared and distributed to the participants for their endorsement, to ensure all relevant issues, actions to improve and agreed ratings were captured and recorded accurately. ✓

*They have endorsed it. [Signature]*

### Recommendation

5. It is recommended that you:

a) note the outcomes document from the APR for the University of the South Pacific Partnership 2010-2012, and

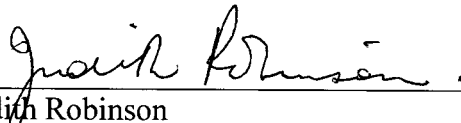
**NOTED / NOT NOTED**

b) approve the final QAE report for the University of the South Pacific Partnership 2010-2012, and authorise finalising the design and proceeding to implementation.

APPROVED / ~~NOT APPROVED~~



Lori Banks Dutta  
Program Manager Regional Education



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Judith Robinson  
Minister-Counsellor Suva

## Report on Quality at Entry and Next Steps to Complete Design for Support to the University of the South Pacific 2010-2012

<b>A: AidWorks details</b> <i>completed by Activity Manager</i>			
<b>Initiative Name:</b>	The University of the South Pacific Partnership 2010-2012		
<b>AidWorks ID:</b>	INB896	<b>Total Amount:</b>	\$18,350,000
<b>Start Date:</b>	1 January 2010	<b>End Date:</b>	31 December 2012

<b>B: Appraisal Peer Review meeting details</b> <i>completed by Activity Manager</i>	
<b>Initial ratings prepared by:</b>	Lori Banks Dutta
<b>Meeting date:</b>	17 November 2009
<b>Chair:</b>	James Sweeting (for Judith Robinson)
<b>Peer reviewers providing formal comment &amp; ratings:</b>	– N/A
<b>Independent Appraiser:</b>	– N/A
<b>Other peer review participants:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Jerry Strudwick, Pac Education Advisor</li> <li>– Christine Pahlman, Director Regional Coordination</li> <li>– Nerida Dalton, A/g Director Pacific Governance and Public Administration</li> <li>– Barbara O'Dwyer, Gender Advisor</li> <li>– Ines Tallos, Pac Education</li> <li>– Marlon Butler, Pac Education</li> <li>– Nic Notarpietro, Senior Operations Specialist</li> <li>– James Sweeting, Counsellor Suva</li> <li>– Rosalyn Morgan, Senior Program Manager Regional Education and Public Sector Governance</li> <li>– Lori Banks Dutta, Program Manager Regional Education</li> </ul>

## C: Quality Rating Assessment against indicators

completed by Activity Manager / Peer Reviewers / Independent Appraiser

Quality	Rating (1-6) *	Comments to support rating	Required Action (if needed)
1. Clear objectives	5	<p>Australia's objectives in supporting USP - quality graduates to meet the needs of the Pacific public service, and services to members to assist them address development challenges - are clear. They are also consistent with key Australian government policies: public service capacity building, scaling up of education assistance and accelerating progress on MDGs.</p> <p>Providing a mix of core, targeted and incentive funding support, and focussing these on implementation of the USP Strategic Plan 2010-2012, which has clear objectives, will contribute to achieving AusAID's objectives in supporting USP.</p> <p>Development of the Strategic Plan included extensive consultation, during which its objectives, strategies, key targets and key performance indicators (KPIs) were reviewed to ensure appropriate links between them, which will lead to the achievement of expected outcomes.</p> <p>The consultation process also ensured endorsement of the objectives of the plan by all relevant stakeholders, including staff, students, member governments, donors, etc.</p>	
2. Monitoring and Evaluation	5	<p>In addition to monitoring USP's operations through Australia's participation in regular University governance mechanisms, there will be a focus on the progress of implementing the Strategic Plan – strategies employed and achievement of key targets in priority areas, and progress against targets that would leverage additional incentive based funding. Baselines will be established for KPIs relevant to AusAID's areas of support.</p> <p>USP will also report on progress against the Plan via their internal governance mechanisms, including Finance and Investment Committee and Council reporting. All relevant plans (e.g. teaching and learning, research) have been integrated with the Strategic Plan, and all heads of school have specific KPIs linked to the Strategic Plan. Quarterly meetings and annual partnership review consultations will provide opportunity for additional monitoring of achievement of targets and will provide an evidence base for required quality reporting (QAIs, APPRs).</p> <p>Because implementation of the Strategic Plan will be core business for USP, provision of data necessary for monitoring will not require additional resources. Monitoring visits by AusAID will be undertaken by appropriate officers at Suva Post.</p> <p>M&amp;E could be constrained by USP's ability to engage staff (e.g. Senior Analyst, Planning Office) with the required skills to provide relevant, robust <i>analysis</i> of available data. This has been discussed with USP management, and they have re-advertised for the relevant position and are hopeful that a wider search will identify a suitable candidate.</p>	<p>Who will do this? R.</p> <p>✓</p>

C: Quality Rating Assessment against indicators

completed by Activity Manager / Peer Reviewers / Independent Appraiser

<p>3. Sustainability</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>There is a great deal of ownership and commitment to the Strategic Plan by the University community, including staff, students and member governments. The consultative process to develop the plan has ensured this.</p> <p>The Plan has been mainstreamed at the University and is integrated with the regular budgeting and planning cycle. Activities from the Plan that will be ongoing after 2012 will be resourced from USP's recurrent budget.</p> <p>University management has committed to fully fund the plan through the use of internal resources, thus ensuring the outcomes of the Plan will be sustainable in the absence of funding from external sources.</p> <p>USP management recognises the difficult global financial climate and its impact on the Pacific. Noting that economic uncertainty may continue for some time, USP has begun to explore alternative sources of revenue (commercial activities, non-traditional donors) rather than assume it will be able to rely on member contributions in the long term. The proposed support to USP represents a 38 per cent increase from the previous three year period (2007-2009). The impact of external shocks on member countries' ability to contribute may further increase the demand for funding from AusAID and other donors.</p> <p>An area to watch in terms of its potential impact on sustainability will be the emergence of national tertiary institutions, most recently, Fiji's decision to merge a number of national education institutions into a new Fiji National University. If they begin to divert resources from USP, it could have consequences for realising outcomes of the Strategic Plan and on USP's overall operations. USP management is keeping a close watch on developments in this area and maintains dialogue with governments on their plans in this regard.</p> <p>At this stage, we assess that there is no national university that has the capacity or funds to provide the range of education and service delivery opportunities that USP has and therefore compete with it. Government of Fiji has also reaffirmed its support to USP and wishes to minimise duplication.</p>	<p><i>Agreed - and we should work to ensure continuing ownership by members through reasonable payment of membership fees.</i></p> <p><i>Acknowledge. But I would also note that USP has shown that it has the capacity to scale back + reprioritise in response to constrained finances.</i></p> <p><i>[Signature]</i></p>
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*Continuing focus by USP on quality should assist here as well. R.*

**C: Quality Rating Assessment against indicators***completed by Activity Manager / Peer Reviewers / Independent Appraiser*

4. Implementation & Risk Management	5	<p>The implementation of the Strategic Plan is being institutionalised by the University through integration into its regular planning cycle.</p> <p>USP will utilise a detailed log-frame as the guiding document for implementation, supported by various plans (Learning &amp; Teaching Policy and Plan, Marketing and Communications Strategy and Plan, Regional Campuses Infrastructure Development Plan, etc) designed to operationalise the Plan.</p> <p>The VC and his Senior Management Team have demonstrated their ability to lead on implementation of the Strategic Plan with their leadership in the turnaround of the University finances.</p> <p>Suva Post will work with USP to determine targets for AusAID priority areas and KPIs linked to incentive funding, similar to the approach adopted in the Pacific Partnerships for Development.</p> <p>Risk management has not been included in the design of the Strategic Plan, though some activities of the plan address risk management for the University. USP is currently developing an institutional risk management strategy, but it is not clear how this will relate to the activities of the Strategic Plan.</p> <p>High level risks to AusAID's support to USP have been identified and mitigation strategies developed (See Design and Implementation Summary). One risk to highlight is the political situation in Fiji. Due to the unpredictability of the current climate, there is a possibility of impact on USP and its ability to provide continuity of services at the Fiji campuses (Laucala, Lautoka, and Labasa) in the wake of potentially destabilising political events. Historically, however, USP has been able to move quickly (offering more courses via distance, repatriating students, providing updates to member governments on the situation in-country) to mitigate effects of political unrest in Fiji.</p>
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**C: Quality Rating Assessment against indicators***completed by Activity Manager / Peer Reviewers / Independent Appraiser*

5. Analysis and lessons	6	<p>The 2008 review of Australia's assistance to USP began the effort to gather information highlighting lessons from our previous engagement with USP (e.g. importance of core funding, need for focus on outcomes, coordination of AusAID support via MOU and through thematic areas) and to inform the next phase of support. The transitional year, 2009, was an opportunity to implement some of the Review recommendations, as well as see the results of some of USP's own institutional reforms. This highlighted additional lessons learned about what is effective and what is not, in terms of Australia's support to USP.</p> <p>Additionally, AusAID involvement in the development of the USP Strategic Plan and regular engagement with University management and governance bodies has provided insight on what is needed to strengthen the University to enable it to deliver quality graduates and services to the region, all of which have informed the approach to support.</p> <p>The current thinking on principles of effective aid has also influenced the approach and the effort to integrate Australia's support with USP's existing financial, management and governance processes.</p> <p>Cross-cutting issues have also been considered. The Strategic Plan contains strategies for enhancing gender equity, improving facilities and services for students with special needs (this will be an area of particular emphasis for Australian support) and enhancing student counselling in HIV and AIDS and reproductive health. Core courses (required for graduation by all students) on Governance, Ethics and Sustainability; and Pacific Studies and Environment will be introduced in 2010. USP also lists environmental sustainability as a core value.</p>	
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**\* Definitions of the Rating Scale:**

<b>Satisfactory (4, 5 and 6)</b>		<b>Less than satisfactory (1, 2 and 3)</b>	
6	Very high quality; needs ongoing management & monitoring only	3	Less than adequate quality; needs to be improved in core areas
5	Good quality; needs minor work to improve in some areas	2	Poor quality; needs major work to improve
4	Adequate quality; needs some work to improve	1	Very poor quality; needs major overhaul

**D: Next Steps** *completed by Activity Manager after agreement at the Appraisal Peer Review meeting*

Provide information on all steps required to finalise the design based on <i>Required Actions</i> in "C" above, and additional actions identified in the peer review meeting	Who is responsible	Date to be done
1. Clarify information in the design summary and implementation document as noted in the peer review outcomes document	Lori Banks Dutta	24/11/09
2. Address issues associated with implementation stage as noted in the peer review outcomes document	Suva Post	Ongoing

**E: Other comments or issues** *completed by Activity Manager after agreement at the APR meeting*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operations and Policy Support (OPS) commented that this is an innovative approach to engagement with USP and it will be used by them as an example of good practice.</li> </ul>
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✓  
 M.V.G.  
 [Signature]

**F: Approval** *completed by ADG or Minister-Counsellor who chaired the peer review meeting*

On the basis of the final agreed Quality Rating assessment (C) and Next Steps (D) above:

- QAE REPORT IS APPROVED**, and authorization given to proceed to:
- FINALISE** the design incorporating actions above, and proceed to implementation
- or:  **REDESIGN** and resubmit for appraisal peer review

**NOT APPROVED** for the following reason(s):

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Judith Robinson, Minister-  
Counsellor Suva

signed:

*Judith Robinson*

date: 21/11/09.

**When complete:**

- Copy and paste the approved ratings, explanation and actions (table C) into AidWorks
- The original signed report must be placed on a registered file