

Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards/Senates of Universities in NSW and the ACT

Comparability of Australian and US bachelor degrees

In all the discussions about the globalisation of higher education, most obviously with respect to the Bologna Declaration, there is a concern for mutual recognition of qualifications across borders. The focus has been the 3+2+3 system proposed under Bologna with which many Australian universities are already largely compatible.

The US higher education system is based on a four-year first degree and there are some signs that China may align with the US system rather than the European system. This would in itself have vast implications for Australian institutions, given that a high proportion of our international students come from China. There are already problems in that US universities and employers have difficulty in recognising Australian three-year Bachelor degrees.

AEI / DEST have been working to convince US authorities of the quality, and equivalence to their qualifications, of Australian Bachelor degrees. They are hosting a symposium in Washington in November in conjunction with the British Council, DAAD and the American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers to discuss the quality of Australian qualifications.

DEST is developing a paper on the positive and negative experiences that universities have encountered with US recognition of Australian three-year Bachelor degrees. They have also invited Peter Booth, DVC at UTS, to present a paper on the Australian higher education framework, especially in relation to three-year Bachelor degrees and Honours degrees. The CoC is invited to make some input to this paper by discussing the experience of their institutions in the recognition of their degrees by US universities and employers.