Most business schools will say they are international. Are they really? **Andrew Crisp** and **Joanne Hession** provide a checklist for both schools and potential students

Developing an international brand

The recent CarringtonCrisp major study *See the Future* reported that 68% of respondent students are interested in studying abroad while 89% of all managers and directors agree that "good business education must develop understanding of business in different parts of the world".

Clearly internationalisation should be part of any business school offer but the question raised is this: If every school wants to be international, how can a school develop a stronger international brand than its competitors?

Statements on business school websites telling potential students and stakeholders about how international, global, multicultural or multinational they are actually say very little. The task is to define what "international" actually means to, and at, your school.

Traditionally, "internationalisation" primarily meant either attracting international students or building strong international academic networks. Associate Deans were appointed to develop internationalisation strategies around these twin issues. However, this narrow view of internationalisation has become outmoded and no longer serves the best interests of a school, its faculty or, most importantly, its students.

Could international accreditation help to differentiate a school?

Accreditation can certainly have a significant impact on the development of a school's international branding and reputation.

The major international business school accrediting bodies, led by the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), AACSB International and the Association of MBAs (AMBA) have recognised an increasingly critical point: internationalisation is not about what a school can get, it is about what a school can be.

What this means is that institutions need to start seeing internationalisation as a culture that can become part of and drive every aspect of a school's activities.

Internationalisation and accreditation

In developing its EQUIS and EPAS accreditations, EFMD sought to ensure that schools appreciated the importance of developing an international culture within all layers of activity.

EFMD made this clear by including internationalisation as a thread running through each standard. Thus, when describing their institutional context, schools should discuss their international strategy and international competitive position.

Schools also need to address research in terms of international collaborations and international research impact. And when discussing programme portfolios a school should outline how the curriculum is preparing students for careers that will inevitably have an international aspect.

AACSB and AMBA are also increasingly concerned with ensuring that the student experience is preparing them for an international business marketplace. Accreditation applications for both AACSB and AMBA now require that a school addresses this crucial issue.

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The nine elements of internationalisation

Clearly, it is imperative for business schools to look more broadly at the issue of internationalisation. What can help them is to examine their current activities in relation to what we call "The nine elements of internationalisation".

Students

A truly international culture requires an international student body. How is your school developing this, in terms of full international degree students, incoming exchange students and outgoing exchanges? Equally importantly, how well do you support those students at your school?

Faculty

Students need to be presented with a perspective on business that reflects more than just a narrow national or regional bias. How international is your faculty? What proportion of your faculty is international by nationality? How many have spent significant periods studying or working abroad? How many received PhDs outside their home country? How many have been involved in overseas faculty exchanges or as visiting lecturers? What explicit policies are in place at the school level to build the "international" profile of the faculty?

Research

How much of your school's research is aimed at an international audience? What proportion of output is published in international journals or delivered at international conferences? How many faculty are involved in international research collaborations? How many are on international editorial boards?

International partners

Many schools have a large portfolio of international partners developed over a long period. Schools need to bear in mind the old truism that "we are often judged by the company we keep". In addition to academic partners, look at your corporate partners. A school that describes itself as international should be developing a portfolio of international corporate partners not merely regional ones. How strong is the range of partners that you have developed; how deep are the partnerships; what are the kinds of activities that you co-operate on?

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Curriculum

Some of the most important opportunities to demonstrate internationalisation are in the classroom.

Increasingly students want case studies from Asia, Africa, Latin and South America, and from emerging economies around the world. Students expect the careers they pursue on graduation to have an international component and are looking for an understanding of business that will enable them to work in such environments.

Is your school systematically ensuring that students are provided with an education that will allow them to survive and prosper in a globalised world? Do all curricula need to incorporate global and intercultural issues? Do programmes utilise international cases as standard? Are international textbooks used? Do you involve international guest speakers or international teams? .

Languages

Proficiency in English is considered particularly important in business but as international trade becomes more diverse, other languages are increasing in importance. What is the language of teaching? How many students are offered (and take up) additional language courses? What is the range of languages available? How high have you set the bar for language abilities within your admissions requirements?

> *Are you clear on who your international competitors are or do you see yourself only competing nationally? Do you monitor and explicitly try to develop your international reputation?*

Governance

Developing an international culture requires a clear commitment to internationalisation at a senior management level. This must be clearly part of the overall governance structure. How can you show that governance at your school involves an international element? Do you have an international advisory board? Is your senior management represented on international boards?

Strategy

One issue looked at closely for any school that puts itself forward as "international" is its explicit internationalisation strategy. Is there a written strategy around internationalisation? Are you clear on who your international competitors are or do you see yourself only competing nationally? Do you monitor and explicitly try to develop your international reputation?

Graduates

Possibly the single most effective way to demonstrate that your school is truly international is to point to a body of alumni employed internationally, either working outside the country of your school or employed locally but in clearly international companies. Does your school monitor where your graduates are employed and the international nature of their employment?

Communicating the brand

A starting point in communicating the international nature of a school's offer is having reliable data:

- how many nationalities are there among students or faculty?
- which international employers recruit graduates?
- where do students get jobs?; and such like.

However, data can be manipulated, so it is important to go further. Case studies from students, faculty and employers that show what internationalism really means are a powerful tool.

One of the most common phrases in marketing today is the question: "How authentic is your marketing?" Students in particular are more likely to respond to authentic messages from students and alumni than to corporate "marketing-speak"

One particular area where international students can help with communication is contact with prospective students. Having native speakers from applicant countries available to answer questions or providing at the very least a welcome message on a school's website will make internationalisation real for a prospective student and enhance a school's reputation as one that has a true culture of internationalisation.

A commitment to internationalisation is a key potential differentiator for many schools. International accreditation may be one means for a school to position itself as international but it is not enough on its own to deliver a strong international brand.

The nine elements of internationalisation can help a school to position itself as having a defined international culture. Understanding which international aspects of the school offer or which combination of elements are appropriate is the key to making internationalisation an active and positive part of a school's brand.

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