

IARC President's Report

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by **John Mason, President International Approval and Registration Centre (IARC)**, Board Member Australian Garden Council, Principal ACS Distance Education, Publisher and Author.

Industry Update

The past year has continued to be volatile across the education industry. The path forward beyond the Covid-19 remains unpredictable, not just for the education industry, but most industries and society at large.

The Future

Last year I said that on-campus education has been disrupted in most countries, and in doing so has provided an impetus for growth in online education. Talk about “getting back to normal” was commonplace, but today it is more common to hear talk of a “new normal”. Our industry is likely to emerge from covid to be permanently something very different to what it was pre covid.

After 5 decades of listening to futurists predict what is coming; I realise that most of the time they are wrong when it comes to detail. The world is too complicated and filled with too many unpredictable factors for us to ever be certain of what things will be like decades into the future. If covid has not taught you that, you have a problem. What we can do though is keep our eyes open, stay aware of what is changing and always have contingencies in place to deal with any change that confronts us. What then is the current state of play in education? For what it is worth, these are my observations.

- Many mainstream education institutions have significant problems including: reduced funding, decline in enrolments, decline or restrictions in on campus activity. One third of full-time staff working at Australian universities have left their jobs. Similar dramatic stories can be told far and wide.
- Colleges have turned attention and redirected resources into online courses and shorter micro-credential courses. Desperation seems to be stimulating dramatic approaches (eg. Central Queensland University recently offered free courses to any graduate who cannot find employment, reports of universities and college considering mergers, an increase in turnover of vice chancellors).
- Big business outside of the education industry is seeing opportunity to enter the sector and capture a market share of a captive market. I am aware of the likes of Microsoft, Google and Amazon making new investments in education over the past year.
- Many of the changes being made are not as well considered or planned as what may have been the case pre-covid.

IARC Activity

IARC has continued to be active with social media and spreading our message. Several of the board members have organised some very successful webinars over the past year. I would like to extend special thanks to Dato' Dr Lawrence Walter Ng of Lawrence Walter Seminars who co-presented our three Facebook live presentations earlier this year. Ze Ann Walter Ng was a tremendous driving force behind the success of these presentations too, and we thank her for her time and effort. We intend to keep bringing IARC news and discussions to you across different platforms.

Considerable effort has been devoted by Jade to dealing with routine correspondence; including students and potential students enquiring about members; and potential membership colleges enquiring about joining, from many countries. She continues to support all current members.

Our Current Status

Over the 2020-21 period, IARC has been even more active than over the previous year, at a time when many similar organisations have been forced to largely curtail their normal operations.

I have become aware of membership numbers dropping, and revenue decreasing very significantly in many other industry bodies. Our total number of members has grown by 5%.

Over the past year, the IARC office has continued operating on minimal human and financial resources. We have been able to identify changes in some IT resources which has enabled to make small but critical spending cuts without affecting our business or services.

Summary of Membership

We have a total of 75 members – this includes all categories of membership. Full fee-paying members, honorary members, and subsidiary memberships. This is 4% increase on membership since October 2020.

- There are three prospective member applications being worked on at present.
- There are a further three new members anticipated to be approved through the ACS Affiliations Network agreement.
- We have **approved six new members**.
- We have **reinstated one member** whose membership had lapsed in 2017.
- We **lost four members** (known reasons: one impact of Covid-19 on business, one closure of an overseas entity/branch, one failure to launch new business, one unknown - no contact received).
- We **rejected zero** applications.
- We terminated the **zero** memberships.
- There is **one nonfinancial member, with membership inactive and on hold**, due to business restructuring and takeover.
- There are **two** members non-financial for the current year.
- There is **one** member considered non-financial with annual fees unpaid for the 2019-2020 & 2020-2021 year.
- We wrote off a total of \$430 from debtors.

We have placed focus on the customer journey over the last few months. With more attention on how and when we follow up with enquiries and how we support colleges and institutions through the joining process.

We have also considered member retention and increasing our online member services to current members. More is coming on this in the next few months.

In closing, we look forward to progressing solidly as the new normal emerges. I would like to thank you for your ongoing commitment to the Organisation and encourage you to consider change management as a key focus within your own schools. Your suggestions, feedback and input into our work is always welcome.

With warmest wishes,



Mr John Mason



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