

**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION
FOR OPEN LEARNING**

*Australasian research on open
and distance learning*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In the last decade, there have been significant changes in the way distance education has been conceptualised and practised. In Australia, Campion and Kelly (1988) identified three distinct phases:

- the external studies phase — approx 1911 to early 1970s
- the distance education phase — approx early 1970s to mid 1980s
- the open learning phase — mid 1980s into the future.

These phases reflect world wide trends. In its open learning phase, distance education is undergoing significant changes in teaching method, clientele and type of courses offered which have led to a reassessment of the conceptualisation of distance education and face-to-face learning as distinct modes of study serving different clienteles.

What is happening is described in various ways using a confusing mix of terminology including distance learning, open learning, flexible delivery, resource-based learning. The choice often depends on geographical area or education sector. Increasingly, the label open and distance learning is used as an umbrella term to describe both an approach to teaching and learning as well as methods. While distance education designates various forms of mediated teaching and learning characterised by the dispersion in time and/or space of learners and their teachers, open learning indicates a philosophy underlining open entry and access to learning opportunities.

Reviewing recent, current and planned research on open and distance learning reflects this confusion. There is a burgeoning interest in all aspects of 'student-centred learning' on campus, due to pressure of large class sizes and dwindling staff numbers and, in Australia and New Zealand, a dwindling interest in 'distance learning' per se. It may well be that a pattern of areas of interest will emerge based simply on a matrix of student-centred/system-centred on-campus/off-campus.

In this report, data collected over a six week period has been analysed and synthesised to inform a report on current, recent and planned research on open and distance learning within Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. The format of this report is influenced by the Terms of Reference of the project brief. In this first section, an interpretation of the key terms used in the Terms of Reference is presented, and regional and sectoral parameters are defined. The review is set in context and the methodology used to compile the report, is described.

In the second section, an analysis of the information collected is presented. The data were analysed in the context of the IRFOL classification. The Proceedings from the two most recent major conferences on open and distance learning held in the region are discussed to ascertain trends in research activities. The impact of the National Teaching Development Grant projects on open and distance learning in Australian higher education is considered. It was not possible to obtain sufficient details of the scale of projects and their actual and planned outputs with which to conduct any meaningful analysis. A database has been established as part of the project processes, but until significant gaps are filled, it is not appropriate to interrogate it in detail. However, the projects have been clustered under the headings of the IRFOL research program and a crude estimate of which are the key institutions and who are the key researchers is provided.

In the third section, the main institutions working in research in open and distance learning are identified. The information is presented by country groupings.

In the fourth section, the activities of professional bodies and associations in relation to research in open and distance learning are identified. Again, the information is presented by country groupings.

A detailed bibliography forms the fifth and final section of the report.

There were four major limitations to the successful completion of this project, all related to the limited amount of time available.

- In New Zealand, the requirements of the Privacy Act meant that contact details were not allowed to be forwarded without the permission of the individual.
- In the Pacific Rim, email facilities were not available and facsimile communication was difficult.
- Some key people did not respond to the call for information about current and planned research activities on open and distance learning and there was no time for systematic follow through.
- The project took place in the run-up to the first budget of a new Commonwealth Government in Australia that will produce drastic cutbacks and closures of some of the activities and programs being surveyed.

1.2 Interpretation

Research

Mouly (1978) described research as a process of arriving at reliable solutions to problems through planned, systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data. He saw research as a necessary tool to advance knowledge and to promote progress. The goal of research is to be able to better understand and predict the events of the world through controlled enquiry.

Research in open and distance learning is a fairly new field. The earliest monographs date from the 1960s and the first bibliographies of distance education works also appeared in that decade. Analysis of the literature revealed that up to the mid 1980s there were three distinct approaches to distance education research:

- descriptive (little attention to concepts)
- application of the theories and methods of related disciplines, and
- as a separate discipline.

Analysis of trends in the 1990s suggested that the issue of distance education as a separate discipline is becoming defunct as the move towards an open and distance learning environment gains credibility (Calvert, 1988).

However, determination of what actually constitutes 'research' in the context of distance and open learning in the region proved to be the most complex aspect of this project. It was a challenge to define 'research' in a way which allows the best aspects of the very diverse activities being undertaken in the region in the context of open and distance learning to be captured and yet filters out purely descriptive reports of tasks completed which are reported in conference proceedings.

Within the region, the Research in Distance Education (RIDE) Conference series, based on Deakin University, was a useful base from which to begin. Berrell et al (1993) commented.

Since the 1980s, research conducted in the international arena has attracted criticism concerning its content, focus and volume. Some of these concerns include the unsystematic and haphazard nature of research, its esoteric nature and its lack of broad applicability . . . In Australia, there is a lack of research and development structure. There is also a paucity of research in areas relating to the development and application of social and public policy in the field of distance education.

Their paper 'Decision making and research priorities: the Analytical Hierarchy Process' describes a computer based 'Expert Choice' approach to overcoming this. However, "the attempted application of the AHP in a group

situation [at the conference] encountered several unforeseen problems, with the result that the process was not completed”.

This report will corroborate their comment that “presently, the research profile in DE in Australia is determined by only a few institutions”. Further, an interpretation here is made difficult by the fact that “some participants had firm views about what constitutes legitimate research . . . the feeling that the AHP is a quantitative method would be a stumbling block in a field which appears to be dominated by qualitative research”.

This debate occurred at a conference hosted by a university. That it is continuing is why “far reaching educational dimensions are made without any grounding in research”, if research is a scholarly activity undertaken by universities.

It is because of this that other types of activity are being funded in the region to inform such dimensions.

One such is the National Teaching Development Project funded by CAUT. In the report on the 1996 round (CAUT, 1995) it was noted:

Universities are unlike bureaucratic organisations where change may be instituted with authority from the top. Ultimately it is the power of ideas together with appropriate recognition and rewards, persuasive demonstrations and an understanding of the system *so that levers can be inserted at points likely to yield greatest advantage* that will advance the quality of teaching”.

The responses of colleagues to e-mailed requests for information for this report were illuminating. One was rather negative.

This university is too busy trying to make money to support any viable research on the part of its workers. One or two may report on the theme of this is how we do it here but it ain't research. And, in these increasingly mean times, our Performance Indicators won't be referring to research as such. Any research carried out by its people will be largely through enrolment in PhD's etc. through a university faculty.

The university concerned hosts one of the leading Australia Distance Education Centres. The reference to Performance Indicators and PhD's suggests that the respondent has a view of research which is grounded in scholarly activities. Another respondent was more pragmatic.

The longer I spend in this business, the less clear I am on what constitutes 'research'. There are two important influences making a constructive blurring of 'research' and 'development'.

1. The strong part played over the past 5 years (but alas no longer) by Government Discretionary Funding Agencies in stimulating R & D type projects, some of which get 'published' and some of which just get 'built in' to operational structures;
2. the fact that many DE practitioners undertake inhouse' institutional research' - inhouse attrition rates might be a classic example, making use of the literature for project design but not necessarily intending to add to it.

It now appears that every higher education institution in Australia hosts some activity which can be classified under the heading of open learning. This is due to the interlinked programs initiated by the National Board of Education, Employment and Training (NBEET) as the result of the commissioned report 'Open Learning' in 1990. More specifically and recently, one of its peak Advisory Councils, the Higher Education Council, advised the Minister:

it is important for universities to recognise that quality outcomes in the wider use of distance education on-campus are attainable (NBEET, 1994, quoted in King, B. 1996).

More practically, 33 of the 36 Higher Education institutions in Australia are now members of NCODE (National Committee on Open and Distance Education).

Discretionary Funding programs such as CAUT's National Teaching Grants have firmly established the reality of this by direct funding of a large number of projects at the grass roots level managed by academics and with little overt 'research' component, but rather 'search'.

Analysis of the project reports and proposals showed that there is a predominance of 'application' which is to be expected. It would be valuable in the future to evaluate the outcomes of these targeted programs.

In this report, a wide view is taken of 'research' and it is not limited to scholarly activity undertaken only by universities.

Distance And Open Learning

Perraton (1993) described distance education as "an educational process in which a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner". In view of the evolving variation of learning environments and patterns of communication, a definition of distance learning should reflect that the learners are usually dispersed in space and/or time. Distance education involves the use of a range of media both for the presentation of information and for

communication between participants in the process allowing for both learner/s interaction and for teacher/learner interaction.

Open learning has been described as an elusive term meaning different things to different people. It is more like a philosophy of teaching and learning, although some refer to open learning as a method; hence the confusion.

Johnson's definition (1990) is still the most quoted in Australia and New Zealand and most readily accepted by all the education and training sectors.

According to Johnson:

open learning is an approach rather than a system or technique; it is based on the needs of individual learners, not the interests of the teacher or the institution; it gives students as much control as possible over what, where, when and how they learn; it commonly uses the delivery methods of distance education and the facilities of educational technology; it changes the role of a teacher from the source of knowledge to a manager of learning and a facilitator. It justifies these measures by arguments of efficiency, cost-effectiveness and equity (Johnson, 1994).

Although there are no direct conceptual links between distance education and open learning, the two concepts are used to describe similar types of educational provision, sharing a common goal of access to learning and flexibility of learning arrangements so that the learning is not synchronised with the teaching.

The term distance and open learning is most commonly used in the higher education and school education sectors in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Rim. In the vocational education and training (VET) sector, the term flexible delivery is in common usage. Flexible delivery is defined as:

an approach to vocational education and training which allows for the adoption of a range of learning strategies in a variety of learning environments to cater for differences in learning styles, learning interests and needs, and variations in learning opportunities (Flexible Delivery Working Party, 1992).

In this report, under the label open and distance learning, the whole range of related forms of teaching and learning, formal and non-formal will be addressed recognising that whatever the term used, interpretations will differ from person to person, sector to sector and in countries which are at different stages of development.

Australasia And The Pacific

For the purpose of this report, the region is defined as:

- Australia
- New Zealand
- The Pacific Rim including the South Pacific Islands and Papua New Guinea.

Education And Training Sectors

For the purpose of this report, descriptors used in Australia as the basis for funding have been adopted to describe the education and training sectors:

- School Education (SE) — from pre-school to Year 12.
- Vocational Education and Training (VET) — post secondary, including Institutes of Technical and Further Education (TAFE), Technical Colleges and Institutes and non-formal adult education.
- Higher Education (HE) — universities, Institutes of Technology, Colleges of Advanced Education and Polytechnics.

It is recognised that, increasingly, the distinction between the sectors is becoming blurred, particularly between the Higher Education and Vocational Education and Training sectors.

1.3 Context

Learning and knowledge are becoming increasingly important in the emerging global, information-based environment that will be characteristic of the beginning years of the 21st century. Information and communications technologies are playing an active part in shaping such an environment.

The electronics revolution has transformed the means of production, the organisation of work and information flows. This is leading to the emergence of a global knowledge economy based on an information mode of production that will have a profound effect on the organisation of learning. This is challenging present institutional arrangements at systems and local levels. In all parts of the region under review there is renewed attention to the role of education and training in equipping people for productive and satisfying careers and in promoting leading-edge economic growth. Changes in the work place and the economy have caused a rethink of the linkages between education, training and work. The emphases now lie in ensuring people are better prepared for employment opportunities and in increasing flexibility and access between different types of education, training and work. These trends are contributing to education, training and work environments that are, increasingly, more centred on meeting learners' needs throughout their lives.

However, the move towards learner-centred learning is also being driven by a momentum of change within the education process itself. Within education and training circles there is increasing demand for a learner-centred culture that values continuous learning opportunities, increased flexibility and user choice. It is an approach that can adopt a range of strategies in a variety of learning environments to allow for different learning styles, interests and needs of users. The apotheosis of learner-centred learning can be seen in initiatives that embrace the philosophy of open learning.

The requirements of training and learning for the 21st century demand that learner-centred learning moves from the fringes to the centre of our education and training systems. Concurrently, the use of educational technologies must shift from the role of instructional delivery devices to tools or adjuncts to the learning process.

Until now it has been too costly for educational institutions to develop and operate more than one or two delivery technologies. With the rapid rate of technological evolution of digitisation and convergence of computer technology and telecommunications services, higher capacity communications services, with enormous potential for education and training are rapidly becoming feasible and affordable. The introduction of such services to the organisation of learning in education and training in all sectors is acting as a catalyst to deepen and extend reform processes. This is due to the fundamental challenge these services present to traditional pedagogy and because they herald the transformation of the education and training sectors into a globalised education industry.

The Broadband Services Expert Group reporting to the Australian Government in 1994, was emphatic that emerging high capacity communication networks and services must be adopted in an intelligent and sensitive way to achieve the goals of the education system. Davis and Botkin (1994) suggested that it is not simply a matter of educational institutions becoming more efficient at what they do but rather they need to use the new mega industry created by the union of computers, communications, entertainment, media and publishing to redefine their activity.

In Australia, recent developments include

- Education Network Australia (EdNA)
- a National Strategy for education broadband services, and
- the announcement of a review of higher education in the context of information and communications technologies.

This review of research on open and distance learning in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Rim has been conducted in the context of current government initiatives, educational reforms and the increasing impact of

information and communications technologies in all sectors of education and training.

1.4 Methodology

The contract for this project was signed at the end of June, 1996, allowing approximately six weeks to review the literature and correspondence and other contact with researchers in order to reach the deadline for completion of the report by 26 August, 1996.

Accordingly, the project processes were judiciously selective, as follows:

Stage 1: *Preliminary review of recent (within the last 5 years) and current research on open and distance learning in the region*

1.1 Review of all volumes of the international journal *Distance Education* since 1991 for information on recent and current research on open and distance learning within the region.

1.2 Review of conference proceedings from two recent major conferences on open and distance learning in the region:

- *Open Learning '94* Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on Open Learning, December 1994.
- *Distance Education: Crossing Frontiers* Papers for the 12th Biennial Forum of the open and distance Learning Association of Australia, September 1995.

1.3 Review of *Research in Distance Education 2* Revised Papers from the 2nd RIDE conference (1991) and *Research in Distance Education 3* Revised Papers from the 3rd RIDE conference (1993).

Stage 2: *Detailed search for information on current and planned research on open and distance learning in the region*

2.1 Internet search using key words 'research', 'open learning', 'distance education', 'flexible learning', and narrowed geographically to Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the South Pacific.

2.2 Scrutiny of existing data bases pertaining to 'research' activities on open and distance learning in the region, namely:

- Open Learning Technology Corporation (OLTC) *Current Research Database* (1996)

- Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia (ODLAA) Special Interest Group: Research

2.3 Request for information through the following electronic discussion forums:

- RESODLAA
- ASCILITE
- TRDEV
- FLEXIDEL
- NCODE L
- ODLAA-exec

2.4 Email or fax contact with ODLAA members requesting information on current and planned research on open and distance learning in the region.

2.5 Direct contact by fax or email with individual researchers identified through networking activities, Internet searches and scrutiny of journal/conference proceedings.

2.6 Direct contact by fax, phone or email with the main institutions within the region working in research on open and distance learning.

2.7 Direct contact by fax, phone or email with professional bodies and associations

Stage 3: *Compilation of a data base of current and planned research activities on open and distance learning*

Data compiled under the following headings:

- Country
- Topic
- Scale of work
- Key researchers
- Actual output
- Planned output

Stage 4: *Compilation of data base of main institutions and professional bodies and associations within the region in relation to research on open and distance learning*

Stage 5: *Analysis of data*

Data analysed to include identification of the main areas of current interest within the research community.

Stage 6: *Preparation and submission of Report*

2.0 OVERVIEW OF CURRENT AND PLANNED RESEARCH PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

2.1 Overview

Over 300 reports on recent (since 1994), current and planned research were scrutinised, including all the formats mentioned in 1.4. (Methodology). Inevitably there is some overlap, and there will be gaps, but the coverage is as comprehensive as the individual responses. Several major institutions reported that it was not possible to respond within the time-frame.

Overall Trends

Given the above reservations, the responses were classified under the two broad International Research Foundation on Open Learning (IRFOL) headings of:

- Context
- Application

The breakdown is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Regional research activities (numerical): IRFOL Classification

	SECTOR				Total
	HE	VET	SE	All	
Context					
purposes	5	-	1	1	7
outcomes & cost effectiveness	22	14	11	2	49
	<u>27</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>56</u>
Application					
management & administration	16	5	3	1	25
teaching, learning & assessment	99	24	6	2	131
technology	81	9	11	9	110
	<u>196</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>266</u>
Total	223	52	32	15	322

The raw figures reflect the reality of the higher education sector as a base for most research, although there is a complication in that some higher education-

based research is being carried out in the other two sectors, which also have their own research base.

When the figures are expressed as percentages, a clearer picture emerges of the differences in emphasis on the IRFOL issues between the sectors. This is shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Regional research activities (percentages): IRFOL Classification

	SECTOR			
	HE	VET	SE	Average
Context (C)	12%	27%	34%	24%
Application (A)	88%	73%	63%	76%
Total	100%	100%	97%	100%
A/C	7.3	2.7	1.9	3.2

Thus, overall, there appears to be roughly three times as much emphasis on ‘application’ as ‘context’ whereas, between sectors, the relative emphasis placed on application in the higher education sectors appears to be more than seven times context. This may be due to the way that the current activities are reported. The individual worker tends to report in the higher education context, whereas in the VET sector, this tends to be done more at the level of the system given the hierarchical nature of the administration of the VET sector.

Two recent regional conferences and the Australian National Teaching Development Grant Projects were also analysed to give a more detailed sample from three different perspectives. The projects were then grouped by institution within sectors, and names listed within institutions. These give a clear picture of the relative distribution of the work being undertaken within the IRFOL categories.

2.2 Open Learning ‘94

Held in Brisbane, the conference proceedings are subtitled “First International Conference on Open Learning”. However, it qualifies as a regional conference for the purposes of this review since only three of the papers emanated from outside the region.

The papers were divided into five streams as shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Open Learning

Stream	Paper
1 Improving the quality and effectiveness of learning for the learner	20

□	2	Technology and its applications in open learning	11
□	3	Research development in open learning	10
□	4	Private providers, industry and Government application of open learning	9
□	5	Futures	□
□		IRFOL classification	□
□		Context	□
□		Purposes	6
□		Political economy	-
□		Outcomes and cost-effectiveness	8
□		Internationalisation	-
			□
			14
□	□		□
□		Application	□
□		Management and administration	3
□		Teaching, learning and assessment	12
□		Technology	25
			□40
			□
□	□		□

2.3 The 1995 ODLAA Forum

The Proceedings of the Biennial Forums of ODLAA can be regarded as:

a poll of the issues demanding the attention of practitioners at the time, so the developing pattern of issues dealt with, conference by conference, provides a trace of ongoing and emerging themes in open and distance learning (Nouwens, 1995).

At the time of the 12th Forum in September, 1995, Nouwens detected the influences of changes in educational technology and the international trade in education as converging themes - another was the influence of changes in educational technology on traditional educational institutions.

The title of the Forum was *Distance Education - Crossing Frontiers* and he identified three as having emerged from his analysis of the papers presented.

- Substituting face-to-face teaching, where learners are separated from teachers in space and time;
- using educational technologies to extend teaching within traditional educational institutions; and
- using educational institutions to support structural change.

He considered that of the 88 papers presented, about two thirds addressed the first frontier, and that the remaining third were evenly divided between the second and third.

For the purposes of this Review, 76 papers reported work done in the Region. The distribution is shown in Table 2.4

Table 2.4 ODLAA FORUM: Regional Distribution of papers

	HE	VET	SE	Total
Australia	61	5	1	67
Papua New Guinea	2	1	1	4
New Zealand	1			1
	<u>64</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>76</u>

This table reflects the numerical dominance of Australian institutions (more specifically Australian higher education institutions) in the Region.

Twenty-five Australian institutions were represented. When grouped by State, the numerical dominance of Queensland emerges as shown in Table 2.5.

It is rather ironic that, in the context of open and distance learning, conference proceedings are still a significant channel for disseminating research results. Given the size and demography of Australia, it is impossible to choose a venue which does not penalize participants from some institutions (in this case the West Australians).

Maybe because of this, all three papers from WA were in the IRFOL 'context' areas of interest, compared with the overall ODLAA Forum ratio of one paper on 'context' for every two on 'application'.

Table 2.5 ODLAA FORUM: Australian Institutions

Institution	Institution	Institution	Institution
CQU 14	Deakin 5	SCU 5	USA 10
USQ 8	Monash 3	CSU 2	
QUT 2	SUT 1	WU 2	
Griffith 2	RMIT 1	SU 1	
UQ 1	OLA 1		OLTC 1
QOLN 1			
QOLI 1			
Q'land 29	Victoria 11	NSW 10	SA 11

2.4 CAUT National Teaching Development Grant Projects

There are several Government Discretionary Funding Agencies which impinge on open and distance learning research. One example is the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) through its research council, ANTARAC. Like other such government authorities, it has a systematic approach to strategic planning and a limited number (five) of research priorities. One of these, 'Learning in the Workplace' is clearly related to open learning and accounts for 40% of its budget. In this instance it is easy to gain an overview of current and planned research.

Another example is the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching (CAUT) soon to be replaced by the Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD). In its fourth and final year of operation CAUT also moved towards a planned strategic program approach. Thus in its 1995 report on allocations for 1996 (CAUT 1995) funded projects were categorised in a pedagogical classification as shown in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6 CAUT National Teaching Grants: 1996

Of the 107 projects to be funded in 1996 there are	
72	IT based
7	distance education
6	student centred learning
Total 85	(or 80% of the total)

On inspection, half of the distance education and student centred learning projects appeared to have a computer/multimedia component which points up the dangers inherent in attempting classification in this area.

For 1996, there were projects in the following areas:

24 Health Sciences
23 Science and Maths
21 Social Sciences
18 Humanities
9 Engineering

The remaining 12 were scattered across Law, Architecture and Agriculture.

Of the 11 universities which received 4 or more grants,

Melbourne University received	9
Sydney University	6
Curtin University	5
University of Southern Queensland	
University of New South Wales	
Flinders University	
Queensland University of Technology	
University of South Australia	
University of Western Sydney	
Wollongong.	

Only three of these have a strong tradition of distance education:

Curtin University
University of Southern Queensland
University of South Australia

Neither Melbourne nor Sydney Universities have any tradition at all in distance learning. Both are considered to be prestigious traditional institutions and yet it is in this context, and in the equally traditional and prestigious Faculties of Medicine and Dentistry, that some of this innovation is occurring in the emerging tradition of Information Technology (which some equate to open learning).

Indeed, an increasing difficulty faced by the writers was the fact that every university in Australia now hosts some activity which can be classified as open learning, according to the CAUT reports. The conditions necessary for convergence of this and distance learning are already there.

It may seem to be a pedantic rationalisation, but using Perraton's definition of distance learning, much of what is classified by CAUT simply as 'Information Technology based' is already operating as distance learning since "a significant proportion of the teaching is conducted by someone removed in space and/or time from the learner", albeit probably still on campus.

Thus, Professor Livet, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Department, University of Melbourne, reported on Project 52 (CAUT,1996).

Practical biochemistry courses for medical students are designed to give students an appreciation of the research and principles on which medical treatment is based . . . this project aims to develop a multimedia reference bank of experimental and safety procedures. . . students will be able to view and study procedures in detail and at their own pace.

Obviously he will not be there in person when this is happening.

It remains to be seen what will happen in the future. The new committee, CUTSD replaces CAUT as the name preferred for the Discretionary Funding Body for innovations in the delivery of higher education by the newly elected Government (which at the time of writing was about to hand down its first Budget with significant cuts in real terms for the entire HE and VET sectors).

Time will tell if the convergence of open and distance learning, which has been accelerating in Australia because of this targetted funding, will finally occur .

But universities are unlike bureaucratic organizations where change may be instituted with authority from the top. Ultimately it is the power of ideas - together with appropriate recognition and rewards, persuasive demonstrations, and an understanding of the system so that levers can be inserted at points likely to yield greatest advantage - that will advance the quality of teaching (CAUT, 1995).

2.5 Areas Of Current Interest

It has already been stated that the responses to our request for information on current and planned research on open and distance learning in the region have not been uniform and any attempt at clustering will inevitably result in an incomplete summary of the real situation.

Accepting the fact that the data are far from complete, all research projects were clustered under the headings of the IRFOL research program, as follows.

C: Context of open and distance learning

- C1 purposes for which open and distance learning is used
- C2 its political economy
- C3 outcomes of open and distance learning and studies of its cost-effectiveness
- C4 internationalisation.

A: Application of open and distance learning

- A1 management of open and distance learning
- A2 teaching, learning and assessment
- A3 technology.

These clusters were then grouped by institution, sector and country and the names of the workers assigned to the project.

It is not possible, from the data provided to decide which projects are truly 'significant'. However, a crude estimate of which are the key institutions is provided by the number of names associated with it.

C: Context Of Open And Distance Learning

C1: Purposes For Which Open And Distance Learning Is Used

Australia

HE

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Murdoch University (2) | M. Champion (2) |
| University of Southern Queensland □ | O. Jegede □ |
| Griffith University □ | M. Hay □ |
| University of Sydney - Orange □ | M Mahoney □ |

New Zealand

VET

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade | C. Matthewson |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|

C2: Political Economy

None

C3: Outcomes Of Open And Distance Learning And Studies Of Cost-

Australia

HE

University of Southern Queensland (6) □	O. Jegede, K. Kruger, J. MacDonald, S. Naidu, J. Hannaford, M. Anstay J. Cawte, C. Burke, R. Lundin, C. Daunt C. Game P. Finnane
Queensland University of Technology (4) Lundin	
Southern Cross University	
University of South Australia	
University of New South Wales (Defense Academy)	H. Heseltine
University of Western Sydney	J. Stewart
NCODE	D. Meacham
Central Queensland University	S. Gregor

VET

OTEN (3)	
Edith Cowan University (2)	R. Oliver (2)
Gordon Institute	P. Smith
DEETYA (Canberra)	P. Bilney
Monash (Frankston)	B. Sharpley
SE	
Central Queensland University	P. Danaher

Pacific Rim

HE

Distance Education Centre, Solomon Islands
College of Higher Education

VET

Distance Education Centre, Soloman Islands
College of Higher Education

C4: Internationalisation

None

A: Application Of Open And Distance Learning

A1: Management Of Open And Distance Learning

Australia

HE

Central Queensland University (2)	A. Zelmer, P. Andrews
Southern Cross University	R. Phelps
University of New England	A. Zuhairi
Murdoch University	M. Champion
Queensland University of Technology	D. Rossiter

VET

OTEN (3)

A2: Teaching, Learning And Assessment**Australia**

HE

University of Southern Queensland (13)	O. Jegede (4), P. Noordink (2), J. Taylor (3), S. Naidu (2), J. Kirkwood, N. Thomas
Monash University, Gippsland (6)□	R. Winter, M. Parer (2), R. Benson (2), B. Faust□
Edith Cowan University (3)□	R. Oliver (3)□
Queensland University of Technology (3)	M. Grace, G. Halliwell, C. Daunt
University of Queensland (2)□	J. Lacksonen, P. Palmer□
Central Queensland (2)□	F. Nouwens, M. Teague□
Melbourne University (VCAH) (2)□	J. Fenwick (2)□
Sydney University, Orange (2)□	B. Johnson, M. Tam□
University of South Australia□	E. Noonan□
Deakin University□	J. Calvert□
University of Tasmania (3)□	J. Walker, J. Osbourne, M. McGill□
RMIT□	A. Inglis□

VET

OTEN (6)

University of Southern Queensland (2)	J. Taylor, J. MacDonald
Open Learning Institute (2)	G. Morrow G. Heath
Outer Eastern College of TAFE	P. Palmieri
Queensland University of Technology	P. Skippington
Melbourne University(VCAH) (2)	J. Fenwick (2)
Central Queensland University	M. Teague
Dept of Training, WA	W. Murray

SE

University of Southern Queensland J. Taylor
Open Access Support Centre Qld
Department of Education and Children's Services, SA

New Zealand

HE
Massey University C. White
Waairiki Polytechnic B. Lewis

A3: TECHNOLOGY

Australia

HE
University of Southern Queensland (9) J. Stewart (2), P. Cook,
B. Horsfield, N-K Plange,
L. Richardson, T. Lai,
C. Cottman, G. Joughan
Macquarie University (4) B. Hesketh, M. Gosper,
J. Andrews, M. Sabaz
Edith Cowan University (4) R. Oliver (4)
Deakin University (2) T. Evans, K. Tregenza
Melbourne University (VCAH) (2) J. Fenwick (2)
University of Tasmania (2) P. Mahnken, J. Walker
Sydney University, Orange S. Wedd
Southern Cross University P. Wildman

VET
Outer Eastern TAFE P. Palmieri

SE
Deakin University J. Mousley
SATCC □ J. Clayton □
Tasmanian School of Distance C. Murray □
Education □
CIRCIT □ J. Gilding □

New Zealand

HE
Otago University D. Thompson

3.0 MAIN INSTITUTIONS WORKING IN RESEARCH IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

3.1 Overview

Analysis of data collected revealed that a variety of institutions within the region are working in research on open and distance learning. In Australia, those designated Distance Education Centres (DECS) by the Commonwealth in 1989 and now operating as independent centres within their universities have developed a research profile. (The national DEC system was reviewed and disbanded in 1992). In some instances, research units in open and distance learning have developed in order to attract funds. Various government agencies, some sector specific, have also gained a reputation for research in the field. For some of these, such as the Open Learning Technology Corporation (OLTC) research is part of their core business; others are providers of funds; others are recipients of funds.

The information in this section is presented by country groupings. An attempt has been made to sub group, not necessarily by sector.

3.2 Australia

Universities

In July, 1988, the Australian Government released a Policy Statement on higher education that set out the objective of improving the provision of distance education by reducing duplication, fostering cooperation, improving quality, availability and efficiency of external studies. The model proposed to bring about this rationalisation of distance education was to create Distance Education Centres (DECs) to be specially funded by the Commonwealth to develop, produce and deliver external studies. Institutions not designated DECs but which wanted to continue their involvement in external studies would be expected to use the infrastructure of the DECs to help produce any materials they required and make their own specialist academic expertise available (Scriven, 1990). DEC status was granted to eight institutions in 1989 as follows:

- University of Southern Queensland
- University of Central Queensland
- Deakin University
- Monash University, Gippsland
- University of New England

- Charles Sturt University
- University of South Australia, and
- Curtin University/Murdoch University and Edith Cowan University in Western Australia.

The DEC's became operational in 1991, dissatisfaction with the system was evident early in that year, the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) recommended the removal of the funding arrangement that underpinned the system in June, 1992, and this came into effect at the end of 1993. In 1992, the Commonwealth allocated \$52 million for an Open Learning Initiative (OLI). In 1993 a consortium of universities, led by Monash University won the bid to implement the OLI, leading to the formation of Open Learning Australia (OLA).

Analysis of data collected revealed that of the eight former DEC's, most are identifiable as specific centres within their universities, either as providers of distance and open learning materials and/or as centres for teaching and learning, often including staff/academic development activities. Most are involved in both funded research and in-house research activities related to open and distance learning.

- University of Southern Queensland's Distance Education Centre
- University of Central Queensland's Distance Education Centre and the Research Institute for Open and Distance Learning
- Educational Development and Research Centre, Monash University, Gippsland
- Flexible Learning Centre, University of South Australia
- Centre for Academic Development, Deakin University
- The Open Learning Institute, Charles Sturt University
- The former West Australian consortium:
 - Interactive Technologies Research Group, Edith Cowan University
 - Academic Services Unit, Murdoch University
 - Teaching Learning Group, Curtin University.

Analysis of the database created as part of the project processes revealed that, in terms of numbers of projects which constitute research on open and distance learning, the following universities may be added to this list of main institutions conducting research in this area.

- Flinders University
- Griffith University
- Macquarie University
- Melbourne University
- Queensland University of Technology
- Southern Cross University
- University of New South Wales
- University of Queensland

- University of Sydney
- University of Tasmania
- University of Technology Sydney
- Wollongong University

However, within these universities much relevant Interactive Multimedia innovative work is spread widely through Faculties/Schools and not concentrated in open and distance learning units anymore. Funding for innovative teaching and learning and staff development projects (many of which constitute research on open and distance learning, as discussed in Section 1 of this report) through the Committee for the Advancement of University Teaching (CAUT) and Committee for Staff Development Funding (CDSF). The recent announcement (August, 1996) of the merging of these two committees with the establishment of the Committee for University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD) to promote quality and excellence in university teaching by providing policy advice, advise on allocation of grants for teaching and staff development and dissemination of information on effective practice, should see this trend continuing.

Analysis of the data base also indicated an increasing trend towards collaborative research activity both intra (cross faculty) and inter university activity, between universities and other sector institutions, and between universities and industry and/or individuals.

In the vocational education and training sector, one Institute stood out in terms of research activity in open and distance learning. This was the Open Learning Institute - TAFE, Brisbane.

Open Learning Australia (OLA)

OLA is an innovative education venture established in late 1992 with initial Commonwealth Government funding. OLA, a company representing a consortium of Australian universities, acts as an educational broker for the higher education sector in Australia, offering people, regardless of age, location or educational qualification, the opportunity to study university and TAFE units leading to diplomas, degrees and other qualifications. It currently involves the collaboration of more than 25 Australian universities and TAFE colleges.

As part of its core activity, a significant proportion of OLA funds were directed towards an innovative and quality enhancement scheme to support:

- innovative pilot projects in modes of delivery of Open Learning course materials or associated services other than broadcast television and radio, and
- quality enhancement initiatives for Open Learning course materials and service delivery other than broadcast television and radio.

Grants are available for units offered or approved for offer through Open Learning. The focus of the innovative grants is on new and innovative modes for offering existing units, while the focus of the quality enhancement grants is on improving the quality of current modes for offering existing units.

National Committee For Open And Distance Education (NCODE)

NCODE has representatives from higher education institutions involved in open and distance learning. Currently 33 of the 36 Australian universities are members and associate members include OLA and key government agencies with a focus on open and distance education.

One of NCODE's main goals is to encourage collaboration between members and to provide a united voice on matters relating to open and distance education in Australia, especially those affecting policy.

Currently NCODE is funding several research projects, undertaken by members. NCODE also employs a part-time Research Officer (Associate Professor David Meacham, Charles Sturt University). Research under way at present includes:

- Institutional Collaboration - two projects
- Resource-based learning
- Entry requirements
- Flexibility of content
- Flexibility of location, and
- Study time flexibility.

Government Agencies

Open Learning Technology Corporation Ltd (OLTC)

OLTC was established in 1993 as a private company of Australia's Ministers of Education and Training as the first point of contact for people who want to participate in a collaborative, approach to open learning. Its current goals are to:

- establish, manage and develop Education Network Australia
- promote and support the development of new open learning technologies
- provide a national information and advisory service, and
- support and undertake applied research, evaluation, project and contract management and brokerage.

Until very recently most of its funding, including research funding was provided by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) through the National Open Learning Policy Unit. This unit no longer exists.

As part of its information and advisory service, OLTC has developed a research data base. Researchers in open and flexible learning are invited to contribute details. OLTC is not sector specific.

Department Of Employment, Education, Training And Youth Affairs (DEETYA)

The Commonwealth Government provides a variety of funds for research activity of which an increasing amount is applied to projects on open and distance learning (in its widest interpretation). The main schemes in 1996 are as follows:

- Committee University Teaching and Staff Development (CUTSD) replacing CAUT and CDSF - higher education
- Evaluations and Investigations Program (EIP) - higher education
- National Professional Development Program (NPDP) - school education.

Australian National Training Authority Research Advisory Council (ANTARAC)

ANTARAC was established in 1993 and is committed to funding research that influences policy and that depends on collaboration. Above all it is committed to developing a culture of research in vocational education and training. Of its five research priorities, three - the needs of small business, needs of special groups and learning in the work place have attracted projects which will contribute to research and development on open and distance learning.

Australian Council For Educational Research (ACER)

ACER is an independent national agency established in 1930 to provide educational research, services and material. A search of its World Wide Web site suggested that its research activities are not open and distance learning specific.

National Centre For Vocational Education Research (NCVER)

As part of its activities, NCVER has developed and maintained a database on projects undertaken in vocational education and training. Those current projects relevant to open and distance learning have been included in this review.

Centre For International Research On Communication And Information Technologies (CIRCIT)

CIRCIT is funded by the Victorian Government and external funding sources and while not education and training specific the majority of its research is in this area. Currently CIRCIT is conducting several projects for the vocational education and training sectors.

Other Government Agencies

Analysis of the project data base indicated that other government agencies involved in research on open and distance learning are as follows:

Vocational Education and Training

- Open Training Services - Victoria (OTS)
- Office of Training and Further Education (OTFE) - Victoria
- Open Training Education Network - New South Wales (OTEN)
- Department of Technical and Further Education - South Australia (DETAFE)
- Western Australian Department of Training, and
- TAFE Media Network - Western Australia.

School Education

- Open Access Support Centre - Queensland
- Open Access College - South Australia
- Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) - South Australia
- Tasmanian School of Distance Education
- Department of School Education - Victoria
- Department of Education and Training - Australian Capital Territory
- Catholic Education Office - Western Australia

- Northern Territory Correspondence School.

3.3 New Zealand

Difficulties were experienced in obtaining information from New Zealand. While many lines of enquiry were obtained through internet links and personal networks, the Privacy Act, that requires bodies to have permission to hand on people's addresses, meant that it was not possible to follow-up on all leads obtained in the short time available.

As far as can be ascertained, the main institutions, or individuals within those institutions, in New Zealand, working in research on open and distance learning are as follows:

- Auckland University, Higher Education Research Office
- Massey University
- Open Polytechnic of New Zealand
- Otago University , Higher Education Development Centre
- Victoria University
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (recently conducted a survey of distance education in the Pacific)

3.4 The Pacific Rim

While distance education is playing an increasingly important role in the Pacific Rim region, energies and funds are concentrated on developing courseware rather than research activity on open and distance learning. A number of individuals are involved in higher degree research.

The project data base of information from the Pacific Rim may well be incomplete given the short period of time available. Email facilities were not available, and considerable difficulty was experienced with communication via fax.

The Solomon Islands College of Higher Education has a new Distance Education Centre which has developed a five year research plan with the following priorities:

- identification of priority learning needs that could be met by distance education
- identification of modes of delivery appropriate for different target audiences,
- investigation of culturally appropriate learning styles.

As far as can be ascertained, other institutions, or individuals within those institutions in the Pacific Rim working in research on open and distance learning are as follows:

- University of Papua New Guinea, Institute of Continuing and Distance Education, and
- University of Technology, Papua New Guinea.