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Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
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### ***Australia-Vietnam Enhanced Economic Engagement Strategy - Discussion Paper***

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Australian Government's *Australia-Vietnam Enhanced Economic Engagement Strategy*.

The University of Sydney has a strong interest in further enhancing our educational and research ties with Vietnam, building upon more than two decades of engagement.

Our ongoing investment in Vietnam complements DFAT's objectives by enabling and engaging the private sector for development; assisting the development and employment of a highly skilled workforce; and promoting women's economic empowerment. We have made engagement in Southeast Asia a feature of our [2016–20 Strategic Plan](#) with the establishment of the [Sydney Southeast Asia Centre](#).

The University has established partnerships with 16 Vietnamese public institutions across 11 provinces and has been highly productive, with 278 publications with Vietnamese partners over the last five years. We are also preparing to establish the Sydney Vietnam Centre in 2021 (see the current entity at [Sydney Vietnam Initiative](#)) to support research partnerships and educational exchange. The University also employs a full-time student recruitment officer who is based in Hanoi.

The University has worked with Vietnamese partners to develop shared capacity in global health research and policy development. We are committed to the principles of sustainable and equitable collaborative partnership that ensure joint recognition for academic outputs. While low and middle-income countries, including Vietnam, carry a greater burden of many diseases, studies have shown that their researchers may not be the major recipients of grant funding for global health research. Over the last 20 years in Vietnam, the University of Sydney has consciously taken a partnership and capacity sharing approach, following research integrity principles for co-authorship and intellectual property.

Our Faculty of Medicine and Health has particularly strong ties to Vietnam in healthcare education, capacity sharing, research and training. Vietnam is a priority country for engagement in the FMH Strategic Plan 2020-2025, with highlights in the past decade including:

- Over \$20 million in competitive funding for medical research in Vietnam, including grants from Australia (e.g. NHMRC, DFAT) and Vietnam (NAFOSTED)
- More than 60 full-time research staff affiliated with the University working on multi-centre studies across 11 of Vietnam's 63 provinces and municipalities
- Clinical trials with more than 130,000 Vietnamese participants, addressing issues of importance to the health of Vietnamese and Australians

- Technology development partnerships including those funded under the *Aus4Innovation* program e.g. the USYD - HSPI partnership to support the development and introduction of artificial intelligence training systems to improve breast cancer detection in Vietnam
- Regional Health Security support through the Australian Centre for Health Security
- Tailored executive education health programs including those delivered by Hoc Mai Foundation and the Asbestos Diseases Research Institute.

Our academics are also involved in many other disciplinary projects including:

- [Dr Reuben Segara](#) from the Sydney Business School, who is collaborating with Hué University examining whether stock liquidity affects dividend policy decisions in the Vietnamese stock market, and
- [Dr Jane Gavan](#) from the Sydney College of the Arts, who has conducted multiple art projects in Vietnam, researching innovative, social and environmental approaches to contemporary creative practices to discover their shared community value.

These projects are just a snapshot of our educational and research engagement in Vietnam. Thank you again for this opportunity and we trust that this input is helpful. Should the Department require anything further from the University, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Tim Payne, Director, Higher Education Policy and Projects, in my office ([tim.payne@sydney.edu.au](mailto:tim.payne@sydney.edu.au), 02 9351 4750).

Yours sincerely,

(signature removed)

Michael Spence

**Attachment A:** The University of Sydney submission to the *Australia-Vietnam Enhanced Economic Engagement Strategy* discussion paper, September 2020

## The University of Sydney submission to the *Australia-Vietnam Enhanced Economic Engagement Strategy discussion paper, September 2020*

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### Growth opportunities in healthcare and digital technology partnerships

The Vietnamese healthcare sector represents an enormous opportunity for growth in the coming decade. Healthcare spending in Vietnam is set to rise from US\$15.6 billion in 2018 to US\$42.9 billion in 2028, while per capita spending on healthcare is expected to triple from US\$161 in 2018 to US\$408 in 2028. Further, private healthcare expenditure is forecast to rise from US\$6.7 billion in 2016 to US\$9.7 billion in 2021.

This growth in the healthcare sector will be underpinned by new digital technologies. The Vietnamese Government's Ministry of Health (MOH) is driving a national agenda for the digitalisation of healthcare, encouraging the adoption of digital health solutions in all hospitals across the country. As the University of Sydney is a lead partner in the new Digital Health Cooperative Research Centre (DHCRC), our Faculty of Medicine and Health (FMH) is uniquely placed to provide much needed education and collaborative research in this domain and is ready to offer online micro-credentials to up-skill medical professionals.

The University, with extensive capabilities in healthcare policy development and implementation, is well-placed to assist with the key objective of the MOH *Direction of Healthcare Activities* scheme, shifting the burden of delivering medical services to lower-level primary healthcare facilities. Likewise, Australia and Vietnam can share our experience with the behavioural and environmental factors underlying poor health and disease, for example, smoking, alcohol consumption and physical activity.

In recent years the number of scholarships offered by the Australian Government has dramatically declined, particularly in the development area of health. As global health security becomes increasingly important, future investment in the Australia Awards, and reinstating schemes such as the Australia Award Fellowships and Endeavour Leadership Program, could bring enormous dividends to health security through both the public and private sectors. Research and development partnerships in health will continue to attract private investment with technology transfer and commercialisation.

Australia will need to be mindful of the importance of mobility to the education and health sectors in the post-COVID context, recognising the increasing importance of Vietnam as a partner.

### Economic opportunities in tertiary education

The University of Sydney is investing in Vietnam's growing tertiary education market, with a full-time student recruitment officer based in Hanoi and a planned Sydney Vietnam Centre to be launched in 2021. These initiatives will position the University to increase undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment and deliver high-quality educational offerings to Vietnam's emerging middle class. Market research undertaken by the University has demonstrated the immense potential for this market over the coming decade, including in Engineering, Information Technology, Health and Science. The University is already engaging Vietnam across all of these domains, for example, [Professor David Guest](#) from the Sydney Institute of Agriculture, is undertaking research in perennial tropical high value crops.

Meanwhile, [Associate Professor Greg Fox](#), from the Central Clinical School (FMH) - with over \$20m of competitive grant funding for work in Vietnam - epitomises the University's capacity sharing approach with 60 research staff in Vietnam. He has worked closely with leading Vietnamese universities and hospitals to build research partnerships. Associate Professor Fox's interests in translation of evidence into policy and decision analysis further ensures the sustainability of his research.

Strategies that will drive further growth in the tertiary education market between the two countries include:

- the Vietnam Government's recent decision to formally recognise the qualifications from online and blended programs jointly delivered by foreign and Vietnamese institutions
- support provided for student mobility exchanges to strengthen partnerships between foreign and Vietnamese universities, and
- the establishment by the Australian Government of a joint Vietnam-Australia Centre.

As detailed above, the tertiary education and health sectors also both present singularly outstanding opportunities to develop bilateral trade and strengthen workforce capacity.