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Bond's private university is aiming to be best

Federal Government plans to make tertiary education more competitive and market-oriented will throw a spotlight on the ambitious privately-funded Bond University taking shape on Queensland's Gold Coast.

Named after its prime benefactor, business mega-star Mr Alan Bond, the university takes the Government's recent recommendations on tertiary education — such as new funding arrangements to stimulate competition for students and freeing up the market for academics — to their logical conclusion.

It will operate much like a commercial corporation, competing for bright and highly motivated students and staff, particularly in sciences, business and technology.

There'll be no "cushy" tenures and laziness won't be tolerated; results will be the benchmark and the Bond University curricula is to be unashamedly "commercially driven".

Leading up to the fanfare of its opening, the university's promoters recently escorted corporate executives and journalists on an inspection of the 300ha university site, now being drained and levelled for the project.

Bond University chancellor, Sir Sydney Schubert, told the visitors its aims were to produce the type of graduates and research that Australian commerce and industry lacked, as well as to undertake specific research projects and consultancy work for industries prepared to pay.

Of the 10,000 students Bond University hopes to have enrolled by the mid-1990s, it's been recommended about 40 per cent should be foreign — and that half of these should be Japanese.

The editor of the university's newsletter, Ms Jo-Anne Cracknell, said the courses would be designed to attract

overseas students, including North American students on exchange programs, and that fees were expected to undercut those for comparable courses in the US, Europe and Japan.

"Next year we plan to begin touting for Japanese students and flying in inspection parties from Japan," Ms Cracknell said.

"Touting" for students and corporate sponsors is a top financial priority.

The Bond Corp and Japan's EIE Development Co Ltd are jointly funding the construction, equipment and infrastructure costs, expected eventually to total \$1 billion.

● *By LEIGH MACKAY, of AAP*

But student fees and corporate sponsorship was essential if the university was to be self-financing, Bond Corp's Qld property manager Mr Brian Orr said.

Mr Orr said it was he who persuaded Mr Bond to put his name to the university, in preference to the proposed Gold Coast University of Technology. This made it Bond's public legacy, and exploited his personal involvement to attract political and commercial support.

Mr Bond's enthusiastic staff heap impressive but expensive statistics on visitors to the pine-covered hills, where the university's first stage is scheduled to open with 1000 undergraduates in February 1989.

There will be picture-sized sculling and basketball facilities, and accommodation for 60 per cent of students. Each

of the 5000 rooms will have a computer terminal connected by optical fibre to electronic libraries on campus and overseas.

Millions of dollars worth of sandstone cladding, landscaping, clock-towers and waterways with punts will give a traditional "Oxbridge" look to hi-tech labs, computer centres and business faculties.

However, both the academics already appointed and the university's promoters agreed that some potentially troublesome policy questions need to be answered.

How high will fees be, especially for promising students without incomes? Will the benefits of research go only to the individuals and companies who commission it rather than to society in general?

Will the Bond University accept commissions for military weapons research, particularly controversial biological weapons such as nerve gases?

Promoters are solidly pushing the commercial and export benefits of Bond University's research and development in such fields as energy, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, information technology and telecommunications.

As its founding professors, the university has chosen men with a strong practical applications background. Four of them outlined their priorities at a recent gathering in speeches that struck some observers as astute sales pitches.

However they were quick to assure sceptics that commercial considerations would not crowd out pure research and social concerns.



● Alan Bond . . . prime benefactor of the Bond University.