

International students through alternative pathways to university – transition issues and implications for support services

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Universities across Australia are increasingly accepting students with a broader range of pre-university qualifications. The traditional Year 12 cohort is no longer the only source for universities. Articulation agreements between the VET or TAFE sector and universities have expanded to include Australian institutes of business, overseas colleges, and polytechnics. There is growing acceptance of these pathways internationally. In particular, these pathways are attractive to international students because they offer a university degree with lower overall costs.

As the numbers of articulating international students increase, it is important to note that these university students are not like first year level university students. These students commence at second or third year level of the university program and consequently have different expectations placed on them by academic staff.

The pathways are marketed as seamless and the students have an expectation that they will make the transition to university studies with the minimum of adjustment. The reality is quite different for many of the students. As these pathways become an increasingly significant source of international students for Australian universities, it is important to discuss the transition issues and the role of student support services. This paper is based on a study of a cohort of business degree students who have articulated to the University of South Australia after studies overseas or at Australian pre-university institutions. The consequences of the study have been the development of specific activities to facilitate the transition process of all articulating students.