

Engaging international students through peer facilitated English language discussion groups: UniSA's Global Experience program approach.

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This paper focuses on a peer facilitated English language discussion group implemented in 2010 as part of the University of South Australia's Global Experience program. The Global Experience Program commenced in 2008 at the University of South Australia (UniSA), and is aimed at broadening intercultural engagement at the undergraduate level through facilitating a range of international experiential activities. These activities range from off-shore experiences such as student exchange and international volunteerism in addition to on-shore intercultural activities such as cross-cultural exchange.

The program developed an English Language Discussion group available for International undergraduate and post graduate students enrolled across the University's four metropolitan campuses. The group, facilitated by key undergraduate students enrolled in the Global Experience program provides a mechanism for accruing experiential program credit in addition to access to intercultural opportunities on-campus.

Through utilising a peer mentoring approach, the group Facilitators provide a supportive forum for international students to practice spoken English proficiency and conversational skills while providing informal information and support on living and studying in Adelaide. In response to increased international student demand, the group has recently expanded across three of the University's four metropolitan campuses.

This paper will review the initiative established at UniSA and explore the potential for student intercultural engagement programs to meet the social engagement and interaction needs of international students utilising a peer mentoring approach.

Key Words

Interaction, intercultural engagement, internationalisation, experiential learning