

Filling in sink holes Down Under: A strategy to support our more vulnerable international students

Chris Beard, Senior Teacher
Foundation Studies, Victoria University of Wellington

Introduction

Export education in New Zealand is estimated to be worth more than 2 billion dollars in foreign currency earnings per annum. In less than ten years the sector has emerged as a key player the New Zealand economy, and revenue from international student fees constitutes an important source of income for private training establishments (PTEs), secondary schools and tertiary education providers. This is viewed favourably by the New Zealand Government which has expressed a goal of doubling revenue from international education in the next fifteen years (New Zealand Government, 2011). While 2010 figures showed that the number of new international students increased, it was against a backdrop of a collapse of Chinese student numbers in 2003/04. At the Education New Zealand Trust conference in 2010, Bruce Baird, the head of the Federal Government review of the Australian Export Education Industry in 2009, warned the New Zealand peak industry body against focusing on revenue at the expense of students (Binning, 2010). The question is whether the NZ sector believes it needs to heed this advice and whether lessons have been sufficiently learned from 2003/2004.

To date, the voices of the fee-paying students (and their families) and coal-face practitioners have not featured prominently in industry literature and decision-making. Research undertaken by the Education New Zealand Trust reveals a prominent marketing thread, which reflects the industry's focus on raising demand (Education New Zealand, 2011). On the other hand, research which investigates the international student experience in New Zealand has been limited, and this has constrained efforts to not only provide tailored support but also to identify predictors of student vulnerability. As a consequence, the sector has made itself unnecessarily vulnerable to a growth in the number of at risk students whose experiences inevitably attract negative media reporting. At the 2010 Education New Zealand conference, CEO Robert Stevens described delegates as the 'bust survivors' (Stevens, 2010). Yet if the challenges posed by at-risk students are not given more attention, the sector may find that it is simply riding a boom-bust cycle. This paper highlights two underlying weaknesses in the export education industry in New Zealand and then recommends a cross-sector international student (IS) support advisory council as a proactive, evidence-based first step in the near term.

Locating the sector's sinkholes

1. Threats to New Zealand's image as a safe destination

New Zealand's image as a safe destination is integral to the success of its international education industry and yet this perception has been compromised by media reporting in the past. New Zealand is more susceptible to negative media stories than competitor countries because (i) the country's point of difference is the perception that it is a safe destination, and (ii) negative incidents are given prominence by local media. Mr Mallard, Minister of Education in 2003, observed that 'the perception of problems in New Zealand is exaggerated by our small size' (McCurdy, 2003). Both the significance and fragility of New Zealand's image as a safe destination for foreign students has previously been noted:

According to the Ministry of Education (2007, p.5), safety was a significant factor in students' decisions to come to New Zealand. This was supported by the findings of Colmar Brunton survey, which found that New Zealand's perception as a safe country was viewed as a unique strength that appealed to students and their families (*Demand side market research -China and Vietnam*, 2007, pp. 75-91). Comparisons with other Commonwealth countries and the United States showed that the perception of safety is more important to New Zealand's image than to the image of competitor countries.

Although the reasons for the sharp drop in Chinese international students coming to New Zealand in 2003/2004 were multi-faceted, research by Mingsheng Li indicates that the tarnishing of New Zealand's image as a safe destination was a significant contributor. In his illuminating paper *The impact of the media on the New Zealand export education industry* (2007) Li reveals for the first time the broad scope of negative media reporting in China. Chinese students studying overseas were being widely reported as victims and perpetrators of crime, and New Zealand figured prominently and regularly in these reports. This extensive media coverage preceded and coincided with the sharp fall in enrolments of new Chinese students in New Zealand, a fall incidentally which occurred in no other competitor country during this period (*Demand side market research- China and Vietnam*, 2007, pp.19-49). Although some Chinese media reporting was dubious and sensationalised, it was difficult to escape the conclusion that New Zealand was not as safe as students and their families were led to believe (Beard, 2008, p.5)

Indeed, concerns about Chinese students in New Zealand were expressed by the Chinese government at the time. Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministry spokesman Tony Brown, cited in Allen (2003 p.1), stated that 'It simply is not a perception of media, but a concern at the highest level of the Chinese Government'. In the Universities Australia position paper *Enhancing the student experience and student safety*' (2009, p.8) Nyland and Forbes-Mewitt point out that 'in 2003, following the absence of new initiatives, Chinese officials effectively closed the Chinese market by stating that New Zealand did not have the accommodation nor infrastructure to support the international student market'.

Marginson (2011, p.287) noted that concerns for student security led the Chinese government to issue a website advisory that counselled against studying in New Zealand, and this precipitated a marked decline in Chinese student enrolments in the country.

Li's 2007 paper highlights extortion, killings and kidnapping as the types of crimes which received broad media attention in China in 2003/2004. More recently, news reports that link Asian foreign students (either as victims or perpetrators) with dubious/criminal activity are resurfacing, in conjunction with the latest increase in international student numbers (Hunt, 2010). The following articles have been published in New Zealand news outlets since 2009:

Koreans seek more support for students [following stabbing incident] (*NZ Herald*, 2009, March 6)

Asian organised crime recruits young students (*NZ Herald*, 2009 October 22)

Chinese students lured to become sex workers (*NZ Herald*, 2010 February 27)

Students used as drug mules (*Stuff*, 2010, February 26)

Students charged after \$3m drug bust (*NZ Herald*, 2010 March 10)

Third man charged after Chinese student's killing (*Stuff*, 2010 June 4)

Operation nets 70kg of 'P' ingredient (*Stuff*, 2011 May 5)

The Chinese student mentioned in the 2010 June 4 headline was killed by other Chinese students. News of Jiayi Li's murder was picked up by *People's Daily Online*, an official newspaper of the Chinese government, on the same day as the *Stuff* report (*Third man charged after Chinese student killed in New Zealand*, 2010). The 2010 article that identifies the use of Asian students as drug mules highlights an issue that was first publicly raised by Detective Sergeant George Korcia, head of the Police Asian Crime Unit, in 2006 (Kiong, 2006). Bryan Williams, Compliance Operations IS specialist, first expressed Department of Labour concern about the numbers of foreign students involved in sex work at ISANA NZ's 2007 conference in Hamilton. Richard Wilson reiterated the Department's concern at the Association's 2009 conference in Christchurch. Students working in the sex industry is a significant welfare issue because they are not permitted to engage in this work, and so are associating with individuals or groups prepared to break the law.

In addition to the issues highlighted by the above headlines, gambling has been identified as a gateway to significant personal problems for some students (Gregory, 2007). A study published in 2007 noted various impacts of excessive gambling on Asian international students, which included poor health, profound financial difficulties and vulnerability to criminal behaviour:

The interviewees in one major city mentioned some alarming examples of Asian students who have gambling problems. Asian students who extorted money from

classmates were expelled from school and sent back to their home country. According to the key informants, international Chinese students were considered to be highly susceptible to problem gambling followed by some Malaysian and Korean students. It is believed that Asian students started to gamble because of boredom, loneliness and having too easy life. The interviewees commented, “They thought they could study less and enjoy the freedom of New Zealand’s lifestyle by gambling” (Tse, Wong & Chan, p.85, 2007).

Patrick Au, ADHB Asian Mental Health Coordinator, believes that Chinese students gamble and lend money to one another as a means of coping with the new life in New Zealand (Au, 2009). In terms of IS sexual health, the numbers of unplanned pregnancies among international students has previously raised concerns among health professionals (*Goodyear-Smith & Arroll, 2003*), and 80 international students were referred to abortion services at one university in one calendar year (Ministry of Education, 2006, p.66). Barriers to Asian students accessing mental health services have also been identified as an emerging welfare issue (Ministry of Education, 2006, p.65; Au, 2009).

In my capacity as a teacher and student advisor, I have assisted students in a range of unsafe situations: emotional and physical abuse, gambling addiction, unwanted pregnancy, mental illness requiring hospitalisation, financial hardship due to ill-advised lending, eating disorders, exposure to organised crime, threatening behaviour, and being charged with offences ranging from drink driving to working at an illegal casino.

Clearly there are international students in New Zealand who are vulnerable, victims of exploitation or at risk. While their number is likely to represent a small proportion of the IS body, their activities are widely reported and their impact on public perception in New Zealand and offshore is disproportionate to their number. In other words, ongoing bad news reports involving foreign students erodes the viability of the industry, particularly while New Zealand’s image as a safe destination remains a significant pull factor (Ministry of Education, 2007, p.48).

2. A lack of evidence-based support

The second weakness underlying the sector, inextricably linked to the first, is the lack of evidence-based practice on the frontline of international student support. In short, the IS support profession is not research-led. For instance, we have little idea from an empirical perspective whether we are communicating with incoming students, i.e. whether our orientations and communication methods actually work. The efficacy of orientation practice is largely un-researched, particularly in relation to student uptake of factual information. This is a critical short-coming that needs urgent attention, not least in the areas of personal safety and health advice.

One of the most recent national surveys of international students in New Zealand notably identified deficiencies in communication: ‘There appears to be evidence of an overall lack of awareness about the actual services on offer’ (Ministry of Education, 2007a, p.77). Further, in an evaluation of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students, some students were found to be unaware of the Code because they ‘received a large amount of paper at orientation’ (Ministry of Education, 2006, p.69). If students are to be protected they need to be effectively advised – in English they understand - of live issues that are relevant to their safety and well-being while in New Zealand. Of course, there are opportunities to counsel students in their home countries, but the education provider exercises the most control during the on entry orientation, where timely welfare information can be managed and presented to a captive audience.

A lack of evidence-based practice constrains education providers’ efforts to meaningfully communicate with new students from different cultures. What is remarkable about the international education industry in Australasia is that education providers in Low Power Distance (LPD) countries are recruiting students from predominantly High Power Distant (HPD) countries (Beard, 2008). According to renowned anthropologist Geert Hofstede (2010, pp.53-88), children in LPD countries are trained to become initiative-taking individualists, while the young in HPD countries are culturally-wired to seek supervision and defer to their seniors. This kind of cultural distance between incoming students and hosts institutions has profound ramifications for IS support, and yet in New Zealand it has largely passed under the pastoral care radar.

If students from HPD countries are culturally wired to seek supervision, then it logically follows that they would be initially hesitant about accessing support services on their own, particularly if they are tailored for domestic students in the first place. A disinclination among foreign students to access services is evident in the Ministry of Education’s *The experiences of international students in New Zealand* reports (2004, p. 49; 2007a, pp.77-81) which reveal their reliance on other internationals for a range of emotional needs, including homesickness, relationship issues, loneliness and being upset. The 2007 report concludes that ‘help from other international students continues to be the first port of call for international students’ (2007a, p.81). The evaluation of the Code of Practice concluded the following: ‘It is relatively clear that most students develop their own support networks outside of pastoral care services (Ministry of Education, 2006, p.77). Research by Wang and Mallinckroft (2006, p.430) which investigated the psychosocial adjustment of Chinese/Taiwanese international students in the US concluded the following:

[Chinese international students] do seem less likely to reach out to available local or university resources and are reluctant to rely on others’ help in dealing with acculturation difficulties and acculturative stress.

Reluctance among students in their first year of study to access services on campus is repeatedly observed by this author. The power distance paradigm provides a compelling explanation for the behaviour of new international students.

Given that foreign students demonstrate a ‘service-shy’ disposition, the first relationships they form with co-nationals and other foreign students assume more significance in terms of their adjustment, outlook and welfare. Indeed, Julianna Leung, Asian Liaison Officer for the Queensland Police Asian Specialist Unit, suggested in her presentation to the Central Districts Police Asian Community Course in 2004 that there are Asian students who genuinely come to Australia to study but can ‘turn bad’ within the first 6-8 weeks, depending on the associations they form. Jessica Phuang, Asian Liaison officer for Auckland Central Police, believes that it is the first three months that are formative in terms of the relationships students establish and the attitudes they form (personal communication, July 9, 2010). Following an ethnographic study of international students, Montgomery (2010, p.65) concluded that ‘who [students] live alongside and who they spend time with appear to be strong factors in delineating their experiences’. It seems therefore that it is not so much a matter of informing the individual but informing the group and this is discussed further in the following section.

Added to the highlighted weaknesses is the position that the industry takes following negative media stories. A common refrain in media interviews is that international students are well cared for in New Zealand and that there are no significant student-related problems. This is not a new position. Nyland and Forbes-Mewett, cited in *Enhancing the student experience & student safety* (2009, p.8), observed ‘that [in 2003] the New Zealand education industry was convinced that openly discussing the issue of student safety would create fear in the market and dissuade students from travelling to New Zealand for education purposes’. It is clearly sound public relations practice to emphasise and promote what the sector is doing well, but a sustained strategy of denying student-related problems when they occur undermines efforts to address them.

The Australian international education industry was left with no choice but to take action after being rocked by reported attacks on Indian students in 2008/2009. The Australian government subsequently commissioned an inquiry into IS welfare and from its report concern was expressed at the lack of tailored support and advice. Ms Christine Bundesen, *English Australia*, noted the lack of a coherent approach to informing students:

... there needs to be a more, cohesive, nationally coordinated approach to provision ... [of] information, and about their safety as well (*Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*, 2009, p.27)

The Australian National Union of Students also drew attention to inadequate safety information to international students:

However by [their] own admission there are still many universities and VET education providers that do not provide adequate information to students about life and safety in Australia. Therefore, there is a clear lack of broad level best practice in this area throughout Australian education institutions (*Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*, 2009, p.27).

What of New Zealand education institutions? The Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students is often cited by industry representatives in New Zealand as evidence that international students are properly advised and cared for. While the introduction of the Code demonstrated ‘first light thinking’ and helped considerably to clean up the sector, its powers to address complex pastoral cases and trends are limited. Also, the industry includes schools, universities, institutes of technology (ITPs) and PTEs, and it is incumbent on individual providers within each sector group to interpret which advice is appropriate or applicable according to Code guidelines. This is problematic given that *there is no common vocational pathway for IS advisors*. Capacity for identifying what is appropriate or applicable therefore varies according to the advisors’ backgrounds and work experience, which can be wide-ranging. This means that the response of an individual institution to the cultural and language barriers confronting new students will depend on the amount of cross-cultural/ESOL experience each IS support team possesses.

In general, IS support personnel in New Zealand demonstrate a high level of professionalism and commitment, but they frequently battle time and resource constraints. Further, the IS advisor is sometime assigned a junior role and the turnover of IS support staff is relatively high. Also, because of work loads and high student advisor-student ratios in larger institutions, support teams can operate in silos by default, and the cross-fertilisation of thought and practice is often limited to an annual (ISANA) conference.

Without evidence-based practice and acknowledgement of problems, the prospect of the sector moving to address issues which underlie IS vulnerability is low. Targeted measures which effectively reduce the numbers of foreign students attracting negative press are unlikely to be implemented without a more strategic investment in IS support.

A more solid foundation: implementing coordinated, cross-sector action in response to student vulnerability

1. Introducing ISSAC

Despite the weaknesses that this paper highlights, a robust strategy for supporting the most vulnerable international students in New Zealand in the near-term remains tantalisingly within reach. New Zealand’s education providers are well positioned to address significant pastoral challenges using a collaborative approach. Professor Michelle Barker, co-founder of the acclaimed ExcelL programme, rightly observed that the small number of tertiary providers in New Zealand presents a unique opportunity for institutional/cross-sector collaboration in the area of IS support (Barker, 2005). In 2009, ISANA NZ proposed an International Student Support Advisory Council (ISSAC) to regularly gather, collate and disseminate cross-sector updates on emergent pastoral issues affecting international students. The ISSAC proposal offers a cost-effective approach that would provide information and timely advice for stretched student support staff around the country.

Individual institutions with large numbers of students are simply not resourced to provide 'exemplary pastoral care' that is stated in Goal 2 in *The International Education Agenda* (Ministry of education, 2007b). Government support for a proactive initiative such as ISSAC, however, would help protect the sector in the short term by providing timely, tailored advice for the more vulnerable students on entry.

The ISSAC proposal is an extension of the recommendations of ISANA's National Safety Advisory Group for International Students in 2006. This group received support from the International Education Division (MOE). Its recommendations were described as 'important work' by the then Minister of Tertiary Education (Hon Dr Michael Cullen, August 2006, p7) and were noted by the Universities Australia 2006 position paper (*Enhancing the student experience & student safety*, June 2009, p.8). The collaborative principle guiding the proposal is drawn from groups that have successfully brought cross-sector solutions to issues relevant to international students and ethnic minorities:

Asian International Student Safety Issues Focus Group (Auckland City)
Safer Students Campaign/Report-It Website, Canterbury
Nelson Safer Community Council
Asian Mental Health Service, Auckland District Health Board
Rotorua Safe Families Action Plan
Risk Advisory Assessment Committee, Victoria University Wellington

2. Council structure

The proposal for the first twelve months is for the initial focus to be on the tertiary sector, given the smaller number of institutions to liaise with, the pastoral challenges brought about by high student advisor-student ratios, and the advantages of establishing operating procedures with a smaller group. Two meetings a year are recommended, along with representation from the following sector groups:

Universities (student support manager)
ITPs (international programme head)
Universities Medical Directors
Student Counselling
Police (senior detective and/or liaison officer with an ethnic community portfolio)
Compliance Operations (Department of Labour)
Asian Mental Health (Coordinator)
Asian and/or Arab community group
MOE
Convener (ISANA executive member)
PTEs/ language school & secondary representative to be added
Secretariat

At the meetings representatives for each sector group will present a summary of key trends or concerns (circulated prior to the meeting) which are then addressed in a roundtable

discussion. A report containing a bullet-point summary of key concerns and recommendations is subsequently prepared and reviewed by Council members following the meeting. This is then disseminated to IS support teams within educational institutions and relevant government agencies. Importantly, international student advisors are provided not only with updates on live issues concerning international students, but also with strategies for addressing emergent issues in terms of delivering appropriate advice to students.

Following the first year, a brief report will be prepared for stake holders including MOE International Division, Police and heads of IS support teams. This will review shared points of concern and clarify recommended strategies for addressing them. In order to gauge the efficacy of the reports, the Council will seek feedback from the IS support team recipients prior to and following orientations for new international students, with a view to relaying this feedback to stake holders.

The importance of tailored, timely advice to new students

Does the provision of timely advice to students on entry make a difference to students' behaviour during their first months in New Zealand? It is difficult to make a case based on empirical evidence because of the paucity of research in this area. However, the benefits of providing clear, sound advice to incoming ISs appear self-evident. Added to this is the coal-face experience of NZ Police and the cumulative testimony of IS support practitioners.

Firstly, the experience of the NZ Police is instructive. The Police place significant emphasis on the early provision of information for the purpose of crime prevention in ethnic communities. Jessica Phuang attributes the drop in kidnappings and extortions following the Chinese student troubles in 2003 to Police initiatives that included targeted, tailored advice to new ISs (personal communication, July 9, 2010). And in a letter addressed to the author of this paper, Detective Sergeant Geoff Scott observed that 'Police initiatives, such as the placement of liaison officers into the main centres, have impacted positively on the level of trust in Police. This has led to an increase in the reporting of offences against Asian students, particularly in Auckland' (personal communication, December 12, 2006). One of the primary tasks of the Asian liaison officer is to connect with and advise new students. The drop in kidnappings can also be reasonably attributed to the collapse in Chinese student numbers after 2003, but the Police experience points to the success of a strategic attempt to inform students. This success is, however, limited by and dependent on the individual education provider's preparedness to engage with Police initiatives.

Secondly, international students can and do respond positively to tailored support and advice when it is provided. Early engagement and input can achieve a level of rapport and trust between the student and the host institution. This was demonstrated in a study which identified strategies that IS advisors employed to help Chinese students overcome barriers

to accessing support (Pickering and Morgan, 2004, p.7). For instance, IS advisors who showed a 'warm heart', communicated clearly and made themselves readily available provided bridges to students who needed help. Pickering and Morgan believed such strategies could be applied to non Chinese students as well. Another study by Commons and Gao (2005) noted that a new group of foreign students who attended an academic orientation programme at Victoria University were more aware of the academic skills required for successful study than another group who didn't receive the same orientation.

A weekly, one hour orientation presentation offered to foundation students at Victoria University in their first trimester regularly yields immediate feedback from students. For example, when matters pertaining to lending money are raised by the university's Police liaison officer during the personal safety presentation, students have demonstrated a willingness to respond with questions and personal anecdotes (B. Murfin, personal communication, July 19, 2010). And in one instance, when students were advised not to bring illegal parcels into the country, a newly arrived Vietnamese student responded by saying that he was approached by a stranger at Singapore airport to take a parcel to New Zealand for him. The problem of importing drugs was recently highlighted in Study Auckland's student safety DVD (*Safety in the city*, 2010).

If IS support personnel readily identify with and demonstrate insight into culturally-specific behaviours, students are more likely to be more inclined to seek help. And Patrick Au believes it is 'fundamentally important' to provide targeted advice and information to Asian international students 'from the very beginning' in order to assist their psychosocial adjustment to the New Zealand environment (personal communication, July 26, 2010).

It is also important to note that the New Zealand Government believes the effective communication of information to new ISs makes a difference: 'International students are [to be] welcomed, receive effective orientation guidance, and exemplary pastoral care and learning support' (Ministry of education, 2007b). Targeted advice for new students from HPD countries is integral to effective orientation guidance: 'service-shy' students can at least be fore-warned and fore-armed about live issues on entry. And if the message is repeated and reaffirmed alongside reports of successful interventions, it is more likely to infiltrate and inform the IS peer groups which the majority of IS student seek solace in.

Conclusion

ISSAC is a first step in addressing student vulnerability in the sector. At the very least, Council reports would provide a rich vein of data that would not only regularly update frontline IS support teams but also researchers. What's more, the Council meetings and dissemination of reports would only require a modest funding injection. A broader change is needed, however, to help provide a platform for more stable student numbers in the future. Generic marketing has attracted the lion's share of Education New Zealand Trust's levy money, and this has impeded the development of IS support. From a supply-side perspective, there is an urgent need for ear-marking a proportion of levy money for

professional development so that research can be undertaken to support evidence-based practice across the sector. The declining amount of levy money available for professional development has attracted comment in the past. In a letter to the then Minister of Tertiary Education Michael Cullen on the 12th of September 2006, Judy Turner, Deputy Leader United Future NZ, raised concern at the increasing amount of levy money being spent on generic marketing at the expense of investment in the pastoral care of students.

Finally, a number of the issues identified in this paper involve Chinese students. China remains international education's dominant export market and is projected to be a depth market for the foreseeable future (Norman, Wu & Leung-Wai, 2009). Added to this, the experiences of Chinese students in New Zealand has broader relationship implications with a trading partner that is poised to be the dominant player in the world economy in the twenty first century.

The international education sector in New Zealand will stand or fall on the experiences of its fee paying foreign students, and the prospect of the sector building on a strong foundation is diminished if the status quo is maintained. Export education – the country's fifth largest foreign currency earner - is as strong as its weakest point, and that is the vulnerable students identified in news headlines. Targeted support for these students is indispensable to the health and growth of the industry.

Bibliography

Allen, S. (2003, August 13). Chinese warn: NZ a school for crime *Stuff* Retrieved July 23, 2010, from http://www.knowledgebasket.co.nz/helicon.vuw.ac.nz/search/doc_view.php?d1=ffxstuff/text/2002/STF/08/13/052302/doc00004.html

Asian organised crime recruits young students *NZ Herald* (2009, October 22). Retrieved July 21, 2010, from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10604807

Au, P. (2009, August). *Addressing the mental health needs of the Chinese international students*. Paper presented at the ISANA NZ Conference, Christchurch.

Senate Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2009), *Inquiry into the Welfare of International Students*, Retrieved 26 July, 2010, from http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet_ctte/international_students/report/report.pdf

Barker, M. (2005, April). *Excell Training for Trainers*. Course presented at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

Beard, C. (2008, November). *The 3C Model: communicating the important stuff to international students*. Paper presented at the ISANA Conference, Auckland, New Zealand.

Binning, E. (2010, August 6). Focus on students, not dollars, sector told *NZ Herald* Retrieved September 14, 2010, from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10663973

Commons, K., & Gao, X. (2005, October). Do academic orientations make a difference: a preliminary assessment. *Journal of the Australia and New Zealand Student Services Association*, 26.

Demand side market research: China and Vietnam. (2007). Final Report presented by Colmar Brunton to the Education New Zealand Conference, 8-10 August, Sky City, Auckland. Retrieved March 5, 2008, from http://www.educationnz.org.nz/indust_researchreports.html

Enhancing the student experience & student safety: A position paper. (2009, June). *Universities Australia*, p.8. Retrieved July 23, 2010, from <http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/documents/publications/Student-Safety-Position-Paper-July-2009.pdf>

Education New Zealand (2011). Retrieved November 10, 2011, from <http://www.educationnz.org.nz/resources/research/>

Goodyear-Smith, F., & Arroll, B. (2003). Contraception before and after termination of pregnancy: can we do it better? *Journal of the New Zealand Medical Association*, (116) 1186. Retrieved May 16, 2008, from <http://www.nzma.org.nz/journal/116-1186/683/>

Gregory, A. (2007, February 26) Chinese students' gambling leads to loan sharks, illness *NZ Herald*.

Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's consequences: international differences in work-related values*. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, J. & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organisations: Software of the mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill, pp.57-59.

Hon Dr Michael Cullen (31 August, 2006). *Speech notes: Speech to International Education Association Conference*. Rutherford House, Pipitea Campus, Victoria University, New Zealand.

Hunt, T. (2010, February 18) Chinese scholars return to NZ *The Dominion Post*

Kiong, E. (2006). Asian students turn to hard drugs *NZ Herald*. Retrieved July 29, 2010, from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10396806

Leenher, C. (2011). *International students in New Zealand: A review of recent international education literature*. Paper presented to the ISANA NZ annual conference *When bad stuff happens*, June 17, 2011, Waipuna Hotel & Conference Centre, Auckland.

Leung, J. (2004, October). *International Students –Trends and cultural considerations*. Presentation at the Central Districts Police Asian Community Course, Palmerston North.

Li, Mingsheng (2007). *The impact of the media on the New Zealand export education industry*. Paper presented to the Inaugural Australia-China International Business Research Conference: International Business in the Asia-Pacific Region: Challenges, Opportunities and Strategies for Research and Practice, University of International Business and Economics, 22-24 September, Beijing.

Li, Mingsheng (2008). *Keeping them safe: A review of Chinese students' safety issues in New Zealand*. Paper presented to ANZCA08 Conference, *Power and Place*. July, 2008, Wellington. Retrieved August 20, 2008, from: <http://anzca08.massey.ac.nz>

Mak, A. S., Westwood, M.J., Ishiyama, & F. I., & Barker, M. C. (1999). Optimising conditions for learning sociocultural competencies for success. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 23 (11), 77-90. Retrieved August 21, 2008, from ScienceDirect database.

Marginson, S., & Sawir, E. (2011). Student security in the global education market. *Social Policy Review*, 23, 281-302.

May Eriksen, A. (2010, March 10) Students charged after \$3m drug bust *NZ Herald*. Retrieved July 21, 2010, from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10631030

McCurdy, D. (2003, September 13). Hard lessons *Dominion Post*. Retrieved July 23, 2010, from http://www.knowledge-basket.co.nz.helicon.vuw.ac.nz/search/doc_view.php?d13=ffx03/text/2003/09/15/doc00088.html

Ministry of Education. (2003). *Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students – Revised December 2003*. Wellington: Ministry of Education

Ministry of Education. (2004). *The experiences of international students in New Zealand: report on the results of the national survey*. Retrieved July 23, 2010, from http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/15288/040604-final-report-for-printers.pdf

Ministry of Education. (2006). *Final report for the evaluation of the Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students: Report for the Ministry of Education*.

Retrieved December 12, 2006, from <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=index&indexed=6666%20>

Ministry of Education. (2007a). *The experiences of international students in New Zealand: report 2007 on the results of the national survey*. Retrieved May 15, 2008, from <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/international/22971>

Ministry of Education. (2007b). *The International Education Agenda*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

New Zealand Government (2011). *International education Leadership Statement*. Retrieved November 10, 2011, from <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/international-education-leadership-statement-released>

Montgomery, C. (2010). *Understanding the international student experience*. Hampshire, England: Palgrave MacMillan.

Mori, S. (2000). Addressing the mental health concerns of international students. *Journal of Counseling and Development JCD* 78 (2), 137. Retrieved March 7, 2008, from ProQuest database.

Norman, D., Wu, J., & Leung-Wai, J. (2009). *In-depth country research – China*. Retrieved July 26, 2010, from <http://www.educationnz.org.nz/resources/userfiles/file/research/in-depth-China.pdf>

Operation nets 70kg of 'P' ingredient Stuff (2011, May 5). Retrieved July 28, 2011, from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/crime/4967099/Operation-nets-70kg-of-P-ingredient>

Pickering, J., & Morgan, G. (2004). *Barriers and Bridges to effective pastoral care support and counselling of Chinese international students*. Retrieved July 26, 2010, from <http://cunningham.acer.edu.au/dbtw-wpd/textbase/ndrie/ndrie147821.pdf>

Safety in the city: Safety tips for international students studying and living in Auckland city (2010) Auckland City Council [DVD].

Statistics: Foreign fee paying student statistics by market 1998-2006. Retrieved July 31, 2008, from http://www.educationnz.org.nz/policy_stats.html

Stevens, R. (9 August, 2010). *Speech notes: Speech to Education New Zealand Conference*. Christchurch Convention Centre, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Students used as drug mules *Stuff* (2010, February 26). Retrieved July 21, 2010, from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/crime/3376318/Students-used-as-drug-mules>

- Tan, L. (2009, March 6) Koreans seek more support for students *NZ Herald*. Retrieved July 22, 2010, from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/education/news/article.cfm?c_id=35&objectid=10560253
- Tan, L. (2010, February 27) Chinese students lured to become sex workers *NZ Herald*. Retrieved July 21, 2010, from http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10628739
- Third man charged after Chinese student's killing *Stuff* (2010 June 4). Retrieved July 21, 2010 from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/crime/3774698/Third-man-charged-after-Chinese-students-killing>
- Third man charged after Chinese student killed in New Zealand *People's Daily Online* (2010, June 4). Retrieved July 21, 2010 from <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/7012045.html>
- Tse, S., Wong, J., & Cha, P. (2007). Needs and gaps analysis: Problem gambling interventions among New Zealand Asian peoples. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 5, 81–88. Retrieved July 23, 2010, from <http://www.springerlink.com/content/t2722h061j8n0332/>
- Ward, C. The A, B, Cs of acculturation (2001). In Matsumoto, D. (Ed), *The handbook of culture and psychology*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press (pp. 411-445).
- Ward, W., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2001). *The psychology of culture shock*. Hove, East Sussex: Routledge.

Proposal

To form International Student Support Advisory Council (ISSAC) for the purposes of: (i) collating, critiquing and disseminating data that is relevant to the welfare and safety of international students undertaking study in New Zealand; (ii) providing succinct, practical guidelines for addressing emergent pastoral care issues, principally to international student (IS) support staff on the front line; (iii) and developing a national, cross-sector approach which forges closer, strategic collaboration between education providers, police and government agencies.

November 2011

1) Executive Summary of Proposal

In brief this proposal seeks the establishment of the International Student Support Council (ISSAC) in order to:

Identify areas of shared concern in relation to the welfare of international students in New Zealand, with an initial focus on student health and personal safety.

Provide a mechanism by which education providers, police and government agencies develop a co-ordinated cross-sector approach to international student (IS) support, taking in regional and national perspectives.

Circulate cross-sector updates on emergent international student (IS) issues to student support personnel on the frontline.

Provide recommendations to education providers and government agencies which focus on broadening the scope of cross-sector collaboration beyond front-line support.

2) Background to the proposal

ISSAC is a proposal that originated from grassroots experience and provides a mechanism for offering practical, co-ordinated support for international students beginning their studies in New Zealand. The outline for the proposal was included in an ISANA briefing paper to the Minister of Education in May, 2009.

The following cross-sector groups provide templates for action at a national level:

Asian International Student Safety Issues Focus Group (Auckland City)
Safer Students Campaign/Report-It Website, Canterbury
Nelson Safer Community Council
Asian Mental Health Service, Auckland District Health Board
Rotorua Safe Families Action Plan
Risk Advisory Assessment Committee, Victoria University Wellington

3) The need for a national, cross-sector advisory group

- (i) Education New Zealand began promoting a *NZinc*. approach in 2009.
- (ii) In 2006, ISANA's (cross-sector) National Safety Advisory Group for international students (NSAG) recommended a nationally co-ordinated, cross-sector approach to IS support.

- (iii) The *Universities Australia Action Plan for Student Safety* is being implemented to provide a national, collaborative approach to IS support in Australia. This was in response to negative publicity and high level concerns expressed by the Indian and Chinese governments about the safety of their students in Australia.
- (iv) According to the Colmar Brunton report *Why New Zealand?* presented to the Education New Zealand conference in 2007, New Zealand's unique strength is the international perception that it is a safe study destination. This perception has been compromised in the past, with significant consequences for the sector, according to Mingsheng Li's paper *The impact of the media on the New Zealand export education industry* published in 2007. The effect of media reports on perceptions of Asian students in New Zealand is also noted by Butcher, McGrath, & Stock in their paper *Once returned, twice forgotten? Asian students returning home after studying in New Zealand* (2008).
- (v) Evidence-based models for effectively informing and supporting new international students are lacking, and little research is being undertaken to remedy this. This appears to be the immediate challenge for IS support personnel, given the cultural and linguistic challenges facing the majority of incoming students, particularly long stay students.
- (vi) Increasingly complex pastoral care cases are testing individual institutions' capacity for providing an optimal level of care for their international students.

4) Support for the proposal

ISANA NZ began circulating the proposal in 2010. The concept was first endorsed by the ISANA NZ executive and ISANA members at ISANA NZ's annual AGM in August 2009. To date, individual international programme heads in the university sector, the ITP International Directors group and NZUSA have expressed support for ISSAC. A member of Universities Medical Directors describes ISSAC as 'a very sensible proposal' and a recently retired secondary school principal suggested ISSAC was a proactive student support mechanism that was overdue.

5) Proposed functions of ISSAC

1. Exploit the strategic advantage of New Zealand's small size by kick-starting a national cross-sector approach to IS support.
2. Assist education providers in delivering clear, pertinent information to incoming students, with an initial focus on personal safety and health.

3. Generate ‘broadband’ efficiency in terms of connectivity between education providers and across sectors, with the two-fold purpose of (i) circulating fresh cross-sector reports on IS support issues, and (ii) mitigating historical, institutional and logistical barriers to collaboration.
4. In conjunction with the initial focus on health and safety, develop holistic, cross-sector perspectives on areas of ongoing concern such as: IS mental health, unwanted pregnancies and restricted access to sexual health care, prostitution, gambling, and culturally-specific harassment such as pressure to lend or give money or import illegal drugs.
5. Provide assistance to IS support professionals who work in isolation.
6. Support the Code Office’s work by helping to identify and promote best practice frameworks relevant to front-line IS support.
7. Develop the sector’s capacity for responding quickly and efficiently to ‘live’ IS welfare issues.
8. Provide a regular source of qualitative data for education providers, government departments and research centres, such as the Centre of Applied Cross Cultural Research.

The above functions include proposals outlined in the NSAG recommendation to the Minister of Tertiary Education in 2006. The Universities Australia position paper *Enhancing the Student Experiences & Student Safety* (June 2009) noted the work of NSAG in its discussion of the care of international students in New Zealand.

6) Meetings

Initial Consultation

The intent is to consult representatives within the university, ITP, PTE and secondary sector, representatives of student health care and counselling, Police, Compliance Operations (Department of Labour), international student groups and ethnic community representatives. Their views on (i) live IS welfare issues and (ii) the merits of the ISSAC proposal will be canvassed, along with recommendations for Council members.

These views will be used to fine-tune the objectives of the group, provide context to various pastoral issues, and shape the structure and intended goals of the Council’s meetings.

Meetings

Two meetings a year are proposed. At the meetings representatives for each sector group present a summary of key trends or concerns (circulated prior to the meeting) which are then addressed in a roundtable discussion. A report containing a bullet-

point summary of key concerns and recommendations is subsequently prepared and reviewed by Council members following the meeting. This is then disseminated to IS support teams within educational institutions and relevant government agencies. Importantly, international student advisors are provided not only with updates on live issues concerning international students, but also with strategies for addressing emergent issues in terms of delivering appropriate advice to students.

Following the first year, a report will be prepared for stake holders including Education New Zealand, MOE International Division, Police and heads of IS support teams. This will help clarify the function of ISSAC, identify shared points of concern and establish best practice strategies for addressing them. This report will give particular attention to feedback from front line IS support teams, particularly their views on the value of ISSAC assistance.

7) Members on the Council

It is recommended that the need for representation on the Council is balanced with the need for functionality during the first 24 months. An initial focus on the tertiary sector is proposed, given the smaller number of institutions to liaise with, the pastoral challenges brought about by high student advisor-student ratios and the advantages of establishing operating procedures with a smaller group. For the first meetings, therefore, it is proposed that members represent the following:

Universities (student support manager)
ITP (international programme head)
Universities Medical Directors
Student Counselling
Police (senior detective and/or liaison officer with an ethnic community portfolio)
Compliance Operations (Department of Labour)
Asian Mental Health (Coordinator)
Asian community group and/or Arab community group
MOE
Convener (ISANA executive member)
PTE/ language school & secondary representative to be added
Secretariat

8) Author of proposal

Chris Beard is a member of the ISANA New Zealand Branch Executive and is a senior teacher/student advisor on Victoria University's Foundation Studies programme. Chris began teaching ESOL in 1992, English for Academic Purposes in 1995, and Academic Writing and NZ Literature at foundation level in 2001 and 2007 respectively. He holds a Masters in Arts (Humanities), a postgraduate diploma in Second Language Teaching, a diploma in pastoral care, and is an accredited ExcelL Intercultural Skills trainer. He has experience teaching in private English language schools and in the tertiary sector, principally at three institutions: International Pacific College, University of Canterbury and Victoria University. Chris first began

supporting students in a pastoral capacity in 2001, and in this embedded advising role he gained first hand experience assisting at-risk students while liaising with student health providers, police, and government agencies. He has presented papers at ISANA conferences, lead specialist IS support workshops and convened the National Safety Advisory Group for international students (NSAG) in 2006. From 2006 to 2010 Chris sat on the Risk Advisory Assessment Committee at Victoria University of Wellington. In 2008 he developed the 3C Model; a framework that provides orientation planners with practical guidelines for informing and supporting new international students. Victoria University has won multiple best practice awards at Education New Zealand conferences.

9) Limitations of proposal

The recommendation is for the Council to be small in size (see page 5) for the first 12-24 months with an initial focus on tertiary to allow for smooth start up. This will limit representation to some extent, although education providers will remain informed through Council reports and broader representation is anticipated beyond the first twelve months. Further, a co-ordinated approach to IS support is contingent on institutional support and cooperation, so care will need to be taken in canvassing stakeholders. There appear to be few reasons, however, why Council reports and advice would not be welcomed by education providers and government agencies, and response to the concept so far has been overwhelmingly positive.

10) Features of this proposal

1. Practical, cost effective and timely – with a clear focus on front-line service.
2. Identifies and addresses gaps in the provision of clear information and support for new international students, particularly English as Additional Language students who lack confidence in accessing services.
3. Provides a mechanism by which to promote Goal 2 in *The International Education Agenda*:

International students are welcomed, receive effective orientation guidance, and exemplary pastoral care and learning support.

4. Signals a proactive approach to international student support which is likely to be viewed favourably by the students' parents and embassies.

For communication relating to this proposal please contact Chris Beard in the first instance.

Contact information: Telephone 04 463 9757 (work)
Email: chris.beard@vuw.ac.nz