

Principals of Good Practice for Enhancing the International Student Experience Outside the Classroom

ISANA
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International students living in Australia encounter a wide range of challenges.

Some are relatively straight forward and others are more complex.

Stakeholders play a key role in helping international students negotiate these challenges to ensure that their experience is rich and rewarding.

The future of international education in Australia may be determined as much by the student experience outside the classroom as by the quality of the educational experience.

DEEWR commissioned ISANA to conduct research on good practice outside the classroom, as part of the Study in Australia 2010 initiative.

ISANA contracted Associate Professor Christopher Ziguras and Dr Aramiha Harwood from RMIT to conduct the research.

International students were consulted in relation to the issues that formed the basis of the research.

Canvassed the views of those working in the sector in order to identify a set of good practice principles for international student support services.

An extensive literature review was undertaken.

Detailed interviews with 30 people involved in key roles in international student support.

Initial findings were presented and feedback was provided before the final report was produced.

Key Findings

Level of support described during the interviews exceeded the minimum legal requirements.

This highlighted a gap between the levels of service documented and the minimum standards set out in the ESOS National Code.

The report identifies this gap and accepted good practice across the industry in nine areas of international student support.

Requirement for all staff to have a high level of training.

Extensive sharing of expertise.

Pre-Arrival Information and Advice

Provide comprehensive information on key aspects of student life in the relevant location.

Provide honest and accurate information about costs.

Ensure that agents provide sufficient and accurate advice to students.

Use multiple channels to provide a range of options for students to access information over time as required.

Pre-Arrival Information and Advice Comparison

Standard 2.1 requires students receive relevant information on living in Australia.

The Code also requires providers only use agents who provide accurate information about study in Australia.

Arrival and Orientation

Ensure that newly arriving students are able to be met at the airport if requested.

Provide information and support at the time of arrival in Australia.

Provide orientation related student life and educational culture in Australia.

Ensure students have ongoing access to orientation information.



Arrival and Orientation Comparison

The National Code mandates the provision of an age and culturally appropriate orientation program and stipulates the type of information - Standard 6.1.



Maintaining Supportive Social Networks

Support and encourage international students participation in dedicated social activities and networks.

Facilitate engagement between international and domestic students.

Facilitate engagement between international students and local communities.

Maintaining Supportive Social Networks Comparison

Standard 6.3 requires providers to ensure the opportunity for students to access welfare related support services.

Standard 6.5 requires providers to designate a member of staff to be the official point of contact.

There is no requirement for a provider to support international students to develop supportive social networks or facilitate social integration.

Accommodation

Support students to access a range of accommodation options, catering to different needs, locations and price ranges, including emergency accommodation.

Maintain close working relationships with quality accommodation providers and agents.

Provide advice to students entering into private lease agreements and support to students who have difficulties.

Accommodation Comparison – 18 years and over

Provide opportunity for students to access support services ..., including ... accommodation issues. No additional costs (Standard 6.1).

Gives no guidance about the nature and extent of these services either at time of arrival, or when a change is required, or when a student is experiencing problems in their accommodation situation.

No mention of relationship between education institution and accommodation providers and agents.

Accommodation Comparison – Under 18 years of age

Approval is required for accommodation requirements for students under 18 years of age (Standard 5.1). Often homestays used.

No standards are set for homestays or other accommodation providers who are approved.

No mention of relationship between education institution and homestay providers or other accommodation providers.

Provide support to students in finding and applying for employment, and advice on legal requirements.

No stipulation in the ESOS National Code 2007 in relation to employment.

No requirement to provide advice about legal requirements in relation to both their visa requirements and in relation to conditions of employment in Australia.

No requirement to provide information about employment opportunities and how to access them.

Ensure that convenient and culturally-sensitive healthcare services are readily accessible.

Ensure that vulnerable students are referred to counseling services that are sensitive to the specific needs of international students.

Ensure that students are aware of specialised healthcare services and resources that are available.

Visa requirement to have Overseas Student Health Cover for themselves and their families.

Provision of information on emergency and health services during orientation (Standard 6.1).

Do not address the need for culturally sensitive services.

Do not address availability of services for these students.

No mention of counselling services and the special needs of these services.



Finances

Provide financial advice.

Provide emergency loans and payment plans.



Finances Comparison

The National Code makes no mention of the provision of assistance for international students in managing their financial situation or providing direct financial assistance.

Provide 24 hour access to readily accessible emergency service with appropriately trained staff.

Maintain a critical incident plan that is broad enough to include a range of emergencies.

Maintain close working relationships with service providers inside and outside the educational institution and key stakeholders, such as consular offices and agents.

Provide support to students affected by critical incidents in their home country.

Standard 6.4 states that the provider must have a documented critical incident policy together with procedures that cover the action to be taken in the event of a critical incident.

Provide careers advice that caters for local and international pathways.

Prepare students for 'reverse culture shock'.

Assist graduates to maintain connections with alumni associations and fellow graduates.

The National Code does not require educational institutions to provide any particular services to students at the completion of their studies.



Where to find the Good Practice Guide?

www.isana.org.au