

Engaging new international students: An update of the 3C Model

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This paper asks whether communication gaps between new international students and host institutions in Australia and New Zealand continue to persist, despite the development of the international education sectors in both countries. One of the challenges facing the supply-side of export education is that robust measures for gauging effective pastoral care practice continue to be lacking. This is due in part to an absence of an academic discipline dedicated to international education as well as limited vocational pathways for front line practitioners. The sector is in need of its own academic discipline and until one is established, questions will remain regarding the efficacy of standard student support approaches, including measures for informing and advising new arrivals. Frameworks of practice can help to provide guidance to front line practitioners in the meantime, however. This paper presents an update on the 3C Model as an example; a theoretical framework used by Victoria University of Wellington of Foundation Studies to deliver tailored orientation information. The Model was first presented at the 2008 ISANA Conference and has been further developed by the Foundation Studies programme to effectively inform and advise its new international students.

The 3C Model encourages an evidence-based approach to communication that engages a broad international student audience, including students with entry-level English and the most cultural distance to negotiate. Each of the three Cs represents a strategy that facilitates tailored communication: (i) cross-sector intelligence; (ii) comprehensible input; and (iii) campus coaches. With reference to industry literature, cumulative experience and desktop research, a core course on the Foundation Studies programme (Academic Writing) delivers 45 minute lecture/workshop sessions over a 10 week period to implement the 3C approach. Essential welfare information is communicated in manageable chunks to newly arrived international students, and this information ranges from health and safety information to tenancy advice. The sessions are carefully chosen and reviewed to address live or emergent issues. The presenters represent a range of on campus and community services and are hand-picked not only for their experience with international student audiences but also for their communication skills. Quizzes are administered to assess students' comprehension and an experienced English as Additional Language (EAL) teacher monitors and modifies the English that is used. Quiz results indicate high levels of comprehension. The paper highlights the challenges of cross-cultural communication that international student support teams face and then describes in detail how each of the Model's three Cs are effectively incorporated into the Foundation programme's student welfare series.

Key words

International student orientation; Tailored support; Effective communication; Evidence-based practice