

## **The discipline embedded International Student Advisor: A collaborative model for academic and non-academic support and advisement for international students.**

1. Kath Lynch RMIT University, GPO Box 2476, Melbourne, VIC, 3001, Australia, kath.lynch@rmit.edu.au

### **Abstract**

This paper outlines the transformation of support services for onshore international students at an Australian university informed by the outcomes of qualitative research investigating the academic adjustment of Japanese students to an Australian learning environment. At the time of the study, academic and non-academic support for international students was the responsibility of one International Student Advisor (ISA) embedded in a large school. The findings and recommendations from the research coincided with the rapid increase in numbers of overseas students, and significantly informed the shift from a single advisor to a broader, more collaborative and holistic model of international student support. The factors impacting the academic adjustment of the Japanese students, a minority group amongst the wider international cohort, were many and diverse, including different language, learning and communication styles, distinct personal and professional cultural experiences and varied pathways and institutional expectations. The intent of this paper, however, is not to discuss these specific findings – they are well represented in the wider literature. Rather, the aim is to document the genesis and maturation of a collaborative approach designed to improve students' transition, engagement and learning experience, by involving the expertise of multiple academic and professional practitioners with the ISA in the role of facilitator. This model was deemed successful in terms of fulfilling the university's obligations to provide quality support to international students. It was also measured a success by many of the participants where collegiate understanding of each other's role emerged and a sense of belonging to a community of practitioners grew; a community with a shared goal – to connect and support their international students.

**Key words:** International students, student advising, collaboration, community of practice