

## **Collaboration with La Trobe University in providing services to international students at La Trobe Melbourne Navitas Bundoora Ltd**

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Collaborations with La Trobe University in facilitating student engagement had a long history with La Trobe University and its International College. When Navitas Bundoora Ltd was formed, and La Trobe University International College metamorphosed into La Trobe Melbourne, in 2010, it was negotiated between the two institutions that most of these collaborations should continue. They continued in a modified form, with a fee for most services or activities. Such engagements include careers, counselling, library use, sale of second hand books, membership of clubs, use of sports facilities and other activities to enhance student experience. One of the most successful collaborations between the two institutions has been in conversation sessions between international students from La Trobe Melbourne and domestic students enrolled at La Trobe University. This program has grown in size and intensity.

The conversation groups are held at present in the student common space area on level 4 at Sylvia Walton Building at La Trobe Melbourne. Each group is supposed to have one University student and five La Trobe Melbourne students. However, due to the popularity of these groups, the size of the groups has grown. Therefore, more groups have been created. A large group can have up to 6 La Trobe Melbourne students and four University students. Each session is for one hour, and two sessions are held daily.

The topics have been chosen by the University students, for example, Indigenous Australia and places in Victoria of interest to tourists. Each week a certain paralinguistic skill is introduced and developed by practice. If a La Trobe Melbourne student wishes to discuss their essay topic or receive feedback on their presentation, they may move to another quiet area on the same floor, with a La Trobe University student.

Feedback from students has registered that the fun element is the most enjoyable part of this exercise. There is a lot of laughter involved.

All La Trobe University students have been recruited via the careers@latrobe portal. Some of the students have worked on all three programs. When the present participants graduate, new LTU students are recruited to take their place. Police check and Working with Children check are required. Some students have professional references or testimonials but others do not as this is their first job. Most students ask a staff member from La Trobe Melbourne involved on these programs to become a referee for further employment elsewhere, especially after graduation.

The University students are of a similar age group as the La Trobe Melbourne students, and quite a few of them have studied abroad as exchange students. They are all very good at choosing and/or making resources to use in their interaction with LTM students, for example pictures, maps, graphs and photos. They were all given an hour's paid preparation/induction time before they started working on the programs.

All participating students from the University are paid at the hourly rate of casual general staff members of Navitas Bundoora Ltd.

During the presentation, an analysis will be presented of the conversation activity over the last five years. Initially, the presentation will outline the nature of the activity as it was designed at the beginning. After this, the presentation gives the reasons for its growth. The positive and negative aspects of the activity will be discussed as well. Finally, an attempt will be made to foresee the future of this collaborative activity between La Trobe University students and those of La Trobe Melbourne Navitas Bundoora Ltd.

The audience for this presentation could be any conference attendees who conduct such programs and would like to reflect on their history, or those who would like to start one. There are useful hints for everyone in this presentation.