



THE UNIVERSITY OF
AUCKLAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau
NEW ZEALAND

Providing a Robust Plan of Support for International Students

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ISANA
Te Papa
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Session objectives

- Discuss the implications of the current trend in tertiary education to increase the number of international students.
- Explore the provisions institutions make for international student support.
- Share my experiences of working with international students.
- Open the floor for feedback, questions and recommendations for the way forward.

The UoA Strategic Plan 2013–2020

- Objective 4: A diverse student body of the highest possible academic potential
- Objective 5: A student body growing at 1% per annum with increased proportions of **international**, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students

Your experience

- What does your institution provide in terms of language enrichment and academic support for international students?

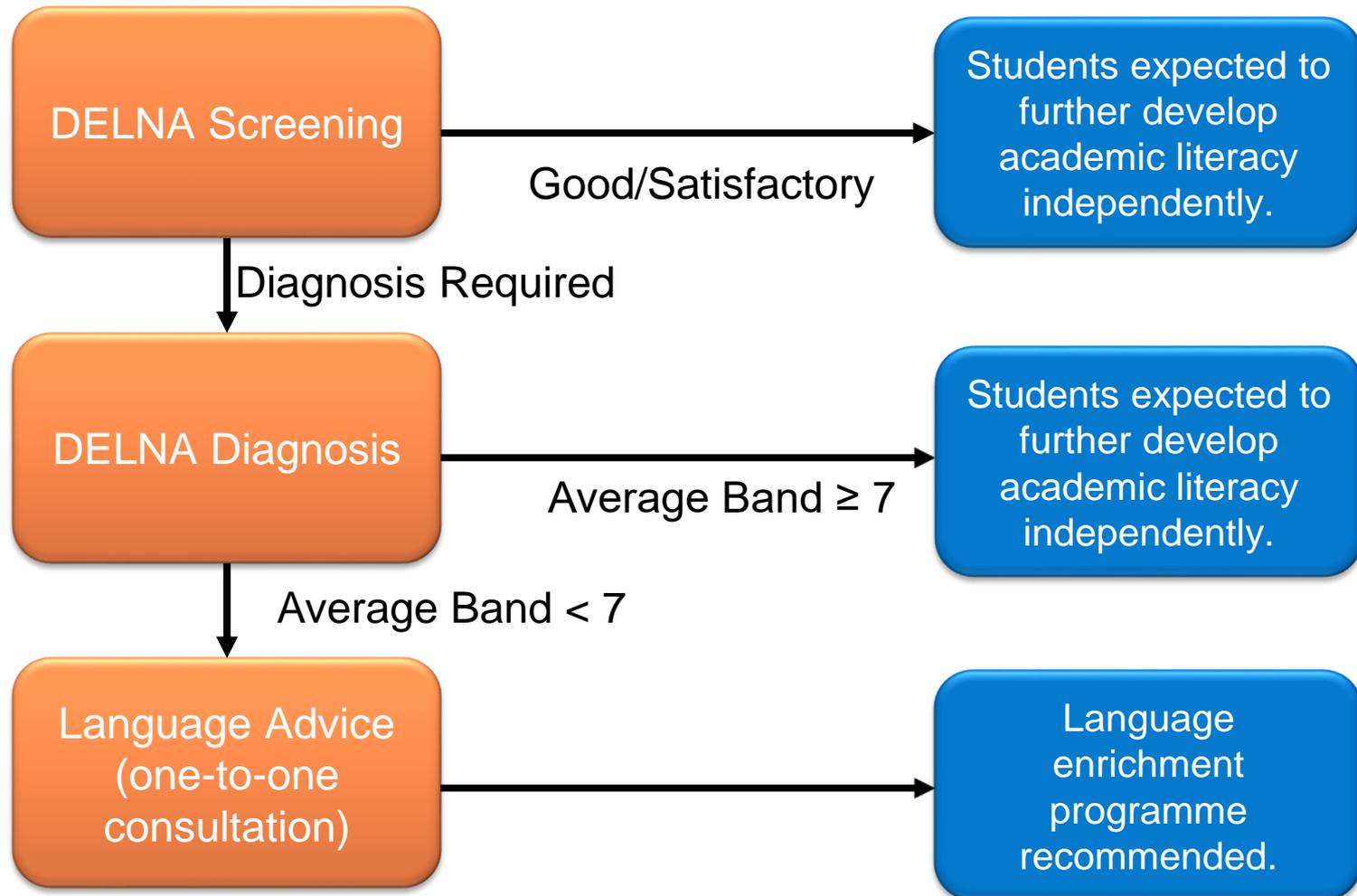
For example, is support:

- Centralised and/or faculty-based
 - Embedded and/or generic
 - Online and/or face-to-face
- Where are the gaps?

Your experience

- What support is available to enhance international students' wellbeing and integration into your institution?
- What career support is available?
- Who can students go to if they have issues?
- Where are the gaps?

The DELNA Process



The FMHS experience

Because of a programme review for the Masters of Public Health, it was decided that an evaluation of the support provided to international students at the School of Public Health would be carried out.

It included:

- A brainstorming session
- Surveys
- Interviews

Brainstorming Session

Issues identified:

- Students had trouble meeting people/reported feelings of isolation and homesickness;
- Academic/English Language support was mostly located on city campus so they felt disconnected from it;
- Lack of clarity around DELNA and support services and how they are linked;
- Confusion around academic integrity and what is/is not acceptable at the University;
- Too much information provided at once during orientation so it was overwhelming and did not feel timely.

Changes after session

- Explained the services offered by ELE more clearly, particularly the Speaking groups and on-line resources.
- Invited Libraries and Learning Services staff to run a specific session for this group of international students.
- Ran a support session on academic integrity and referencing.
- Set up study groups/arranged rooms so the international students could meet and study together.
- Invited FMHS Postgrad Student Association to come and tell students about what it offers.
- Met with some of the students individually to discuss clubs/activities that may help them meet people and provide opportunities to speak English.
- Potluck for international and non-international students at the School.

Surveys/Interviews

- At the end of the semester, 17 students filled out surveys and six were interviewed.
- Positives:
 - ✓ They felt more aware of the support available on campus.
 - ✓ After the Libraries and Learning Services session at Tamaki, two of the students said they felt more motivated to engage with the services even though they were on city campus:
 - “At orientation, I don’t know why I need to go to some workshop, but after the first one I attended, I thought wow, this is so helpful.”
 - ✓ One student mentioned how useful the Speaking groups at ELE were:
 - “I feel, I don’t know how to make a conversation with new people, but in the conversation group it was quite easy because of the topics.”

Issues that still existed

- Some students (4) still had the belief that English Language Enrichment and Library and Learning Services were for “bad” students.
- There was a belief held by two students that DELNA was for “non-native” speakers and could not be helpful to them, so they had not followed up after the diagnosis.
- In the survey, most students (11) said too much information had been received too early.
- Some students (7) identified a lack of time to be involved in activities and to access support.
- All students identified a lack of chances to meet students who had been in the programme longer.
- In the interviews, when asked about questions/ doubts they still had, 3 Masters students reported confusion around research topics and finding a supervisor.
- Lack of knowledge of who to go to about finding a job.

Changes for 2016

- Orientation was split over 2 days: one prior to the semester starting, one two weeks into the semester.
- A more in-depth and positive spin on DELNA at orientation before students took the assessment.
- Explanations about support from ELE on both orientation days.
- Invited returning students to come to the orientation lunch and meet new students.
- Organised a session on writing research proposals for Masters students, followed by a session on finding a supervisor (run by academic staff).
- Presented information about new CDES workshops that were being run for international students.

Moving forward in 2017

- A buddy/mentor system to pair each international student with a non-international student (including planned activities).
- Meet and greet with academic staff.
- Afternoon teas for all faculty and students at the School so they can mingle.
- Closer work with key members of academic staff to identify any struggles with language early on.
- A workshop run by an academic staff member on thesis writing targeting Masters students.

Some useful references:

Carter, S. & Laurs, D. (Eds.). (2014). *Developing generic support for doctoral students: Practice and pedagogy*. Abingdon: Routledge.

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Hanaver, D. & Englander, K. (2013). *Scientific writing in a second language*. Anderson, S.C.:Parlor Press.

Read, J. & von Randow, J. (2016). Extending post-entry assessment to the doctoral level: New challenges and opportunities. In J. Read (Ed.), *Post-admission language assessment of university students* (pp. 137-156). Switzerland: Springer.

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