

INTEGRATION & INTERACTION

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Lights, Action, Rolling:

A DVD delivered to students that encourages integration and creates an opportunity for interaction to occur in a positive way before students arrive into Australia.

Description of Presentation

The goal for all institutions is to look at ways to develop integration and interaction as soon as a student is engaged at the offer stage. The Course guides are colourful the resources of reading materials are a plenty. However, in many cases the majority of students that we are trying to connect with have English as a second language. So with the plethora of information we send before they arrive, just how much are they reading? What are they truly absorbing? How accurate are their expectations?

It is these questions that we were asking at Victoria University that prompted us to do some of our resources a little differently. To support the transition of all international students we took up the challenge of creating a DVD that captures and portrays real life experiences of Students from the time they leave the plane and arrive in Melbourne. We decided these experiences could be better delivered through the medium of a DVD as this information cannot always be captured by reading arrival and travel books alone. This DVD also provided a means for interaction with the student's support network in their home country.

What was born was the Life at VU DVD was born and you can preview it from the link:
[http://www.vu.edu.au/International/Life at VU/index.aspx](http://www.vu.edu.au/International/Life_at_VU/index.aspx)

When we are successful in presenting at this conference we would present the DVD that runs for 16 minutes and then focus on the following:

1. How we engaged current international students to be involved in the project.
2. The importance of involving Academic staff in delivering information regarding a students expectations
3. The importance of building a rapport and establish a connection with international students prior to their arrival.
4. The importance of removing fears that some students may have of the daunting flight and going through the Australian Customs experience
5. Address safety in a positive way while identifying and de-mystifying the fears that people may have with their own countries authorities and infer that it could paralleled in other countries. We wanted to re-assure students and create a positive component and strengthen our relationship with the Victoria Police.
6. Creating a tool that benefits the student and their families
7. Measuring its success amongst measured student feedback

We believe this resource has removed some of the difficulties that international students are challenged with when they are adjusting to the academic, social and environmental aspects of their transition experience when arriving in Melbourne and VU. This experience is not unique to our institution it is common for any arriving international student.

This tool encourages students to embrace their new experience and they can engage with their fellow students who are talking to them and offering some helpful advice.

We are hopeful that we can share our story of what it was like developing such a tool and also share anecdotes of how successful this tool has been for the staff at Victoria University in minimising the questions that students asked before this resource was used.

Samantha Thompson – Short Biography

I did my undergraduate degree at Northern Illinois University in the USA whilst there on a golf scholarship and my golf handicap for those in the know was one. I then completed my Masters degree in Counselling/Psychology at the same institution and this is a great strength in my current role. After returning to Australia I commenced my career in the area of International Education and enjoy the challenges and the changing environment to which we are all exposed to.

I have been in the education industry in Australia in different capacities for about 10 years including: Residential Settings and within various International education portfolios including Marketing, Study Abroad and Student Exchange. After VU went through a restructure I joined the newly developed International Student Support team. I have had an eclectic exposure to international education and have benefited from all these experiences.

I have an empathy and passion for international students and after walking the walk I can now assist in talking the talk and creating resources and services to help international students.