



About ISANA: International Education Association

ISANA: International Education Association is the national professional association that represents people working with international students in Australia. It is a well-respected membership body that has provided services to international students and the professional staff who work with them since 1989. ISANA is a voluntary organisation, comprising a National Council, State and Territory branches and a general membership, with all office bearers elected by members. ISANA has a robust branch incorporated in New Zealand with whom activities, events and resources are shared. The association plays a key role in contributing to improving international student experience through policy and practice.

ISANA members work in universities, colleges and schools as well as with public and private organisations, making it unique as a cross-sectoral body engaging effectively with people working directly with students. Members are employed in administration, student support, compliance, policy, teaching and teaching support, in management and international education leadership roles.

ISANA has a dynamic relationship with groups whose responsibilities connect with international students' experience. It has a demonstrated record of collaboration with relevant organisations such as student representative organisations, government agencies, accommodation providers, police, fire, health, insurance, emergency services, community organisations and guardians. It is therefore responsive to issues that arise such as cultural adjustment, academic progress, health and wellbeing, safety and security, as well as the needs of younger students.

ISANA has always taken an active interest in the development of government and institutional policy, and the impact of policy on international students. ISANA contributed significantly to the 2004 Evaluation of the ESOS Act 2000 prior to the development of the current National Code. It has engaged with government through a number of taskforce and consultative groups, contributing to dialogue relating to international student matters. Recently, this contribution has included submissions to the following:

- Draft Strategy for International Education (2015)
- Roundtable consultations (2014) for the Productivity Commission's Research Paper on International Education Services, April 2015
- The *Review of the ESOS Act* (2014)
- Joint Review of Border Fees, Charges and Taxes (2014)
- *Stronger, simpler, smarter ESOS: supporting international students*, (2010) (Baird Review)
- The *Senate Committee Review into the Welfare of International Students* (2011) and the
- *Strategic Review of the Student Visa Program* (2011) (Knight Review).

ISANA SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY: WORKFORCE FOR THE NEW ECONOMY

ISANA's submission focusses on the role and potential contribution of international students studying in Australia to Australia's future labour force. As recently announced by the Minister for International

Education, Sen. Richard Colbeck, 498,155 international students chose to enrol across all Australian education sectors in 2015 contributing nearly \$20 billion to the Australian economy in 2015. More Chinese students in particular are choosing to study in Australia with a rise of 13.3% in 2015 to 136,097 students or 27.3% of all international students in Australia, the highest of any nationality. Australia attracts students from over 120 countries. Other nationalities with high numbers of students include India, Vietnam, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Brazil, Thailand, Nepal, Indonesia and Hong Kong.

Looking beyond the numbers

International students, while a significant cohort in many of Australia's institutions, are not generally seen as potential contributors to Australia's future as an innovative and creative nation, although there is an emerging recognition of the contribution international student make to the knowledge economy in some areas. However, to a large degree, international students are commonly regarded as providers of much needed cash for education providers who wish to supplement Commonwealth funds for teaching and research and infrastructure maintenance and development.

Internationalization of the Curriculum

International students come with academic history in diverse disciplines particularly international postgraduate coursework and research degree students. - are we harnessing this asset? Or are we considering the history and prior learning experience of international students to be negative inconveniences in the Australian education of international students? In a globalized world, Australia cannot consider its education system as being exclusively superior to others, especially our Asian neighbors where the majority of our international students come from. Increasingly, in international tests, Australian students perform below those of our Asian neighbors.

International students come with academic history in diverse disciplines particularly if they are international postgraduate coursework and research degree students. Our question is: Are we harnessing this asset, or are we considering the history and prior learning experience of international students to be negative inconveniences in the Australian education of international students? In a globalized world, Australia cannot consider its education system as being exclusively superior to others, especially among our Asian neighbors where the majority of our international students come from. Increasingly, in international tests, Australian students perform below those of our Asian neighbors ([2012 Programme for International Student Assessment \(PISA\) report](#))

The challenge for course developers is to design a curriculum that serves global rather than national priorities, which does not rely on prior knowledge of local provenance, where students from all sources share equal opportunities for advancement in an inclusive learning environment, and which serves to introduce stay-at-home students to the demands of an increasingly multinational world of work. (*Internationalization of the Curriculum: Designing inclusive education for a small world* <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03098260120110368>)

Betty Leask's Australian Government-funded National Teaching Fellowship in 2010-11 entitled 'Internationalization of the Curriculum in Action' is an excellent study in how Australian universities can imbed IoC. Professor Leask's Fellowship focused on the active engagement of academic staff across different disciplines and institutions with internationalization of the curriculum. (<http://www.ioc.global/about.html>)

Federal and State governments could apply such research findings and provide incentives to education providers to ensure that there is internationalization of the curriculum and opportunities for internationalization of the campus culture through funding for small projects and making these a demonstrated requirement of TEQSA and ASQA compliance.

Developing employability skills for the 21st Century

Institutions are not preparing students for employment. There is a need to imbed employability skills into the curriculum. Professional year programs have had to be developed to address this deficit, however their effectiveness is not guaranteed and for international students who already pay large sums for tuition fees, this additional year appears to many students as an indictment on the quality of

their degree. It is also questionable whether international students are undertaking the professional year to gain employability skills not provided through their degree or whether students are paying for an additional 5 points to contribute to their PR application.

Institutions need to understand what employability skills are needed and imbed them into the curriculum. Extra curricula activities have limited impact because students struggle with study and work life balance. Work integrated learning (WIL) must be embedded in curriculum so that students apply what they learn and graduate with some practice. Our HE institutions are expert in introducing concepts, teaching and assessing knowledge but fail to provide the opportunity to students to put these into practice in disciplines where WIL is not a course accreditation necessity. Therefore students in Business, the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and some Sciences are disadvantaged compared to students in Health Sciences, Education and Engineering. For international students, it often comes as a shock when they learn that WIL is not embedded. Even where WIL is provided, students undertaking Engineering courses, for example, are also expected to set up their own final year work experience before they are deemed to have graduated. This is particularly difficult for international students who do not have the local industry knowledge or networks. HE institutions should and must facilitate these WIL experiences for all students, particularly international students. The part-time and casual employment undertaken by many students for experience and income, such as in hospitality, retail and through voluntary work, could be used by employers and education institutions in partnership as a basis to increase the status and practical of a range of employment and skills already being developed in the workplace.

Higher education institutions should actively provide and promote cross discipline studies to encourage the generation of ideas and to bring together expertise to build businesses together. As disciplines become more focused, students often miss out on the opportunity to develop a more rounded education. Consumer demand has led to fewer opportunities to introduce cross discipline courses and students often query why they need to pay for a business course in an engineering degree or a social sciences course in an IT degree. HE institutions should be encouraged to do this with an emphasis on cross-cultural development and understanding.

International students receive an introduction to Australian culture and society but the same cannot be said for domestic students who do not receive any cross-cultural awareness training. Without this, interaction across the cohorts remain challenging and an opportunity to learn about the cultures, society and needs of the world is lost.

Regulations

With international students on campus, Australia has the means and opportunity to train, teach and develop the next generation of leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators of our international partners. There are enormous benefits in establishing future collaborations in business, research and innovation by working with our international students on campus, including their representative groups. This enhances the value of the education experience, the personal and professional development of the student body, as well as the profile and attractiveness of the enrolling institutions. In not addressing the barriers to employment both during and after study of these graduates in Australia, we stand to lose their potential contribution in the work place. Regulations could be reviewed in order to facilitate better collaboration and flexibility for such partnerships to develop.

Both Federal and State governments should take the initiative in promoting the benefits of hiring international students in the workplace. These students add to cultural competence and skill development for domestic students. Astute employers will appreciate the connectedness with foreign customers and markets that this brings to their business. This in turn will lead to the development of innovative and creative business solutions that meet the needs of export markets.

There remains ignorance about the post study work visas amongst employers. More information provided directly to business groups is important. The Department of Immigration and Border Protection needs to reinstate their Community Liaison work and expand it.

There is a perception amongst employers that only Permanent Residents and citizens can be hired and this perception is also the case amongst graduate students. Leading the way through educational programs addressing real and perceived 'red-tape' and highlighting the benefits of employing international graduates should be Government agencies. With Federal agencies, it should be possible for students to work in voluntary capacities or even in joint funded projects where there are businesses, local governments and federal agencies involved. Regulations that create barriers and disincentives to these initiatives should be reviewed.

Collaboration with industry

Incentives for innovative solutions that address the suggestions above should be developed, including collaborative pathways with industry.

International students as graduates provide Australia with the opportunity to develop innovative projects with export markets in mind by encouraging partnerships. The Federal Government should consider facilitating international projects through tax incentives and direct project funds, which are competitive, with appropriate safeguards but without onerous requirements. These partnerships would be demonstrated by not limiting applicants to funds on the basis of an Australian citizenship and actively encouraging young entrepreneurs from the international student graduate pool to apply.

The Australian Government could also consider providing incentives for a venture capital pool of funds where contributors could claim tax breaks. It is extremely difficult for startups to gain seed funding evidenced in the many cases in the media of enterprising innovators seeking crowd funding or going to the United States to sell their ideas and enterprises. If it is difficult for Australian citizens, how much more difficult is it for international graduates who may only be on a temporary resident visa?

Many interesting ideas are developed when creative like-minded people come together. Unfortunately for many students—international and domestic, networking opportunities to meet and share ideas are often restricted to academic conferences. With limited funding, conference attendance is often a luxury and unattainable for many students.

There should also be facilitated opportunities for researchers and students to meet with Small Medium Enterprises (SME) and larger businesses. Again, these opportunities do not exist as a norm. Students are unable to meet with businesses unless they are facilitated through their HE institution through a Careers Networking event (or through the initiatives of some international student networks), where the main purpose for students is often to seek employment. SMEs would benefit from opportunities to meet with talented students, including international students who could participate as an onshore sample for export markets

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Quality Assurance

As stated earlier, international education is a major contributor to the Australian economy. Unfortunately, it has also led to the establishment of poor quality education providers. In allowing private providers to flood the market with low-cost, high-volume approach to course construction, the quality of training has become diluted. This has the danger of tarnishing the reputation of good international students from ethical and reputable private providers as well as Australia's public universities in the eyes of the public and industry in particular.

When the perception of international students is poor in the eyes of industry and business, it can lead to a reluctance to engage with the graduates. ISANA strongly recommends that quality audits continue to be conducted by ASQA.

List of recommendations

Federal and State governments could apply such research findings and provide incentives to education providers to ensure that there is internationalization of the curriculum and opportunities for internationalization of the campus culture through funding for small projects and making these a demonstrated requirement of TEQSA and ASQA compliance.

Work integrated learning (WIL) must be embedded in HE curriculum so that students apply what they learn and graduate with some practice.

Higher education institutions should actively provide and promote cross discipline studies to encourage the generation of ideas and to bring together expertise to build businesses together.

There should be an emphasis on cross-cultural development and understanding for all enrolled students.

Regulations that hamper employment both during and after graduation of international student graduates in Australia could be reviewed, in order to facilitate better collaboration and flexibility for partnerships to develop with international students and their representative groups.

More information on post-study work visas provided directly to business groups is important. The Department of Immigration and Border Protection needs to reinstate their Community Liaison work and expand it.

The Federal Government should consider facilitating international projects through tax incentives and direct project funds, which are competitive, with appropriate safeguards but without onerous requirements. These partnerships would be demonstrated by not limiting applicants to funds on the basis of an Australian citizenship and actively encouraging young entrepreneurs from the international student graduate pool to apply.

The Australian Government could also consider providing incentives for a venture capital pool of funds where contributors could claim tax breaks.

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ISANA strongly recommends that quality audits continue to be conducted by ASQA and TESQA to ensure the high quality of our education providers and confidence in our graduates.

Conclusion

ISANA as an active professional network is in a privileged position to observe problems, evaluate programs and initiate solutions, particularly in relation to the experiences of international students. Our collective historical knowledge and capabilities can be used to further develop ideas in areas we

have outlined above. In particular, we believe there are strategic advantages to develop and facilitate the conditions needed to better understand the employment-study conditions our international students face, and, as many of our members operate in organisations other than education institutions we are well equipped to advise on these matters. We look forward to contributing further in this area and to the Inquiry.

Mary Ann Seow
National President
ISANA International Education Association