



1 December 2022

Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
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Submission to an Inquiry on International Education

Leaders Institute is a registered Higher Education Provider - CRICOS No 03732F and operates campuses in Brisbane and Sydney delivering undergraduate programs in Accountancy and Agribusiness for the past 4 years. The Institute has applied to the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency for accreditation of postgraduate qualifications in Agribusiness and Agricultural Information Management. Most of our students attending the Institute are from an international background including the Asia sub-continent.

During the pandemic, our student numbers declined by over 50% and the current contemporary issues affecting visa application approvals continue to significantly affect the Institute's capabilities in delivering core programs to a sizeable number of international students. During the pandemic, we were assisted by the Federal government with a grant to improve our online learning and student registration capabilities, broadening our agent base to include Africa, Middle East, South America, and European countries to attract international students and strengthen our policies and practices in supporting international students.

Leaders Institute would like to make the following submission to the Inquiry regarding our efforts to attract international students, learning capacity and some of our learnings in dealing with governmental processes in delivering our core educational business.

1. ***Challenges associated with the loss of international student numbers because of the significant disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and effective measures to attract and retain students to Australia.***

The following issues affected the operations of the Institute during the pandemic –

- Student in foreign countries could not obtain visas to this country which required us to provide online intensive courses for a brief period. Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA) approved the Institute to deliver online course but not to deliver educational delivery hubs in foreign countries, although we were able to provide support centres with computer resources due to the countries, we were dealing did not have reliable computer and network systems.
- Many of the students after completing the initial intensive courses decide to accept visas to other countries who were accepting international educational students e.g., Canada, England, and America.



- The remaining students did obtain visas to Australia, but the entry was through Sydney and many of the students did not transfer to Brisbane which was, at the time, the centre of our face-to-face delivery services.
 - The government funding which Leaders Institute received did provide much better online delivery services to overseas and local students using the upgraded Moodle system which was excellent for both lecturers and students.
 - However, our expansion into other countries to obtain international students e.g., Africa, Middle East, Europe and South American have been restrictive to the processing of visa applications. Our agents have indicated that students prefer is to accept education into other countries where access is more readily available.
 - The COVID 19 pandemic and visas processing issues have affected our financial capabilities and due to the Risk profiling approach adopted by TEQSA and CRICOS, the Institute has managed to continue to date. However, our organizational budget has been curtailed so we have not been able to expand operations or introduce new innovations during this 3-year period.
 - Students' physical and social wellbeing has also been impacted by government policies, including their ability to obtain financial incomes, food relief, medical support including access to vaccinations and most of all their social networking capacity. This has been a concern for the Institute to address workplace opportunities, food supplies and a 24/7 support network where students can contact us and others to address their needs.
2. ***Online innovations in education delivery and potential opportunities to strengthen the sector's resilience.***
- The Institute is an approved face to face delivery service provider, however with TEQSA approval, online services which the Institute had developed were able to be used. The government funding was used to improve registration systems, the online system including the use of social media infrastructure such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams by both students and lecturers.
 - Certainly, there is significant scope for TEQSA to broaden their approval for commencing Institutes to access online services and face to face delivery for students both in a domestic and foreign situation.
3. ***Initiatives to ensure positive international student experience and support pathways to build their skills and contribute to Australia's prosperity.***
- Certainly, a critical issue raised by all international students is the need for greater capacity in the visa processing system to further their education or obtain employment opportunities in Australia.
 - There also appear, based on our work integration learning contacts, for more work experience and a need for direct linkages from their work experience and into the work employment opportunities in Australia.
4. ***Opportunities for international education to support strategic and foreign policy objectives.***
- There appears to be an excellent opportunity to link foreign policy on education, work opportunities and potential collaboration with other countries into the future.



For example, India believes that food shortage will be a critical issue for their country within the next twenty years and international students from their country and work experiences within our agriculture industry will not only support their country's food requirements but will create business agriculture opportunities for Australia.

Conclusion

Leaders institute believes that international education can be significantly enhanced by improved visa processing and simplification. Access to large Asian based agricultural markets over the next twenty years will be important to Australia's economic opportunities. Furthermore, international students will provide the Australia government access to highly qualified people for our workplace and improve our educational status to the surrounding countries.

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