

UNSW



UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

SUBMISSION

**SENATE INQUIRY INTO THE WELFARE
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

August 2009

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Introduction

The University of New South Wales (UNSW) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry.

The University of New South Wales (UNSW) is one of Australia's leading International Universities, a foundation member of the Group of Eight (Australia's leading teaching and research universities) and Universitas 21 (an international alliance of 21 research intensive universities in thirteen countries.)

UNSW has a large and diverse international student population (in excess of 10,000) representing over 130 countries. International students have featured as an essential part of the University's life over 50 years, and now approximately one in five students come from overseas.

With the growth of education as an export industry, international student fees represent 14% of UNSW's total revenues. (Source: DEEWR (Finance 2007 – Financial Reports of Higher Education Providers) as quoted on p92 of "Review of Australian Higher Education Final Report – December 2008).

Recognising the importance of international students to UNSW and its development as one of Australia's leading international universities, UNSW was at the forefront in establishing dedicated services to assist international students to enjoy and benefit - from their time at UNSW and in Australia. We have continued to review and adjust our student support and development strategies in order to meet the changing needs of students.

UNSW is committed to ensuring all international students have a rich student experience. A world class education is provided. Additional professional and personal development opportunities are made available. Students are welcomed into the UNSW community and are assisted to establish social networks and to experience Australian culture at its best.

Today the support needs of international students at UNSW are coordinated through a range of integrated professional services within the Student Development portfolio. Specialist units (such as Student Equity and Disability Unit, Graduate Research School) provide services to specific cohorts of international students. ARC, the UNSW Student Association, offers a range of free services to international students who choose to join. Faculty specific support programs are provided at School and/or Faculty level. At the heart of all of these services sits the International Student Services (ISS) unit.

ISS provides a range of programs to assist international students succeed in their studies and to have an enjoyable and productive experience during their time in Australia. These services begin before students leave their home countries with the provision of detailed information to assist in their preparation for life in Australia, and continue with on-arrival services such as airport reception, accommodation assistance and orientation, together with social activities throughout the academic year. Students often report that the extra curricula activities are a key ingredient of

their experience as an international student. This small unit provides the public face of support; it has a pivotal role in facilitating the connection of international students to both the full range of professional services available, and just as importantly to ensuring that students have the opportunity to engage socially with other international students and local students.

It is the expectation that all professional and academic support staff within the Student Development Units (Learning Centre, Counselling Services, Careers and Employment, International Student Services) providing support and academic enrichment services will have highly developed cross cultural skills. International students make heavy use of all of the support services. Indeed international students are over represented in the numbers of students utilising each of the Student Development support services. Generic and tailored programs are offered.

The Submission

This submission addresses the terms of reference from the perspective of our international students, the UNSW providers of student support services and a number of academics and other Faculty staff with a particular interest in the welfare of international students. Both the offices of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) and Registrar (with responsibility for student welfare and the student experience) and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, International (with overall responsibility for international recruitment and the management of key relationships with external stake holders) provided important contextual information that has assisted in the development of this submission.

The Welfare of International Students

In gathering data for this submission Faculties, student associations and support units were invited to participate. Some provided written information; other representatives agreed to be interviewed. These included but were not limited to International Student Services (ISS), International Office (IO), Graduate Research School (GRS), Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) and Registrar, The Learning Centre (LC), Careers and Employment (C&E), Counselling Services, Student Equity and Diversity Unit (SEADU) and Student Associations, Academic staff. It is interesting to note that whilst responses were received from the majority of those contacted, only one response was received from a student association. It would seem that within the UNSW context while students have individual concerns and issues, these have not been elevated to the association level for a formal approach to the University.

The richest evidence and material for this submission was provided by our international students themselves. We utilised a number mechanisms for obtaining input from as many international students as possible. These included:

1. The ***Through the Eyes of Students: International Student Experience (2009)*** project. This major study was undertaken by a Student Development Project Team June-August 2009. The study collected and analysed information from new and current international students in order to understand and evaluate their experiences at UNSW and within the

wider community. Information was collected via three streams (online survey, peer to peer in-depth interviews, and focus groups). Over 2500 international students participated. This represents 25.5% of UNSW's international student body. The draft report of the study is included as an Appendix (A). 'Hearing' the words of international students provides an undiluted source of rich information.

2. **IS-Forum Email Survey**-International Students registered on the IS-Forum were surveyed by email on areas relevant to the Inquiry. Over 50 students responded.
3. Review of the **UNSW Survey on Safety Issues and Living Costs of International Graduate Research Students** (a joint initiative of IO and GRS). This survey was conducted during June 2009. 3800 international post graduate students were surveyed (799/22% responded).
4. An additional focus group (addressing the Inquiry's issues) was conducted with representatives of the 30 **International Student Peer Mentors**. These are international students who volunteer to be trained to assist ISS with the activities and programs for international students, including mentoring of new students. They are a committed, informed and articulate group able to 'value add' to the programs of ISS and other service providers. They are very committed to improving the experience of international students.

The information collected from all the sources outlined above (students and non students) has been collated and inserted into topic areas set down in the terms of reference. Some information applies to more than one of the topic areas. Recommendations are included at the end of each section.

Student Safety

UNSW takes seriously the responsibility to ensure the safety of all its students. A number of key strategies are in place. Some of these relate to all students; others are specifically tailored to the needs of international students. Two key University Safety Committees are in operation. The PVC (Students) and Registrar chairs the Safety Committee with representatives of students, service providers and campus Security. This group has been in operation since the beginning of 2009. It aims to develop practical measures that increase student awareness of safety. It also provides a forum for students to raise safety concerns.

The second committee is jointly convened by UNSW Security and the local Police Command (as part of the NSW Community Precinct Safety Committee). Senior staff and police are actively involved; this committee aims to address criminal activity against students and staff (for example, robbery, assault) both on campus and within the local region.

Educating international students on safety issues is undertaken by both the UNSW Security team and ISS in a coordinated way.

UNSW Security

- Conducts safety awareness lectures for groups of staff and students.
- Provides pamphlet drops around UNSW 'hot spots' to promote safety on and off campus.
- Operates a shuttle bus service (between 7pm-11.30pm).
- Operates Unibeat cycle escorts (6pm to midnight).
- Outside the hours of operation for the shuttle bus service and the Unibeat service, an individual escort service available.
- Personal Safety Handbook downloadable from <http://www.facilities.unsw.edu.au/safety-security/security-services/unibeat-escort-services/>

ISS Safety Program

To address the issue of safety on campus and in the community at large, ISS:

- Arranges for visits by representatives from NSW police force to present workshops in safety awareness and self-defence during Orientation.
- Safety is raised extensively during the (AST) *Arriving, Surviving and Thriving* seminars which are held during Orientation, when students are informed about the wide range of support services available on campus.
- A surf education program 'The Science of the Surf' (www.scienceofthesurf.com) is run on behalf of ISS by Dr Rob Brander.

In addition Student Development supports a Safety Week (Week 3 of Semester). ISS, the Student Association, the Safety Committee and UNSW Security collaboratively feature 'safety' for a week as an awareness raising strategy.

During Safety Week, ISS facilitates the following activities:

- Presentation by Waverley Lifeguards on Beach Safety at UNSW, followed by a practical talk at Bondi Beach and a BBQ.
- Presentation by Randwick Council Community Road Safety Officer on practical road safety (pedestrians/cyclists/drivers).
- Presentation by UNSW Security and Eastern Suburbs Crime Unit on strategies for personal safety and self defence followed by an introductory self defence class for those who sign up.

UNSW Service Providers Perspectives on Safety

Safety is a key concern of service providers. Information is provided in many formats (see above) and repeated throughout the year. Service providers are aware of the challenge of making this information accessible. Recent discussion has highlighted the difference between providing information and ensuring that students digest it. UNSW is looking at ways of ensuring students see the information as relevant to them (before safety is a personal concern). A new initiative recently

funded by the PVC (Students) and Registrar is a project that will undertake to convert some of the material of the various safety workshops into online modules that can be accessed at any time. Discussion has commenced re whether completion of these modules will be made 'compulsory' for all students.

Students' Perspectives on Safety

Service providers report many examples of international students who have raised concerns about how they have been treated by Police officers when they report crimes. Other students have reported that they have not reported crimes to police as they had heard they would not be treated respectfully, nor would anything happen as a result of the reporting. This feedback has been given to the relevant Area Command with an assurance that cross cultural issues will be further addressed in training.

None of the surveys or focus groups conducted found safety to be a priority issue for UNSW international students. In further questioning, however, it became clear that most students could in fact relay stories of muggings, violence, feeling unsafe.

See excerpt below containing feedback on safety by the focus groups in *Through the Eyes of Students* (pg 12-13)

'3.5 Student Safety

Although *Student Safety* was not high in the order of priority, once the discussion began on the issue, many stories emerged of first hand experiences with:

- **Muggings**
 - *'I've been mugged here on Alison St, by 2 guys, they asked me for my money, they wanted my watch and my cell phone, I don't know what happened. I refused to oblige to them and was about to dial 000. In the meantime two people just went by a car. So I just ran across the road, and I just shouted out to them. By the time I turned back, these two guys ran away. Then I came to know of this – I'm not sure if you guys know if this – 000 first goes to a call centre, from there they redirect it to the police or the ambulance. There should be a direct number to the police also.'* – Postgraduate, India
- **Violence**
 - *'After all these attacks on Indian students, even though I have never personally felt any kind of risk, except for a couple of times in the workplace, during the phone calls, there is a certain amount of fear, that I don't go out in the night. I don't feel safe. Even though I have not been personally attacked, but just from whatever I have heard and whatever I have seen, I just don't go out at night. [FACILITATOR: Even around Ashfield, the area that you live?] No. Not alone, never alone. Or very rare occasion I would go out, but only to go to Woolworths or whatever, but I would not go out at night.'* – Postgraduate, India
 - *'I was not very serious with that but In 1 night there were 4 guys and it is very shame that we were chased by 10 young guys, I think like, 17 to 25 years old, like that, I thought that they may be drunk. And we just walked very fast and run to Belmore Street.'* – Postgraduate, Iran
 - *'With housemate on bike, rode past 2 drunk guys, yelled and tell us to "go back to our home town" – I don't think it's a case of racism, more that they are drunk. It's our fault to ride on the footpath but they should not have thrown us off [our bikes].'* – Undergraduate, Singapore
- **Australian Drinking Culture**
 - *'Some rowdy people on the street, I think they don't have any particular issue with anybody, just whoever is walking they just want to [harass]'* – Postgraduate, India

- *'The Australian crowd is very rowdy, there are so many drug addicts on the roads, and trains are not safe.'* – Postgraduate, Bangladesh
- *'What I experienced at night, when you are out for a movie or something, or stay late, when you are at the station to catch a train or something, mostly you see the people at the station are drunk, completely out of their conscience. Fortunately I've never been attacked, or intimidated, but whenever such kind of people are not in their senses and completely drunk you don't feel safe. You feel like just getting into the bus or the train. The only thing is that at that time there is nobody around, or there is no security around to make sure – because those people are drunk and they are not in their senses, they can potentially do anything. There are potential risks and threats like that.'* – Postgraduate, Pakistan
- **Racism**
 - *Some rowdy people on the street, I think they don't have any particular issue with anybody, just whoever is walking they just want to [harass] – Postgraduate, India*
 - *I worked as a telephone interviewer from a private company, on some rare occasions I get people say "you bloody Indians don't call me back again!" which actually hurts you know. If they think that most of the call centres have been outsourced in India, it is because it is expensive to run them in Australia. The way that they are inviting university students here is the same way that we are inviting work in India, through call centres or whatever. So they need to understand that it's far beyond time where the whites are superior. If you think of the IQ level or any other things, Indians or Pakistanis, or blacks or anybody, everybody has the equal calibre. It has been a very rare occasion when somebody has done [that]. Mostly I have had supportive people but in some occasions when you say "fuck off, why are you calling from India", that's stupid!* – Postgraduate, Pakistan
- **Late Night Classes**
 - *'Because the post grad student always take classes at night, I live on the top of the hill, and it is very quiet, there is no bus pass by, and after the class sometimes I catch a security bus but sometimes I should wait for a long time for it, because the timing thing. At night nobody pass by and I don't feel very safe there.'* – Postgraduate, China
 - *'Especially all post grad classes, go to late nights, if we can think of some way if you want to stay after that on campus, you can't find so much places to go there, there is only 1 rectory to go. You can't find any security on campus at that time'.* – Postgraduate, Iran
 - *'I classes go to 9 a lot of times and I feel there should be slightly more coordination between the bus service – the uni express bus – and class timing, because sometimes we have to wait for, like, half an hour something.'* – Postgraduate, India

Students across all focus groups also had third person experiences to share with regard to personal safety issues. These include incidents of muggings, eggs being thrown from cars, safety on public transport and safety after dark on campus and in the community.

- **Third Person Experiences**
 - *'My roommate got mugged twice near IGA, 2 girls say they want \$2 and when she says no, they reached in and took the purse. This was 9am, it was really public, with lots of people around.'* – Undergraduate, Pakistan
 - *'I had a friend who had an egg thrown at her by local people, from a car. Maybe it was discrimination?' – Undergraduate, China*
 - *'One of my friends had a laptop being robbed, he immediately called the help desk, the UniBeat, and the police rounded those people up. And the first thing the police asked these students – they were Pakistani students - was "did you happen to beat the other Australian fellow" because the people who attacked those guys were under 18 and it seems that under Australian law you are not supposed to put a scratch on those under 18 guys, and it's a big thing. It is very appalling - they even know who has perpetrated the crime, and the first thing they ask is did you happen to hit the guy, and you know when such things happen the first thing you do is shove them and defend yourself. The police seem to say when this happens you just put your thing down and walk away – that is ridiculous.'* – Postgraduate, India
 - *'Especially trains, if you go around after 5 or 6 there is nobody on the trains, after peak hours. I have a friend who got hit by beer bottles on his head and he was in a coma for 1 month and his family couldn't contact him for a month. The trains there should be more security.'* – Postgraduate, Bangladesh
 - *'To me they suggest is some Asian girls, they walk along on the street, there some robbery, some horrible. So I don't dare to go out even after 5 o'clock when it get dark. [M: on campus?] Maybe just around campus. When I just come a month later, I received a email, they say that during the week there were 9 robberies take place around campus, so I feel that is very unsafe. Just students walking down the street. Even one of my friends have suffered that. So I feel very unsafe.'* – AusAid student, China

- *'Recently there are several incidents which are very disgusting and appalling, Australian local people, especially young people beat up international students, especially Indian students. I think as a group, the international students our safety is not guaranteed by the government. [Facilitator: Do you feel safe on campus?] On campus it is alright, but around campus like Barker Street, Meek Street and Borrodale Street, not so much. Maybe sometimes the local people they will chase you and beat you up for fun, I already heard several incidents'. – Postgraduate, China*
- *'I heard from my friend that the crime rate in Sydney is reasonably higher than other cities so it makes me worry for me, especially when I have to work alone in the night around campus, especially in Anzac Parade, I heard a lot of frightening stories like when students went home alone, and they broke the laptop and there is Robbers. Anzac Parade I think is the most dangerous area in the night [SB: What about other areas in Sydney, do you feel reasonably safe?] not really, because I read some stories and also heard from my friends it's not reasonably safe in Sydney, you know, compared to Melbourne for instance.' - Postgraduate, Indonesia*

Many students brought up the recent attacks on Indian students as cause for concern, fearing that they too may become targets of violence directed on their nationality.

- *In the media they say a lot about Indian students, so sometimes we are very worried as well. At that time Indian students, but Vietnamese students perhaps it might happen. – AusAid student, Vietnam'*

Whilst none of the focus groups listed safety as a priority issue, it is an issue. Results from the online survey (with responses from over 25% of all UNSW international students) demonstrate this.

Students were asked two questions:

- Have you felt unsafe on campus?
- Have you felt unsafe in wider Sydney

18% of surveyed international students have felt unsafe on campus; 58% have felt unsafe within wider Sydney.

When the responses were broken down by country of origin, significant variations appeared. Students from Singapore were the most concerned with safety issues (31% on campus; 67% within Sydney) compared with students from USA (1.4% on campus; 22% within Sydney) who were the least concerned. Interestingly Indian students were less concerned with safety than the overall average (11% had felt unsafe on campus; 42% within Sydney).

The following excerpt from *Through the Eyes of Students* illustrates the variation across student cohort (depending on country of origin).

Top Six Countries of Origin by Participation Comparison Table

	China	Malaysia	Indonesia	Singapore	India	USA
Have you felt unsafe on campus?	Yes 18%	Yes 25%	Yes 17%	Yes 31%	Yes 11%	Yes 1.4%
Have you felt unsafe in wider Sydney?	Yes 62%	Yes 65%	Yes 54%	Yes 67%	Yes 42%	Yes 22%

Recommendations-Safety

1. International students' concerns re safety relate overwhelmingly to their life off campus. Without creating unnecessary panic, prospective students need to be fully informed about safety issues at various points in their 'journey' from prospective student to enrolled student. This information needs to be realistic and presented in clearly understood format. Personal safety strategies and the importance of reporting safety concerns should be highlighted.
2. It is within their life outside university that most students experience safety concerns. The host community needs to be assisted to become more welcoming of international students. An education campaign with a positive message about the benefits of the international student market should be undertaken. Strategies that provide local communities with the opportunity to interact with international students should be developed. The Lord Mayors Welcome Ceremony (within Sydney and other capital cities) should be expanded to local government areas where large numbers of international students reside.
3. It is the responsibility of education providers to ensure their international students have a full understanding of the various aspects of safety (from personal safety, to road safety, beach safety, how to report incidences etc). It would be helpful if funds were provided by the Federal Government to develop and maintain high quality online resources to assist education providers in this task. Given that all education providers have responsibilities in relation to safety, development of a single set of resources (that could be adapted to suit specific contexts) would be a more effective use of resources rather than providers developing their own. This could be done by way of tender; those providers (such as UNSW) who have well developed safety strategies in place could be funded to further develop their resources so they could be used by other providers. This would make it easier to ensure consistency in the provision of quality information and safety programs.
4. The NSW State Government should be encouraged to introduce travel concessions to international students. Students report that they often take the cheapest route home to save money. This at times exposes them to unnecessary risk.
5. It is recommended that the cross cultural training that both Police and Campus Security Officers receive be reviewed to ensure it contains strategies that will assist international students to report crime.

6. Education providers should be assisted to develop strategies (such as 'Safety Week' campaigns) that facilitate the creation of a culture of mutual responsibility; those students as 'good citizens' of their educational community are assisted to take some responsibility for their own safety and for that of their community (eg reporting crime, broken lights etc).

(i) Adequate and Affordable Accommodation

International students at UNSW are able to access a range of accommodation related services including:

- UNSW Housing Office assists students to find accommodation, through its off-campus listing service. It provides brochures on temporary accommodation close to UNSW, on-campus college accommodation and has information on a range of other options. The listing service has notices of vacancies for share housing, full board, room and facilities and some rental flats in the suburbs surrounding the University.
- Six onsite (catered) Residential Colleges on campus.
- Three student apartment blocks (self catering).
- New College Village (self catering).
- UNSW Village (self catering) - under construction and due to open in 2010.
- ISS operates International Housing Assist (ISHA) throughout all Orientation periods. **ISHA** is a dedicated personalised service offering advice and guidance on what to look for in private housing, as well as how to effectively use UNSW Housing Office's listing service. Experienced Housing Assistants accompany students when they inspect prospective rental properties. This is a free service.
- Prior to 2008 ISS also ran an air-port pick-up and temporary accommodation service for students at a standard fee of \$50. This service was phased out due to fewer students utilising it. Reintroduction of the service is currently under consideration following increased requests for this or a similar type of service. The current shortage of readily available reasonably priced accommodation in Sydney is the reason cited when requests for the service are received.

Service providers (ISS and UNSW Counselling Services) regularly assist students to resolve issues that in part relate to accommodation (availability, suitability, cost, retrieval of bonds). ISS welfare staff report that at least 40% of student issues relate to accommodation (such as exploitation by landlords, high rents, excessive bonds, overcrowded accommodation lacking facilities, sudden and excessive rent increases without warning).

Service providers attempt to address exploitation by providing Tenancy Rights information and workshops and by referring students to relevant external authorities.

Faculty respondents also focused on accommodation. One academic reported that “it is not uncommon to hear of students sharing 10 to a 2 bedroom apartment, an hour or more away from campus.” Another raised the issue of poor advice given by some education agents to students “raising expectations that the university would provide accommodation and hence they arrive with false expectations which in turn impact on their transition period.” One Faculty officer reported that “last semester..six students arrived at...expecting to be shown to their accommodation which their agents had told them the university would arrange.”

Students’ Perspectives on Accommodation

Each of the student surveys, interviews and focus groups nominated accommodation as an issue.

- The IO/GRS Graduate Survey on Living Costs found that 52% of respondents nominated accommodation costs as an area of difficulty.
- 20% of the IS email forum group cited finding affordable accommodation as a key issue.
- The Peer Mentors Focus group all agreed that the first question students they are linked with (pre arrival) relates to accommodation. They are concerned they are not well placed to provide the type of practical advice new students require. Each of the peer mentors could provide anecdotal reports of scams that target international students. Students spoke of internet scams whereby students searching for accommodation online before leaving their home country had been duped into paying substantial deposits (i.e., up to \$2000) only to find on arrival that the accommodation did not exist.
- *Through the Eyes of Students* project found that accommodation was an issue for the Focus groups as well as for the online survey respondents. Section 3.2 from the report is included below.

‘3.2 Accommodation

During all focus groups, sourcing accommodation, the process of renting and the expense of rent were discussed as major contributing factors to international student wellbeing. Many described situations of:

- **High Occupancy and Bedroom Sharing**
 - *‘In my house there is 8 rooms, all of us have some situation. There are around 15 or 16 people, there are 2 floors. We are sharing rooms. I think that maybe some people here will not prefer this sharing because this is not privacy, but in my case it is help me a lot, so I can save a lot of money for other issues’ – AusAid, Vietnam*
- **Renting Unconverted Spaces**
 - *‘The place where I’m living, there are 2 students living in the house and 2 in the garage.’ – Undergraduate, Pakistan*
- **Being Taken Advantage of by Private Landlords & Bond Issues**

- *'When I first transferred here, main thing I think International Students should be aware is that there is a legal aspect to accommodation, because sometimes we are so desperate we just go to web advertisement or notice board and get a number and call them, they ask for bonds and things like that, a lot of people get cheated in that way. I really had a problem in my first place here – I'm not a very nasty person I don't know why someone can hate me in that way'* - Undergraduate, Singapore
- *'[Renting from] individual landlords and I face all the problems with that, the owner didn't tell me that he is going to sell the property, it is three month that almost every week we are receiving inspections. And I don't have the right to say "no, do not come" [FACILITATOR: Because it's a private rental?] Yes. And I also don't have the right to say to my landlord, because they have access to my bond that I paid. [FACILITATOR: Rent paid with Rental Bond Authority, do you know your rights there?] No, that's the problem, I was going to raise that here, because lots of international students they don't know their exact rights here so they cannot manage themselves what to do in these cases.'* – Postgraduate, Iran
- *'Also if you apply with the private sector, it's not very clear what your rights as a tenant are. It would be useful to include a short seminar on tenancy rights for international students in the orientation program – just to boil it down to maybe 5 or 6 essential points.'* - Postgraduate, China
- *'I checked with housing services in the uni it is compulsory for everyone to get that kind of bond receipt but in many case we cannot get the receipt, the landlord just keep it, they do not want to report to the authority because they don't want to pay tax. For me it is quite suspicious when I pay the bond if I can be able to get back the whole amount. The landlord will give us some receipt with her signature but it is not official stamped by the authority.'* AusAid student, Vietnam
- **Rental Agency Issues**
 - *'One thing I found is you have a very nasty experience if you are going to the private sector and to agents as an international student to get accommodation. Once they know you are a student they turn you off. I don't know on what basis do they judge students and people. Because financially, we all come on loans so we will be able to pay the rent, but they don't seem satisfied with that.'* – Postgraduate, Hong Kong
- **Subletting**
 - *'You end up sub-leasing from a room from a guy who leases the house since you need some kind of income statement to go to a real estate agency, and it ends up more expensive when you sublease'* – Postgraduate, China
 - *'I was looking for a house with a friend here. We were just looking through the house, they just said "ok, this is the rent" But they didn't show us the original lease that goes with the landlord; they were not ready to show it, like "this is not done"; they make another lease for the sub-lease'* – Postgraduate, Bangladesh
- **Pushed into the Deep-End**
 - *'The Housing Office push you in the deep end... Just a wall [for advertisements], might go there and find out it is not even appropriate. It's just too much at that point. The places should be screened first.'* – Undergraduate, Pakistan
 - *'Also it is difficult to find ones that are clean, there are some disgusting places, even those that are advertised by ISS office, I think they should need to be more cautious in what they advertise.'* – Postgraduate, Singapore
- In the online survey (*Through the Eyes of Students*) an overwhelming 65% of respondents indicated that they would have liked to have known more about accommodation and living arrangements prior to arriving in Australia. In addition 37% of students nominated accommodation as an issue or problem since arriving in Australia.

Recommendations-Accommodation

1. That all education providers should be required to provide/organise temporary accommodation for students (if requested by students) in order to help students avoid becoming victims of scams and/or exploitation. This would go a long way towards ensuring that the stresses associated with relocation are minimised.

2. Students recommend that service providers should be obliged to ensure that any accommodation they advertise has been assessed as appropriate and reasonable (costs, facilities etc). This is especially important in relation to 'homestay' arrangements.
3. Results of our surveys and focus groups indicate that realistic information about accommodation needs to be provided to students before they arrive in Australia. A mechanism for ensuring accuracy of information provided by agents is required.
4. Consideration should be given to requiring service providers to demonstrate commitments to ensuring students are not exploited in relation to their accommodation. It is difficult for a student to successfully transition into university in a foreign land if their basic accommodation needs have not been adequately secured. Providers should be required to allocate resources to welfare services that ensure students find or are able to be placed in appropriate accommodation.
5. Adequate information needs to be provided about how to access help. It is not sufficient to provide this information at Orientation alone. Students need to be very clear about where and to whom they can seek advice at any time during their studies. Service providers should be required to actively reinforce this information at key times throughout the year as students will not always retain information they do not believe is relevant at that time. Providers should not be able to escape duty of care to provide support or information about support simply by providing this during Orientation (a culture of great customer service rather than 'tick the compliance' box.)
6. The establishment of an independent Ombudsman for International Students (at State level) would be a positive step. Such an Office could investigate accommodation grievances and afford vulnerable students another option.

(ii) Social Inclusion

UNSW has a long history of embracing a diversity of cultures. Our students are drawn from over 130 countries. Programs and policies that support social inclusion and cross cultural exchange have been important in ensuring a harmonious and inclusive environment.

Student Development units deliver a number of programs to facilitate inclusion including orientation programs, cultural transition assistance, social activities and academic preparation courses. In addition a comprehensive array of Peer Mentoring

Programs is available, both discipline based (which involves international and domestic students) and a specific International Students' Peer Mentoring Program.

Many areas/Units throughout the University provide opportunities for students to meet with other students. These events are sometimes promoted as social events. At other times they specifically call together particular cohorts of students (including international). Students have a lot of choice in relation to becoming involved with other students. Many international students make full use of these opportunities; others require more encouragement or assistance to do so. ISS provide a range of activities, social and developmental, in partnership with other Units (such as the GRS, the Learning Centre, the Counselling Services, the Careers and Employment Unit, the Student Association) that are unique opportunities for international students to meet other students and staff. A small cohort of students experience ongoing difficulties in establishing a peer social and support network. These students continue to be assisted with a range of range of social programs that teach social skills.

There is a renewed awareness of the need to facilitate opportunities for local and international students to meet outside the classroom. A Culture Club has recently been established to foster this interaction. The Club quickly became very popular and has now evolved into self-supporting reliant club with its own office bearers, all from different nationalities.

Student Development is currently investing in developing specific programs that enable local and domestic students to learn from one another and become adept at communicating with a diverse range of people. The PVC (Students) and Registrar is sponsoring a major 'Global Citizen' project that will further embed cross cultural competencies in the UNSW Student Experience.

Additional Comments by Staff-Social Inclusion

- Facilities (such as the gym) and some programs and social events have a cost attached to them. Staff report that many international students feel 'cheated' in being expected to pay for additional services especially those of a social nature as it is often these that provide opportunities to develop friendships. Staff report that international students often believe the full range of services and facilities should be available either for free (being included in the fees already paid) or at a greatly reduced cost. At present many students believe they cannot afford to participate in the social activities (due to cost) that would provide opportunities of engaging with local students. It should be noted that there are many free or low cost activities available on campus run by the Student Association and support units.

- Some staff (and students) have requested additional informal meeting places (equipped with microwave ovens and tea/coffee making facilities) as places for students to gather.
- Many School and/or Faculties provide facilities that enable students to interact informally. Faculty staff report these are well utilised and ‘provides an excellent opportunity for international and local students to interact.’
- One Faculty expressed the view that a reinstated student contribution fee could be targeted ‘to assist in supporting additional measures to further social inclusion’ and that this would benefit local and international students.
- One senior academic expressed concern over the lack of contact international students have with Australians within an Australian home. The academic reports regularly inviting international students ‘home for dinner’. For many “it will be the only time they have visited an Australian home even though they may have been here for a number of years.”
- Another academic commented about students choosing to live in areas that did not require the use of English outside university. It was suggested that ‘such enclaves...are not conducive to social inclusion and lead to a drop in English standards while an international student.’
- For another Faculty the way the University allocates resources (between different units) was seen as not always facilitating inclusive practices: “Central to the university’s ability to provide adequate international student support and facilitate social inclusion is the provision of basic study resources such as desks, computers and printing services. At present, the provision of these resources for postgraduate students is split between the GRS and the faculties.” And “Increasing the level of faculty-based study resources would help to integrate international students within a cohort of researchers. While by no means a complete answer to the issue of social inclusion, it would be a very useful first step.”
- Many staff (professional and academic) expressed support for any initiative that focuses on social inclusion. It was not uncommon to hear comments about the need for educational institutions “to come to grips with integration issues” as ‘highlighted by recent attacks involving Indian students.’
- A small number of staff commented that the impact of providing more accommodation on campus will be an increased concentration of international students “which would further make the notion of inclusion very difficult to

actualise". Comments such as these illustrate the complexities involved and the level of sophistication required to achieve good outcomes. In resolving a lack of onsite accommodation, it will also be necessary to ensure appropriate strategies are in place to foster social inclusion and prevent the development of enclaves.

Students' Perspectives on Social Inclusion

- Peer Mentors' Focus group identified a number of barriers to social inclusion. These include shyness, language barriers, lack of confidence in use of English, lack of familiarisation with 'slang', lack of access to Student Association activities due to non member status, the high cost of extra-curricular activities such as UniGym. This group also expressed concerns about the negative impact on social inclusion of programs in which enrolments consisted of high concentrations of international students.
- 20% of respondents on the IS-Forum email survey cited 'social inclusion' as a major challenge and something they would "like more of to enhance their international student experience."
- In the study *Through the Eyes of Students* it is evident that students had a mixed view on 'social inclusion' within the context of UNSW and in the wider community. The excerpt below (focus groups, peer interviews) summarises these mixed views:

3.6 Social Inclusion

International students had both positive and negative views on Social Inclusion at UNSW and in the wider community. International students tended to create networks with those of the same nationality and some found it difficult to move away from that comfort zone and engage local students. Positive experience included receiving help from local students, engaging in social activities and finding employment to breakdown the local/international wall. There was also an acknowledgement that international students need to be proactive in their approach to social inclusion.

- **Positive Interactions**

- *'Taught me how to write resume for nothing. They are very kind. – Undergraduate, China*
- *ISS is really good.' – Undergraduate, Pakistan*
- *'Best way is to not exclude yourself. It is very easy and comfortable to go back and hang out with someone from the same culture. The best and easiest way to [meet local friends] is to break away for awhile to get friends from the local, and learn the things they like to do. It's something new to yourself as well. If language is a problem, do an activity that doesn't need talking – like Sports!' – Undergraduate, Singapore*
- *'If you want to step into the society can do by part time job or volunteering, because I joined the running festival of Belmore 2008, I think it is a good way to let yourself get in with others, because you can chat with others, share your opinions, and they are interested in you because you are foreigner. Also you are interested in them because they can tell you lot of other things. So I think you can try a lot of things to make yourself included in society.'* – Postgraduate, India
- *'I think that's the only aspect I am satisfied as a post graduate student. Because for postgraduate, 80% of my batch is international students, so everybody is coming from different places. Even the*

teachers, you find a lot of international teachers. There has not been any problems [Facilitator: Have you been able to connect with local students as well?] Yes.’ – Postgraduate, India

- ‘Because I’m a PhD student here, when I came there is a GSA association, so the GSA student member, actually gave me quite a comfortable welcome. They introduced me to places and they took campus tours and also other activities, because I became a member of it, through that I was able to volunteer, for major events that GSA organised, and right now also an executive, after election, so through the student body it was very easy for me to penetrate, and integrate into the system. So social inclusion is not a major area of concern for me at UNSW.’ – Postgraduate, Pakistan
- ‘Yeah I think so, all friendly and ready to help; very helpful. I got two part time jobs, I think the companies I work for is very helpful too and the manager is supportive, it’s nice.’ – Postgraduate, China
- ‘I should add it is very interesting that my country is in conflict with other countries, but I have classmates here that they really help me, and it is really interesting to view that they see that my English is not very good, sometimes he comes and corrects my email. The student community is very good here. They help each other. I think for local students also, if you ask for help of course they will come to give you help for that.’ - Postgraduate, Iran

- **Negative Interactions**

- ‘As far as the university goes everything is fine but when we leave the university it’s not so good. I used to a lot of door to door knocking, many people have treated me badly, very badly for that thing. It’s just a skin colour or something, I’m not sure. Some people have used very abusive language towards me.’ – Postgraduate, India
- ‘Also experience for me as well. When I was speaking in Mandarin on the street, somebody came up to me and asked me “why are you speaking Mandarin, you are in Australia!” I was quite shocked to hear that, because I’m actually speaking to my friend, I’m not talking to the person’ – Postgraduate, Singapore
- ‘ABS is extremely bad, extremely rude. Never smiling. Treat us like we are stupid. (re. pub crawl) I don’t go to pub crawls because don’t drink’ – Undergraduate, Pakistan
- ‘Can’t communicate with them, the things they know, we don’t know. For example with music, they like Hip hop, or drinking.’ – Undergraduate, China
- ‘Just talk in the lecture and discuss assignments and that’s it. Don’t really have a social life like where I’m from. After lecture you go different ways, and you feel very left out. Because you are leaving your whole social circle somewhere else and then you come and want to get adjusted but there’s a lot of gap.’ – Postgraduate, Belgium
- ‘To be honest no. In my school especially I don’t know why they are look like selfish people, they are so introvert, if I want to meet him, I have to make appointment with him, email and if I come a bit earlier, they don’t open the door, something like that; it’s no good.’ – Postgraduate, Indonesia
- ‘It’s the same issues that he mentioned [as above], it is of course cultural issues different, I understand that completely, they are not concern for me. If you salute someone, if you say hello to someone you are expected an answer, but here, you experience you call someone and you don’t receive any answer, and I understand that it is different culture, it is the culture here maybe, but when I was in contact with staff here before coming to Australia, they didn’t give me enough information about their school and the environment here; the situation I will have. And when I came here I did not have enough support. They could be to say that “ok, you are here, I cannot support you in this way” but they are telling you - especially case for me absolutely – that I don’t extend for all staff of here, but it is like talking to a kid, not a person with 7 years of experience in the industry, I expected to have better welcoming.’ – Postgraduate, Iran

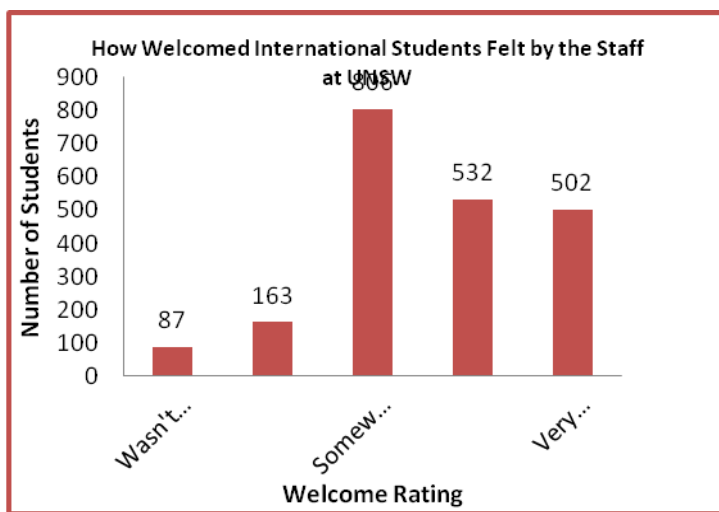
- **Interaction Issues**

- ‘International students don’t try to interact with local students, for instances when there are BBQ and Pubcrawls, the international students don’t turn up! I think it’s a more of a matter of international students don’t want to hang out with local students [rather than the other way around]’. – Undergraduate, Malaysia
- ‘Difficult to get more communication with locals, can only talk with them in group work or seminars, after that can only stay with own friends, share culture. Want to make friends with local students.’ – Undergraduate, China
- ‘From what I have seen, the Chinese hang around with the Chinese, the Indians with Indians, Brazilians with Brazilians, I’m here for 2 months now, I got to know 2 Australians and 45 Brazilians!’ - Postgraduate, Brazil
- ‘Also undergrad and postgrad is different, undergrad you are on the same level with each other so you can just meet but postgrad they already have their life and friends, they don’t need you! They

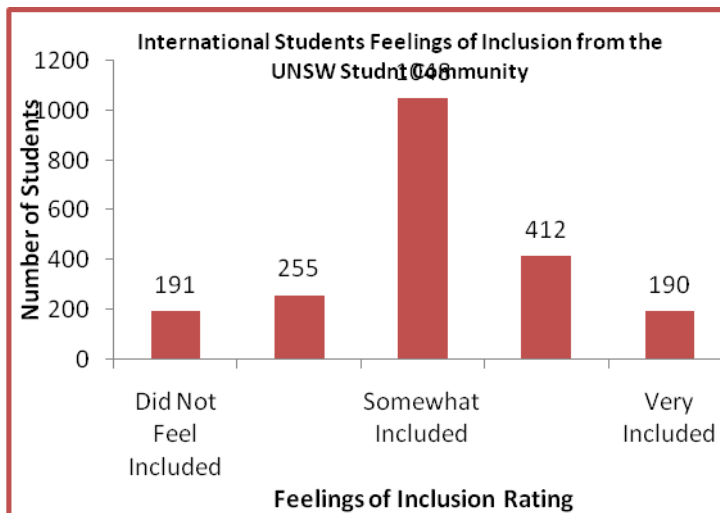
don't want to be your friend, and they don't expect you to be their friends, because they already have their friends.' – Postgraduate, Belgium

- *'Especially students from your own country. But not local students. International from my school [of Biological Research] is very few, maybe is only 3 of us. Problem the problem is that we don't always meet each other everyday. It's like someone who don't know each other they say hello and that's it. There is no social gathering. More we can talk or something.'* – Postgraduate, Indonesia

- In the online survey section of the *Through the Eyes of Students* study, on a rating scale (Wasn't Welcomed; Somewhat Welcomed; Very Welcomed) 39% of surveyed international students felt 'Somewhat Welcomed' by the staff community at UNSW. 25% indicated they felt somewhere between 'Somewhat Welcomed' and 'Very Welcomed' and 24% indicated they felt 'Very Welcomed'. See below:



- In the same survey when asked about 'Feelings of Inclusion from the UNSW Student Community' on a rating scale (Did Not Feel Included, Somewhat Included, Very Included) 50% of students reported feeling 'Somewhat Included'. 20% rated their feelings of inclusion one above 'Somewhat Included' and one below 'Very Included'. For full responses see table below:



- Through the Eyes of Students* (pg 20) provides information on how particular cohorts of international students respond to questions about inclusion and feeling welcome. Detailed results are given for the top six countries by participation (China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, India and USA). From this data surveyed Indian students were the only country from the top six countries of origin by participation to indicate they felt 'Very Welcomed' by the staff community of UNSW. All top six countries of origin by participation indicated they felt 'Somewhat included' by the UNSW student community. The percentages of the top six countries of origin by participation who indicated they felt 'Very Included' by the UNSW student community are Indian 18%, Malaysia 8%, China 7%, USA 6%, Indonesia 4% and Singapore 4%.
- The UNSW Law Society reported that it has been "consistently addressing the issue of social inclusion for all Faculty of Law students including international students". Difficulties have been encountered partly because of the "difficulty of effectively and efficiently identifying international students" and because of a 'lack of ...interest in positions for international student coordinators-these are volunteer positions."

Recommendations-Social Inclusion

- The wider Australian community has an important role to play in the social inclusion agenda. As recommended above the concept of 'Lord Mayor's Welcome' to international students should be extended to local government areas with high concentrations of international students.
- Mechanisms to facilitate the development of partnerships between educational providers and local communities where high concentrations of international students reside should be developed. Joint cultural, sporting

and social events could become a regular feature of both the local community and the education provider. Some incentive to creatively engage with each other to support and welcome international students would be welcome. Small grants to Local Councils to undertake these types of initiatives should be considered. This might very well lead to the development of student programs and community resources that are mutually beneficial.

3. International students would benefit (meeting new friends, gaining an understanding of local culture, opportunity to practise language skills, practical experience that could translate into skills required for paid employment) from participating in community organisations as volunteers. One peak NGO should be resourced to extend their volunteers program to include an international student strategy. The outcomes of this project could be promoted to other NGOs as an incentive to extend their volunteers programs in a similar manner.
4. One off seed funding and/or other incentives to develop new approaches to facilitating social inclusion should be considered. Good will and great ideas need to be supported with resources. These projects could be gathered in one place (DEEWR website for example) as resources for other education providers to adapt to own context.
5. Education providers should be encouraged to partner with local community groups, local Government and other interested parties in organising major multicultural celebrations that provide the opportunity for interaction between 'locals' and international students.
6. A Government driven media campaign should be undertaken to promote the social and economic benefits of international education.
7. In times past strong messages about multiculturalism and its place in Australia have been undertaken. It would seem timely to develop a multi media campaign that again highlights Australia as a multicultural society.
8. Units engaged in supporting international students to adjust and integrate fully into the life of the university, and the wider community, should be funded appropriately. Institutions should be encouraged to receive their internal funding arrangements. Currently in many institutions no significant investment has been made in developing support services. A 'per head' allocation should be considered to adequately resource non academic support units to provide the vast array of services and programs that students both expect and require to study and settle successfully.

(iii) Student Visa Requirements

- UNSW's ISS report that approximately 40% of student inquiries are related to Visa concerns. The ESOS Compliance Officer (collocated within ISS) is available to provide ongoing support and advice to students on all matters related to compliance. A range of strategies are in place to ensure all international students are fully informed of their rights and responsibilities with regards to VISA regulations. Information is provided regularly, and in different formats. Support staff make themselves available to answer questions and facilitate resolution of visa related issues.
- Some students remain confused about ESOS requirements, and the role of DIAC. Representatives from DIAC and migration agents regularly present information sessions to address issues and reinforce requirements and roles.
- Faculty staff reported as an issue the time lag between achievement of required IELTS score and commencement of study (due to VISA processes for some countries). It is reported that it is not uncommon for students' English proficiency to deteriorate during this period.
- Several respondents reported that Students from Pakistan and Afghanistan from 1 August 2009 will have to lodge their student visa applications direct with the Adelaide Off-Shore Processing Centre. Applications received at the AHC Islamabad after 1 August will be returned. Applications are to be sent by post or courier, thereby incurring additional cost. This is viewed by students as unfair.
- The Peer Mentors Focus Group was very vocal about Visa Requirements. Comments included the following: "Too stringent"; "Application long and complex, especially for AL4 countries where PVA required – 30 pages (approx 3.5hrs to complete and that was from a student with excellent English language skills)"; "Visa application fee – very expensive"; "Have to pay again to extend visa"; "No problems reported with e-Visa"

Recommendation-Student Visa Requirements

1. There is much ambiguity and confusion surrounding policies relating to obtaining permanent residency in Australia. An initial review of the modal list relating to 'in demand' occupations would be an appropriate starting point. We currently have visa laws which are driving the high demand in vocational education areas with the main aim of enrolling in these programs to gain permanent residency.

2. A review of assessment levels for visas in all countries for higher education programs. A greater emphasis should be placed on students coming to the vocational education sector to ensure the authenticity of the application and the student.

3. The DIAC living allowance must reflect actual CPI increase and living costs for all cities, not just an average of rural and city areas which is currently the case. The current amount of AUD \$12,000 is woefully inadequate and a gross underestimation of actual living costs. This figure has not changed for 10 years.

(iv) Adequate International Student Supports and Advocacy

- UNSW was an early provider of dedicated support services for international students. Regular reviews are undertaken to ensure the most appropriate arrangements are in place, reflecting the changes in demand. Today an integrated range of professional support and academic enrichment services are available. The ISS acts as a first point of contact and provides a range of support and advocacy services. The Unit is small; its role is not to be a 'one stop shop' for international students. It has a specific focus and for all other issues students are referred to the appropriate dedicated service. Cross cultural competency is required of all Student Development support service providers. Apart from initial arrival services, the majority of international students accessing the support services (such as Counselling Services, the Learning Centre, Careers and Employment, The Religious Centre) make direct contact with the relevant service. Students who are unsure about where to obtain support are encouraged to start with ISS. Appropriate referrals or provision of information can happen from that point.
- International students with a disability have a legislative entitlement to receive appropriate educational adjustments. Within UNSW these services are provided by the Student Equity and Diversity Unit (SEADU).
- Unlike services provided to domestic students with a disability, the costs associated with the provision of educational adjustments for international students with a disability do not qualify for (partial) reimbursement under the ASSD funding package (administered through DEEWR). At times this places a very heavy (financial) burden on the Units providing the services especially for example, if the student is a 'high needs' student.
- Additional problems are encountered when international students with a disability arrive with an expectation re type and quantity of service or adjustments. In some cases the expectations are way and above what would routinely be provided to local students with the same disability. The situation is compounded if the student arrives with wrong and/or insufficient documentation (re the

disability). The problem often stems from the information they are given at source from agents. The end result is that expectations cannot be met and all parties are put under stress. Information at the point of enquiry needs to be comprehensive and clear. In the case of an international student with a disability, consultation with SEADU should occur at the earliest possibility. Advance notice is often required to put into place appropriate adjustments for 'high needs' students. It is also easier for the student to ensure he/she has appropriate documentation to support the request for educational adjustments, before leaving their home country.

- The Advisers within ISS are able to offer support and assistance, and referral advice on the full range of welfare issues. The Advisers will sometimes deal directly with the issues; more usually the student is referred to an appropriate agency or service (either within UNSW or within the community).
- ISS maintains up to date resources and referral information to ensure students can be expeditiously referred. They are usually supported (if appropriate) until they gain an appointment with the agency and or professional.
- Due to growing demands on all the support services (both within the University and the community) lengthy waiting lists are sometimes encountered. Where appropriate the International Student Adviser will attempt to facilitate a more speedy appointment. Sometimes the Adviser is left to support the student through the crisis/difficulty because the waiting list is too long. This is essentially a resourcing issue.
- Due to high demands on support services it is essential that the International Student Advisers (ISA) have up to date lists of options available to students. It is also essential for ISAs to be able to assess the seriousness of the issue and act accordingly. Backup support and assistance with case management supervision is provided to ISAs through the Counselling Service. Additional training in Mental Health First Aid has been essential.
- Pathways for dealing with crises are clearly set out in the University's processes. In these instances, the Counselling Services are usually involved to ensure appropriate clinic decisions are made. The International Student Advisers will often work with the Counsellors to ensure the student is fully supported. All counsellors are required to have demonstrated cross cultural skills of a high order.
- For families with small children, UNSW offers a range of child care centres on campus. ISS and the Student Association provide a list of local day care centres.

Students have reported that it is difficult to find appropriate, reasonably priced child care.

- Legal advice and support is available through the Student Association. This service is available to all members as well as to non-members in special circumstances. Both ISS and the Counselling Services facilitate referrals to this legal service. In addition information on community based legal centres are made available to students as required.
- The UNSW Counselling Services is heavily utilised by international students. They make up approximately 27% of all clients. The full range of psychological services is available, free of charge. Developmental and academic enrichment programs are offered during Orientation and throughout the year.
- Apart from the range of psychological and wellbeing issues that are common to both domestic and international students, other issues more specifically related to international students include the students' high expectations not being met across a range of issues such as accommodation, facilities, learning environment, social inclusion, and when combined with language difficulties can result in very challenging circumstances; support issues for students with families; mental health issues; OSHC not adequate to cover good hospitalisation for students with mental health issues.
- If an international student dies or is reported missing, the University has well defined internal processes to ensure all assistance is provided to the family and authorities. The response is coordinated through the office of the PVC (Students) and Registrar to ensure compassionate, legal and legislative requirements are attended to in a timely manner. An emergency fund has been established to provide emergency funding to families of dead students (for example, to cover funeral expenses, travel costs). These processes have been streamlined; they are reviewed following each incident.
- Student Advocacy mechanisms have similarly been refined. The University has established a Student Conduct and Appeals Officer (SACO) position. The position is responsible for student complaints and investigations of allegations of student misconduct as required under ESOS legislation. Well defined processes exist, including the capacity to appoint independent reviewers or to refer to external bodies (such as HREOC). These processes are promoted within the student and staff communities. Staff receive regular opportunities for training. A complaints network has been established to further refine the processes.
- At all stages of the investigation process students are offered support. They are fully informed about their rights. Referral to the Student Association for advocacy

assistance is offered. Students are also provided with information to access external support and advice as appropriate (for example to a Community Legal Centre). Students are fully informed about the appeals process.

- UNSW has a formal protocol in place with NSW Ombudsman.
- English language difficulties and the need for language support have emerged as major issues with both students and staff. These difficulties can impact adversely on international students' academic and social experiences.
- Each year approximately 11% of the UNSW international student body access central Learning Centre services versus 2% of the local student population.
- International students complained that there were insufficient one-to-one consultations to meet their needs; budget constraints prevented increasing these consultations.
- The units within Student Development conduct transition, induction and academic preparation programs. Some students (for example Ausaid students) undergo an intensive five week preparation program.
- The Learning Centre at UNSW coordinates a Writing Assistant Program that provides both the student assistants and the students who are tutored with value opportunities. Those capable, high achieving students who undertake this (paid) role have the opportunity to both earn income and mentor other students. The students receiving the assistance under this program are able to access intensive one on one help.
- The types of issues international students present to the Learning Centre include time management issues; difficulties in adjusting to a different learning style; lack of effective and efficient independent learning and study strategies; poor English skills to tasks at hand; lack of knowledge of research techniques.
- To address these issues the Learning Centre provides a range of services including individual consultations via writing assistants (trained post graduate students) and learning advisors; generic workshops on a wide range of study skills; post graduate coursework sessions.
- In addition the Learning Centre (LC) designs and conducts a number of targeted programs in collaboration with other Units. For example the LC and ISS deliver an International Academic Preparation Program for International AusAid students. Extensive collaboration with Faculty academics to embed academic literacy development and support in courses is ongoing. A number of successful

collaborative initiatives are now in operation, able to be used as models of best practice. This support covers Diploma, Bachelor, Masters and PhD programs.

- In addition the LC website provides extensive range of resources and links for students and staff. Online resources are available 24/7 and are highly used.
- A number of academics provided comments on the support needs of international students. A number of academics observed that many students “are ill-prepared for the academic requirements they face upon arrival”. In some instances a lack of English language skills combined with an inadequate understanding of the new academic setting decrease their opportunity for inclusion and a positive student experience. Some academics queried whether entry requirements and English language pathways are adequate for students to succeed.

Students’ Perspectives on Student Supports and Advocacy

The IS forum email group focused on a number of concerns:

- 40% cited lack of transport concessions as a huge concern. This is viewed as both unfair and discriminatory. It contributes to students’ ability to manage financially, and in many cases to travel safely.
- For 30% language difficulties and adapting to a different academic environment were issues.
- The Sydney transport system was seen as inadequate especially to and from campus in the evening (“The Sydney bus services is one of the worst and most inefficient big city systems in the world.”)
- Most respondents in this group did not believe the University provided adequate (no cost) facilities for international students. Examples cited included high UniGym fees, lack of student lounges and access to microwave ovens and coffee making facilities for undergraduate students; lack of Prayer facilities.

The Peer Mentors Focus Group also highlighted lack of transport concessions as unfair. All agreed that this was an issue of particular concern because they see they are contributing to the economic prosperity of the State but are not treated equally with domestic students in this regard. Other issues raised by this group included:

- Some supports should be free (for example each student should have a free printing/photocopying allowance).
- Better facilities with longer opening hours are required.
- A lack of sensitivity on the part of some staff and local students “..they should be aware of the difficulties which students from NESBs encounter when first coping in a different language and social environment and speak more slowly..especially (in) early weeks of session.”

- Many students need more help with practical information (location of shopping centres, cheap food outlets, safe suburbs) and insight into how to communicate and use 'local English'. Students indicated that it is not sufficient to provide all this information at Orientation. It needs to be available over a long period of time.

The *Through the Eyes of Students* online survey found that 65% of international students felt the need for further academic or social support during their studies. The support areas that they wanted additional assistance with included:

- 49% for additional career and employment support.
- 38% for additional language and communication support.
- 35% for accommodation and housing support.
- 33% for financial support.

Students were also asked to list the problems they have experienced since arriving in Australia. A number of issues received a high percentage of responses (students could select more than one option). These included 'Language and Communication' (41%), 'Financial' (39%), 'Academic Failure' (39%), 'Academic/Course Related' (38%), 'Stress and Worry' (37%), Accommodation (37%).

47% of students said they had concerns adjusting to Australia prior to arrival.

An overwhelming 82% of international students indicated the best way they have settled into social and academic life is 'by making friends with other international students.'

In the *Through the Eyes of Students* focus groups students did not rank access to dedicate international support services as being a high priority. They did, however, indicate a need for more support in relation to housing, employment and permanent residency. The focus groups praised ISS for playing a pivot role in the support network for international students and their adjustment to social and academic life. See excerpt from report (pg 16)

▪ **Praise for International Student Services**

- *'It's like a place to meet some friends there, they running a tour or something during orientation week or n the other days. I think they have provided a lot of support for international students.'* – Postgraduate, Indonesia
- *'International student support as been very active and done very good on a few things, which I'm very grateful for. If you need help with enrolment or if you enquire about subjects or swap classes or swap subjects' - Postgraduate, Pakistan*
- *'They [AusAID] linked us up with ISS as well they were the ones who ran the orientation, they were very helpful. We made a lot of new friends and we continue to keep in touch with those friends.'* – Postgraduate, Philippines
- *'[Best experience] – Last semester ISS, I became part of ISS and it feels really nice. Australia can place go for different experience that you can never do back home.'* - Undergraduate, Pakistan
- *'[Best experience] – help of ISS. In first week of Sydney I went to the ISS everyday for every kind of problem, and they helped me solve these problems step by step.'* - Postgraduate, India

Through the Eyes of Students explored the support needs of students prior to departure from home country. Respondents wanted more information and/or support in relation to:

- a. Accommodation and living arrangements (65%)
- b. Public transport information for Sydney (62%)
- c. Student Life at UNSW (54%)
- d. What Suburbs to live in Sydney (47%)
- e. Personal Safety Issues or Concerns (47%)
- f. General Life in Australia (47%)
- g. Support Services available at UNSW (35%)

Recommendations-Adequate International Supports and Advocacy

1. Institutions should be required to demonstrate they are working to the 'Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency for International Students in Australian Universities'
<http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Publications/Pages/GoodPracticePrinciples.aspx>
 This would go a long way towards addressing the English language issues of students and staff.
2. Institutions should ensure a robust case management system is in place to manage students at academic risk. Mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of intervention strategies should be mandatory to ensure that advice given to students is part of an intervention strategy (and not just a letter of warning/advice).
3. Academics consistently raised the question of adequacy of current requirement of English language proficiency to the demands of a higher degree research thesis. A review of current standards needs to be carried out by DEEWR as a matter of urgency. Pre arrival testing needs to be reviewed.
4. Development of intercultural competencies and communication skills should be embedded in the curriculum. This would benefit all students.
5. All international students should have access to travel concessions.
6. The upcoming ESOS Review should have a key focus on the standards that relate to the support of students. Greater rigor is required in audit processes that look at adequacy of support services. The simple existence of a service without reference to staffing levels, roles within the institution, budget etc, should not be sufficient to 'pass'. Support Services need to be professional and resourced. Recommendations should be made re support staff to student ratio. Budgets provided to support units should have a 'per head' allocation.
7. Consideration should be given to the development of a Student Portal that is managed centrally (perhaps DEEWR) and would contain comprehensive

information on student and community supports and services. This site could also contain information on safety, employment, medical services, obtaining a Tax File Number and other items of interest/concern.

8. A mechanism should be in place to ensure students maintain appropriate health insurance for the duration of their studies (a DIAC responsibility).
9. All students should have access to an emergency International Student Hotline available 24/7. Supply of this service could go to tender. Some students requested that it be State run. NGOs currently operating Hotlines (with telephone staff available 24/7) may be interested in extending the training of staff to include this service.
10. A review of the current levels of government funding for universities should be considered. Both the volume of demand for support services and the complexity of issues presented have increased. Consideration should be given to utilizing a funding formula that directs adequate funds to student support services that provide frontline services.
11. Universities should ensure their internal funding processes adequately resource the support units to meet their responsibilities in relation to provision of academic enrichment and support services to international students. A 'per head' allocation should be considered.
12. Better training and supervision of education agents is required. Strategies to ensure agents provide up to date and correct information to students (pre-arrival) is essential.

(v) Employment Rights and Protections from Exploitation

Both support staff and students see this as an area of great concern. ISS for example reports that many students suffer great disadvantages because of the costs of living here (on top of high fees). This makes survival more difficult. As a result students are at times forced into substandard accommodation which can then lead to other kinds of problems (mental and physical health concerns) and failure to achieve academically. Many students receive financial support from family members but still need to contribute to their support through part time work. Many students complain that it is very difficult, especially at present, to find part time work. Employers tend to prefer to employ local students or those with Permanent Residency. Many students report feeling as though they have no employment rights and if they are lucky enough to get a part time job, it is likely to be poorly paid.

The Careers and Employment (C&E) Unit at UNSW provides a range of generic and tailored services. C&E programs and services are widely publicised. Students are encouraged to register with the service to receive regular emails regarding services, workshops, special events.

C&E are able to provide many examples of students struggling to find work. The reasons for this are varied. The Careers Consultants are particularly aware the poor communication skills of many students. Employers report back to C&E on the lack of 'work readiness' of many students. Employers report that English language levels on entry to university (and on exit) are not good enough. For example some major corporate employers require IELTS test scores before offering employment. These are usually between 7.5 and 8.0 (higher than the UNSW English entry requirement of 6.5 overall and 6.0 in each band for most faculties).

In the current job market international students are worst affected. C&E are seeing more students presenting with anxiety and depression than in previous years.

In order to address some of the current issues C&E have developed two new initiatives this year. Both are aimed at helping students become work-ready. These programs are outlined below.

UNSW Professional Development Program (International Students)

The UNSW Professional Development Program (International Students) is an initiative for UNSW international students with English as a second language. It aims to develop their communication skills in a professional setting and provide practical workplace experience to enhance their career opportunities.

The Program consists of 2 components:

- A two-day training program on business communication, customer service skills, employer expectations and the recruitment process.
- A 50-hour office internship program organised by Careers and Employment and run in various departments at UNSW.

An information session was recently held to explain this program. Over 400 international students attended to compete for the available places.

More information about this program is available at:

www.careers.unsw.edu.au/Students/Searching_For_A_Job/UNSW_Professional_Development_Program_Internation.chpx

Job Club

Job Club is a new group for current or recently graduated students (from any faculty) facilitated by experienced Careers Consultants. It aims to promote ways for students

to help each other, get motivated, develop new approaches, sharpen job search skills, think laterally and gain confidence to take action in the job-hunting process.

The Job Club is held in 2 hour sessions on 4 consecutive weeks. 80% of participants to date have been international students.

Other Programs

20% of clients of the C&E are international students. Apart from the general workshop offerings (Resuming Writing, Interview Skills, Networking etc) tailored careers workshops are available to international students. Topics from career planning and finding part-time work to preparing for professional work in Australia and overseas are regularly presented.

Various Careers Expos and Vacation and Internship Careers Expos are also held annually. Approximately 30% of attendees are international students.

Students' Perspectives on Employment Rights and Protections from Exploitation

16% of respondents to the IS Forum-Email Survey highlighted difficulties encountered in securing employment citing employers preference for citizens or those with Permanent Residency and/or local experience.

This group highlighted as an issue the difficulties in obtaining industrial training or internships without PR. Many of these students believed the University could do more to assist by creating part-time jobs on campus for students and assisting partners/spouses on a dependent student visa to find employment.

The Peer Mentors' Focus group were vocal on the vulnerabilities of students who are open to exploitation by employers largely because students are not aware of their rights, award rates, entitlements etc. Stories of desperate students accepting jobs with poor conditions (and at times unsafe) were common. This group discussed the way international students are exploited by some unscrupulous employment agencies. One participant knew of students who had paid \$900 to secure work which in some cases was unpaid/voluntary work. Exploitation by employers of the same nationality as students was raised as an issue.

Through the Eyes of Students examined the areas that contribute to financial concerns of international students. It is important to understand these 'financial worries' as it is often these that lead to acceptance of poorly paid work without protections.

Of all concerns international students have 'Financial Worries' rated equal first with 'Adequate and Affordable Housing'. See excerpt below from pg8-9 *Through the Eyes of Students*

3.1 Financial Worries

The major areas indicated by all groups to contribute to the financial worries of international students were:

- **Accommodation**
 - Refer to 3.2 for further details
- **Materials**
 - Text Books, Food on campus, printing
- **No Travel Concession in NSW**
 - *'No transport discount for students. Only Local and AusAID – these are international students too – so why do they get concession and we don't? What about International students? It's not just 10-20%, but 50% - that's huge! Also, food and things on campus in general are high.'* – Undergraduate, Pakistan
 - *'There should be some equality - we are paying for the local students – we are paying about four times what they are paying, there should be some preference given to us. It can't be that you just take all the money and don't give us any rights.'* Postgraduate, Bangladesh
- **Finding Employment**
 - Refer to 3.3 for further details
 - *'In terms of jobs, in terms of helping us find work here, in terms of letting us know the pathway to permanent residency, in terms of having employers here to hire international students. So that even if once we graduate and we want to work in another country, we have a pathway.'* – Postgraduate, Belgium
 - *'My main concern, really is finding a job, because when you come here you know you have to pay the fees, but if you don't get a good job, you end up working in a restaurant, can only work 20 hours and get crap salary, so you cannot even pay for your expenses, cannot pay for your rent, at the end of the month you have 100 dollars only, so you start to get a little bit worried. And also because you get to the end of your course, and you don't have a good job and you don't have a good contact in a company so you can't really apply for residency. You've got to go back, and you've had no work experience in your area of study, so you end up with only a degree but not many opportunities.'* – Postgraduate, China
 - *'[We need] job connections with companies'* – Postgraduate, China
 - *'Everybody informed us that you would be able to earn your last semester's fees in those three months. When I landed over here, I realised that there aren't any opportunities, even if I am allowed to work for those 3 months full time, which I am allowed by law, but there isn't opportunity for international students. I just want to gain experience – I have certain amount of financial security, I have the amount I need to pay for my fees and everything. But the point is that if I want a permanent residency, I might have to go through another 1 year of studies, because I'm in the 1 and a half year masters. Over there they say "you can extend by 6 months, that's not a problem", which is not possible – if I want to do a research in certain category, or I want to merge it with another subject, it is only possible if you have done it back in India. We want to study at UNSW which is a very reputed university, in India as well as in Australia, but I don't know if we are in any case better off in the market.'* –Postgraduate, India
- **University Course Fees**
 - *The tuition fees, increases every year. We are on the student loan, so what we originally show the banks is the amount at that point of the year. It's not like you put it two years in advance and you get the money. So it is increasing every semester. That's another concern.* - Postgraduate, India
 - *Course fees are too high. I'm from Belgium, there are no links between Belgium and Australia, we have no scholarships, you've got a lot of things available for Asian students for example, you cannot even apply for one if you are not part of the Commonwealth or that [particular] country. Everything is very expensive to study here.'* Postgraduate, Belgium
 - General costs of living (food, entertainment etc)
- **Value for Money**
 - *'There is not a link between what the university offers and what they really show. When you come to Australia, you know that you are going to spend more than what you would in your home country, if you come here 2 years you know you are going to spend broadly 10 times or 15 times what you would spend in another place. So what I find with international students is, it's a bit unfair. We pay a lot to come here, we don't have the concessions in New South Wales, I know that is a problem of the government of New South Wales, but the university should inform a little more about the conditions here in Australia, or at least in Sydney. It's a marketing campaign – they can lose students to University of Melbourne or University of Queensland – so they hide this. But university should show five-star working rating, say if you leave from UNSW you are going to get a good job, and that seems good. But when you arrive here, everything is more expensive, and you start looking and the transportation is an issue, there is no concession, and you can't get a job, and you spend even more money applying for visa, and medical expenses we do through an agent. At the end many people just go back because this is more money and you wonder if it's really worth it.'* –Postgraduate, Colombia
- **Recognition of Experience**

- *I am in the architectural profession and one of my seniors apply for the recognition of her degree over here, they have not recognised it. The same degree is recognised in US, in UK and all of the countries in the world. So her 11 hundred dollars which she has spent as a fee is down the drain. She is again going to reapply and figure out what the problem is. The lawyer earns so much money out of you, you know. Why a degree with is recognised in the US and UK, how can it be not recognised in Australia? It's not that Australia has exceptionally high standards than US or UK. – Postgraduate, Pakistan*

3.2 Accommodation

During all focus groups, sourcing accommodation, the process of renting and the expense of rent were discussed as major contributing factors to international student wellbeing. Many described situations of:

- **High Occupancy and Bedroom Sharing**
 - *'In my house there is 8 rooms, all of us have some situation. There are around 15 or 16 people, there are 2 floors. We are sharing rooms. I think that maybe some people here will not prefer this sharing because this is not privacy, but in my case it is help me a lot, so I can save a lot of money for other issues' – AusAid, Vietnam*
- **Renting Unconverted Spaces**
 - *'The place where I'm living, there are 2 students living in the house and 2 in the garage.'* – Undergraduate, Pakistan
- **Being Taken Advantage of by Private Landlords & Bond Issues**
 - *'When I first transferred here, main thing I think International Students should be aware is that there is a legal aspect to accommodation, because sometimes we are so desperate we just go to web advertisement or notice board and get a number and call them, they ask for bonds and things like that, a lot of people get cheated in that way. I really had a problem in my first place here – I'm not a very nasty person I don't know why someone can hate me in that way' - Undergraduate, Singapore*
 - *'[Renting from] individual landlords and I face all the problems with that, the owner didn't tell me that he is going to sell the property, it is three month that almost every week we are receiving inspections. And I don't have right to say "no, do not come" [FACILITATOR: Because it's a private rental?] Yes. And I also don't have the right to say to my landlord, because they have access to my bond that I paid. [FACILITATOR: Bond paid with Rental Bond Authority; do you know your rights there?] No, that's the problem, I was going to raise that here, because lots of international students they don't know their exact rights here so they cannot manage themselves what to do in these cases.' – Postgraduate, Iran*
 - *'Also if you apply with the private sector, it's not very clear what your rights as a tenant are. It would be useful to include a short seminar on tenancy rights for international students in the orientation program – just to boil it down to maybe 5 or 6 essential points.' - Postgraduate, China*
 - *'I checked with housing services in the uni it is compulsory for everyone to get that kind of bond receipt but in many case we cannot get the receipt, the landlord just keep it, they do not want to report to the authority because they don't want to pay tax. For me it is quite suspicious when I pay the bond if I can be able to get back the whole amount. The landlord will give us some receipt with her signature but it is not official stamped by the authority.' AusAid student, Vietnam*
- **Rental Agency Issues**
 - *'One thing I found is you have a very nasty experience if you are going to the private sector and to agents as an international student to get accommodation. Once they know you are a student they turn you off. I don't know on what basis they judge students and people. Because financially, we all come on loans so we will be able to pay the rent, but they don't seem satisfied with that.' – Postgraduate, Hong Kong*
- **Subletting**
 - *'You end up sub-leasing from a room from a guy who leases the house since you need some kind of income statement to go to a real estate agency, and it ends up more expensive when you sublease' – Postgraduate, China*
 - *'I was looking for a house with a friend here. We were just looking through the house, they just said "ok, this is the rent" But they didn't show us the original lease that goes with the landlord; they were not ready to show it, like "this is not done"; they make another lease for the sub-lease' – Postgraduate, Bangladesh*
- **Pushed into the Deep-End**
 - *'The Housing Office push you in the deep end... Just a wall [for advertisements], might go there and find out it is not even appropriate. It's just too much at that point. The places should be screened first.' – Undergraduate, Pakistan*

- *'Also it is difficult to find ones that are clean, there are some disgusting places, even those that are advertised by ISS office, I think they should need to be more cautious in what they advertise.'* – Postgraduate, Singapore

3.3 Employment Rights

Students are finding the process of securing a job increasingly difficult. Compounded by the economic crisis, they are experiencing a vicious cycle of not having their previous experience in their home country recognised, not having Permanent Residency status and only being able to work 20 hours per week. Students also express their concerns on volunteer and internship roles requiring local experience. A postgraduate student from China had found a part time position in his field of study and referred to himself on several occasions as 'lucky'.

Areas contributing to *Employment Rights* issues include:

- **Recognition of Experience**
 - *'I applied for a few jobs and they said whatever experience I had in my home country will not be counted here. If you have local experience then they will take you. They say [overseas experience] can be fake or anything, and what do we do about this thing?'* – Postgraduate, Bangladesh
 - Refer to 3.1 for additional details
- **20-hour Work Limit**
 - *'The problem I find – I am doing finance in my masters - I would like to do something related to finance, even part time job. But you know we have 20 hours, I have called many companies, they said your resume is really good but we can't hire you because we need you more than 20 hours; clients need you more than 20 hours. So I think you can get a job, but a job like a waiter. Relating to your career it is almost impossible, just impossible.'* – Postgraduate, Colombia
 - *'I've been to a few interviews, but they are just not that into International students. Probably because of the work restrictions, 20 hrs. Should lift 20-hour limit. Ok, I understand in reality you wouldn't work more than 20 hours but that would give more reasons for employers to employ you.'* Undergraduate, Sri Lanka
 - *'I don't want to exaggerate but there seems to be some discrimination against international students in terms of employment rights. With our student visas we are only allowed to work 20 hours, but Australians and permanent residents they can basically work unlimited hours even though they are enrolled as full time students. I did my undergraduate degree in England, it does not matter whether you are international student or from England. Every full time student can only work a certain number of hours. I applied for a job on campus and it said the applicant must be available as required by the employer. The way the ad was structured and the job description suggests "don't even apply unless you can work unlimited hours". It doesn't make any sense, how is there a distinction between international and full time students, legally.'* - Postgraduate, Hungary
 - *'Most employers are seeking the one who can work unlimited so [the 20hr limit] could be an issue for international students.'* – Postgraduate China
- **Permanent Residency Status**
 - *'I have another concern, we have this 3 month internship this December, but they require PR. What do you expect for international students? Should they pack up their bags and go back home? I think the university need to take some stance in this. There are a lot of companies – all the companies I wanted to apply – and I just can't apply because I'm an international student.'* – Postgraduate, India
 - *'I'm doing petrol engineering. I tried to apply to all those companies here in Australia, they require residency proof. The second most important about finding a part time job is they want reference. Maybe even just supermarket or something – it is much easier to find a job. They don't like to do a test and access the person, they just do a reference.'* – Postgraduate, India
 - *'it's just like you are keeping 2 faces, one for the press and the legal things, that "we do give equal opportunities" – this is the advertisement at the start of the recruitment process, but over these 3-4 months I have been experiencing it, going places for several internships which relates to my field, but it comes back to "do you have local experience?" - no, "do you have confirmed residency?" – no, "do you know somebody here, as in, do you have reference?" - no. So, pack up your bag! Legally if someone was to evaluate it, it's fair enough. For the advertisement there is an "overwhelming response" as they always say, but in the end of the day you don't get it. Our universities at home for every application, the university at times have test conducted for university students to go for the companies. So the companies used to come over for international students – their international students, we were local students – the company would test interview and set up university students for internship or whatever,*

right there and then. Now that's what I'll call a fair chance, not just advertise it and find it yourself.' – Postgraduate, Pakistan

- **Locals versus Internationals**
 - *'Any kind of job you apply for, even if you are better than local they still want a local. I mean, I am an architect by profession; even if I apply for a position for a graduate architect they will still want a graduate from Australia. So how can I be sure I will have a good career after I graduate if they are always going to ask for local experience? How will I gain local experience if I don't get the opportunity?'* – Postgraduate, India
- **Economic Crisis**
 - *'I think here Australia is a special moment, we are in the recession – normally for international students in Sydney to get a part time job it wouldn't be as difficult, compared with many other cities in the world'* – Postgraduate, Colombia
- **Low Wages**
 - *'Most jobs require PR. Some job has lower salary, and they will give to you even though you don't have Australian experience.'* – Undergraduate, China
- **Training and Experience**
 - *'For basic job like storekeeper and the like, they want 5 years experience, 3 years experience – dude, where are you coming from? Like if I want to work at a library, who is to say I need 5 years experience as a library?'* - Postgraduate, Pakistan
 - *'Even for internship they ask you for experience – what kind of internship is that? I attend the internship to get experience, if I had experience I wouldn't need - it's a closed loop. Even for vocational and volunteering they ask you for experience – I can't believe that!'* – Postgraduate, Iran
 - *'[UNSW should provide] Employment only workshop how to find the job, not how to do the job. Basic training like cash register.'* – Undergraduate, Pakistan
- **Age**
 - *'It is quite hard to get employment especially as I am 41 years old, when I submit the application, they ask the age right away.'* - Postgraduate, Philippines,

Suggestions made by international students to combat employment issues include:

- *'Allow international students to have unrestricted working rights, [or else same restrictions] for local students like they have in England.'* – Postgraduate, Hungary
- *'Teach us some knowledge on superannuation and tax return. When employer asks me to whether I have a superfund etc I had no idea, so I had to find out by myself.'* – Postgraduate, Pakistan
- *'There should be some on campus jobs as well, for basic things they should employ people from around here rather than bringing people from outside, so that there is some help at least from the university side, if there is no jobs outside.'* – Postgraduate, Bangladesh
- *'There are a lot of research work done on uni, we can work there, cause we are all postgrad, so we have enough experience'* – Postgraduate, India

49% of students in the online survey component stated they required more Careers and Employment support.

Recommendations-Employment Rights and Protections from Exploitation

1. The recommendations of the 2008 DEEWR Report: *Review of Career Development Services in Australian Tertiary Institutions* should be adopted, specifically Recommendation 12 ('Institutions should provide special funding for the provision of career development services for international students as a fixed proportion of income received from student fees.')
2. Institutions should be encouraged to embed Career Development Skills within the academic program. All relevant programs should have a work integrated learning component.

3. It is recommended that a Charter of International Students' Rights be developed and promoted to students. Support services need to encourage students to report exploitation to appropriate authorities and to ensure students know their rights and how to access assistance.
4. Appointment of State based Ombudsman for International Students should be established. This body could investigate complaints against unscrupulous employers. A publicly accessible register should be established.
5. Students are going to continue to be vulnerable to exploitative practices if they are in financial difficulties. Students need to know pre-arrival the real costs of living so they can prepare appropriately. Agents must be held accountable for the information they supply.

(vi) Appropriate Pathways to Permanency

All service providers agreed that a significant proportion of students on campus intend to apply for PR. ISS endeavours to support such students by providing adequate and updated information on the appropriate pathways. For example information sessions (run by DIAC and migration lawyers) are regularly organised.

A number of staff commented that the PR and Visa requirements drive a lot of the behaviours of international students including the program they choose. Often prospective students are keen to know whether they will get a job in Australia after completing the program that will allow them to get permanent residency.

Many international students have the impression that completion of a program in Australia would grant them a work visa or a permanent resident visa.

DIAC and DEEWR need to work together to ensure that any 'unintended' consequences of changes in PR/visa requirements are considered and addressed appropriately beforehand.

These issues impact all students not just international students, particularly as many of the "local" students are recent PR's also adjusting to their new life in Australia.

Clear and concise information on PR requirements and processes needs to be given and explained early in the decision-making process, i.e., in-country when students are making their decisions about which country and which program. This is particularly relevant for students undertaking 1 – 1.5 yr postgraduate programs. Students undertaking postgraduate programs of less than 2 years can be adversely affected when applying for PR because they need to enrol in another program to reach the two year total, and by the time they've completed the second program, the points for their work experience expire and they are seriously disadvantaged.

These students should have the option to apply for PR before their work experience points expire.

Students' Perspectives on Appropriate Pathways to Permanency

The *Through the Eyes of Students* focus groups discussed this issue. 58% of all the focus group attendees wanted permanent residency in Australia. The excerpt (pg 12) below outlines comments provided:

3.4 Permanent Residency

58% of all focus group attendees wanted permanent residency in Australia. Issues with obtaining permanent residency included:

- **Changing Regulations**
 - *'The PR rules are changing every second. When we come to Australia, we have seen a particular set of rules, and that should apply to that person coming at that particular period of time. But every year it keeps changing.'* – Postgraduate, India
- **Trust in System**
 - *'You need to take IS exam to get residency, you need to have 7 as a minimum score. A lot of my friends, or seniors, when they came here they had an overall rating of 7.5 – 8, but after they study here for 2 years, after which they take the test once again – it's become a money-making racket. You have reading, speaking, writing and listening. All the other bands will be 8 or 9, but one of the bands will go below 7. How's that? A person has stayed here for 2 years, the chances of going down are very less.'* – Postgraduate, India
 - *'If they are testing our skills in English after two years, the people who talk in Australia, their English is worst than ours after they start studying for two years, that's the only reason they are testing us, they fear that our English has deteriorated down to their people! I don't find any other logic, it's just a money-making business.'* – Postgraduate, India
- **Uncertainty & Cost**
 - *'Also it is highly indefinite, "we can't tell you when we'll get back to you", and they may get back to you in 1 -2 years. They gave me the reason "we have to adjust how many people we put from each department".'* Undergraduate, Pakistan
 - *'Biggest concern is uncertainty. Anyone can apply but don't know how long it will take to get the visa. If you know for sure need 3 months to process, then at least you know and can plan.'* – Undergraduate, Singapore
 - *'You may risk 2 or 3 years of your life, applying and investing, thinking and orienting your life for permanent residency. You find yourself very eligible and suitable for PR here, but always you feel this huge risk you may face. After 2, 3 years, you have managed to travel a hemisphere to be here, and you have spent a lot and you manage your life, and after 2 -3 years you may get a big 'no'. It's a big risk.'* – Postgraduate, Iran
- **Employment**
 - *'First priority comes to employer sponsorship, but then, it's hard to get a job.'* Undergraduate, Pakistan
 - *'Employment is the key. Maybe the college can go to companies to see if they need students. Where I come from, the companies go to uni to pick the students, they value the students there, but over here it's like a struggle to get to a nice company and get a good job, good part time job. So maybe a little bit more action from the uni.'* – Postgraduate, China
 - *'The only reason [to get PR] is to get a job.'* – Postgraduate, India
 - *'Especially the risk comes from how to find a job. [It is part of] the process of helping residency as well, because it is pointless for permanent residency if you don't have a job here.'* – Postgraduate, Indonesia

Recommendations-Appropriate Pathways to Permanency

1. Measures need to be put in place to ensure students receive the correct advice re 'pathways to permanency' before choosing a course. Education institutions, DIAC and agents have a role to play.
2. Important that DIAC and DEEWR work together to ensure that any 'unintended' consequences of changes in PR/visa requirements are considered and addressed appropriately beforehand.
3. Marketing and recruitment staff are often approached about which are programs students should enrol in, in order for permanent residency to be granted. The emphasis on the points system for permanent residency may need to be reviewed so as to include other areas which are taken into consideration before permanent residency is granted. With the current system the modal list is driving the demand for programs, not the academic program and quality of the education we provide.

Identification of Quality Benchmarks, Controls for Service, Advice and Support for International

Recommendations

1. That the establishment of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) ensure that accreditation and monitoring of education providers to achieve at least minimum standards (including staff to student ratios) is a priority.
2. These minimum standards should be comprehensive enough to prevent providers being able to 'tick the compliance box' without actually addressing the key issues. Minimum standards should be developed for key interactions across the student life cycle.
3. TEQSA should have overall responsibility for management of ESOS and the National Code.
4. All overseas Education Agents should be registered and licensed through DEEWR. Heavy penalties (such as loss of license) should be instituted for Agents who provide misleading information to students.
5. Education providers should be rated on the quality of service (including non academic support services) provided to students. This rating should be able to be used by prospective students to assess the suitability of the institution to their needs. Funding arrangements (including performance based) should be tied to the achievement of effective and efficient support services delivered across the student lifecycle.
6. A further funding review should consider both the overall level of government funding to universities, and how support services are funded. A 'per head' calculation should be considered for allocation of funds to support services.
7. A framework be established for the development of centralised online support, information and referral sources for international students perhaps by way of a Student Portal (hosted by DEEWR).
8. A robust mechanism needs to be established to ensure that the education impact of any changes to migration policy should be assessed before the changes are promulgated.

9. Increase regulatory oversight of all agents and their partners in country to ensure quality assessment of their operations. AEI in each country must establish a regulatory body which accredits agents who are recruiting students for Australian Education. If any Agent were not given this accreditation, then an Institution would not be allowed by law to work with this Agent.
10. Further to the above recommendation, AEI in each country must identify and alert institutions to any “rogue” international agents who they become aware of who may be operating out of this framework.
11. A centralised body (perhaps TEQSA) should have responsibility for ensuring students are aware of ESOS and the protection they receive in the higher education sector. Many students are unaware of frameworks currently in place to protect their investment in their education.
12. There must be a consistency in regulatory frameworks across all sectors. Audits must be undertaken of all Institutions/Colleges who have licenses to teach international students.

As an industry a much more holistic approach must be undertaken if we are to protect Australian Education as the third largest export industry in Australia.

Professor Joan Cooper
PVC (Students) and Registrar

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