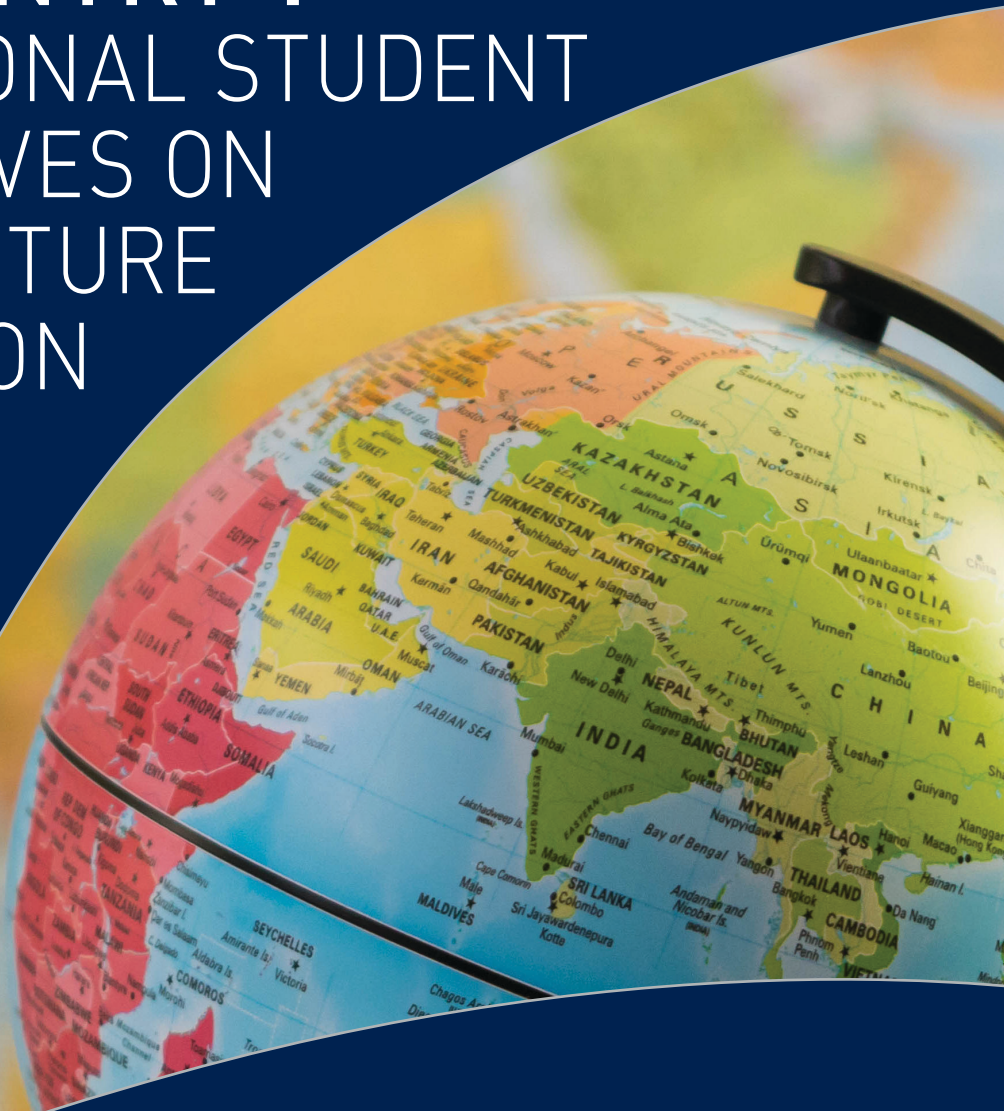


UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

“NEW ADVENTURES IN A NEW COUNTRY”: INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

MARCH 2020



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AUSTRALIA

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Further inquiries should be made to the Chief Executive.

1 Geils Court, Canberra ACT 2600
P +61 (0)2 6285 8100
E contact@universitiesaustralia.edu.au

universitiesaustralia.edu.au

ABN 53 008 502 930

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FOREWORD

Our international students are essential threads in our universities' academic and social fabric. We welcome them into our country and institutions, where they receive educational, social and personal experiences that stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Alongside providing a quality qualification, part of the task for Australia's universities is to make the process of adapting to life in a new country as smooth as possible for our international students. Moving across borders isn't an easy transition, and universities currently provide extensive advice and information to new students to help them settle and find their feet, both academically and personally. The purpose of this project was to explore students' perspectives on the support provided, and to ask them directly what they found helpful. Importantly, it asked if there are any areas in which universities could improve the way they assist students prepare for life in Australia.

The project included a survey of first- and second-year international students, followed by qualitative interviews with targeted focus groups. The final conclusions incorporate information from more than 17 000 survey respondents and insights gained from in-depth interactions with a wide range of students studying across Australia. Our universities educate students from more than 140 different countries, and the diversity of responses reflected the diversity of our international student cohort, as well as the individuality of the students themselves.

Some common themes emerged from the project's findings, namely that making the huge and life-changing leap to come to a new country to study is indeed a challenging and difficult undertaking.

The results indicate that the majority of students engaged with the information provided by their universities to help them make this transition, and on the whole, this material was useful in helping them adjust to their new lives. Ultimately, there will always be challenges in making such a dramatic transition, to which there are no quick and easy solutions. It's also heartening to see it widely acknowledged that these challenges are outweighed by the rewards students gain through their Australian university experience.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the Project Advisory Group, the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment for providing funding for this important work, and of course, the thousands of students who contributed their thoughts and perspectives to inform this study.

Ms Catriona Jackson
Chief Executive
Universities Australia



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We are also grateful to university Vice-Chancellors and the staff who facilitated the distribution of the survey to their international students.

Thanks also to the various universities that supported the coordination and provided facilities for the international student focus groups: Queensland University of Technology; The Australian National University; University of Canberra; UNSW Sydney and the Kirby Institute at UNSW; The University of Sydney; UTS Insearch at the University of Technology Sydney; The University of Queensland; Victoria University and The University of Melbourne.

Funding for this project was received through the Enabling Growth and Innovation Fund, administered by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, on behalf of the Council for International Education.

Finally, many thanks to the more than 17 000 international students who contributed to the project through completing the survey or participating in focus groups.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Information provided to international students prior to their departure for Australia is an important resource to help them prepare for university studies in a new country—a setting that, in most cases, is very different to their home environment. Often, this information is the first contact between the student and their university and can be the foundation for a positive study experience in Australia. While providing information can not be expected to solve every problem or challenge international students face, clear, accurate and geographically specific advice can equip them with the tools to have the smoothest transition possible. While every university provides pre-departure information in some form, anecdotal evidence suggested that at times students still felt underprepared for life and study in Australia.

To explore this in more detail, Universities Australia conducted a nationwide survey on the perspectives of international university students on the pre-departure information they received, how useful it was, and how prepared they felt when they arrived in Australia. The project sought to identify examples of good practice, as well as challenges in providing useful and culturally appropriate material. Box 1 provides a description of issues covered in the survey.

More than 17 000 students responded to the survey, which was supplemented by targeted focus groups of international students and discussions with universities. Part A discusses the survey and discussion group findings. It emerged that the information needs of international students are diverse, specific to the individual and subject to change.

Box 1: Pre-departure information survey topics

Accommodation	student accommodation, rental accommodation, temporary accommodation and homestay
Finances and banking	cost of living, budgeting, opening a bank account, obtaining and using bank cards, the use of currency exchanges and how much money to bring into Australia
Travel arrangements	student visas, passports, travel insurance, what to bring on the flight to Australia, entering Australia (clearing customs, immigration and quarantine), baggage claim and airport pickup
The university	student services and support (student activities, student advocacy), career/employment services, teaching and learning environment, managing studies, assessment methods, university rules (plagiarism and complaints, important dates for students) information about campuses and emergency campus contacts
Accompanying family	bringing family members to Australia, family visas, associated costs, requirements for children, pre-school, school, childcare and family recreation
Living in Australia	Australian laws, culture and customs, sport and social activities, food, weather, public transport, driving, the internet, mobile phones and power voltage.
Working in Australia	applying for a tax file number, workplace rights (minimum pay, superannuation, Fair Work Ombudsman, employer obligations and employment options
Health concerns	health insurance (Overseas Student Health Cover), immunisations, prescription medication, sexual health and health care services, the Australian public health system
Personal concerns	being prepared emotionally for studying overseas, personal wellbeing, living independently, personal safety, contacting family, religion and worship, spiritual support

The survey found international students consider all information to be important. More than 80 per cent of surveyed students considered all issues covered in the survey to be important in assisting them transition to life in Australia. Overall, the highest proportions of survey respondents rated the topics of accommodation, health concerns, and finances and banking as important.

“All information about the foreign land is vital at this point. The more information the better standing.” (survey response, Q26)

Most students access pre-departure information. More than half of the survey respondents accessed pre-departure information on every topic, except for the topic of working in Australia. The highest proportion of students accessed information on their university, health concerns and accommodation.

“Seek out information and you will get it.” (focus group participant, Melbourne)

More than 80 per cent of the surveyed students indicated that the information they accessed on each topic was useful. There was slightly more variability with respect to students' level of preparedness upon arrival. Eighty per cent of students felt prepared regarding their university and travel arrangements, while around 38 per cent of survey respondents felt prepared regarding working in Australia. Around three-quarters of respondents felt prepared with respect to the remainder of the pre-departure information topics.

“Obtain information as much as you can. School website provided much more useful information than I imagined.” (survey response, Q26)

Information needs to be targeted, specific and easily understood. Despite some students expressing a desire for further information, many students noted that they felt overwhelmed by the volume of information they received, and, in many cases, they did not engage with all the material. For some students, this was further complicated by overly technical language and difficulty in contextualising the information before arriving in Australia.

“...efforts should be made to ensure these information are made clear to international students so they don't experience culture shock when they arrive Australia.” (survey response, Q11)

The survey results and information from the student focus groups indicated that there are benefits to providing information to students over a longer period, rather than in bulk, prior to or immediately upon arrival in Australia. Students might benefit from accessing information at a number of points throughout the year as their circumstances change. Most importantly, students want the assurance of knowing that information is available and readily accessible at a time relevant to them.

“Need to know basis: Not to bombard student at the first go.” (survey response, Q11)

Information needs to be accurate and realistic. Students want information that allows them to develop a realistic expectation of life in Australia. The survey respondents noted having this information would not eliminate or remove all the challenges associated with coming to Australia, but would help to reduce unrealistic expectations, unexpected surprises, culture shock and additional stress.

“...The system here is different from most Eastern countries therefore, students need more realistic and comprehensive information...” (survey response, Q11)

Attendance at orientation events is high. Despite anecdotal evidence to the contrary, orientation or welcome week was well attended by the survey respondents. Students tended to engage with these events to source university and course-specific information, rather than broader information about lifestyle. Non-attendance at orientation events was largely due to arriving in Australia too late to attend.

“Attend orientation!” (focus group participant, Sydney)

Some students still want more information. Despite most respondents noting they did access useful information regarding most of the topics covered in the survey, some indicated that they would have appreciated additional information on certain topics. In particular, students expressed a desire for further information on accommodation, cost of living and adjusting to the academic structure and rigour of Australian universities. These issues are explored in more depth in Section 7: Where are the gaps?

Adjusting to life as an international student can be challenging, but also very rewarding. The key theme that emerged through the survey and focus groups was that adjusting to life in a new country is difficult and requires patience and resilience, regardless of your country of origin. Many students acknowledged they had underestimated the difficulties and stress associated with simultaneously moving to Australia and starting university studies. These feelings could be exacerbated by a sense of isolation due to being located away from their familiar support network. Students were frank and open about the challenges they faced but noted that when looking at their experience in Australia so far, the benefits went beyond the high-quality academic experience—they also learnt invaluable lessons in resilience, perseverance and for many undergraduate students, independence.

“It’s not all koalas and kangaroos” (focus group participant, Brisbane)

“It’s not as easy as you think it will be, but it’s worth it.” (focus group participant, Melbourne)

Undertaking university level studies is a testing and demanding enterprise for all students, as they transition to a new world of opportunities and challenges. International students face the additional challenge of adjusting to life in a new country. While there is no amount of information that will remove all of these challenges, pre-departure information will help ease the transition and assist students to adapt as smoothly as possible.

While this study hoped to simplify the issue of preparing international students for life in Australia through the identification of tangible recommendations that could be adopted by Australian universities to support their students, the matter has proved to be complicated. The findings of the study indicate that in general, students are well informed, and reasonably well prepared when they arrive in Australia.

Based on the project results, Universities Australia has identified a number of best-practice principles to inform the development of effective pre-departure information for international students. To ensure pre-departure information is effective, it should be provided in ways to ensure it is:

- multi-platform;
- trustworthy;
- targeted;
- accessible;
- accurate; and
- comprehensive.

These principles are outlined in Part B, illustrated with a selection of examples from the range of pre-departure materials currently provided by universities.

**SURVEY RESULTS
AND DISCUSSION**

PART

A

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Australia's international higher education sector makes a significant contribution to Australia's economic and cultural climate. Tens of thousands of international students arrive each year to benefit not only from Australia's world-class universities, but from living in a society often quite different to their own. International students choose Australia because of its quality education, safety, and its warm and welcoming environment and lifestyle. Despite very positive messaging regarding the benefits of studying in Australia, there have also been reports of student isolation and difficulties in integrating with campus and wider communities, some of which have been linked to students feeling under-prepared for life in Australia^{i,ii,iii,iv,v,vi,vii}. Anecdotal reports suggest that the information students receive before they leave their home country may, at times, be insufficient to prepare them for student life in Australia.

As the international education sector in Australia grows and develops, the expectations and perceptions of international students of services and the quality of institutions are changing. International students now place as much emphasis on their in-country experience as on the quality of their studies^{viii,ix,x}. Universities are under increasing pressure to take a more holistic approach to internationalisation by providing what have been referred to as 'core services', which are related to teaching and learning, and 'peripheral services', which relate to the living conditions and the environment of the host country^{xi}.

The provision of these services begins well before international students leave home. The information students receive about Australia and their Australian university is the first stage of the international student experience and can significantly influence the experience students have upon arrival. Providing accessible and accurate pre-departure information is essential in maintaining Australia's reputation as a study destination of choice, and to equip students with the knowledge they need to have a positive student experience. Surprisingly, there is a paucity of research into the quality and usefulness of this information and the extent to which such information should be crafted for specific cultural groups.

Pre-departure information may be provided by a variety of stakeholders including universities, agents, government in-country posts, private websites and organisations, peer-to-peer information from returned alumni and fellow nationals already studying in Australia. Despite the broad acknowledgement of the importance of pre-departure information, to date there has been no comprehensive study of the content of the pre-departure information being provided to students, the sources of this information, and its utility. This project endeavoured to fill, at least in part, this knowledge gap.

1.2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

Universities Australia received funding from the Department of Education, Skills and Employment Enabling Growth and Innovation (EGI) Program to implement an online survey and host focus groups to gather current student perspectives on the information they received prior to their arrival in Australia. The project also collected examples of good practice and sought input from stakeholders to identify the challenges associated with the provision of useful and culturally appropriate pre-departure information to incoming international students.

Universities Australia engaged Engine (formerly ORC International) as the independent survey consultant. Engagement with universities was facilitated via university Vice-Chancellors, the Universities Australia Board and Plenary memberships as well as the Australian University International Directors Forum (AUIDF). Broader community engagement was conducted through presentations at the 2018 and 2019 ISANA International Education Association (ISANA) Conferences and the 2018 Council of International Students in Australia (CISA) Conference.

The project benefited from the expertise of the project Advisory Group, which was comprised of representatives from ISANA, AUIDF, CISA, Austrade and the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. More information regarding the Project Advisory Group can be found in Appendix 1.

The survey consultant developed a theme matrix (Appendix 2), which was used to develop the survey instrument (Appendix 3). The survey instrument was fine-tuned via consultation with the Advisory Group members and other stakeholders. Cognitive testing performed by a sample of international students helped to remove ambiguous language and ensure the survey was accessible through a variety of platforms. Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Canberra Human Research Ethics Committee.

This included development of participant information and consent documents (Appendix 4).

The final *2019 UA Pre-departure Information Survey* (the survey) contained a total of 26 questions canvassing students' opinions on topics the Advisory Group determined to be the most important for international students coming to Australia. These topics were broken down under sub-themes to assist survey respondents. Given the limitations placed on the scope of the project by funding and time, it was not possible to cover every aspect of the student experience and a number of these sub-themes warrant more detailed examination in future studies.

Universities Australia also developed a Survey Managers' Guide (Appendix 5) to assist in the collection of student sample files.

All 39 Universities Australia member institutions were in scope for the survey data collection. The target population for the survey was onshore undergraduate and postgraduate international students undertaking their first or second year of study in 2019. Thirty-four universities participated in the survey, with a total of 92 612 students found to meet the desired criteria and invited to complete the survey. Data collection commenced on 29 April 2019 and concluded on 27 May 2019. Further details of the survey process can be found in the methodological summary (Appendix 3).

1.3

SURVEY RESPONSE

A total of 17 325 international students responded to the survey, achieving a survey response rate of 19.3 per cent.

International students from 151 countries responded to the survey with 60.3 per cent of respondents originating from China, India, Nepal, Malaysia and Singapore (Table 1). This is broadly consistent with the profile of international students across Australia's university sector. The exception is Vietnam, which is the fifth largest source country for international students in Australian universities but was only in ninth place in terms of survey respondents, contributing only 2.4 per cent.

Table 1: Survey respondents, by country of residence

	Number of respondents	Proportion of all respondents		Number of respondents	Proportion of all respondents
China ¹	5318	30.7%	Taiwan	212	1.2%
India	3005	17.3%	Bhutan	195	1.1%
Nepal	884	5.1%	South Korea	180	1.0%
Malaysia	652	3.8%	Saudi Arabia	176	1.0%
Singapore	582	3.4%	Kenya	153	0.9%
Hong Kong	517	3.0%	Iran	131	0.8%
Sri Lanka	483	2.8%	Nigeria	127	0.7%
Indonesia	474	2.7%	Japan	124	0.7%
Vietnam	419	2.4%	Papua New Guinea	122	0.7%
Philippines	335	1.9%	Thailand	110	0.6%
Pakistan	306	1.8%	Germany	105	0.6%
United States of America	270	1.6%	Cambodia	102	0.6%
Bangladesh	265	1.5%	Other countries	1840	11%
Canada	238	1.4%			

¹ Excludes SARs and Taiwan

Other key characteristics of the survey respondents included:

- 93.6 per cent of students were studying in metropolitan areas;
- 17.4 per cent of students were aged 19 and under with a further 44.3 per cent aged 20 to 24 years old;
- 54.5 per cent of students were enrolled in a postgraduate coursework degree and 36.9 per cent were enrolled in an undergraduate degree; and
- 80.9 per cent of students came to study in Australia independently without any accompanying family members.

1.4 FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups were conducted following preliminary analysis of the survey results. Basic findings from the survey guided the development of discussion questions for the focus groups. These questions were used as prompts for facilitating discussions, which were predominantly student-led.

Focus groups were held in four cities, as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Focus group locations and host institutions

City	Institution	No. of sessions
Canberra	The Australian National University	Two
Canberra	University of Canberra	One
Brisbane	Queensland University of Technology	Two
Brisbane	The University of Queensland	Two
Sydney	The Kirby Institute, UNSW	One
Sydney	UNSW Sydney	One
Sydney	The University of Sydney	Two
Sydney	UTS Insearch	One
Melbourne	Victoria University	One
Melbourne	The University of Melbourne	One

The number of students in each focus group ranged from three to 20. Many nationalities were represented, with some groups being country specific.

Focus group participants were not limited to the host institutions but came from a variety of universities in each geographical location.

2 IMPORTANCE OF PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

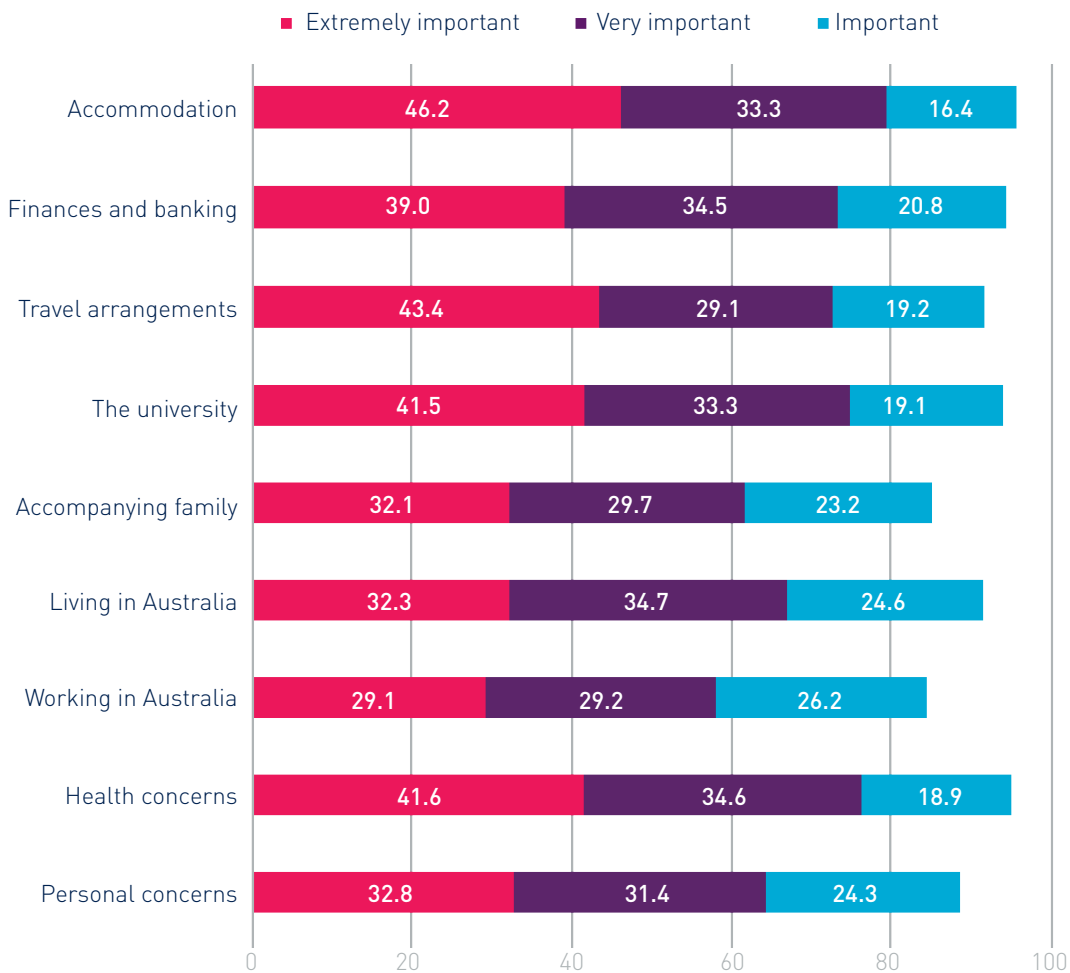
The survey asked international students to indicate how important it was to receive pre-departure information about a range of topics before arriving in Australia. Responses were provided on a five-point scale ranging from 'Not at all important' to 'Extremely important'.

2.1 AGGREGATE RESULTS

Overall, more than 80 per cent of respondents indicated that all of the pre-departure topics covered by the survey were either important, very important or extremely important (Figure 1). Information on accommodation (95.8 per cent), health concerns (95 per cent) and finances and banking (94.3 per cent) ranked in the top three.

Information relating to accompanying family and working in Australia were viewed as being less important than other topics but were still considered important by significant proportions of survey respondents.

Figure 1: Importance of pre-departure information received before arriving in Australia (per cent)



2.2 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RESULTS

The survey response data from the top five student markets for the university sector—China, India, Nepal, Malaysia and Vietnam—show some subtle country-specific differences in the ratings of the importance of information received (Figure 2). While more than 80 per cent of respondents from all countries rated information on the majority of topics as being important, there was some variation with respect to the importance of information about accompanying family and working in Australia.

The three topics identified as being the most important by students from the top five source markets are listed in Table 3. Some country-specific variation is apparent in the students' perceptions of the importance of various topics. Students from four of the five countries placed accommodation and health concerns in their top three areas of importance for pre-departure information. Students from Malaysia viewed information relating to finances and banking as being their top area of interest, while students from Nepal listed information relating to their university as being their number one area of importance. Interestingly, students from Nepal were the only students within this country cohort for which accommodation did not figure within the top three most important topics for pre-departure information.

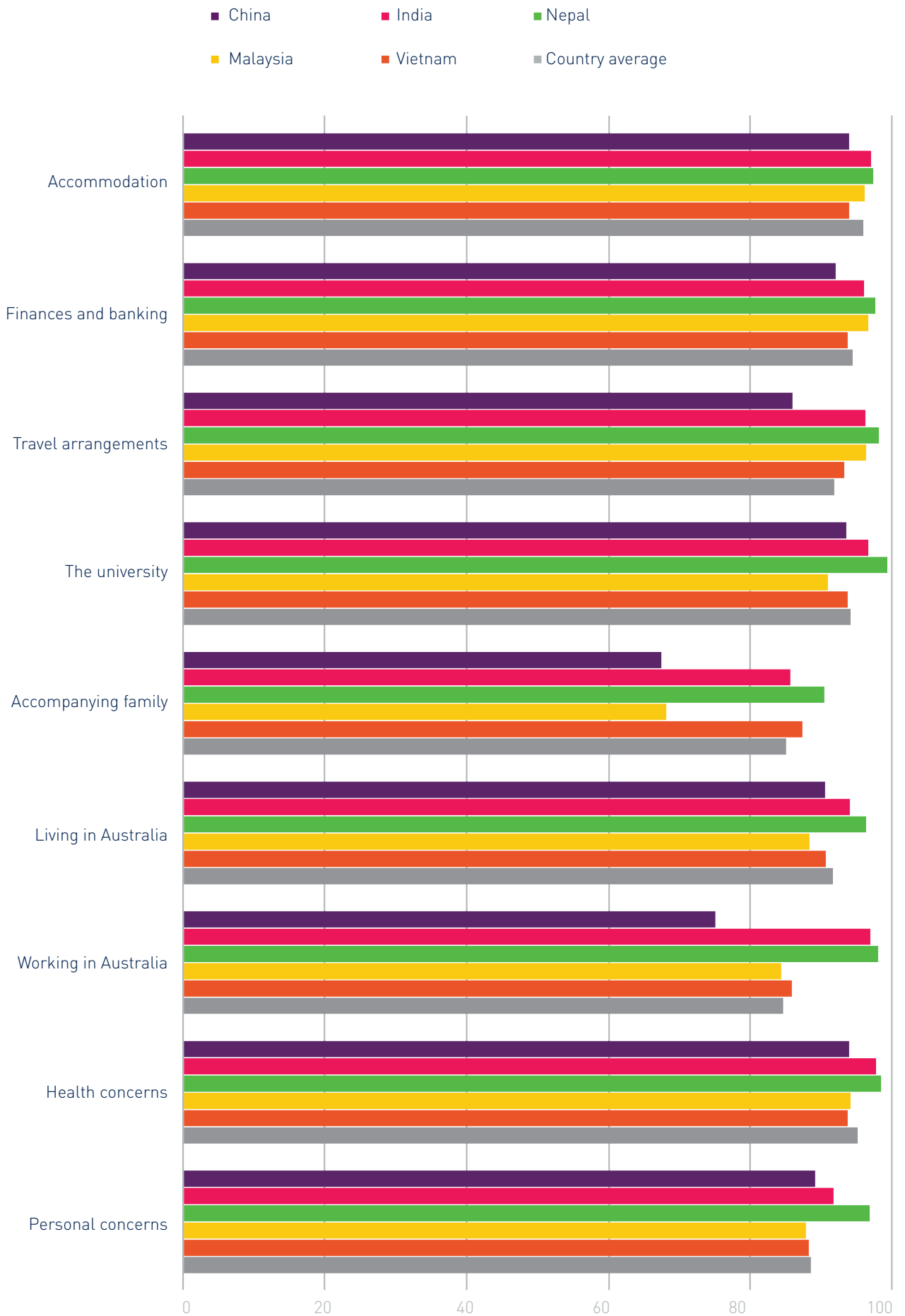
Table 3: Top three most important topics for pre-departure information by country.

Country	Ranking		
	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3
China	Accommodation	The university	Health concerns
India	Health concerns	Accommodation	Working in Australia
Nepal	The university	Health concerns	Travel arrangements
Malaysia	Finances and banking	Travel arrangements	Accommodation
Vietnam	Accommodation	Finances and banking	Health concerns

While approximately 90 per cent of students from India, Nepal and Vietnam considered information regarding accompanying family members to be important, this issue was deemed as being important by 67.3 per cent of Chinese respondents and 68 per cent of Malaysian respondents.

There was also some variation in the country-specific ratings of the importance of information about working in Australia. This was considered important by 97.9 per cent of Nepalese respondents and 96.8 per cent of students from India, while 74.9 per cent of Chinese students rated this information as being important.

Figure 2: Importance of pre-departure information, by country (per cent)



3 PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION ACCESSED

The survey asked respondents if they received or accessed information on a range of topics before arriving in Australia.

3.1 AGGREGATE RESULTS

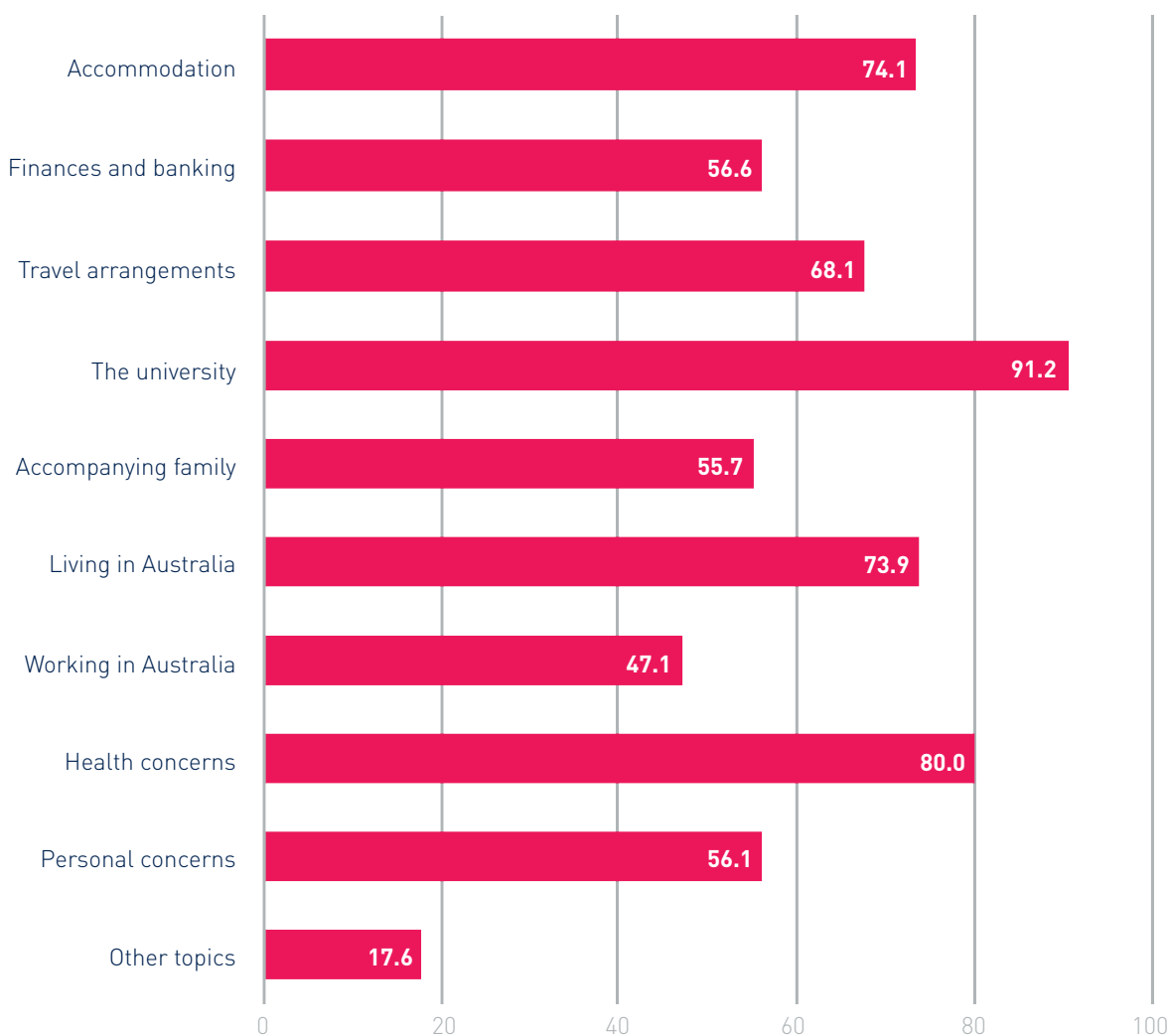
The information most commonly received or accessed by survey respondents was information relating to their university (91.2 per cent), health concerns (80 per cent), accommodation (74.1 per cent) and information about living in Australia (73.9 per cent) (Figure 3).

Despite the high number of respondents rating information regarding finance and banking as important, (39 per cent extremely important, 34.5 per cent very important, 16.4 per cent important) a lower proportion of students (56.6 per cent) received or accessed information on this topic.

A similar proportion of students (55.7 per cent) reported receiving or accessing information regarding accompanying family.

Information regarding working in Australia was accessed by 47.1 per cent of respondents.

Figure 3: Pre-departure information received or obtained (per cent)



3.2 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RESULTS

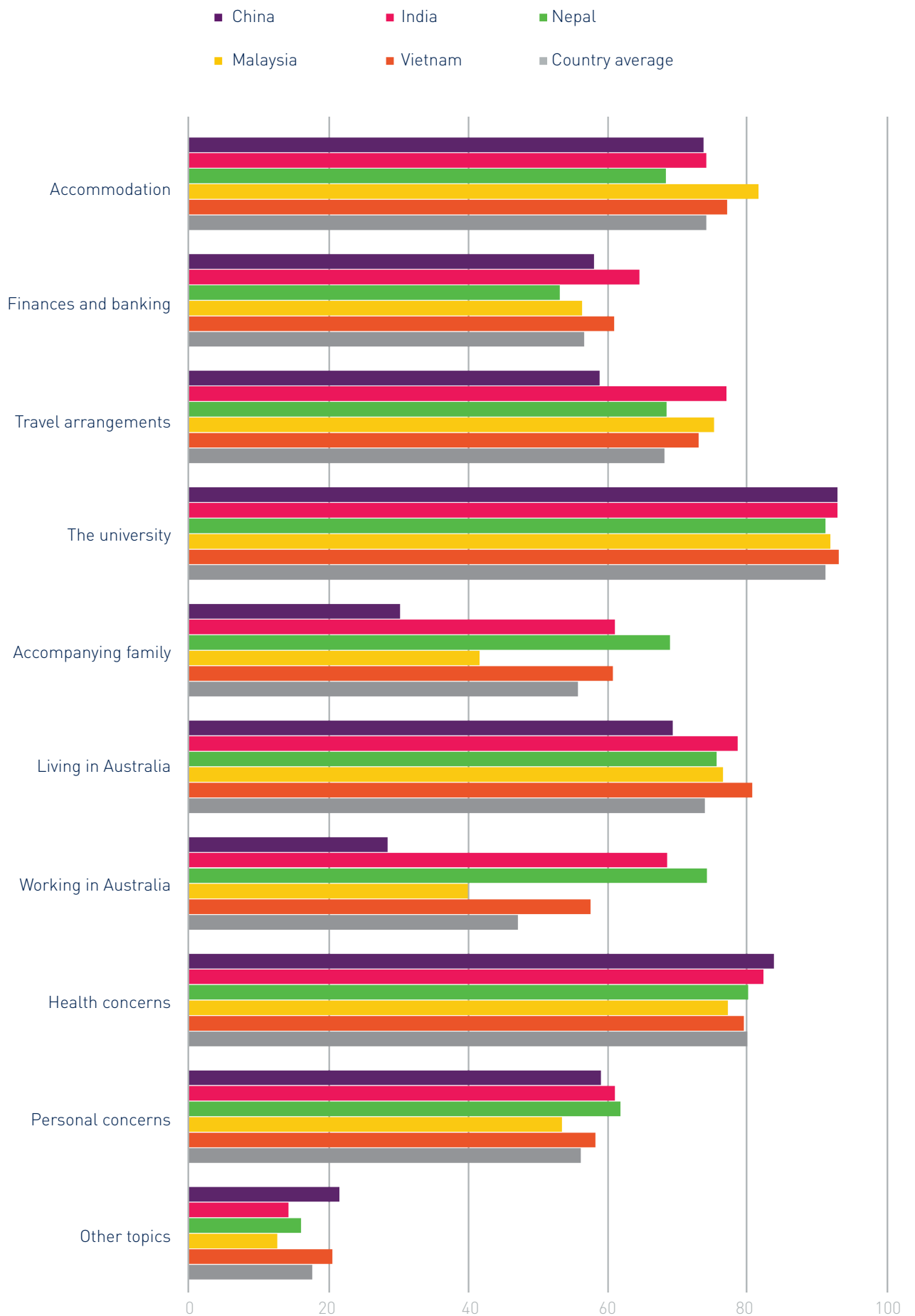
Figure 4 shows more than 90 per cent of respondents from the top five source countries—China, India, Nepal, Malaysia and Vietnam—received or accessed information about their university. Information about accommodation, health concerns and living in Australia were received or obtained by more than 65 per cent of respondents from all countries.

More than 70 per cent of students from four of these countries reported that they had received information about travel arrangements, except for students from China where less than 60 per cent of respondents received or sourced this information.

There was variation in the number of respondents from these five countries who reported receiving or accessing information about accompanying family and working in Australia. While students from China and Malaysia were less likely than students from other countries to rate information about accompanying family as important, the survey found that only 30.2 per cent of students from China and 41.6 per cent of students from Malaysia—who arrived in Australia with family members—indicated they received or accessed this information.

Only 28.4 per cent of Chinese students and 39.9 per cent of Malaysian students received or accessed information about working in Australia, compared to 68.5 per cent of respondents from India and 74.2 per cent of respondents from Nepal.

Figure 4: Pre-departure information received or obtained, by country (per cent)



4 INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

The survey also considered the sources and modes of communication international students use to access pre-departure information.

In general, most international students indicated they received their pre-departure information via friends or family or directly from websites. Friends were a particularly prevalent information source for postgraduate students, who appeared to prefer sourcing information from colleagues who were currently studying or had previously studied in Australia.

The type and reliability of information obtained from different sources is variable. Students who receive information from family connections or friends are more likely to receive personalised, tailored or specific information and advice. However, this type of non-curated information, which may not come from official sources, could in some cases be inaccurate or not give the full picture. While students will always seek information from informal sources, it is important to ensure that correct and accurate information is readily available through more formal channels.

The survey responses revealed that education agents were another significant source of pre-departure information for prospective students. Other commonly accessed platforms included the Australia Awards pre-departure briefings, contact officers and Introductory Academic Program, which are available only to students studying on an Australia Awards scholarship. Several students also reported using OzTREKK, IDP, university and government websites.

The majority of students who engaged in the focus groups acknowledged the use of internet searches to source information. Many students looked for online videos of current and previous students discussing life as an international student in Australia. Several students noted that while a significant amount of information was circulated to students via email, email was often not a preferred mode of communication for the current generation of students. This issue was further complicated by the fact that many students used family-related email addresses prior to their departure, which they did not check regularly. In some cases, information was sent to institutional email addresses which some students acknowledged that in the initial stages they were not aware they had or did not check on a regular basis, if at all.

4.1 ACCOMMODATION

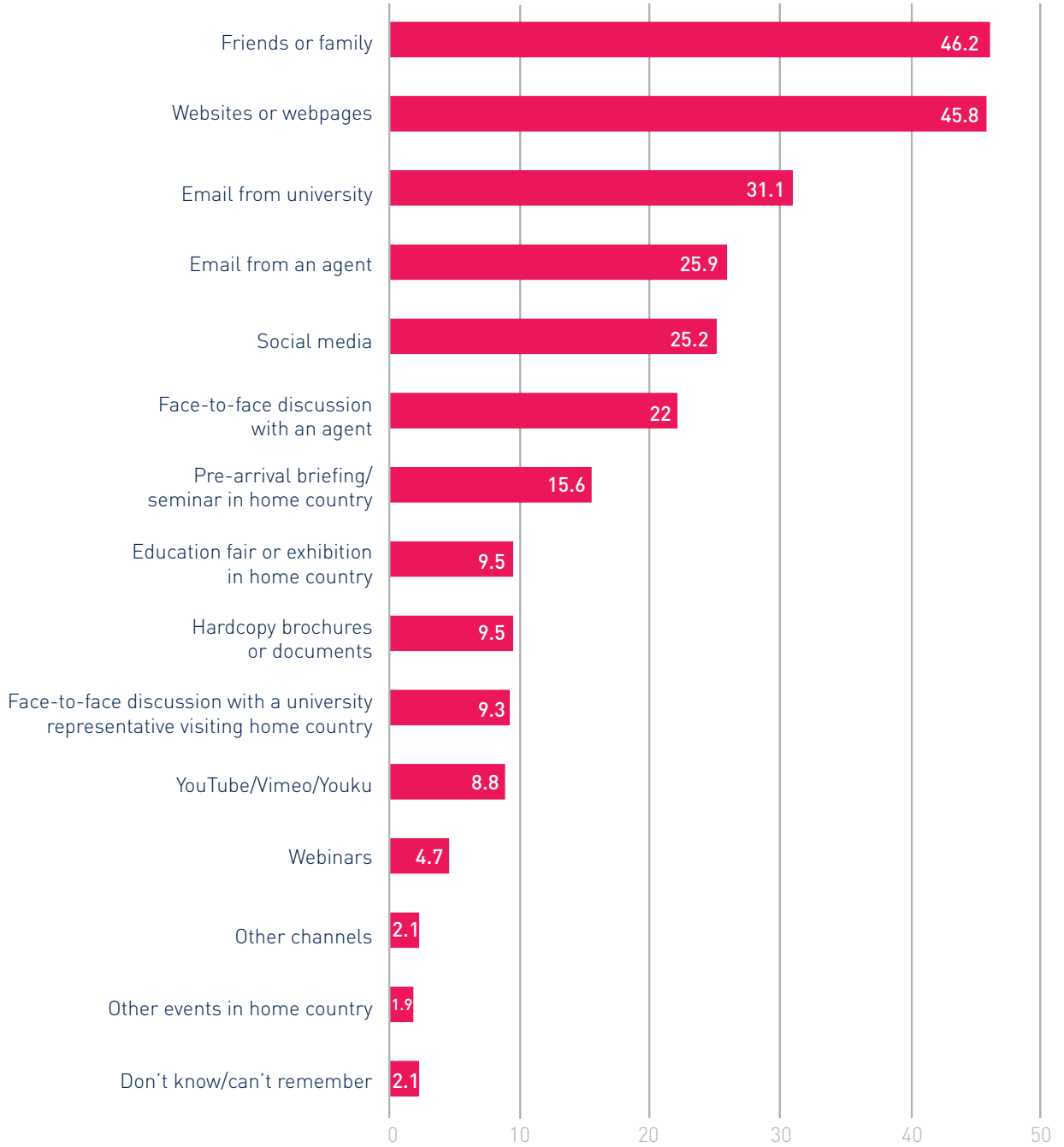
Of the 74.1 per cent of respondents who received information about accommodation before arriving in Australia, nearly half received or accessed information through friends or family (46.2 per cent) and websites or webpages (45.8 per cent). A further 31.1 per cent of respondents indicated they received accommodation information via email communication from their university (Figure 5).

In open responses, students commonly referenced Gumtree, flatmates.com, realestate.com, domain.com and Facebook as sources for finding accommodation opportunities.

During the focus group discussions in Sydney, Chinese students frequently cited the app/news service Today Sydney, while several other Chinese students mentioned using WeChat to find accommodation.

Among those who accessed information about accommodation from their friends and family, many tended to access information from people from the same country.

Figure 5: Information channels, accommodation (per cent)

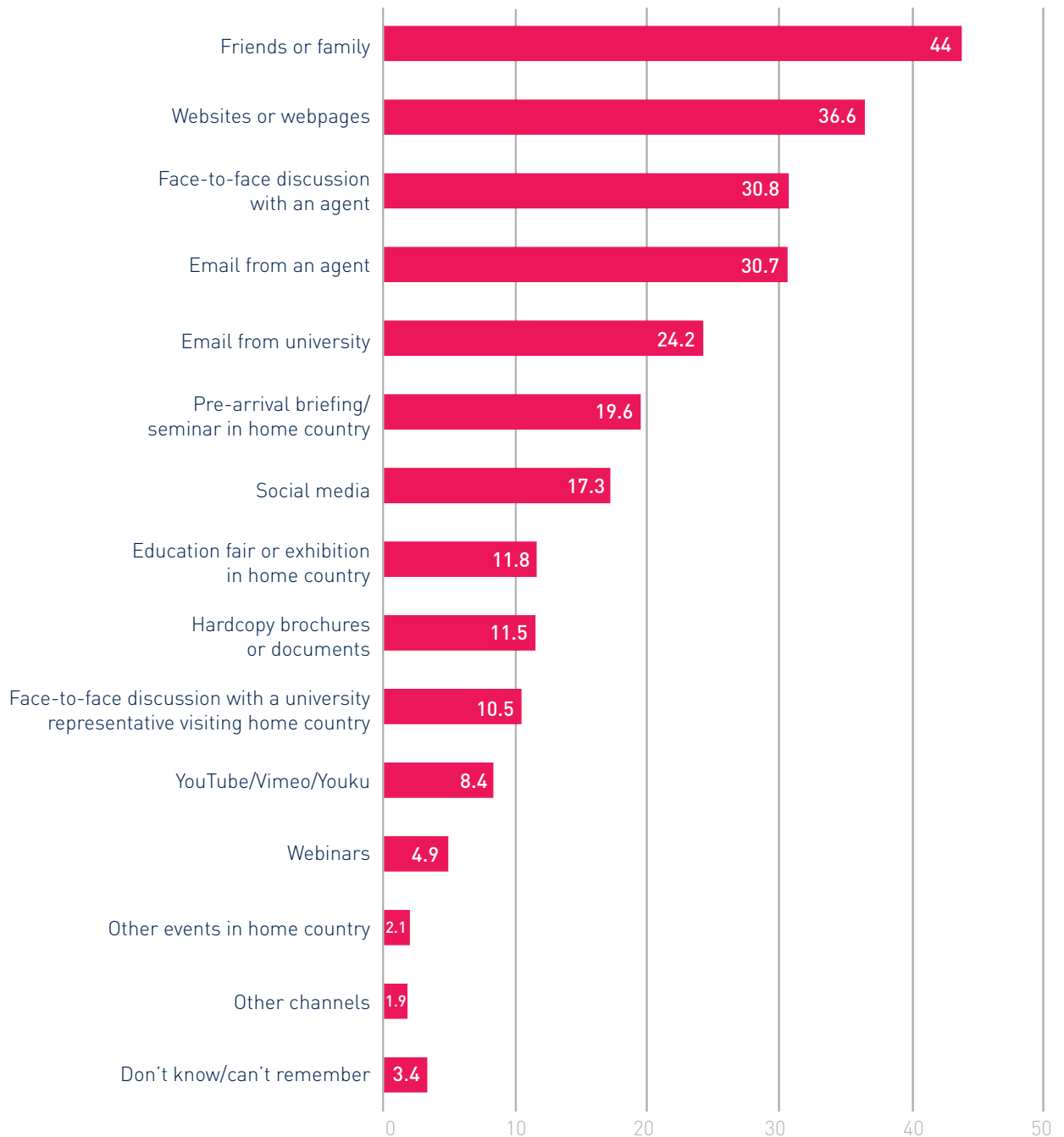


4.2 FINANCES AND BANKING

As shown in Figure 6, of the 56.6 per cent of respondents who received pre-departure information about finances and banking, 44 per cent indicated they received this information through their friends or family while 36.6 per cent accessed finances and banking information through websites or webpages.

Many international students also relied on an education agent for information regarding finances and banking, with 30.8 per cent receiving information through face-to-face discussion with an education agent and 30.7 per cent receiving email information from an agent.

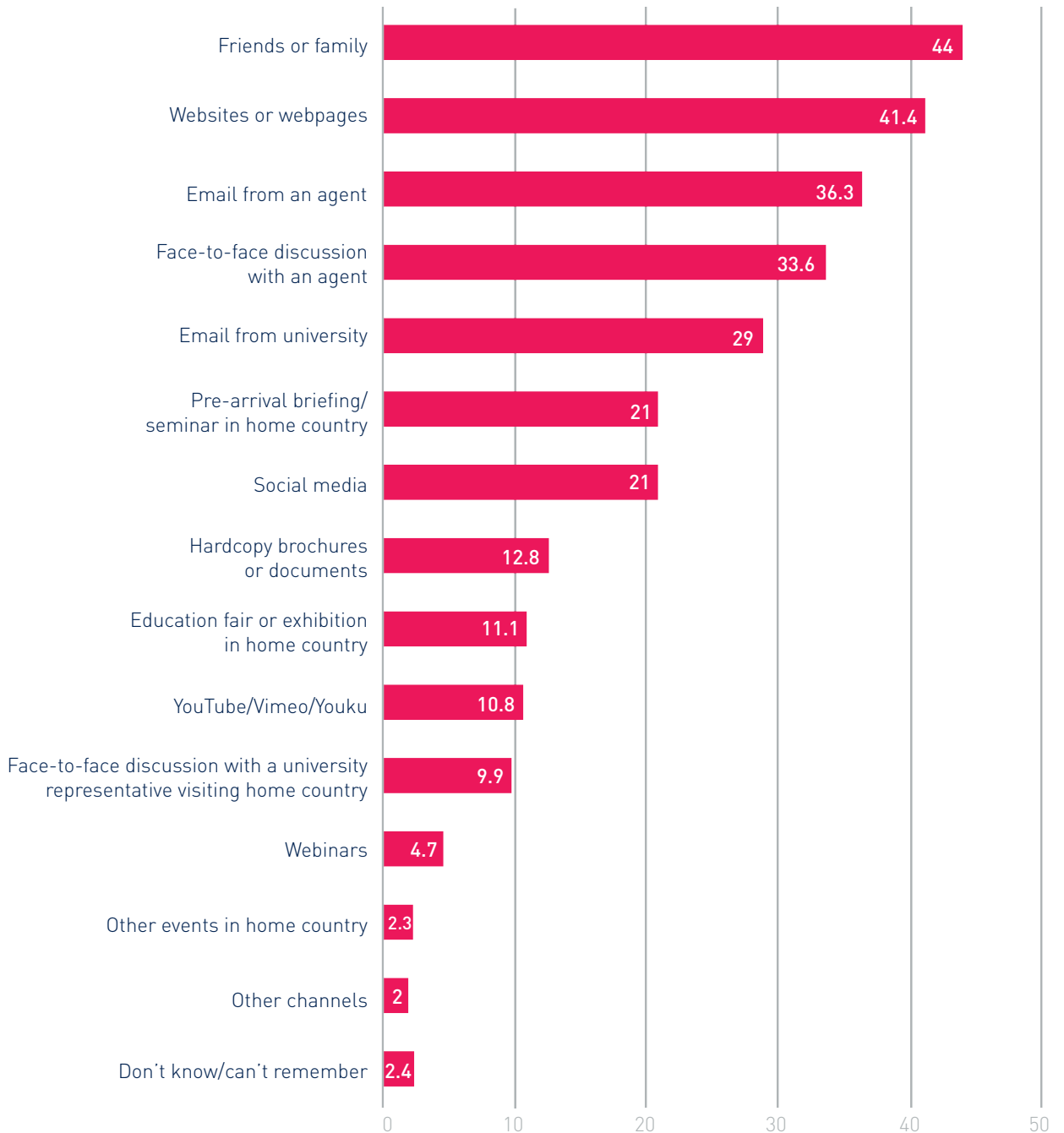
Figure 6: Information channels, finances and banking (per cent)



4.3 TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Similar to information on finances and banking, most international students received information about travel arrangements through friends or family (44 per cent), websites or webpages (41.4 per cent) and email from an education agent (36.3 per cent) (Figure 7).

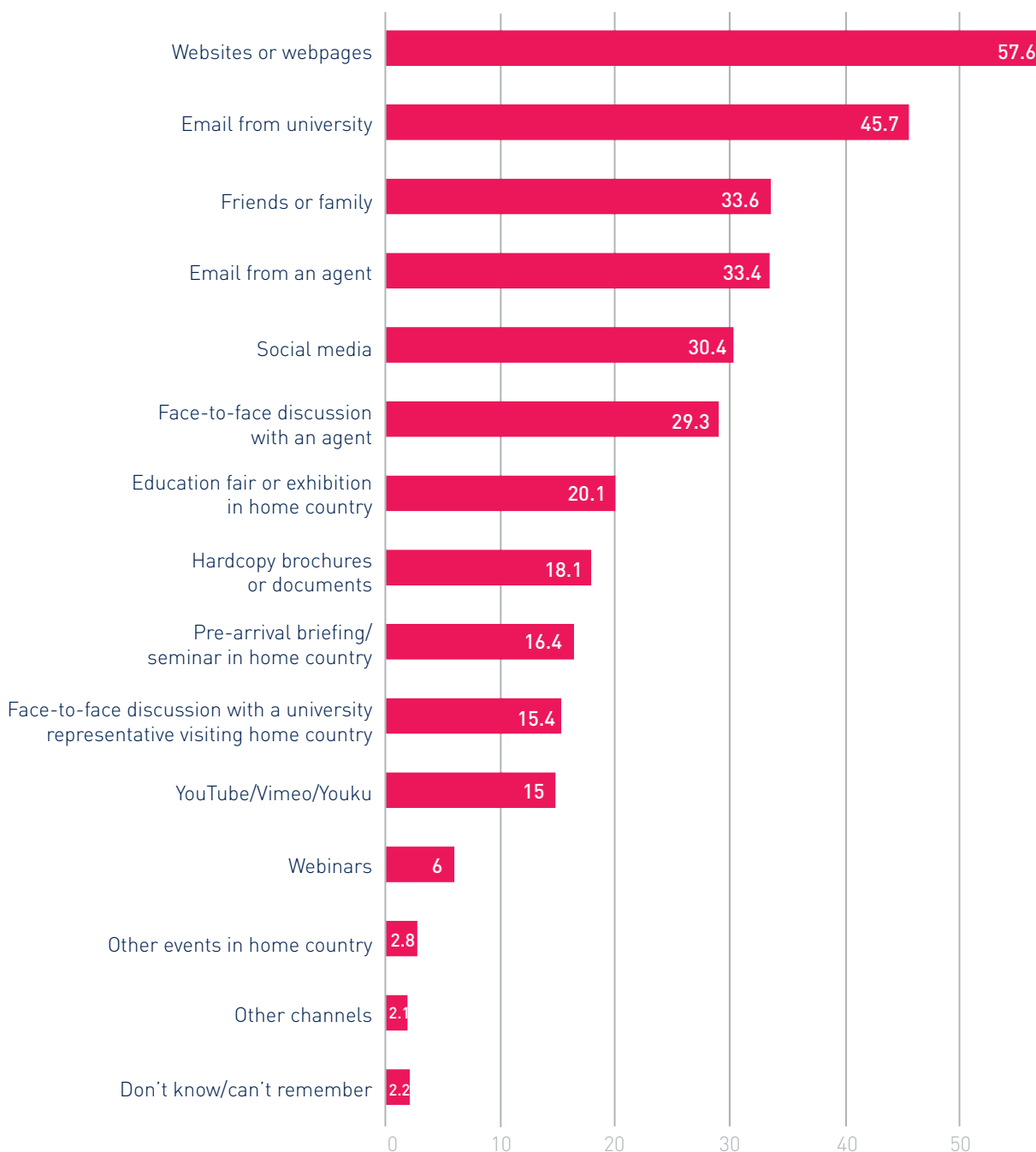
Figure 7: Information channels, travel arrangements (per cent)



4.4 THE UNIVERSITY

As discussed in Section 3, a large proportion—91.2 per cent—of survey respondents reported receiving or accessing information about their universities before arriving in Australia. As shown in Figure 8, most of these students received this information by visiting websites and webpages (57.6 per cent) and via email from their university (45.7 per cent). One in three respondents also received information about their university through social media, for example, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Weibo, WeChat etc.

Figure 8: Information channels, the university (per cent)



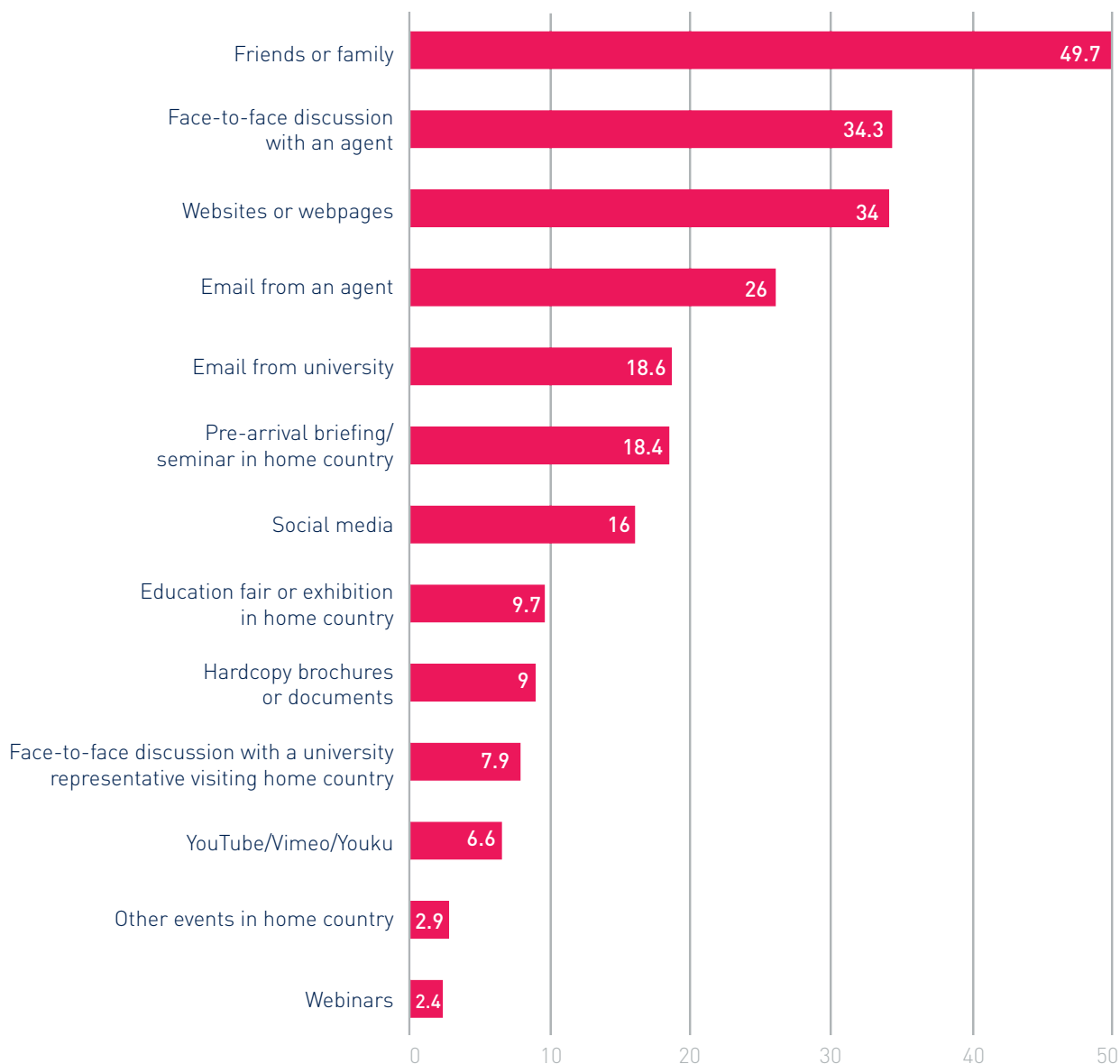
Students noted that obtaining information about their university was an important aspect of moving to Australia as an international student. They also acknowledged that reviewing university websites was an important part of the research they undertook prior to selecting which institution they would attend. Often students will have researched a range of universities' websites prior to selecting their final destination.

Many students noted that they also accessed information about their university, particularly faculty-specific information, during orientation week or welcome week.

4.5 ACCOMPANYING FAMILY

A total of 3 304 survey respondents (19.1 per cent of all respondents) came to study in Australia with their family members. Of these students, 55.7 per cent indicated that they received or accessed pre-departure information about accompanying family. Most of these students received information about accompanying family through their friends or family (49.7 per cent), face-to-face discussion with an education agent (34.3 per cent) and websites or webpages (34 per cent) (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Information channels, accompanying family (per cent)

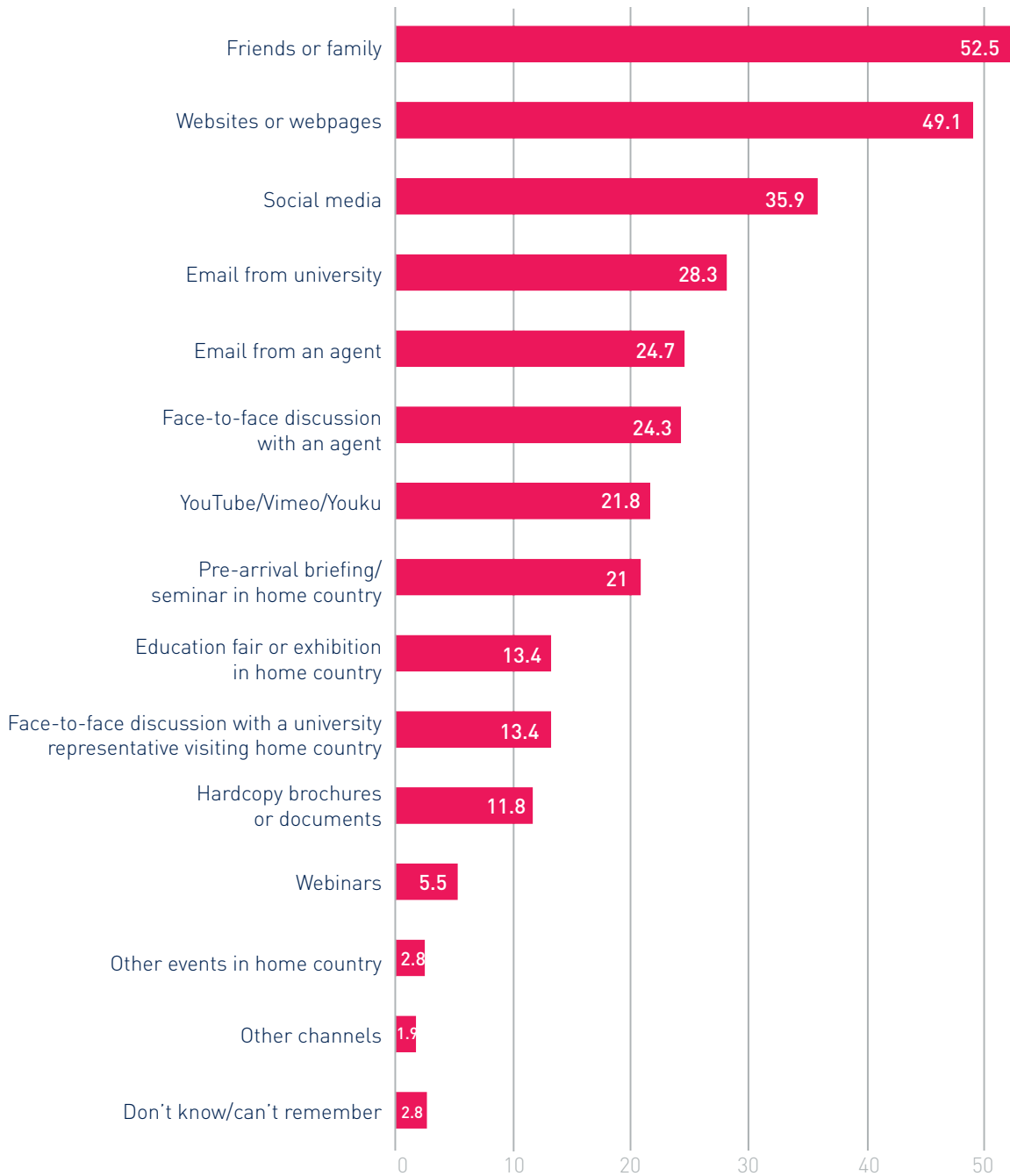


4.6 LIVING IN AUSTRALIA

Of the 73.9 per cent of survey respondents who reported receiving or accessing pre-departure information about living in Australia, 52.5 per cent sourced this information through their friends or family, 49.1 per cent from websites or webpages and 35.9 per cent from social media (Figure 10).

Recipients of Australia Awards scholarships were unanimous in highlighting the usefulness of the pre-departure briefing provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as part of the program and the ongoing assistance provided to the students and their family post arrival.

Figure 10: Information channels, living in Australia (per cent)



Many students in the focus groups mentioned attending a pre-departure briefing session in their home country at which alumni from Australian universities gave presentations or were available to answer questions. Students noted this opportunity to speak directly to someone with relevant experience of living and studying in Australia was extremely useful.

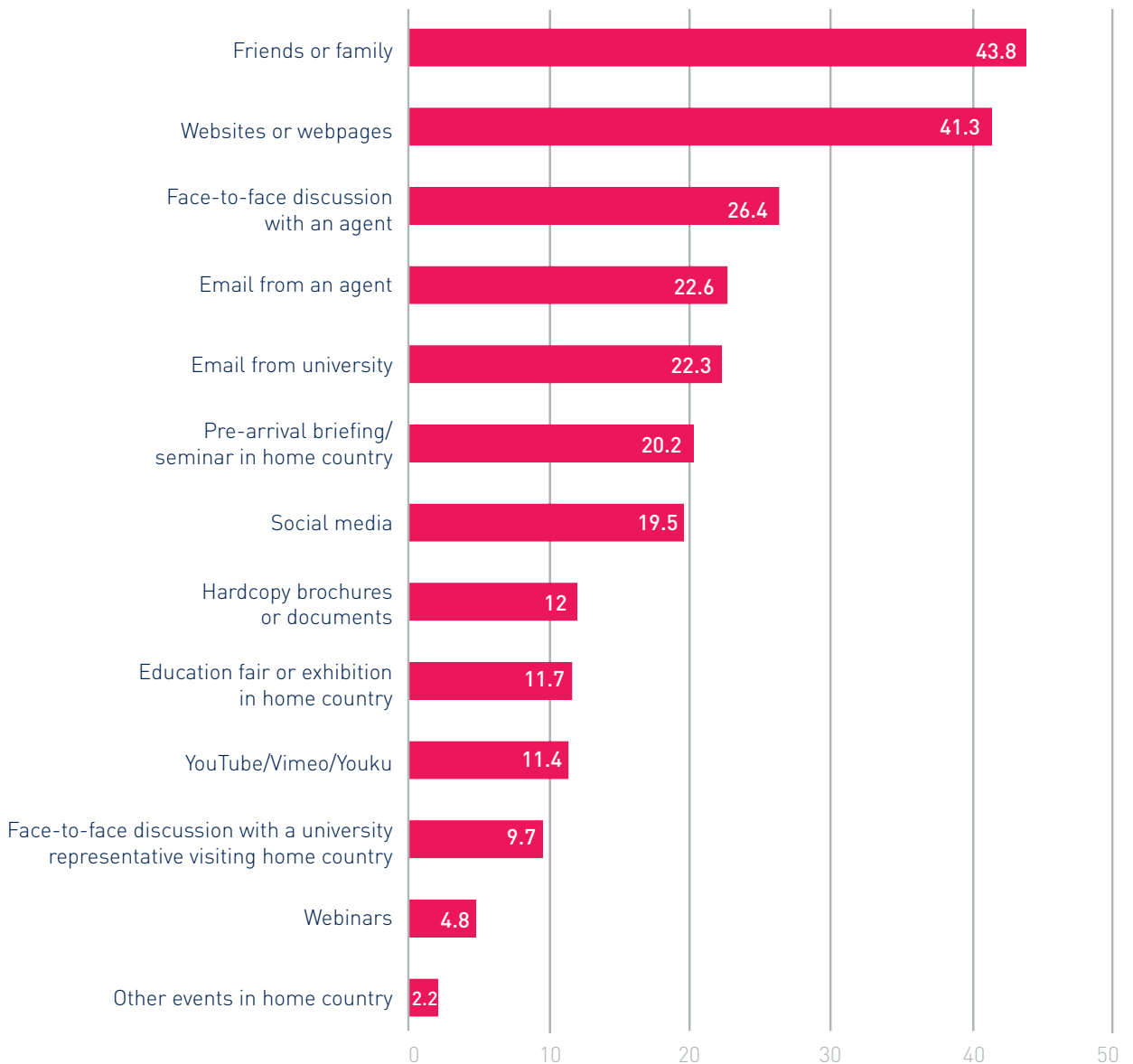
Students also noted that they attempted to source information about life in Australia via social media platforms on which former and current students from their respective countries described their experiences of living in Australia.

4.7 WORKING IN AUSTRALIA

Less than half (47.1 per cent) of survey respondents reported receiving information about working in Australia. Of these students, 43.8 per cent received information about working in Australia through their friends or family, 41.3 per cent through websites or webpages and 26.4 per cent through face-to-face discussion with an agent (Figure 11).

Several students mentioned accessing information from Australian government sources regarding working in Australia, with the focus being mainly on the work conditions attached to their student visa.

Figure 11: Information channels, working in Australia (per cent)



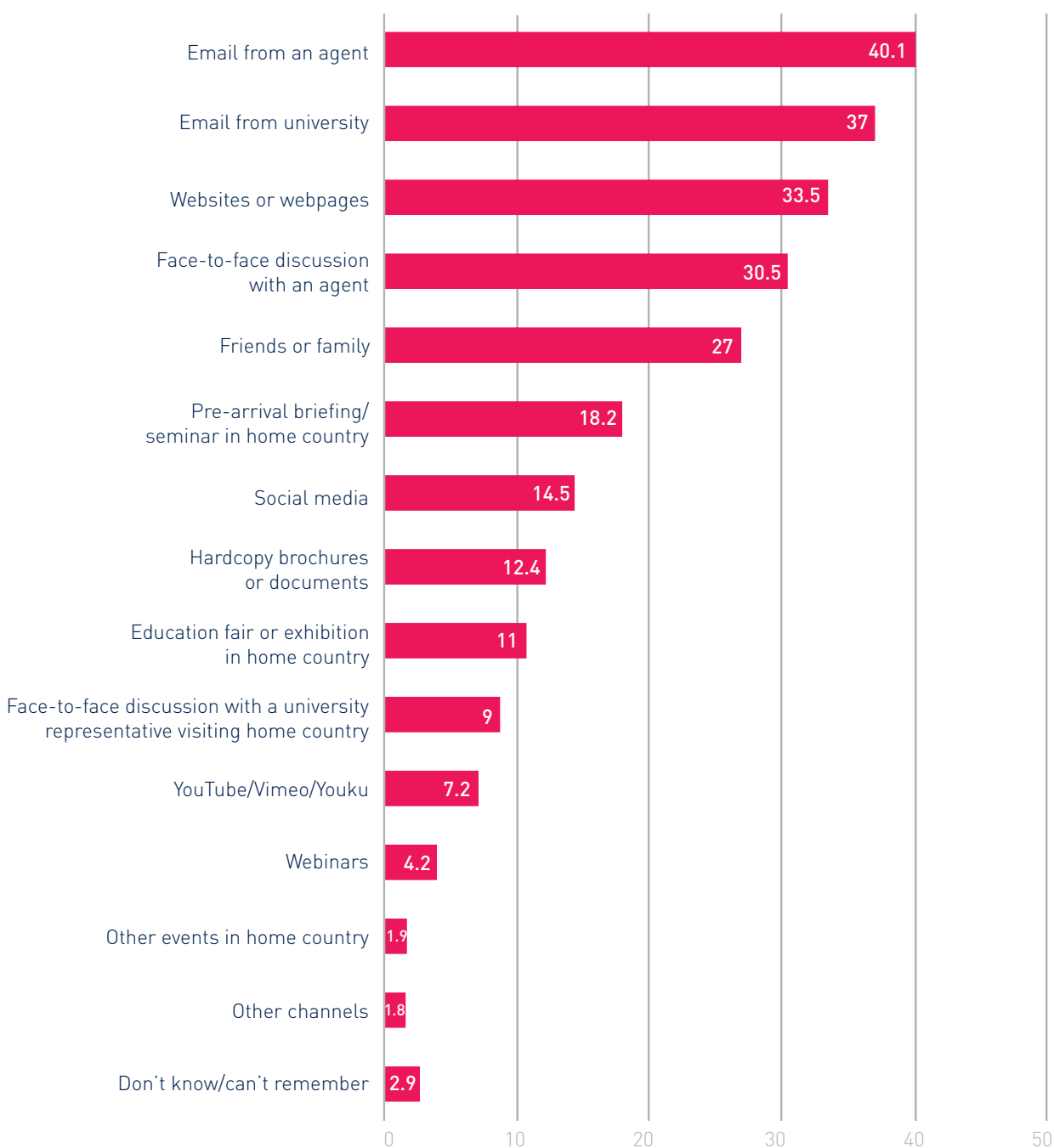
4.8 HEALTH CONCERNS

As depicted in Figure 12, of the 80 per cent of survey respondents who reported receiving information related to health concerns, 40.1 per cent received this information through email from an education agent and 37 per cent via email from the university. Websites or webpages were also a commonly accessed source of information (33.5 per cent).

Many students received information directly from the insurance provider, or through their agent or scholarship provider. Students also mentioned receiving information as part of their visa documentation.

Students also noted that events such as orientation week, welcome week and orientation from their respective college or accommodation provider were also useful sources of information on this issue. This included information regarding access to services on campus including those dealing with mental health and counselling services, along with sexual health matters.

Figure 12: Information channels, health concerns (per cent)



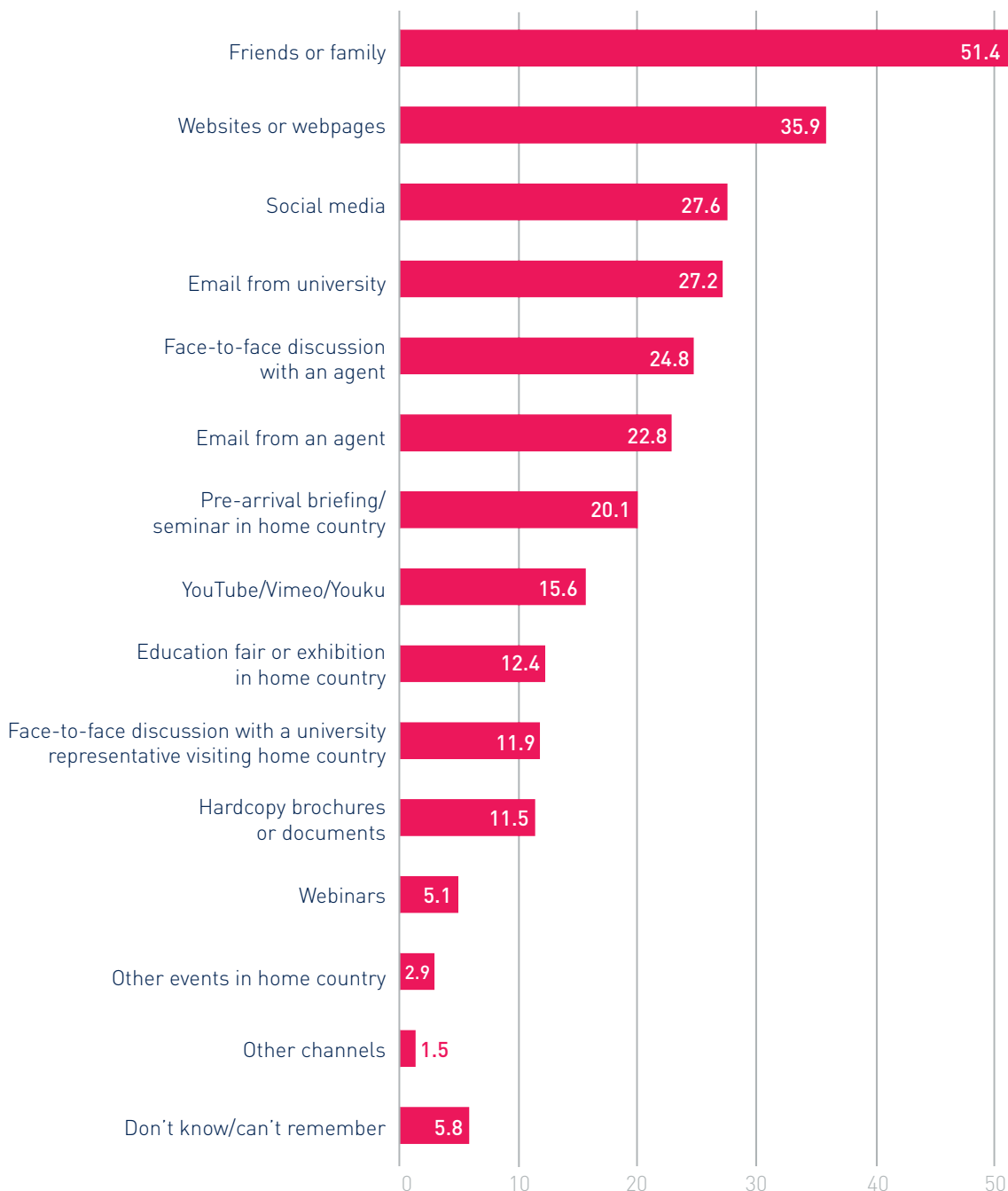
4.9 PERSONAL CONCERNS

Slightly more than half of the survey respondents (56.1 per cent) indicated they received pre-departure information about personal concerns. Many students received this information through their friends or family (51.4 per cent), websites or webpages (35.9 per cent) and social media (27.6 per cent) (Figure 13).

This topic elicited considerably fewer written answers within the survey responses. When exploring the topic further in focus groups students seemed to be aware of where and how to seek help for personal concerns if they felt this was necessary. Students seemed to have less awareness of when it was appropriate or necessary to access such services. Some students indicated they knew about the provision of these services, but did not always feel comfortable using them.

While nearly all students who participated in the focus groups acknowledged that they had accessed student support services of some description since arriving in Australia, many students indicated a preference to seek help from online sources when dealing with issues of a personal nature. This included social media platforms, online blogs and other web-based sources.

Figure 13: Information channels, personal concerns (per cent)



5 USEFULNESS OF PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

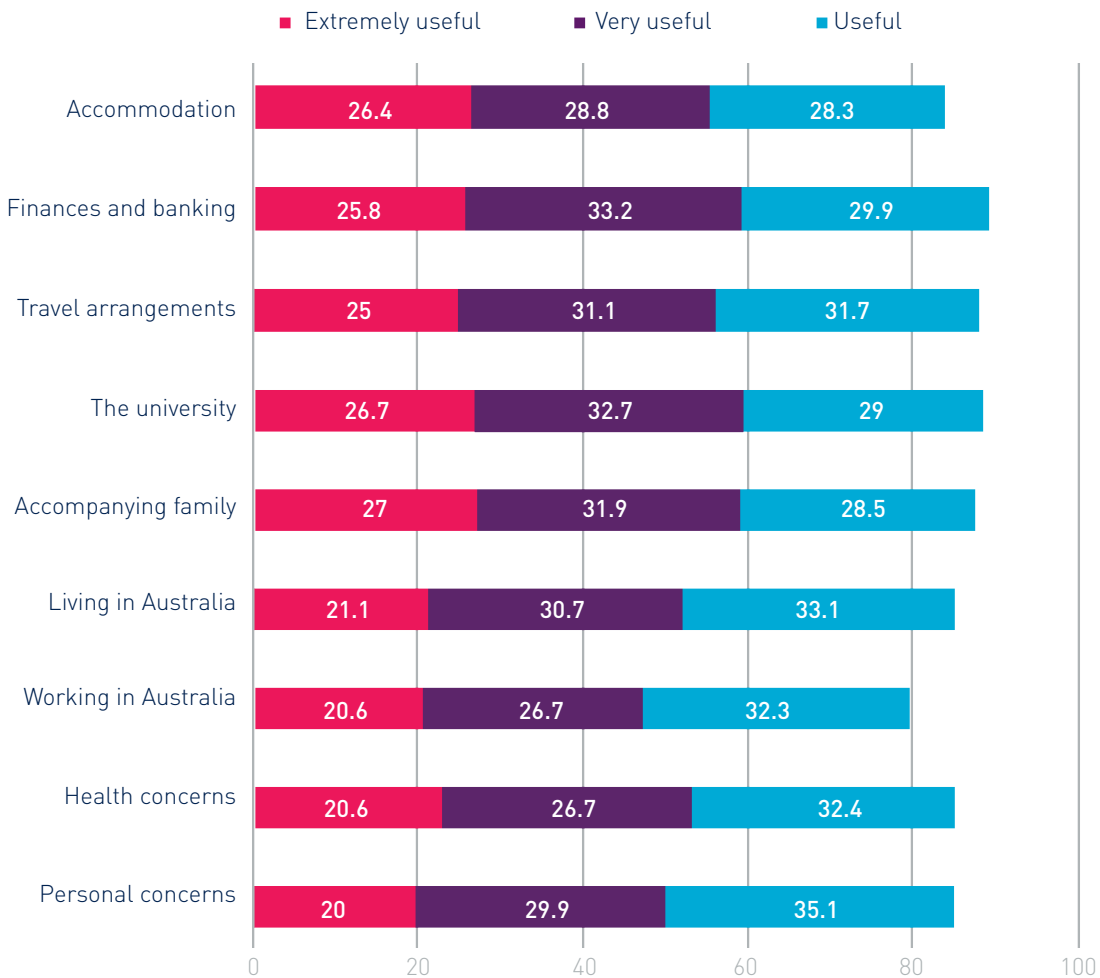
The survey asked international students their perceptions of the usefulness of the pre-arrival information they received or accessed before arriving in Australia.

5.1 AGGREGATE RESULTS

As shown in Figure 14, more than 80 per cent of survey respondents indicated that the information received or obtained before arriving in Australia was helpful, with information on most topics rated as useful, very useful or extremely useful. Information received on finances and banking (88.8 per cent), the university (88.4 per cent) and travel arrangements (87.8 per cent) were rated in the top three in terms of utility.

More than a quarter of respondents rated the information they received or accessed about accompanying family, the university, accommodation, finances and banking, and travel arrangements as being extremely useful. This likely reflects the immediacy of these topics—they are the first things that international students need to attend to when coming to Australia for their studies.

Figure 14: Usefulness of pre-departure information received or obtained (per cent)

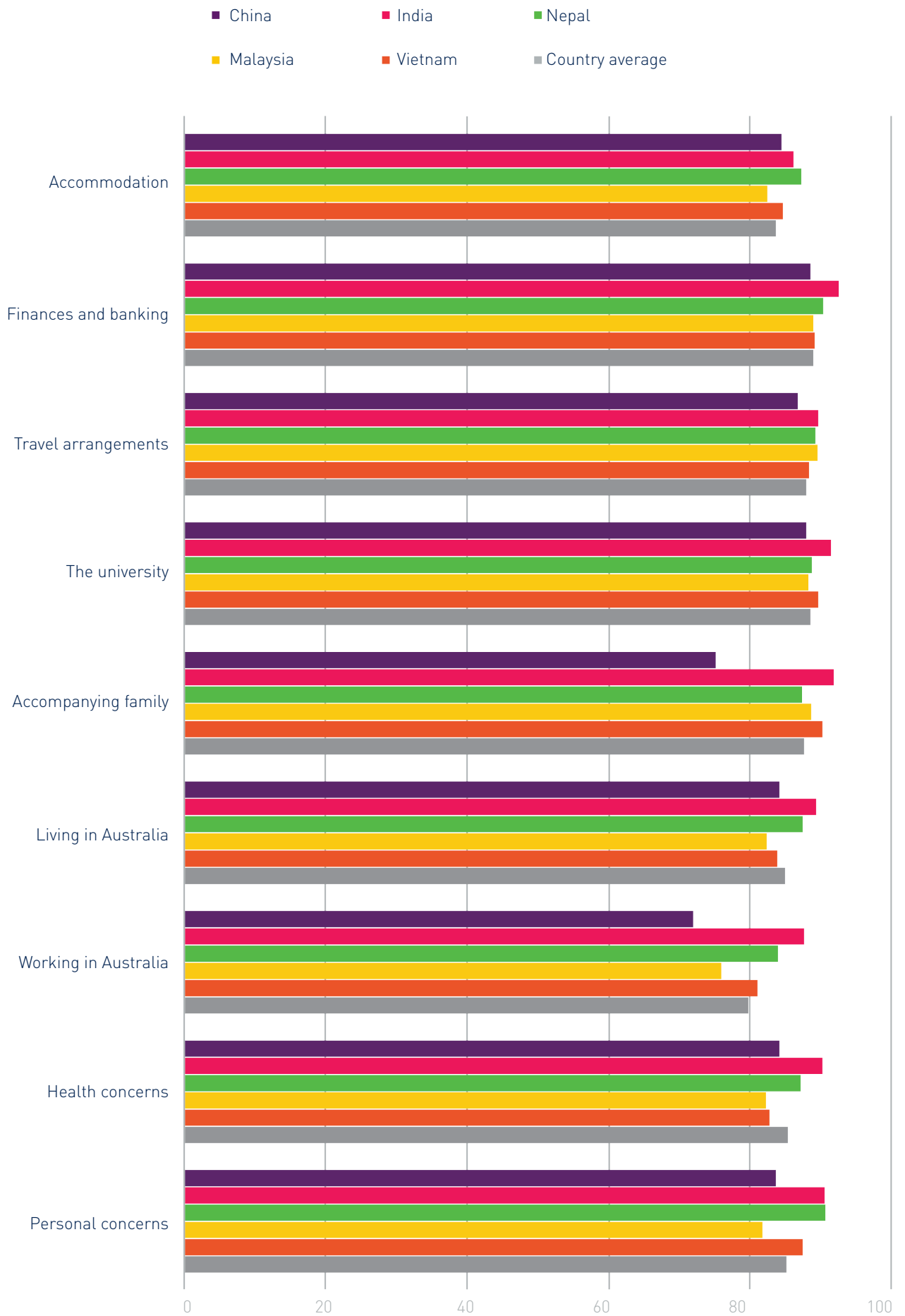


5.2 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RESULTS

More than 80 per cent of survey respondents from the top five source countries rated information, received or obtained, on nearly all topics as useful, very useful or extremely useful. The few exceptions apparent in Figure 15 are that slightly lower proportions of students from China (75 per cent) considered the information they received or accessed about accompanying family useful compared to those from the other countries, and slightly lower proportions of respondents from China (71.8 per cent) and Malaysia (75.8 per cent) rated information about working in Australia as useful.

It is notable that these topics were also deemed to be important by slightly smaller proportions of respondents from these countries, and also accessed by smaller numbers of students. While these differences are notable, they should not be taken to mean that students from China or Malaysia are not interested or do not need information regarding accompanying family or working in Australia—there are still sizeable proportions of respondents that indicated the material they received was useful.

Figure 15: Usefulness of information received or obtained, by country (per cent)



6 PREPAREDNESS UPON ARRIVAL IN AUSTRALIA

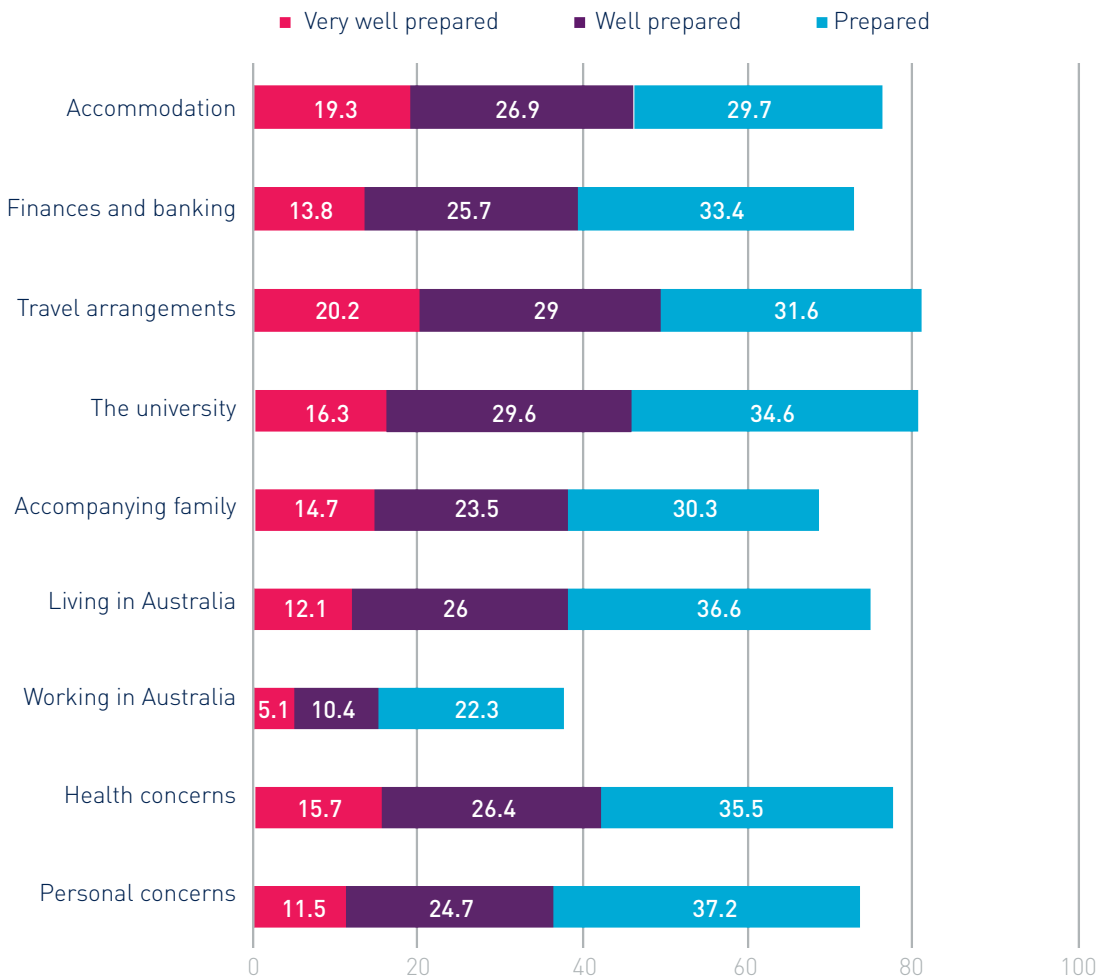
The survey asked international students how prepared they felt when they arrived in Australia to commence their studies.

6.1 AGGREGATE RESULTS

Figure 16 shows that more than 70 per cent of the survey respondents indicated they felt either prepared, well prepared or very well prepared in most areas when they arrived in Australia. The exception to this were issues relating to accompanying family members and working in Australia.

A slightly lower proportion (68.4 per cent) of students indicated they felt prepared when they arrived in Australia with their family members. Just over a third (37.8 per cent) of students indicated that they felt prepared regarding working in Australia.

Figure 16: Preparedness when arrived in Australia



6.2 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RESULTS

Figure 17 shows more than 70 per cent of respondents from most of Australia's top five source countries felt prepared upon arrival in Australia. As with aggregated data, the two exceptions were preparedness for working in Australia and travelling to Australia with accompanying family.

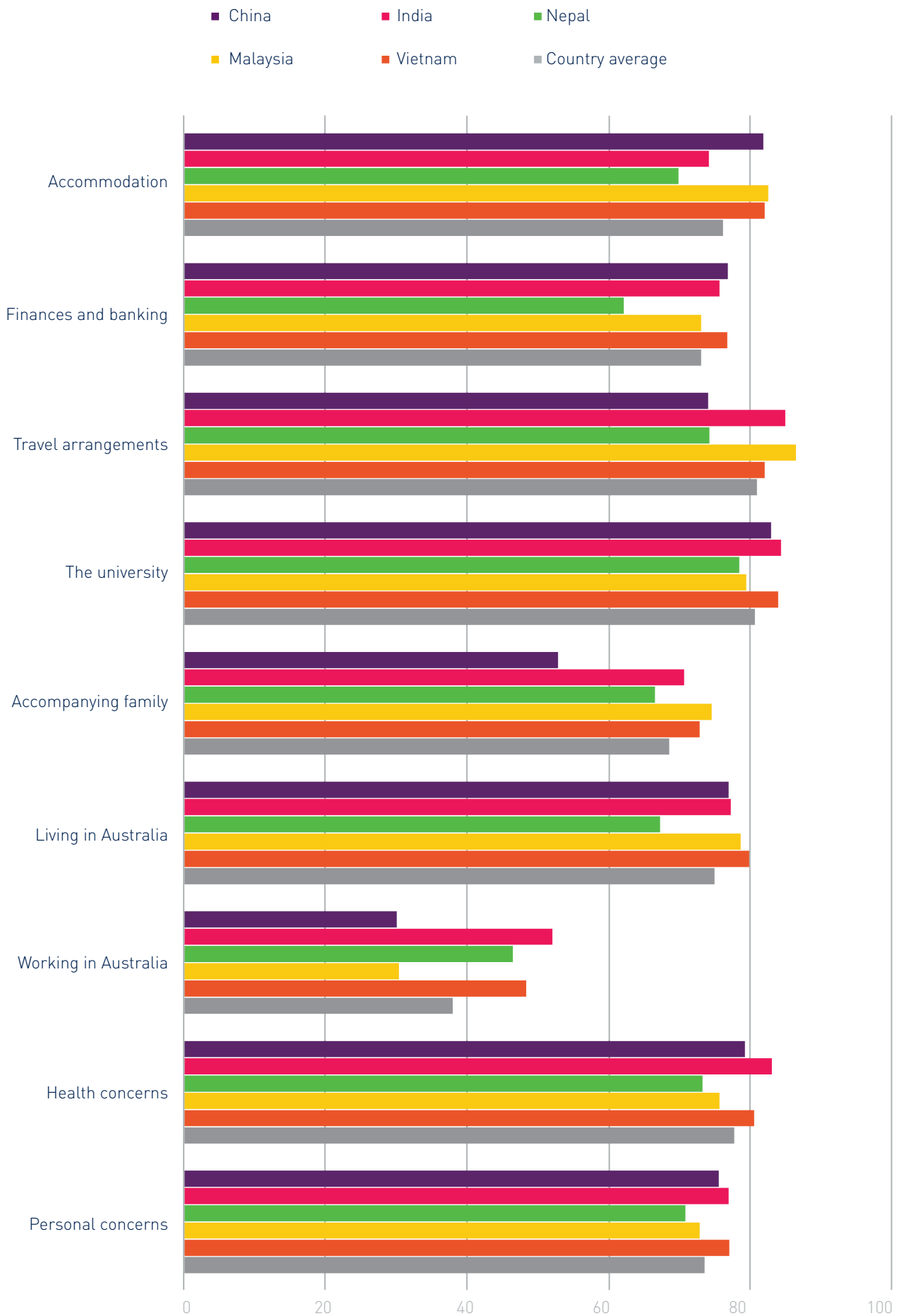
Only around one third of students from China (29.9 per cent) and Malaysia (30.2 per cent), indicated they were prepared with regard to working in Australia when they arrived. Less than half of students from Nepal (46.3 per cent) and Vietnam (48.2) per cent, and slightly more than half of the respondents from India (51.9 per cent) indicated they felt prepared with regard to working in Australia.

Around a quarter of respondents from India (22.3 per cent), Nepal (25.5 per cent), and Vietnam (24.6 per cent) indicated they felt not at all prepared with respect to working in Australia. Even higher proportions of respondents from China (41 per cent) and Malaysia (39.4 per cent) felt not at all prepared regarding this topic. This is potentially a reflection of cultural differences in these countries where having a part time job while studying is not as common as in Australia and some other countries.

Approximately 50 per cent of students from China indicated they were prepared when they arrived in Australia with family members, which is less than the other major countries and the national average.

An emerging trend was that, in general, Nepalese students appeared slightly less prepared compared to students from other countries in the majority of areas surveyed. Around two thirds of Nepalese students indicated they were prepared in terms of finances and banking (62 per cent), accompanying family (66.4 per cent) and living in Australia (67.1 per cent).

Figure 17: Preparedness of international students, by country (per cent)



7 WHERE ARE THE GAPS?

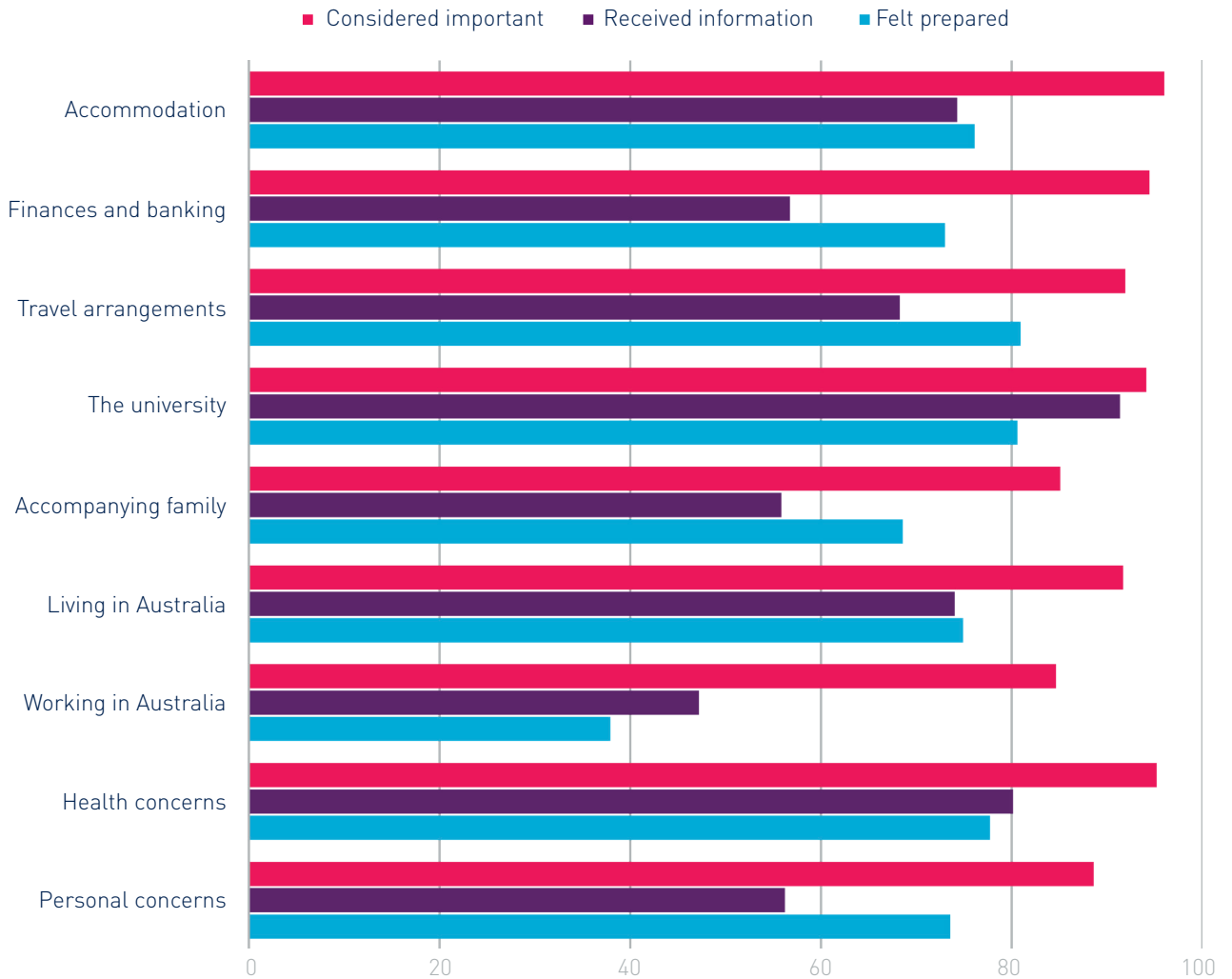
A comparison of the survey respondents' ratings of the importance of pre-departure information on the various topics, whether they received information in relation to these topics and how prepared they felt upon arrival in Australia, is shown in Figure 18.

It is clear that survey respondents considered all of the key topics to be important in preparing for life in Australia. Despite this, it is also evident that not all students were provided with, or personally accessed, information on these topics. This was particularly evident in the area of information relating to working in Australia, where more than 80 per cent of students considered information on this topic as being important, but less than 50 per cent of students accessed this information. The one area where students appeared to be receiving information at a level commensurate with the perception of importance was in regard to their specific university.

Interestingly, topics identified as being of highest importance—accommodation, finances and banking, accompanying family, working in Australia and personal concerns—were all topics for which the data suggested the surveyed students were less likely to have received or sourced information. The data also illustrates the lack of a strong relationship between students having received information on a particular topic and how prepared students felt upon arrival in Australia.

Notwithstanding the discrepancy between the degree of importance of particular pre-departure topics and whether students had received information on these topics, it appears that the level of preparedness was equal to, or in some cases exceeded, the rate at which students received information. The one exception was information relating to working in Australia, which is discussed in more detail below.

Figure 18: Comparison of ratings of information importance and access, and preparedness of international students, by country (per cent)



During the course of the survey, respondents were given the option to identify additional areas of pre-departure information they considered important for international students to receive before they arrived in Australia. Each respondent was able to list up to five topics through a free text response.

More than 7 500 unique responses were provided to this question. Analysis of the responses revealed that the most commonly occurring topics that students considered important prior to arriving in Australia were:

- study and academic issues;
- Australian culture and customs;
- working and the challenges of obtaining a part-time job;
- Australian laws, particularly driving and traffic rules;
- public transport;
- finances, including household budgeting and living expenses;
- accommodation;
- health and medical issues;
- food and shopping; and
- weather and climate.

Interestingly, several of the topics listed by the students in response to this question were closely aligned to or directly overlapped with the topics that were specifically included in the survey questions. Moreover, a high proportion of survey respondents indicated they had received or accessed pre-departure information on these topics and respondents who had accessed information across the various topics indicated the information they had received was useful.

The cause of this inconsistency is unclear, but there are a number of potential interpretations. It is possible that information is not presented to students in a manner which makes its significance immediately obvious, and while students do receive information on particular topics, they do not fully grasp its context and pertinence until they have been in Australia for some time. It is also possible that students suffer from information overload that results in some information being ignored or forgotten. Another explanation is that the information provided only partially meets students' needs at any given point in time and additional supplementary information is required at different times as students adapt to life in Australia.

7.1 ACCOMMODATION

Many survey respondents indicated that being able to access or receive additional information about student accommodation would have been beneficial. This included information relating to suitable areas for students to rent, the process by which rental bonds are managed and general advice on tenancy agreements. Many students acknowledged having received information on this issue prior to leaving their home country, but did not completely understand the relevance of the information until having arrived in Australia.

Another issue of importance to international students was the challenge of securing a private rental property as many real estate agents require references as part of a rental application. International students new to the country are not likely to have such references, which can complicate securing this type of accommodation. It is unclear whether appropriate references obtained from their home country would be acceptable to real estate agents, so while students can be informed of this requirement prior to arrival in Australia, there is no apparent simple solution. Some students who pursued private rental accommodation also indicated more information about rental bonds—what they are, how they work and who they should be paid to—would have been useful.

Rental markets are tight in most Australian cities, which is a reality that is difficult for many students to manage. While pre-departure information about the challenges of finding accommodation won't necessarily make the task any easier, realistic information will go some way to managing students' expectations.

“Accommodation - I recommend students from the same country should be encouraged to live together in the same location or rental place. I found this so helpful during my first semester now. I am sharing an apartment with two other people from my country and found it so helpful. It cuts down on homesickness and am able to adapt quickly as we all share the same experience and solutions.” (survey response, Q11)

“Accommodation needs to be explained. It is always better if the university can provide accommodation for at least a week. The accommodation providers don't give you for this short period and from home country it is difficult to make a long commitment without actually inspecting and getting little used to the Australia.” (survey response, Q11)

“Accommodations: Brief incoming students about tenant rights and the importance of going through affiliated agencies even before leaving their home country. Warn students about dodgy deals with landlords.” (survey response, Q11)

7.2 FINANCES AND BANKING

The apparent inconsistencies between the proportion of students who rated information about finances and banking as being important, and the proportion of students who accessed information and felt prepared upon arrival regarding this topic is important to note. The question defined 'finances and banking' to cover a range of issues, ranging from the technicalities of opening an Australian bank account, to understanding the cost of living and creating and managing a household budget.

Information from written responses to the survey, along with insights gained from the focus group discussions helped further elucidate students' specific concerns. Many students in the focus groups commented that they were surprised at the high cost of living in Australia and would have appreciated more accurate information regarding living costs to assist in their planning. Several students indicated that their universities had provided a guide to living costs, either with their offer letters or on their websites, but in some cases this information underestimated the actual costs. In some cases, even though students understood that studying in Australia would be expensive, they were not prepared for the reality of the expenses.

Many students also commented on the expense of eating out, particularly in comparison to many countries where cheap simple meals are easily accessible and affordable. For some students this issue was compounded by an unfamiliarity with cooking and preparing meals for themselves.

The cost of rental accommodation, and the additional expense of utilities not being included in rental payments and the cost of public transport also took many students by surprise.

“Holy s%4* I spent so much money!” (focus group participant, Melbourne)

“[Students should] have a lot of money for the first three months.” (focus group participant, Sydney)

“I knew the cost of living would be high, but not this high.” (focus group participant, Melbourne)

Some students mentioned that they were provided with a guide from IDP regarding living costs, which was on the whole considered to be very accurate. Information provided as part of the Australia Awards briefing program was also found to be useful by students within that program.

“Do not be shocked at how expensive the lifestyle can be in Australia. I had trouble managing my budget even though I have experience handling my own finances.” (survey response, Q26)

“Do not come with a belief that you will be able to work part-time to pay your study fees and do a full-time university course. It is VERY difficult. It is easy to get carried away with earning money from part-time jobs and students tend to neglect studies since they are now 'earning in dollars'”. (survey response, Q26)

“Be prepared to be independent and definitely give yourself a monthly budget.” (survey response, Q26)

7.3 TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Despite survey responses suggesting that information relating to travel arrangements was important for students, there appeared to be no common theme regarding the sort of information students deemed as being helpful or where the current gaps were in the information that was being provided.

Feedback obtained from students during the focus groups indicated that many of the issues raised by students were quite specific and were not likely to be addressed through the provision of generic travel information. These included the logistics associated with transferring from their particular arrival airport to their final destination within Australia, knowing what time of day to arrive in Australia so as to be able to connect with public transport, the distance between their port of arrival and their final destination, and the modes of transport available to them upon arrival in Australia.

A number of students noted that they would have benefited from a better understanding of the public transport options available to them and the distances between their respective university and major public transport hubs.

7.4 THE UNIVERSITY – ACADEMIC LIFE

The written responses from the survey revealed that students considered information regarding the structure of their university course(s) and information regarding university policies to be important. This was reiterated during focus group discussions. Several students indicated they were surprised by the structure and nature of teaching and learning in Australian universities. Many students were from academic backgrounds that involved different pedagogical styles and approaches to learning that are more structured and prescriptive than those employed within the Australian schooling and university context. Several survey responses indicated students would have benefited from more information about universities' strict plagiarism policies.

Students also noted that they found it challenging to embrace an enquiry or research-based style of learning, and this often contributed to the stress of starting university in Australia. Many students reported that feeling confident to engage and ask questions freely in class was not easy. Another challenge was learning to work collaboratively and managing group assignments.

A deeper understanding of the differences between the teaching modes would not have changed students' decisions to study in Australia, but could have enabled a smoother transition to the new teaching style.

"...be prepared for major change in your study style. Learning and teaching style has a vast difference here. Be more self dependent rather than any one else." (survey response, Q26)

"Be prepared for the grading and class formats to shock you. They are very different here compared to back home." (survey response, Q26)

"Be prepared to do self directed learning and to be independent." (survey response, Q26)

"Most international students are not aware of the academic standards that are required from them in Australian Universities. They should acclimitise (sic) themselves to this new method of learning." (survey response, Q11)

"The teachers want to help you, you just need to speak out." (focus group participant, Sydney)

7.5 ACCOMPANYING FAMILY

During focus group discussions, several students noted that additional information regarding the complexities of bringing family members with them to Australia would have been useful. This included information about childcare costs—international students' children can generally attend public schools free of charge, but childcare is not free. Other issues were the much higher cost of overseas student health cover (OSHC) required to cover family members, and the more limited (and expensive) options for accommodation.

“The importance of students to come in to settle and adjust to the cost of living and studying in a big world like Australia before bringing your family because life and culture of Australia is quite different from my Fiji life.” (survey response, Q11)

Some students raised the complexities associated with their partners finding paid employment and suggested that universities may wish to consider ways in which partners could easily access employment information, or potentially access university career guidance services.

7.6 LIVING IN AUSTRALIA

Engaging with Australian culture

A number of students from a range of nationalities expressed surprise at the different way people interact in Australia, which was often perceived as 'unfriendliness'. Students noted they had to learn that a lack of physical contact or an initial aloofness was not necessarily unfriendliness, but simply the cultural norm. Many students noted that more advice on basic Australian etiquette such as personal space and appropriate levels of formality for various social situations would be useful.

“Get used to being stared at. I feel like an alien, but just get on with it. Keep your posture.” (focus group participant, Sydney)

“Be friendly and people here are friendlier than you think.” (focus group participant, Melbourne)

“The importance and difference between appropriate and inappropriate remarks” (survey response, Q11)

“...education about local culture (including how to blend in with Australians or any groups/ clubs that we can join to learn English better)” (survey response, Q26)

Students also indicated they would appreciate information about the Australian political system, Indigenous people and Indigenous culture.

“Information about Australia[n] history and the Indigenous community.” (survey response, Q11)

“The actual relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians” (survey response, Q11)

Safety

Several written responses from the survey indicated students would appreciate receiving more information about safety issues, which ranged from advice on how to protect themselves from frauds and scams, to fundamental information relating to bush and beach safety.

Weather

More information about the Australian climate and weather was another common topic that surfaced through the written survey responses and the focus groups. Students expressed a desire to be better informed about the 'ever fluctuating' weather conditions, in part because it would better inform their packing and ensure they brought adequate clothing, rather than having to buy additional necessary items upon arrival. There was also a prevailing assumption that weather in Australia is similar across the continent and is generally warm and sunny, so the cooler and more variable climates of some areas in Australia took students by surprise.

"...brace up for the weather. Australia is really cold but generally, it is a beautiful and welcoming place." (survey response, Q26)

"The weather is so Melbourne here. Bring enough clothes!" (survey response, Q26)

"They should consider the hot weather in Australia before they come here. It is really hard to adjust your body if you have lived in a cold country for most of the time of your life." (survey response, Q26)

"The weather which changes constantly so that they can be mentally as well as physically prepared. It plays an extremely important role here. It can lead to illnesses and I have friends who are finding it difficult to adjust in the weather here." (survey response, Q11)

Laws and regulations

Many students indicated that more information concerning a range of basic Australian laws would be beneficial. This included issues such as the laws governing driving in Australia and basic traffic rules, along with more prosaic issues such as littering and jaywalking.

Other issues like work rights, rental rights and laws, immigration regulations and laws and restrictions around drug and alcohol consumption also emerged as issues that some students considered important.

Wildlife

Several survey responses indicated that students wanted additional information regarding dangerous wildlife in Australia. A common theme which was raised by students during the focus groups was that prior to their departure students felt that their personal safety may have been at peril due to the prevalence of 'dangerous' wildlife.

"Avoid the black birds, they are called magpies and they attack" (survey response, Q26)

"About all the animals and insects, which are not really common in Kazakhstan. Students must be ready to face snake, spider or something else even at their home." (survey response, Q26)

However, other students indicated that the stories they heard were exaggerated, and that it was important to provide accurate information about Australia's wildlife that was realistic and non-alarmist.

"Australia has a reputation for dangerous snakes and other animals, the information of the widespread of these animals is highly exaggerated." (survey response, Q26)

Food and shopping

Much of the feedback provided by students on the issue of food and shopping reflects the fact that many international students who come to Australia have little experience cooking for themselves. A frequent piece of advice given by the survey respondents was for prospective students to learn some basic cooking skills before they leave their home country. Students also commented that further advice on where to buy groceries and other necessities along with information regarding average prices would be useful.

“Learn cooking and other household activities so that you don’t have to suffer later on.” (survey response, Q26)

“Try to learn cooking before you arrive, unless you are very rich.” (survey response, Q26)

“If I want to get some snacks at night, I have to walk 20 minutes!” (focus group participant, Sydney)

7.7 WORKING IN AUSTRALIA

Survey responses indicated that working in Australia was the topic on which the lowest number of students had accessed information. Perhaps not surprisingly, this was also the topic on which the lowest number of students felt prepared upon arrival in Australia. Due to the diverse number of issues that are relevant to this topic, it was difficult to identify any particular trends from the survey data.

All students who engaged in the focus groups indicated they were aware their student visa provided them with the right to work whilst in Australia, but many students noted that the consideration of part-time work had not been a significant issue for them prior to and post arrival. As such, obtaining information about working prior to coming to Australia had not been a priority. Other students noted that while they had given consideration to working in Australia during their studies prior to departure, they felt that this was an issue better dealt with following their arrival in Australia.

Students in the focus groups reported finding it challenging to obtain appropriate part-time work, and it appears many students equated this with not being sufficiently prepared for working in Australia, rather than it being a reflection of the current job market. Students provided a diverse range of motivations for working, from the need to earn income to cover their day to day expenses to a desire to engage more with the local community. Some students expressed confusion or did not know about specific requirements for certain occupations. Examples cited were the Responsible Service of Alcohol, immunisation requirements for nursing jobs or placements, Working with Children Check or Working with Vulnerable People requirements for childcare and disability care jobs.

Students who engaged in part-time employment showed a considerable level of understanding of their work rights and the obligations of their employers. Many noted that they had been able to source information regarding the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) directly from their provider and were able to obtain assistance to identify the avenues they may wish to explore if they felt their employer was not meeting their obligations in the workplace. A number of students did note that they felt the FWO process was cumbersome and that when they had suspicions that their employer was not meeting their obligations it was easier for the student to find another job.

“Certifications needed for work (RSA, White Card etc).” (survey response, Q11)

“Availability of part-time jobs in their respective city.” (survey response, Q11)

“I would also like more information regarding working under visa condition as a student in Australia before arrival.” (survey response, Q26)

“Get overview of ... laws regarding the safety at work and especially get detailed information about tax file number and what is the importance of that.” (survey response, Q11)

7.8 HEALTH CONCERNS

There was a degree of confusion among international students about the interaction between the Australian healthcare system and overseas student health cover (OSHC). Most students in the focus groups had OSHC through their university's preferred provider and some students noted that they would have appreciated further information about changing their level of cover or about the ease with which they could use alternative providers. Moreover, students expressed the desire to be able to personalise their OSHC to meet their particular needs and weren't aware of the other options available to them until they arrived in Australia. It was noted that such information would be helpful in terms of ensuring students were getting the right coverage for their particular circumstances.

Students seemed reasonably well informed about what services were covered by their OSHC but would have liked greater clarity regarding the amount or level of coverage. Some students expressed frustration in trying to understand when and if certain services had a gap payment or out-of-pocket expense.

**“OSHC will cover... but not the entire cost usually which I did not even know until I got here”
(survey response, Q26)**

Some students described difficulties with navigating approved healthcare providers and how payment for health care worked—some doctors and other medical services require up-front payments, for which students can seek partial reimbursement, and some students suggested that some health practitioners do not accept the OSHC cards at all. These issues were even more complicated for students with accompanying family members.

Although students can access information directly from their OSHC providers, which sometimes have offices on their university campus, students reported they found the system confusing and, in some cases, overwhelming. Students reported that the explanation that 'OSHC provides international students with cover basically equivalent to Medicare' was not helpful, as many international students don't know what Medicare is, or what level of cover it provides to Australians.

“Also, about the OSHC and health related issues, that many times are unclear for people that don't know about the Australian healthcare system.” (survey response, Q26)

The complexities of these instances cannot all be addressed through provision of pre-departure information. However, several students indicated that they would have appreciated being provided with very simple information covering the basics beforehand, particularly with regard to the broader OSHC environment and the options available to them. Universities Australia is contributing to various discussions regarding the complexities of OSHC, including the current Productivity Commission Inquiry on the Social and Economic Benefits of Improving Mental Health.

7.9 PERSONAL CONCERNS

Survey respondents and students from the focus groups noted that adjusting to life in Australia was mentally and emotionally challenging. Clearly acknowledging these challenges to prospective students while highlighting the support services provided to students may help some students be more prepared and cope better with the adjustment period.

Students stressed the importance of being able to connect with other students from their own country, as well as reaching out to connect with other social groups more broadly. In many cases, students were connected with social media groups of students from particular countries—some of these were groups of commencing and later year students, created by universities, others were groups that spanned the broader community.

“I would say, having friends from different country is good, but having those from the same country definitely helped me through homesickness and mental health.” (survey response, Q26)

Many of the students who participated in the focus groups stated that they had significantly underestimated the level of stress and isolation they experienced after arriving in Australia and felt that they were at fault for having such feelings, or were even showing weakness in admitting their concerns.

“Homesickness is real, it’s not an easy emotional battle, so one should expect the worst in order to be ready to fight the real battle of studying overseas.” (survey response, Q26)

“Be mentally and emotionally prepared leaving comfort zone (home) to something new, especially for first timers being separated from family and friends for a long period of time. It is one thing to say you are prepared, it is another to EXPERIENCE the joys and sorrows of leaving comfort zone.” (survey response, Q26)

“Please, not only study, join activities as well!” (focus group participant, Sydney)

There is considerable discussion regarding the mental health and wellbeing of international students both within and external to the university sector. Improving help-seeking behaviours in international students requires a collaborative, multi-pronged approach. Universities Australia is undertaking a range of projects to support the mental health and wellbeing of all university students, including a set of suicide prevention guidelines for the sector and the development of materials to improve mental health literacy.

7.10 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ISSUES

There was no clear indication in the project’s findings that pre-departure information tailored specifically for students from particular countries is required. The survey data and information gathered from the focus groups did not provide strong evidence for country-specific trends in the types of pre-departure information students rated as being important or information that was found to be useful.

Figure 17, which illustrates the proportion of students that felt prepared regarding the various issues when they arrived in Australia, shows little variation between the five main country groups. The most notable exceptions are a lower proportion of Chinese students feeling prepared with respect to accompanying family, and lower proportions of Chinese and Malaysian students who felt prepared regarding working in Australia.

Students from Nepal appeared to feel less prepared than students from other countries across the range of topics, with lower proportions of students feeling prepared with respect to finances and banking, accompanying family and living in Australia in particular. This could indicate a need for more targeted information to be provided to prospective students from Nepal.

Further in-depth research on specific issues would potentially elucidate clearer country-specific trends.



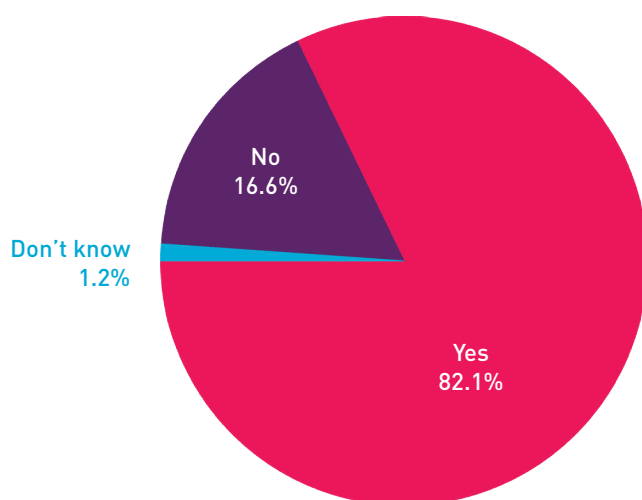
8 ATTENDANCE AT ORIENTATION OR WELCOME WEEK

Anecdotally, it has been suggested that international students deliberately avoid attending orientation events at universities, and that this might contribute to students being less prepared for the academic year. To investigate this, the survey asked international students if they attended orientation or welcome week and if they did not attend the event the main reasons they were absent.

8.1 AGGREGATE RESULTS

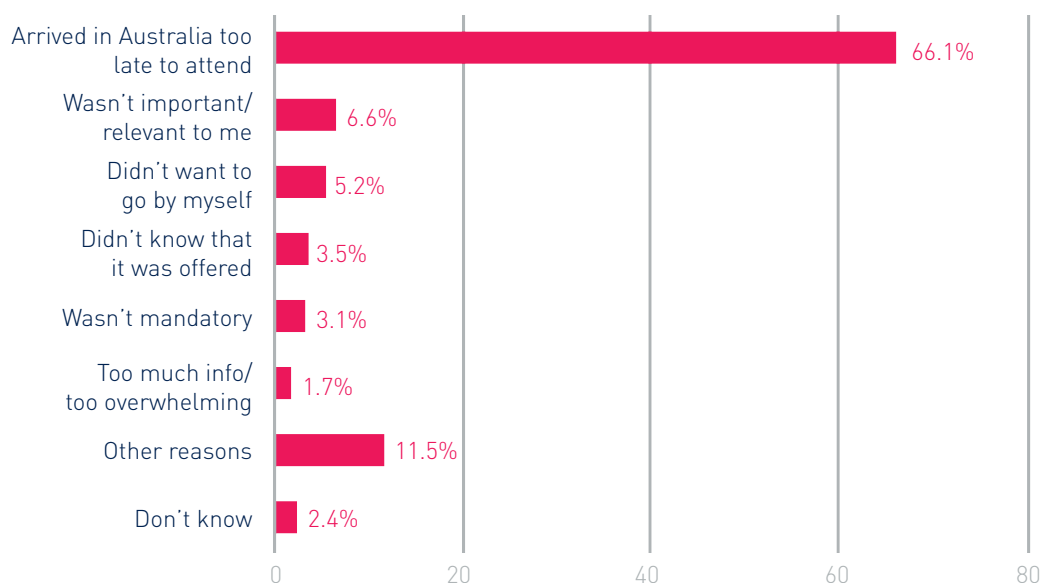
As shown in Figure 19, 82.1 per cent of respondents attended their university orientation or welcome week. Of the remaining students, 16.6 per cent of respondents did not attend and 1.2 per cent did not know if they attended an orientation event.

Figure 19: Attendance at orientation or welcome week



Of the 2 879 respondents who did not attend their institution's orientation or welcome week, 66.1 per cent indicated the reason for their absence was that they arrived in Australia too late to attend the event. A further 6.6 per cent indicated the orientation week was not important or relevant to them and 5.2 per cent indicated that they did not want to attend the event by themselves (Figure 20).

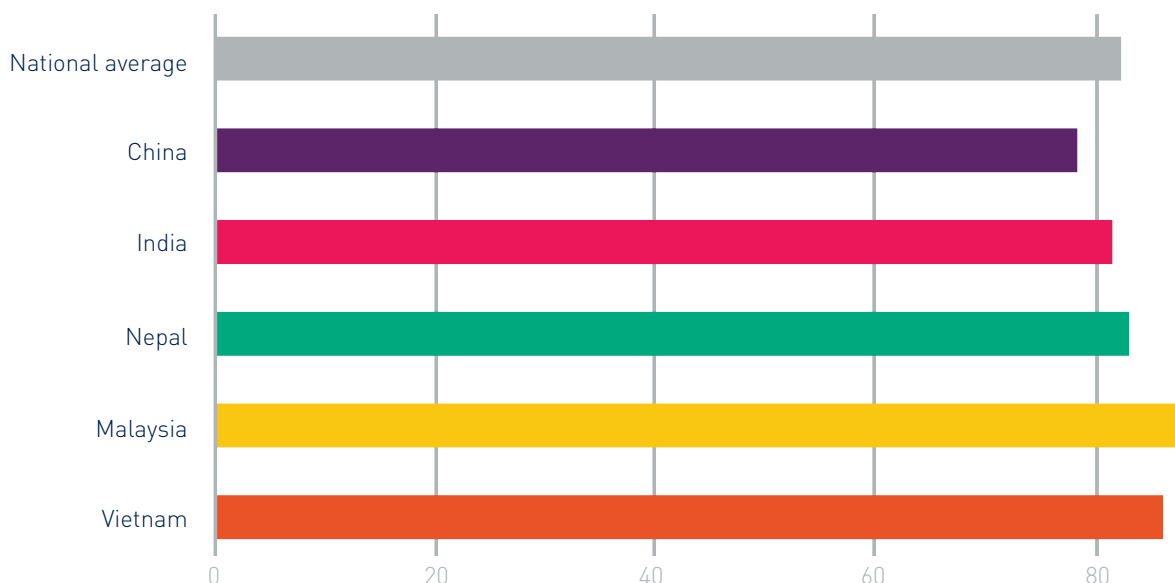
Figure 20: Main reasons for not attending Orientation or Welcome Week



8.2 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RESULTS

Figure 21 shows little variation in the proportions of students from the top five source countries attending orientation or welcome week events. The lowest proportion was 77.9 per cent of respondents from China, however, this still accounts for more than three-quarters of respondents. The country with the highest proportion of survey respondents who attended orientation or welcome week was Malaysia, with 88.3 per cent.

Figure 21: Proportion of students attending orientation or welcome week (per cent)



Arriving in Australia too late to attend was the main reason given by most respondents who did not attend orientation and welcome week from China (64.3 per cent), India (78.2 per cent), Nepal (80.6 per cent), Malaysia (58.3 per cent) and Vietnam (65.4 per cent).

Respondents also indicated other main reasons for not attending the event:

- 9.1 per cent of Chinese students indicated they didn't attend orientation week because the event was not important or relevant to them and a further nine per cent indicated they did not want to attend the event by themselves;
- 14.2 and 11.8 per cent of Indian and Nepalese students respectively cited other reasons for not attending orientation week and a further 2.6 and 4.2 per cent respectively indicated they did not know the event was offered; and
- 19.4 and 7.7 per cent of Malaysian and Vietnamese students respectively indicated they did not attend orientation week due to other reasons and a further 11.1 and 11.5 per cent respectively cited the event was not important or relevant to them.

9 CONCLUSIONS

Just as every international student is an individual, so is the nature of the information students require and will find useful as they prepare to come to Australia to study. While it is impractical to create and effectively provide information packages uniquely tailored to every individual student, there are some essentials that all students agree are important must-knows before they arrive in Australia.

**“Culture shock is always there, no matter where you come from.”
(focus group participant, Melbourne)**

However, the survey results indicated that there is not always a clear correlation between the proportion of students who consider particular topics important, the proportion of students who access information on these topics, and the reported levels of preparedness upon arrival. Clearly, simply providing students with information will not always result in students feeling totally prepared when they arrive in Australia. A strong message from both the survey responses and the student focus groups is that travelling to a different country to begin a new life studying at a foreign university is by its very nature an extremely challenging, and often difficult, undertaking. A degree of culture shock, homesickness and a period of adjustment to life in Australia will be largely unavoidable for most students. Unfortunately, these are very personal issues that are not readily ameliorated by the provision of extra information.

It would not be realistic to expect pre-departure information briefings or information packages to completely remove these challenges. However, effective and useful information will make the transition process for students as smooth as possible, and set students on a solid footing for the beginning of their life in Australia.

All the issues canvassed in the online survey were considered important by more than 80 per cent of survey respondents. The top three issues were:

- accommodation;
- health concerns; and
- finances and banking.

The majority of survey respondents indicated the information they did receive on each of the issues was useful, and students generally reported feeling prepared in regard to these topics when they arrived in Australia. However, further analysis of the written survey responses and focus group discussions revealed some issues remained challenging for students, particularly that of managing the costs of accommodation and general expenses.

The results of this project suggest there are two types of information that international students require when coming to Australia—the immediate, logistical and practical information necessary to setting themselves up in Australia, and also more complex, broader considerations necessary for long-term adjustment.

Students indicated that they would appreciate being provided with an up-to-date checklist of essentials to help in the fundamentals of their preparation. This would include information to help them navigate:

- enrolment at their university;
- finding accommodation—information on securing both short-term and long-term options;
- information on local weather, shops (including the types of food and groceries available), transport; and
- an accurate guide to the cost of living.

These more immediate logistical issues need to be supplemented with further information and advice for students regarding:

- the complexities of bringing family members;
- what to expect from university-level study in Australia; and
- simple and clear information regarding overseas student health cover (OSHC).

Ensuring information is clear and concise is important. A key takeaway from this study was that students indicated it is easy to be overwhelmed by too much information, and they simply do not engage with it. Similarly, complex information, such as that regarding the technicalities of OSHC, must be communicated in clear and simple language.

Overall, while being realistic about the challenges of adjusting to life in Australia, pre-departure information should also promote the positive—that there will be many positive opportunities and experiences during their time in Australia, and if they need help along the way, they just need to ask. While many students spoke of a challenging and sometimes difficult adjustment period, there was a strong sentiment that they enjoyed their life in Australia, and it was worth the effort.

Simply being provided with additional information prior to arrival will not solve some of the challenges associated with moving to a new country and taking on the multiple demands of university studies. However, realistic, accurate information, provided in a timely and accessible manner enables students to plan, prepare and more effectively manage the transition to life in Australia.

“Australia is a beautiful and amazing country with many opportunities knocking on our door, specially [sic] with the qualifications we obtain from getting an academic degree here. However, Australia is also fairly isolated from the rest of the world, so sometimes it can be tough to be far away from family and friends. Loneliness may be a frequent feeling to have while here even when surrounded by new friends. Be ready for the challenge of finding the balance between your studies, financial organisation (Australia is also an expensive country to live in!), emotional and social life. It can be a fun one! I can tell it is worth it!”
(survey response, Q26)

“Although being an international student is hard, studying in Australia gives you an opportunity and experience that is worth every single cent. Australia/ Adelaide has taught me so many things I know I would not have learnt if I was back home. That doesn’t mean Malaysia’s education is not good, but it just teaches you different things. If you do plan on studying in Australia, it will be hard, but very worth it. Enjoy every second of it, be hardworking and consistent and your hard work will pay off. It’s a privilege to be able to study in Australia—safe and simply amazing!” (survey response, Q26)

**BEST-PRACTICE
PRINCIPLES FOR
INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT
PRE-DEPARTURE
INFORMATION**

**PART
B**

A key theme that emerged from this project's survey results and focus group discussions was the individual nature of international students' information and support requirements. As such, there is no one single model for pre-departure information packages or briefings.

It was apparent that pre-departure information should be supplemented with comprehensive information upon arrival that reiterates or reinforces the messages provided in pre-departure materials. The importance of attending orientation or welcome week events appeared to be well appreciated by the students who participated in the survey. These events provide opportunities for students to familiarise themselves with their new environment, meet other new students and potentially later-year students who can be a valuable source of advice and guidance. As with pre-departure information, striking the balance between providing students with all the necessary information and resources they need, while not overloading them, is important.

The personal nature of students' needs can become particularly pertinent in the period immediately post-arrival, as students begin the process of settling in and adapting to life in Australia. While this is no longer during the 'pre-departure' stage, students indicated that personalised support at this time, such as one-on-one buddy or mentor programs, and connecting with other students within the early stages of a student's arrival can be hugely beneficial. While offering a personalised mentoring service for every new international student would practically be very difficult for some universities to implement, the importance of student volunteers who help new students settle in and provide advice from their own experience can not be overstated.

Despite the challenges that the diversity of international students and their needs pose to developing a one-size-fits-all model for pre-departure information packages, the project identified some key principles that are important to consider when delivering effective pre-departure information. Pre-departure information should be provided in ways to ensure it is:

- multi-platform;
- trustworthy;
- targeted;
- accessible;
- accurate; and
- comprehensive.

These principles are outlined in the following sections, illustrated with a selection of examples from the range of pre-departure materials currently provided by universities.

MULTI-PLATFORM

Students use a variety of platforms to gather information and there are correlations between the type of information and the platform the student uses. For example, the project survey results indicated students are more likely to use social media to access information about their university or accommodation (30.4 per cent and 25.2 per cent), than about their finances or health concerns (17.3 per cent and 14.5 per cent).

Friends or family emerged as the most popular source of information for seven of the nine topics canvassed by the survey. Websites were nearly as commonly accessed, highlighting the importance of maintaining an up-to-date and accessible website with a wide range of information. While focus group discussions suggested that many students prefer to source information via social media than email correspondence, the survey results indicate that for most topics, email from the university or from agents were more commonly accessed than social media for most topics.

It is also important to provide information on multiple platforms because countries have different social media trends and applications. Some social media will be more effective in reaching particular cohorts than others. A list of social media platforms and their international student users can be found in Table 6 of the *Contact Points: Enabling international students during critical incidents* report^{xii}.

It is important that information should be provided through as many channels as practicable, with websites, email and social media as priorities. Covering off on all avenues will help ensure that as many students as possible engage with the information.

EXAMPLE | THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

The University of Queensland (UQ) uses a multi-platform approach to pre-departure information. UQ regularly assesses and updates their resources to ensure that the most effective information is being delivered to incoming students. A UQ survey of international students at a compulsory orientation week 'Getting Started' workshop found that 80 per cent of students 'somewhat prefer' online web resources in conjunction with face-to-face sessions.

UQ has created content that can be accessed online at a time that is convenient to the student. The university developed pre-departure videos, online modules and a student podcast. While some of these resources are not compulsory, they are promoted through websites, formal communication from the university, and social media.

Pre-departure videos

The UQ pre-departure videos—available on the UQ YouTube page—provide key information to help international students transition to study at the university. These videos target students at the pre-arrival stage and are often one of the first communications between the university and the student. The pre-departure videos are promoted by the Future Students Team (International Marketing & Communications) through messaging channels, including the pre-departure guide and online webinar. The videos were designed and produced by students and are available in English, Mandarin, and Indonesian.

UQ Online Modules

The UQ online modules were launched in January 2020. They provide new students with important information to settle in to UQ and Brisbane. They also introduce services available to students and how to access them when needed. Access to the modules are sent by email from the International Marketing and Recruitment team as part of UQLife². The modules can reach students at a time that suits them and allows the university to track who has completed the modules.

International Student Podcast Series

The International Student Podcast Series is a new initiative for 2020. It aims to improve the knowledge of new international students transitioning to study at UQ and life in Australia. It is delivered by students, to students, and is promoted on social media, student newsletters and emails from UQLife.

The series adopts a casual, engaging, and conversational style and includes information about available support services, myth busting, dos and don'ts, and tips from current students.

²UQLife is the one stop shop for experiences, opportunities, programs, and stories from across The University of Queensland.

TRUSTWORTHY

The perceived trustworthiness of information sources is very important to students, as evidenced by the high proportion of survey respondents who obtain information from the trusted source of family and friends. Events with alumni, who can provide information from personal experiences, are considered particularly valuable as a means for students to source realistic information and insider tips that sometimes cannot be provided by the university.

Students also appreciated being able to source information from official government websites for particular issues, such as visa and immigration advice, living costs and safety advice. This should not preclude universities from providing this information, but links to government sources should also be provided.

EXAMPLE | THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

The University of Melbourne offers in-country pre-departure briefings in several countries. These events cover a wide range of information—'from visa requirements to the weather'. The university also encourages current students who are back in their home country for the holidays to volunteer to participate in these sessions.

For other students, the university also has an online webinar, and students can register to view the recording of this event.

EXAMPLE | UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY (UTS)

UTS Insearch is a provider of UTS pathway programs, offering English language programs, foundation courses and university diplomas. UTS Insearch caters for around 5 000 students per year.

The UTS Insearch website has a page with a range of pre-arrival information for new students. They cover a range of issues, including tips for getting settled in Sydney, a basic packing checklist and stressing the importance of attending orientation sessions and academic preparation week classes. Both orientation and academic preparation week are compulsory for all students and provide targeted information.

UTS Insearch pre-arrival webpage provides links to several NSW and Australian government websites to help inform students regarding their rights at work, and regarding various NSW government services. The pre-departure information is supplemented with a personal approach to student support upon arrival that builds student trust and ensures students feel comfortable seeking help if needed.

During orientation, UTS Insearch runs study success sessions to assist students with learning how to manage their study time, get the most out of lectures and tutorials and use the tutorial system. This is complemented by Academic Awareness Week, which includes a range of presentations and activities and excursions that introduce students to their teachers and subject coordinators and prepare them for their studies. Each student is given a personalised schedule of events and relevant sessions.

Support services continue to be accessible to UTS Insearch students after orientation, including full-time dedicated Study Success Advisers, one-on-one learning support sessions, and study skills workshops.

TARGETED

As the needs of the international student cohort are diverse and varied, there will inevitably be some types of information that are more pertinent to some students than others. Providing targeted and personally relevant information in discrete and specific packages can reduce information fatigue from the extensive amount of pre-departure information that most students access.

Targeted information can also help create a feeling of welcome, particularly for students with diverse needs and backgrounds. Information targeted towards specific cultural groups can also potentially help reduce culture shock.

Although the project results did not identify any striking differences between the pre-departure information needs of students from different countries, it is worth noting that survey respondents from India and Nepal did place a higher importance on information regarding working in Australia than students from other countries. Similarly, slightly higher proportions of survey respondents from India, Nepal and Vietnam indicated that information regarding accompanying family was important. These differences should be considered when developing any information specific to particular cohorts.

Targeting the timing of information provision is another important consideration. Providing information at the relevant times during a student's journey will support effective engagement with the information, and again, help to reduce information fatigue.

EXAMPLE | LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

The La Trobe University website contains a range of information covering specific issues. This includes clearly signposted information for international students regarding their visas, accommodation, issues regarding bringing family and health concerns, along with more day-to-day living issues.

While there is a vast expanse of information available on the website, it is clearly labelled in discrete sections so students can choose to engage with the information relevant to them.

[La Trobe University](#) > [Study with us](#) > [Life at La Trobe](#) > Living in Australia

Living in Australia

Melbourne is often referred to as Australia's cultural and sports capital. It has been consistently ranked as one of the world's top three most liveable cities, and the most liveable city in Australia (2011-2017 Economist Intelligence Unit, London).

Accommodation

A guide to choosing your accommodation, both on and off campus.

Living costs

Living costs for Melbourne and Bendigo.

Living safely in Victoria and Australia

Student safety information for La Trobe University international students.

Shopping and food

Information about shops close to campus and around Melbourne.

Australian culture

Information on Australian culture and customs.

Climate and clothing

Victoria's climate and advice on clothing.

Public transport

Public Transport options to the campuses.

Health system and emergency services

Medical support is easy to find in Melbourne. See the information in this section to help you in case of an emergency.

Internet, phone and post

This section has details on the various communication services available in Victoria.

<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/study/life/living>

Your visa

› [Applying for a student visa](#)

Important information on how to obtain a CoE and apply for a student visa if you are a future or current student.

› [Education Services for Overseas Students \(ESOS\): your rights and obligations](#)

Learn more about La Trobe University's and international students' responsibilities.

› [Health insurance](#)

As a condition of your student visa, it is important that you have a current health insurance. Read about costs and coverage and how to find a medical centre or hospital in your area.

› [Bringing your family](#)

Do you want to bring your family over to Australia while you study? View the legal requirements for having your family join you as dependants and information to help you arrange a childcare or school for your dependants.

› [Permission to work](#)

Find out about how much part time work you are allowed to undertake while in Australia on a student visa.



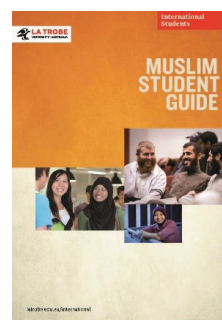
<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/international/how-to-apply/apply-for-a-visa/visa>

La Trobe also provides guides for distinct groups of international students.

Muslim student guide

The La Trobe University Muslim student guide can be found on the La Trobe University website, on a page with a range of brochures for international students, as well as various other points on the website.

The guide provides local information for Muslim students, such as shops for Halal products, mosques in the area and information about community groups and activities for Muslim people in the community.



https://www.latrobe.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/58990/Muslim-Student-Guide.pdf

EXAMPLE | UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG AUSTRALIA

The University of Wollongong includes targeted messages and information for distinct groups of students on their pre-arrival information website. These include resources and information specially directed to students from China, India, Pakistan and Vietnam. Some resources and information are available in Chinese and Vietnamese.

Information for Indian and Pakistani students outlines the various social and cultural groups and facilities available for students at the University of Wollongong. Links to the University of Wollongong's Muslim Student Guide and specific Facebook groups and other community resources are also provided.



FOR CHINESE STUDENTS >



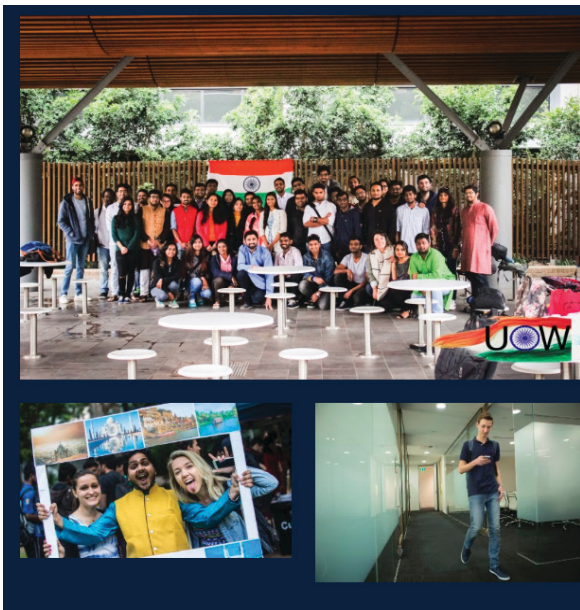
FOR INDIAN STUDENTS >



FOR PAKISTANI STUDENTS >



FOR VIETNAMESE STUDENTS >



Connect with Indian students on Facebook

The Indian Society meets regularly on campus and organises activities on and off-campus throughout the year. It represents and promotes Indian culture and helps new students to get acquainted with their new environment. The Indian Society also promotes sporting activities and celebrates Indian Festivals. Like the UOW South Asian Students and Indian students association page on Facebook.

LIKE THE UOW SOUTH ASIAN STUDENTS PAGE >

LIKE THE UOW INDIAN STUDENTS ASSOCIATION PAGE >

<https://www.uow.edu.au/study/international/>



ACCESSIBLE

Most students indicated that they would prefer a combination of online and in-person resources. Having a combination of accessible online resources available before arrival and providing information upon arrival is the most effective for reaching students.

More than two thirds of students (66.6 per cent) that did not attend orientation week were absent because they arrived late. It is important that orientation resources are still available to international students that may arrive late or past the orientation activities.

Students indicated that while mobile applications were not the sole device used to access online information, it was important that information provided online is in a mobile-accessible format.

Some important information, such as that regarding Overseas Student Health Cover can be very technical and hard for students to engage with. Clear and simple language explanations should be provided to inform students regarding the fundamentals of these topics, with clear pathways for students to seek further information should they need it. Information provided in visual and video formats can also help improve the accessibility of some types of information and lead to more active engagement.

EXAMPLE | UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) international team works collaboratively with the Toowoomba Regional Council to ensure that international students are well informed regarding broader community and regional services and initiatives.

Language accessibility

USQ has begun the process of translating their university profile into several different languages, including Spanish, Indonesian, Portuguese, Russian, Vietnamese, Turkish, Thai, Korean and Arabic. Providing information in multiple languages helps make key information about the university even more accessible to a number of students, particularly in the early stages when they may not be as comfortable or practised with consuming information in English.

360 virtual campus tours

USQ has 360 virtual campus tours on their webpage, which helps students form a realistic expectation of their study environment in Australia. The 360 virtual campus tours are housed on the USQ website and show different campuses and student spaces, allowing incoming students to become familiar with the university before they have landed in Australia. Presenting this sort of visual information visually also improves accessibility and engagement with information.

<https://goeducation360.com.au/university-of-southern-queensland/index.html?startscene=pano2475>

International student orientation

USQ offers a student orientation that is tailored to the needs of international students. This is held during the broader orientation week and provides information that is specific to international students. This orientation is important in addressing some of the information needs that are particular to incoming international students and is seen as a valuable forum to ask questions.

Virtual open events

If students are unable to arrive in Australia in time to attend open day events in person, they have the option of viewing the international virtual info day event online. This is a webinar event that also provides students with an opportunity to ask questions during a Q&A session. The webinar is recorded for students that can not view it at the scheduled time.

<https://www.usq.edu.au/events/2019/10/virtual-events/international-virtual-info>

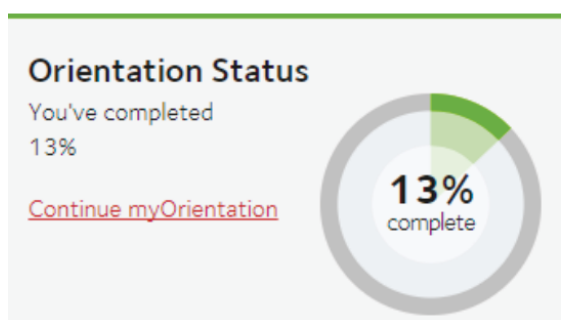
EXAMPLE | GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY

Griffith University has developed the myOrientation module, which can assist students who do not arrive in Australia in time to attend orientation week events. Students can sign into the module through the university intranet and are guided through several tasks relating to university processes and administration and becoming familiar with Griffith University campus life and facilities.

Orientation at Griffith

It's important to get the right start at Griffith, and find out all you need to know. That's why we've created myOrientation. Once you've received your offer of admission you'll be able to access myOrientation and be taken on a personalised journey through your first weeks of University.

The O-Week Planner is part of myOrientation and that's where you'll find information on sessions, skills workshops, social events and tours, and meet staff and students, while exploring your campus. As well as making new mates you can find out what to expect as a Griffith student.



GET SET UP AND STARTED AT GRIFFITH WITH MYORIENTATION

myOrientation provides a personalised journey to help you with tasks such as enrolling, getting a student ID card, understanding our online systems, committing to a safe and inclusive campus and attending O-week. You'll be presented with information that will help you transition into the Griffith family. You can access myOrientation via the orientation tile in myGriffith.

<https://www.griffith.edu.au/orientation>

EXAMPLE | CQUNIVERSITY

CQUniversity also offers an online orientation program that includes videos, quizzes and learning modules. This program is compulsory for all new students and can be completed any time after students accept their offer.

ORIENTATION ONLINE

Orientation Online is designed to provide you with all of the essential information you need to be successful at CQUniversity.

Modules, videos and quizzes will introduce you to our learning management system, Moodle, as well as all the other essentials.

Orientation Online is compulsory for all new students. It should be completed after you accept your offer and before the start of term.

The video-based modules will help you to become familiar with our online systems, along with the support services available to you.

VISIT ORIENTATION ONLINE

To visit Orientation Online, visit [Moodle](#), log in with your student number and password, and select ORIE12345: Orientation Online.

<https://www.cqu.edu.au/student-life/new-students/orientation/orientation-online>

ACCURATE

It is extremely important that information provided to students is regularly updated and accurate. This will help students develop a realistic picture of life in Australia, and plan accordingly. While the adaptation process might still be challenging, realistic expectations will help mitigate any unexpected or unpleasant shocks to students. This was flagged by students as a particular issue in regard to the cost of living. While most students indicated that they received information about finances and banking in Australia (56.6 per cent), focus group discussions indicated that students often felt unprepared for the reality of the expenses.

Wherever possible, this information should be city/region specific. Students also indicated that links to verified sources of information, such as government websites are highly desirable.

Other issues where it is imperative students are provided with accurate information include visa compliance guidelines, and information regarding Overseas Student Health Cover and employment and work rights in Australia.

EXAMPLE | FLINDERS UNIVERSITY

The Flinders University website includes a living costs calculator that students can use to gain an idea of how much money they will need to support their preferred lifestyle. The calculator includes estimates for different types of accommodation, eating out, groceries, entertainment, sporting and social groups, transport and clothing costs. Students can indicate their usual level of spending on these items so the calculator is more closely tailored to their particular lifestyle than a broad estimate for all students. The calculator also covers several different cities—Adelaide, Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Gold Coast, Brisbane and Hobart.

1. In which city will you be studying?

ADELAIDE	MELBOURNE	BRISBANE	SYDNEY
PERTH	CANBERRA	HOBART	GOLD COAST

5. How many times a week will you be eating out?

Breakfast	Days Per Week
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Lunch	
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
Dinner	
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

7. What level of these services or products do you require?

Gyms	None	Cheap	Moderate	Expensive
Haircuts	None	Cheap	Moderate	Expensive
Cosmetics	None	Cheap	Moderate	Expensive

The calculator then sends the student a final estimate based on their responses to the various questions.

<https://www.flinders.edu.au/international/living-in-adelaide/cost-of-living>

EXAMPLE | WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

Western Sydney University provides up-to-date information regarding the cost of living, using figures provided by the Australian Government, but also highlighting that this is likely a minimum estimate for many students to maintain their preferred lifestyles. This guide includes a list of the costs of basic grocery items, as well as the cost of eating out and several entertainment options. This guide also recommends budgeting in excess of the minimum visa requirement amount to be prepared for expenditure.

Cost of Living

Cost of Living in Sydney

As a student visa holder, you will be required to have approximately AUD\$21,041 per person per year for living expenses, as advised by the Australian Government. However, the actual cost depends on your individual lifestyle and you should budget for approximately AUD\$25,900 per year per adult. Remember, your living expenses are separate from your tuition fees.

As it can often take some time for money to be transferred from your home country to Australia, you will need to bring enough money with you to cover your expenses for the first few weeks. Foreign currency can be exchanged for Australian currency at Sydney Airport. If you arrive on a weekend (Saturday/Sunday) and do not change some currency at the airport you may not be able to change it until the next working day.

Cost of Living Guide

(All prices in the below table are quoted in Australian Dollars.)

Housing:

Accommodation		
Accommodation*	\$130-\$350	Cost depends on your "style" of accommodation on- or off-campus. *Price may vary depends on location and room types. See on-campus accommodation costs: Western Sydney University Village www.mystudentvillage.com/au/westernsydneyuv/ Off-campus accommodation: a two bedroom apartment in Parramatta costs about \$350-\$450 per week to rent. Internet is included for on campus accommodations and is often included within most of the private rental housing. The University has free Wi-Fi on campus.
Rent advance or rental bond	\$300-\$900+	Rent for your accommodation in advance. Rental bond if you are renting off-campus accommodation
Home appliances (fan, heater, rice cooker)	\$20-\$50	Some accommodation may not be fully equipped or you may want your own appliances. Consult with your landlord ahead before purchasing.
Utility bills (electricity, gas, water)	\$30-\$50	For on-campus accommodation, costs are included. Costs varies for off-campus accommodation depending on share arrangements.



https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/international/home/prepare_to_arrive/pre-departure/sydney_lifestyle/cost_of_living

COMPREHENSIVE

The survey results indicated that information on all topics to be important, and some students will appreciate being provided with highly detailed information on a very diverse range of topics. As such, it is important to ensure a comprehensive range of information is available to students. As some students did report instances of information fatigue, providing this information in a targeted means, that enables students to self-select which parts of the information they choose to engage with at relevant times, will help to prevent students being overwhelmed.

Allowing time for a comprehensive introductory program post-arrival enables students to feel confident in advance of their studies.

EXAMPLE | UNSW SYDNEY

The suite of information provided by UNSW Sydney to commencing international students is comprehensive, yet able to be tailored to individual students' needs.

The online services and information are accompanied by many in-person orientation and support programs upon arrival. These include international student advisors, alumni host program, cultural mentors, buddy program and an International student welcome centre. This caters to a variety of student needs and the desire for trustworthy sources of information, from different sources. Some students may consider a peer the most reliable source of information, while others may consider the university a more trusted resource on certain topics—the UNSW Sydney programs cater to all these needs.

Variety of topics

UNSW Sydney offers numerous online resources to prepare students for life in Australia, which are also available throughout the duration of their study. These resources include online documents and guides, modules, videos, virtual tours, webinars, social media and online tutorials.

UNSW Sydney produced seven 'Essential Modules' for international students, which are completed on a voluntary basis. These seven modules cover the following topics:

- preparing to arrive;
- getting started;
- getting acquainted;
- settling in;
- managing your studies;
- preparing for exams; and
- supporting your student (information for parents and supporters).

In addition, UNSW Sydney has a safety and wellbeing tutorial for international students, including tutorials specifically targeting international and domestic students. The tutorial gives students an understanding of the health and safety risks in the local environment and how to manage and seek timely help when required. The tutorial covers topics of health, safety, community, relationships and identity.

Giving context to information

UNSW Sydney provides detailed information that gives context to recommendations. These information sheets are not included in the formal international student guide but are easily accessible on the UNSW webpage. This is important in reducing information fatigue by having targeted information.

Some fact sheets that give further context and deeper understanding to incoming international students include information such as why it's important to get short term accommodation.

Introductory academic program scholarships

Giving full recognition to the overwhelmingly positive feedback from Australia Awards recipients towards the Introductory Academic Program, UNSW Sydney allows all incoming international students to access the four-week program. This is offered to students at a fee with limited places available, although UNSW has teamed up with Medibank, their preferred OSHC provider, to offer scholarships to undertake the comprehensive orientation program free of charge.

<https://www.international.unsw.edu.au/life-at-unsw>

EXAMPLE | UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

As well as general information for international students about visas, accommodation and living in Australia, University of Tasmania offers the UniStart program to prepare students for university level study. The program is available to all students, with a distinct program developed for international students. The program covers a range of academic issues, with modules covering independent learning, critical thinking, research strategies, assignment writing, academic honesty and academic English.

The program is available online and students are encouraged to participate in the course at any time, even before they leave home.



Modules

1. Independent Learning

2. Critical Thinking

3. Research Strategies

4. Assignment Writing

5. Academic Honesty

6. Academic English

<https://www.utas.edu.au/unistart/international>

EXAMPLE: THE AUSTRALIA AWARDS

The Australia Awards provide funding to students from a variety of developing countries as part of the Australian Government's development policy, managed through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Student survey responses and comments during focus group discussions indicated that recipients of Australia Awards scholarships felt the pre-departure information and orientation services and support they received was comprehensive and extremely useful. In many respects, the Australia Awards pre-departure information and orientation services can be considered gold-star standard. However, it must also be acknowledged that this program is very resource intensive and it may not be possible to implement on a scale that would accommodate every international student.

Universities may wish to draw on this program to identify specific areas of good practice that would assist with onboarding their own international student cohort.

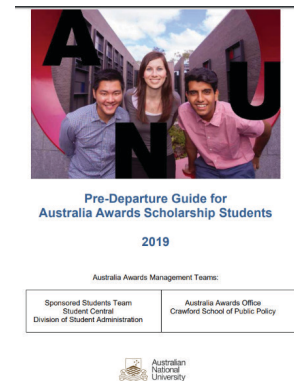
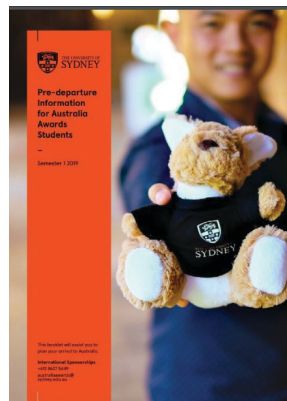
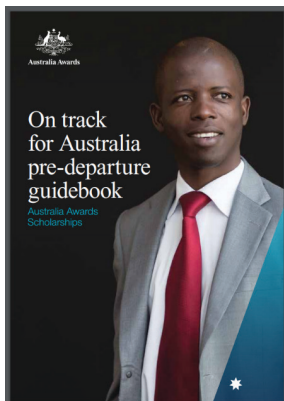
Pre-departure guidebook

The Australia Awards pre-departure booklet, produced by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade covers a comprehensive range of topics and is written in simple, clear language.

The guidebook covers both short- and long-term issues, with sections devoted to preparing to come to Australia, arrival, longer-term living, study, and also returning home.

The Australia Awards management teams at individual institutions also provided tailored pre-departure materials to their incoming Australia Awards students.

Students usually also receive pre-departure briefing sessions in their home country prior to their departure.



Introductory Academic Program

The Introductory Academic Program (IAP) is a four-week program that focuses on developing the international students' academic skills to facilitate their smooth transition to study in Australia. It is compulsory for all Australia Awards recipients and it includes tutorials and workshops that prepare students for the Australian academic environment. It also includes general information sessions, with dedicated time for self-directed activities and/or excursions, such as opening bank accounts and applying for accommodation.

The IAP covers:

- orientation and adjustment;
- finding accommodation;
- health and wellbeing;
- finance and budgeting;
- bringing your family to Australia;
- argumentation and critical thinking;
- thesis writing and working with supervisors;
- basic research skills, seminar presentation and academic writing; and
- computer literacy⁴.

Academic Advisor

Each Australia Award student is assigned an academic advisor to support them. This point of contact acts for all students at that university under the Australia Awards. The advisor is a trusted contact to the student and provides face-to-face support.

Alumni events

Prior to arriving in Australia, the Australia Awards holds alumni events in recipient home countries to give incoming students a chance to interact and talk with students from their home country. This is an important opportunity for commencing students to talk to alumni and other commencing scholars and ask candid questions and share knowledge.

⁴ The University of Melbourne <https://students.unimelb.edu.au/admin/australia-awards/your-arrival>

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APPENDIX 1

Advisory Group Terms of Reference

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION PROJECT ADVISORY GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

BACKGROUND

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the information provided to international students before they leave their home country is, at times, not sufficient to prepare them for life in Australia. There is currently a paucity of research into the usefulness of pre-departure information and the extent to which it is culturally appropriate.

Pre-departure information is currently being provided by a variety of stakeholders including universities, agents, government in-country posts, private websites and organisations, and peer-to-peer information from returned alumni and fellow nationals already studying in Australia. There is currently no overall picture of what pre-departure information is being provided to students, where this information is coming from and whether this information is effective in preparing students for life in Australia. This project will help to fill this information gap.

The aim of the project is to research the perspectives of international students on pre-departure information. The project will seek examples of best practice and challenges to providing useful and culturally appropriate pre-departure information.

The project will include three methodological approaches:

- Part 1: A nationwide survey of international university students across Australia
- Part 2: A series of country-specific focus groups
- Part 3: Stakeholder consultations.

UA have engaged ORC International an independent market and social research organisation, to undertake the data collection for the quantitative survey. The survey will be in the field from 3 – 31 March 2019.

Focus groups will take place between April and July 2019.

A final report and best practice guidelines is due to be submitted to the Department of Education and Training in fulfilment of the funding conditions of the Enabling Growth and Innovation (EGI) grant in December 2019.

PURPOSE

UA will convene an Advisory Group to contribute to the project. The Predeparture Information Project (PIP) Advisory Group will meet at three key times throughout the duration of the project:

- Meeting 1: Survey and research design (23 November 2018)
- Meeting 2: Focus group planning (March 2019)
- Meeting 3: Best practice and research results (July 2019)

The Advisory Group will group will:

- advise UA on the design and conduct of the project
- provide input into survey instrument and dissemination strategy
- identify any potential issues or risks in terms of timelines or content
- assist with the identification of best practice

MEMBERSHIP

The Advisory Group members are:

- Dr John Wellard, Policy Director International, Universities Australia
- Dr Angela Lehmann, Policy Analyst International, Universities Australia
- Sonia Whitely, ORC International
- Belle Lim, Women's Officer, Council for International Students Australia
- Ralph Teodora, Vice President, Council for International Students Australia
- Bronwyn Gilson, President, ISANA
- Jessica Haag, Student Experience and Mobility Team, International Group, Department of Education and Training
- Dessma Smith, Australian University International Directors Forum
- Tom O'Brien, International Education, Austrade

APPENDIX 2

Themes Matrix

APPENDIX XX

Living in Australia	Travel	Family	Accommodation	Finances	Health	Personal	Working	Institution	Academic	Other
public holidays	entering Australia	requirements for children	student accommodation	cost of living	health insurance	preparing yourself emotionally	applying for a tax file number	information about institution	enrolment	first few days
climate/weather	visas	childcare	rental accommodation	scholarships	overseas student health cover	safety	part time work	information about campuses	studying	migration agents
clothing	passport	pre-school/school fees	homestay	fees	health and wellbeing services	important / personal documents		student services and support	academic information	ESOS Act
voltage/power supply	visas	schools	temporary accommodation	credit card	immunisations	religion / worship		application deadlines	academic support services	legal services
plug sockets	travel insurance,	language programs for partners		banking	medications	living independently		information about the faculties	student rights	scams and frauds
computer	transport from airport	children's activities		how much money to bring	prescription medication	contacting family		important dates	assessment methods	consumer rights
mobile phones	what to bring on the flight	bringing family		currency exchange		personal insurance worships		student advocacy	plagiarism	important dates
time zones	entry process to Australia	family visas		opening a bank account				counselling	complaints and appeals	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
driving	travel arrangements	family recreation		budgeting				student activities	discussion skills	
internet	clearing customs			transferring funds				buddy program	managing studies	
sport and social activities (NOTE: interest in terms of integration opportunities and inter-cultural awareness)	quarantine			ATMs				rights and responsibilities		
food	baggage claim			money management				university rules		
public transport	airport pickup							expectations of international students		

APPENDIX 3

Methodological Summary and Survey Instrument



ENGINE

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION SURVEY

Methodological summary

Prepared For:

Universities Australia

Prepared By:

Sonia Whitely, Eric Skuja & Melina Cao

Phone: +61 3 8639 5100

Email: Melina.Cao@EngineGroup.com

Engine Ref: AU3000546

June 2019

Level 1, 459 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, VIC, 3000, Australia

WWW.ENGINEGROUP.COM/APAC ABN: 39 126 100 276 ACN: 126 100 276

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The number of international students undertaking higher education in Australia has increased dramatically during the past decade. This growth is now gathering pace and the sector is likely to exceed 360,000 international students studying onshore in Australia by 2020. Recent policy changes have essentially capped the number of university places available for domestic students which will result in students from overseas becoming an increasing percentage of the overall student body.

In an environment where government funding to higher education institutions is declining, the estimated multi-billion-dollar revenue generated from international students means it will be critical to support investment in research activities and infrastructure. As such, having a deep understanding of the international student experience, as well as their learning journey, will allow universities to effectively support positive outcomes for this group.

The experience of Australian higher education starts for international students well before they have left their home country, largely through the provision of pre-departure information. Surprisingly, there is a paucity of research into the usefulness of this information and the extent to which it is culturally appropriate. The Pre-departure Information Survey aims to fill that gap.

The data collected from the Pre-departure Information Survey complements a series of country-specific focus groups and stakeholder consultations on information being undertaken by UA.

The project was overseen by Universities Australia's (UA) Pre-Departure Information Project (PIP) Steering Group consisting of representatives of UA, the Council of International Students Australia (CISA) and the International Education Association (ISANA) and other nominated experts. UA engaged Engine, to undertake the data collection for the quantitative survey.

1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of this project was to gather current student perspectives on the pre-departure information they received prior to their arrival in Australia. This understanding will allow the sector to identify gaps, inconsistencies and instances where student needs are not being met. This project also aimed to identify examples of best practice in the provision of pre-departure information.

1.3 OVERVIEW

Table 1 summarises the main fieldwork outcomes for the Pre-Departure information survey. Data collection commenced on the 29th April 2019 and concluded on the 27th May 2019. Institutions provided contact details for nearly 100,000 overseas students. Of these, about 7% of the records were out-of-scope for the survey, mainly because the students had arrived in Australia more than a year ago or their course commencement dates were outside the ranges specified for first and second-year students.

Of the 92,612 students who were invited to participate, 3 per cent opted out of the survey, leaving a final sample of just under 90,000 students. Of these, 19.3 per cent completed the survey.

Table 1. Key project statistics

COMPONENTS	
Institution sample file records	99,603
Out-of-scope records	6,991
Invitations sent	92,612
Opted out	2,827
Final sample	89,785
Completed	17,325
Response rate %	19.3%

1.4 INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION & IN-SCOPE POPULATION

All 39 Universities Australia member institutions were in-scope for the data collection. Participation in the Pre-departure Information Survey was optional and a complete list of institutions that contributed to the collection is contained in Appendix A.

The key populations of interest were onshore international, undergraduate and postgraduate university students who are:

- commencing their first year of study, or
- undertaking their second year of study

Further details about the selection of in-scope students can be found in Section 2.4.

1.5 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Engine was one of the first Australian market research organisations accredited with the International Standard for Market and Social Research: ISO20252 (Client Number: 3942). The scope of our certification covers:

- Overall project management
 - Market research design,
 - Consultancy,
 - Analysis.
- Quantitative services
 - Central location interviewing,
 - Telephone interviewing,
 - Self-completion and online interviews.



- Qualitative services
 - Group and depth moderation,
 - Recruitment of participants.

Our commitment to this quality assurance standard ensures that every aspect of projects we conduct for our clients will be completed to the highest level, from project conception through to deliverables.

Our quality philosophy is that market research services supplied by Engine must be delivered to clients with the necessary assurance and compliance to established professional standards, specifications and agreed contractual obligations.

2 SURVEY DESIGN & PROCEDURES

2.1 INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

UA emailed all Vice-Chancellors from member institutions to request a nominee for the survey. The institutional nominee was the key point of contact for Engine, they were provided with access to the secure file exchange and invited to participate in the Operational Webinar.

The Operational Webinar was conducted on the 26th of March to ensure that institutions have sufficient time to brief staff internally. The main focus of the webinar was on the sample list creation process but also covered the purpose of the survey, the scope, the institutional and respondent burden, and level of data disaggregation used for reporting purposes.

2.2 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Engine manage all aspects of the survey invitations and reminders (via email) to students. Reminder emails were sent to students to encourage participation and early completion. During the four-week data collection period, a total of 7 reminder emails were sent to students who had not completed the survey. Table 2 gives an overview of the student engagement and reminder process.

Table 2. Student engagement and reminder process

ROUND OF ACTIVITY	DATE	SENT	CUMULATIVE NO. OF COMPLETES	RESPONSE RATE %
Invitation	Monday 29 th April	92,612	789	0.9%
Reminder 1	Friday 3 rd May	86,184	7,181	7.8%
Reminder 2	Tuesday 7 th May	82,369	10,283	11.1%
Reminder 3	Friday 10 th May	78,212	12,105	13.1%
Reminder 4	Tuesday 14 th May	76,067	13,709	14.8%
Reminder 5	Friday 17 th May	74,178	14,911	16.1%
Reminder 6	Tuesday 21 st May	71,378	16,150	17.4%
Reminder 7	Friday 24 th May	70,051	17,050	18.4%
Total	Sunday 26th May	NA	17,325	18.7%

A copy of the invitation and all reminders is provided at Appendix B.

2.3 QUESTIONNAIRE

2.3.1 Development

To assist with the development of the online survey instrument, Engine conducted an online desktop review of the pre-departure information that is publicly available to understand the:

- content of the pre-departure information and the
- dissemination mechanism.

The results of the desktop research found some key themes and areas that were common across the pre-departure information publicly available on institutional websites.

The desktop review information was used to create a draft instrument for discussion by UA and the PIP Steering Group. This refined draft instrument was then moved to a cognitive testing phase as summarised below.

2.3.2 Cognitive testing

Universities Australia sourced volunteers from a range of international student associations to participate in the cognitive interviews. Recruitment for the cognitive interviewers was conducted by a member of the Engine project team. During the recruitment process, volunteers were provided with a Plain Language Statement fact sheet (or Participant Information Sheet) with details and background information on the project (see Appendix C).

Of the 16 volunteers sourced by UA, a total of 10 cognitive interviews were completed. The cognitive interviews were conducted by phone and each interview took approximately an hour.

Prior to each phone interview, participants were emailed a softcopy of the Pre-Departure Information survey and instructed not to open the survey until the researcher called. During the phone interview, the researcher read out the questions and participants were asked to answer the questions. After each question, the participant was asked to talk through their thought processes when they were answering the question.

The cognitive interviews for the Pre-Departure Information survey were conducted between 16th January and 1st February 2019.

Overall, the instrument functioned well and covered all of the major topics relevant to international students arriving in Australis. Importantly respondents did not feel uncomfortable answering the questions. A number of questions were revised based on the following feedback:

- Respondents had difficulty answering the questions about the importance of pre-departure information. They weren't sure if they should answer the questions with their own experience in mind, or if they should answer from a general point of view.

- Respondents did not like the (negative) term ‘issues’ in the items ‘Accompanying family issues’, ‘Health issues’ and ‘Personal issues’. They preferred the terms ‘Accompanying family’ (without the word ‘issues’), ‘Health concerns’ and ‘Personal concerns’.
- Most of the examples in the item descriptions were interpreted correctly but there was confusion about the terms ‘airport guide’, ‘important dates’, ‘power supply’ and ‘employment options’.

At the request of UA, two additional items were included to determine whether the students had attended an orientation or welcome week at their institution and to identify the main reasons for non-attendance.

Appendix D contains a copy of the final instrument.

2.4 SAMPLE FILE SPECIFICATIONS

2.4.1 Sample frame and design

The key group of interest was onshore international students who commenced in Semester 1, 2019. This group can be identified in the Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS) where data element E358 (Citizen/resident indicator) is coded 4 and E534 (Course of study commencement date) is in the range 201901 to 201903. The other in-scope group was onshore overseas students who commenced one year earlier in Semester 1, 2018 - specifically E358=4 and E534 is in the range 201801 to 201803. To exclude students who were enrolled in a different course at an earlier date, commencing students must have arrived in Australia (data element E347) in 2018-19 and second-year students in 2017-18.

2.4.2 Sample list creation

The sample list creation process was designed to try to minimise the amount of work required to complete the extract. The filters for the extract (below in SPSS format) were as follows:

```
SELECT IF (E358 EQ 4 AND ((E534 GE 201801 AND E534 LE 201803 AND E347 GE 2017) OR
(E534 GE 201701 AND E534 LE 201703 AND E347 GE 2016))).
```

The requested variable list is detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Email send outcome

VARIABLE	LABEL	REQUIRED FOR FIELDWORK
E306*	Higher Education Provider code	Yes
E313*	Student identification code	Yes
E310	Course of study type code	Yes
E314	Date of birth	No
E315	Gender code	No
E320	Location code of home residence	Yes
E347*	Year of arrival in Australia	Yes
E358*	Citizen/resident indicator	Yes

VARIABLE	LABEL	REQUIRED FOR FIELDWORK
E461	Field of education code	No
E462	Field of education supplementary code	No
E534*	Course of study commencement date	Yes
E559	Course campus code	No
SURNAME*	Student surname	Yes
FIRSTNAME*	Student given name – first	Yes
EMAIL1*	Primary email address (University account)	Yes
EMAIL2*	Secondary email address (Persona account)	Yes
EMAIL3*	Tertiary email address (Other account)	Yes

Data extracts were submitted in Excel format with the 17 data elements appearing in columns A to Q in the same order listed in Table 3. Sample lists were uploaded to Engine’s secure FTP (SFTP) site on completion.

The extracts were checked for completeness and each institution provided with a summary of their extract for confirmation to ensure that the number of first and second year students identified as in-scope accorded with their expectations.

2.5 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was undertaken in accordance with the ISO 20252 standard for research activities.

The online survey was hosted locally in Australia in equipment tried and tested to handle large and complex datasets. Each unique survey link was issued using a secure https structure and accessible through all popular web browsers including Internet Explorer, Safari and Firefox. The responsive survey design ensured that the instrument was easy to complete using a range of devices including phones, tablets and desktop computers.

The online questionnaire test focused on two critical aspects:

- Testing of the survey link being sent out, to ensure the white-listing of our IP addresses and smoothing out any potential technical risks or issues.
- Checking that the data capture and survey set-up process were working appropriately.

Prior to the survey launch, the online survey was tested and approved by UA.

2.6 RESPONDENT SUPPORT

Email and phone (1800 number) support was available to support the survey, to answer queries and support with any technical problems. The helpdesk was available through business hours to take phone calls or address emails with regard to the survey. The staff running the help desk were specifically briefed on the likely queries, including requests for reissue of the questionnaire/log in details, confidentiality enquiries and technical assistance. In total, there were 24 helpdesk requests that came through email. The breakdown of these requests is summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of helpdesk traffic by source

	QUERY SOURCE		
	Total	Email	1800
Total	24	24	0
Completed courtesy / reminder call	1	1	
Support accessing online survey	9	9	
Opt-out	3	3	
Already completed	1	1	
Out-of-scope	4	4	
Legitimacy / privacy concern			
Complaint (too many emails etc)	1	1	
All other	5	5	

2.7 INCENTIVES

A rolling prize draw, one draw for each week of the data collection period, was undertaken to encourage early completion of the online survey. Respondents who, for example, completed the survey in week one, were entered into the prize draw for all four weeks. Table 5 outlines the prizes and closing dates for the four prize draws.

Table 5. Prize draw details

DRAW	CLOSE DATE	DETAILS	VALUE
1	7 th May	1 x \$250, 2 x \$100 and 4 x \$50 pre-paid Visa gift-cards	\$650
2	14 th May	1 x \$250, 2 x \$100 and 4 x \$50 pre-paid Visa gift-cards	\$650
3	21 st May	1 x \$250, 2 x \$100 and 4 x \$50 pre-paid Visa gift-cards	\$650
4	26 th May	1 x \$250, 2 x \$100 and 4 x \$50 pre-paid Visa gift-cards	\$650
Total			\$2600

Table 6 contains the key dates associated with each of the four prize draws.

Table 6. Prize draw schedule

	ACTIVITY	DATE
	Prize draw period opens/Fieldwork starts	Monday 29 th April
Prize draw 1	Draw closed	Tuesday 7 th May
	Draw conducted and winners notified	Wednesday 8 th May
	Publication of winner names	Friday 10 th May
Prize draw 2	Draw closed	Tuesday 14 th May
	Draw conducted and winners notified	Wednesday 15 th May
	Publication of winner names	Friday 17 th May
Prize draw 3	Draw closed	Tuesday 21 st May

ACTIVITY		DATE
	Draw conducted and winners notified	Wednesday 22 nd May
	Publication of winner names	Friday 24 th May
Prize draw 4	Draw closed	Sunday 26 th May
	Draw conducted and winners notified	Monday 27 th May
	Publication of winner names	Wednesday 29 th May
	Online collection closes	Monday 27 th May

3 DATA PROCESSING

Several items in the survey (S2, S3, S4, S6 and Q15-Q23) involved multiple responses. These were unpacked into individual 'Yes-No' variables as illustrated below.

Q15 'How did you receive or obtain information about accommodation?'

Q15_1 'Accommodation: Hardcopy'

Q15_2 'Accommodation: Websites'

Q15_3 'Accommodation: Webinars'

Q15_4 'Accommodation: YouTube'

Q15_5 'Accommodation: Social media'

Q15_6 'Accommodation: Education fair'

Q15_7 'Accommodation: Pre-arrival briefing'

Q15_8 'Accommodation: Other events'

Q15_9 'Accommodation: Agent'

Q15_10 'Accommodation: University representative'

Q15_11 'Accommodation: Email from university'

Q15_12 'Accommodation: Email from agent'

Q15_13 'Accommodation: Friends or family'

Q15_14 'Accommodation: Other'

Q15_15 "Accommodation: Don't know".

A data dictionary accompanied the final output file which included a range of course related and demographic variables taken from HEIMS, as well as the survey responses.

No other derived variables were included in the file except for an InScope variable which UA might consider using as a filter in its analysis to remove some of the ambiguities in the data. These include students identified in HEIMS as first-year students who said they were actually in second year (InScope=2); and students identified in HEIMS as second-year students who said they were in first year (InScope=3). The categories are listed below along with the relevant survey items.

InScope

1=In scope

2=Not a first-year student

3=Not a second-year student

4=Previous Australian university

Screening items

S5: What year of university are you currently studying in Australia?

S4_3: Had previously studied in Australia at a university

Syntax

InScope=1 (default)

IF (EnrolYear EQ 'First' and S5 EQ 2) InScope=2.

IF (EnrolYear EQ 'Second' and S5 EQ 1) InScope=3.

IF (S4_3 EQ 1) InScope=4.

4 RESPONSE RATES

4.1 OVERALL RESPONSE RATE

The overall response rate of 19.3 per cent was higher than expected for a new survey that was not widely promoted across or within institutions. Table 7 summarises the main sample and survey outcomes.

Table 7. Response summary

COMPONENTS	n	RESPONSE SUMMARY
Institution sample files	99,603	
Out-of-scope	6,991	7.0%
Invitations sent	92,612	
Opted out	2,827	3.1%
Final sample	89,785	
Completed	17,325	
Overall response rate (%)		19.3%

4.2 RESPONSE RATE BY YEAR OF STUDY

Table 8 shows that the response rate of first year students was much higher than that achieved for second year students. This suggests that the subject matter was highly relevant for first year students who had recently arrived in Australia.

Table 8. Response rate by year of study

YEAR OF STUDY	INVITATIONS SENT	OPTED OUT	FINAL SAMPLE	COMPLETED	RESPONSE RATE %
First	53,746	1,450	52,296	11,531	22.0%
Second	38,866	1,377	37,489	5,794	15.5%
Total	92,612	2,827	89,785	17,325	19.3%

4.3 RESPONSE BY INSTITUTION

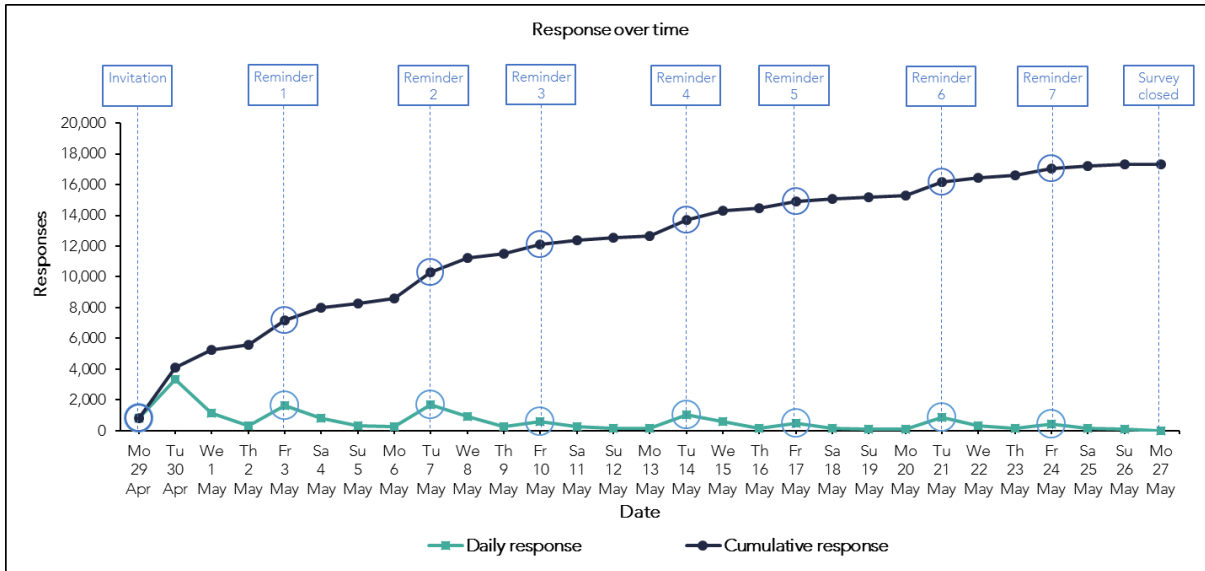
Table 9 lists response parameters by institution. Response rates varied greatly between institutions from a high of 32.0 per cent at JCU to a low of 5.6 per cent at CQU. Response rates appear to be somewhat associated with the proportion of second year students in the sample (a higher proportion results in a lower response rate) but this alone would not account for response rates of less than 10 per cent.

Table 9. Response by institution

INSTITUTION	INVITATIONS SENT	OPTED OUT	FINAL SAMPLE	COMPLETED	RESPONSE RATE %
Australian Catholic University	1,355	14	1,341	269	20.1
Bond University	247	11	236	62	26.3
Charles Sturt University	3,034	51	2,983	202	6.8
Central Queensland University	2,907	40	2,867	161	5.6
Curtin University	2,440	128	2,312	609	26.3
Deakin University	4,029	127	3,902	887	22.7
Edith Cowan University	1,583	34	1,549	458	29.6
Federation University Australia	674	12	662	164	24.8
Flinders University	1,476	48	1,428	450	31.5
Griffith University	2,159	37	2,122	458	21.6
James Cook University	495	13	482	154	32.0
La Trobe University	2,687	53	2,634	444	16.9
Monash University	7,699	200	7,499	1,067	14.2
Murdoch University	1,456	28	1,428	191	13.4
Queensland University of Technology	4,140	97	4,043	797	19.7
Southern Cross University	2,108	37	2,071	355	17.1
The Australian National University	3,156	141	3,015	878	29.1
The University of Adelaide	2,176	63	2,113	520	24.6
The University of Melbourne	5,884	119	5,765	698	12.1
The University New England	206	7	199	55	27.6
The University of Newcastle	1,270	39	1,231	297	24.1
The University of Notre Dame Australia	103	2	101	29	28.7
The University of Queensland	6,556	282	6,274	1,809	28.8

INSTITUTION	INVITATIONS SENT	OPTED OUT	FINAL SAMPLE	COMPLETED	RESPONSE RATE %
The University of Sydney	9,613	436	9,177	1,697	18.5
The University of Western Australia	2,313	90	2,223	332	14.9
University of Canberra	731	16	715	153	21.4
University of New South Wales	6,858	299	6,559	1,171	17.9
University of South Australia	3,752	58	3,694	740	20.0
University of Southern Queensland	675	15	660	128	19.4
University of Tasmania	2,614	102	2,512	486	19.3
University of Sunshine Coast	710	23	687	183	26.6
University of Wollongong	2,688	57	2,631	442	16.8
Victoria University	2,375	70	2,305	336	14.6
Western Sydney University	2,443	78	2,365	643	27.2
Total	92,612	2,827	89,785	17,325	19.3%

4.4 RESPONSE OVER TIME



APPENDIX A - LIST OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

Australian Catholic University
Bond University
Charles Sturt University
CQ University
Curtin University
Deakin University
Edith Cowan University
Federation University Australia
Flinders University
Griffith University
James Cook University
La Trobe University
Monash University
Murdoch University
Queensland University of Technology
Southern Cross University
The Australian National University
The University of Adelaide
The University of Melbourne
The University New England
The University of Newcastle
The University of Notre Dame Australia
The University of Queensland
The University of Sydney
The University of Western Australia
University of Canberra
University of New South Wales
University of South Australia
University of Southern Queensland
University of Tasmania
University of Sunshine Coast
University of Wollongong
Victoria University
Western Sydney University

APPENDIX B - INVITATION AND REMINDER TEMPLATES

EMAIL INVITATION

SUBJECT: Pre-departure Information Survey for International Students

Dear <Student Name from sample>,

You are invited to participate in an online survey for international students currently studying at <uni name from sample>. The aim of the research is to understand the information needs of international students before they arrive in Australia to commence their study.

The survey is being conducted on behalf of Universities Australia (UA), the peak body representing the university sector in Australia. Engine, an independent provider of market and social research, have been commissioned by UA to conduct the research. This survey has been approved by the University of Canberra Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number 1702 – Pre-departure Information Project).

We have obtained your contact details with the permission of your university. Any information you provide will be de-identified and will only be used for research purposes.

The survey will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete, depending on your answers. As a thank-you for participating, you will be entered in a rolling weekly prize draw, over four weeks, for a chance to win one of several pre-paid Visa gift cards. The earlier you complete the survey, the more chances you will have of winning a prize. Please visit http://survey.orcinternational.com/orc/img/AU3000546_TermsandConditions.pdf for a full list of the Ts&Cs.

Please complete the survey by 26th May 2019. We will send you reminder emails during this period.

To enter the survey, click on the 'Start Survey' button below. If you need to stop the survey at any time before completion, your answers will be saved automatically and you can return to complete the survey at another time using the same link.

↓↓START SURVEY BUTTON↑↑

If you experience any difficulty entering the survey, try to copy the entire link below and paste it into your web browser. If you continue to have difficulty, please email supportau@orcinternational.com (and include your phone number) or contact 1800 065 312.

↓↓SURVEY LINK WITH INDIVIDUAL ID TO BE INSERTED HERE↑↑

For more information on the project please click <<here>>. If you have any questions about this research, you can contact Dr John Wellard, Policy Directory (International) for Universities Australia at j.wellard@universitiesaustralia.edu.au or on +61 2 6285 8135, during office hours (AEDT).

If you do not wish to participate in this survey, please click on the UNSUBSCRIBE link below.

↓↓UNSUBSCRIBE BUTTON↑↑

Thank you for your valuable time and participation in this important survey.

Regards,

Sonia Whiteley

Head of Education & Training Research, Government & Social
Engine

REMINDER EMAIL**SUBJECT: REMINDER: Pre-departure Information Survey for International Students**

Reminder #	Reminder email to be sent on
1 st	Tuesday 7 th May, 2019
2 nd	Tuesday 14 th May, 2019
3 rd	Tuesday 21 st May, 2019

Dear <Student Name from sample>,

We recently sent you an email invitation to participate in a survey for international students currently studying at <uni name from sample>.

Your participation in the survey will assist all Australian universities to better prepare students from <country name from sample> for study and living in Australia.

Just a reminder to please complete the survey by 26th May 2019. (Remember, the earlier you complete the survey, the more chances you will have of winning a prize! Please visit http://survey.orcinternational.com/orc/img/AU3000546_TermsandConditions.pdf for a full list of the Ts&Cs.)

To enter the survey, click on the 'Start Survey' button below. If you need to stop the survey at any time before completion, your answers will be saved automatically and you can return to complete the survey at another time using the same link.

↓ START SURVEY BUTTON ↑ ↑

If you experience any difficulty entering the survey, try to copy the entire link below and paste it into your web browser. If you continue to have difficulty, please email supportau@orcinternational.com (and include your phone number) or contact 1800 065 312.

↓ ↓ SURVEY LINK WITH INDIVIDUAL ID TO BE INSERTED HERE ↑ ↑

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact Dr John Wellard, Policy Director (International) for Universities Australia at j.wellard@universitiesaustralia.edu.au or on +61 2 6285 8135, during office hours (AEDT).

If you do not wish to participate in this survey, please click on the UNSUBSCRIBE link below.

↓ ↓ UNSUBSCRIBE BUTTON ↑ ↑

Thank you for your valuable time and participation in this important survey.

Kind regards

Sonia Whiteley

Head of Education & Training Research, Government & Social
Engine

PRIZE-DRAW CLOSING REMINDER EMAIL

SUBJECT: REMINDER: Weekly prize-draw for Pre-departure Information Survey closing soon

PRIZE-DRAW SCHEDULE			
Prize Draw # (A)	Reminder email to be sent on (B)	Cut-off date to qualify for weekly prize-draw (C)	Prize-draw drawn on (D)
1 st	Friday 3 rd May, 2019	Tuesday 7 th May, 2019	Wednesday 8 th May, 2019
2 nd	Friday 10 th May, 2019	Tuesday 14 th May, 2019	Wednesday 15 th May, 2019
3 rd	Friday 17 th May, 2019	Tuesday 21 st May, 2019	Wednesday 22 nd May, 2019
4 th	Friday 24 th May, 2019	Sunday 26 th May, 2019	Monday 27 th May, 2019

Dear <Student Name from sample>,

[IF (A) = 1st, 2nd or 3rd DISPLAY]

Just a reminder that the weekly prize draw for the Pre-departure Information survey is closing soon!

The [INSERT (A) ABOVE] weekly prize-draw will be drawn on [INSERT (D) ABOVE]. Please complete the survey by [INSERT (C) ABOVE] to enter the draw.

[IF (A) = 4th DISPLAY]

Just a reminder, this is your final chance to have your say and to win a prize!

The [INSERT (A) ABOVE] and final weekly prize-draw will be drawn on [INSERT (D) ABOVE]. Please complete the survey by [INSERT (C) ABOVE] to enter the draw.

[ALL]

(Remember, the earlier you complete the survey, the more chances you will have of winning a prize! Please visit http://survey.orcinternational.com/orc/img/AU3000546_TermsandConditions.pdf for a full list of the Ts&Cs.)

To enter the survey, click on the 'Start Survey' button below. If you need to stop the survey at any time before completion, your answers will be saved automatically and you can return to complete the survey at another time using the same link.

↓ START SURVEY BUTTON ↑ ↑

If you experience any difficulty entering the survey, try to copy the entire link below and paste it into your web browser. If you continue to have difficulty, please email supportau@orcinternational.com (and include your phone number) or contact 1800 065 312.

↓ ↓ SURVEY LINK WITH INDIVIDUAL ID TO BE INSERTED HERE ↑ ↑

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact Dr John Wellard, Policy Director (International) for Universities Australia at j.wellard@universitiesaustralia.edu.au or on +61 2 6285 8135, during office hours (AEDT).

If you do not wish to participate in this survey, please click on the UNSUBSCRIBE link below.

↓↓UNSUBSCRIBE BUTTON↑↑

Thank you for your valuable time and participation in this important survey.

Kind regards

Sonia Whiteley

Head of Education & Training Research, Government & Social
Engine

APPENDIX C - PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT FACT SHEET

Participant Information Sheet

PROJECT TITLE: Pre-departure Information Survey for International Students

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: John Wellard

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in the project described below.

What is the project about?

This project is about understanding the information needs of international students before they arrive in Australia to commence their study. The purpose of this project is to gather current student perspectives on the pre-departure information they received prior to their arrival in Australia. There is currently no overall picture of what pre-departure information is being provided to students and where this information is coming from. This project will help to fill this information gap. It will also help to identify inconsistencies and instances where student needs are not being met before they arrive in Australia.

We will be conducting an online survey to find out what information international students receive, where they get it from and whether it is useful.

Who is conducting the project?

The online survey is being conducted by Sonia Whiteley and Melina Cao at ORC International on behalf of Universities Australia.

Ethics approval

This survey has been approved by the University of Canberra Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number: 1702 – Pre-departure Information Project). You can contact the University of Canberra's Research Ethics & Integrity team if you have queries or concerns about the ethical conduct of this study. You can either contact Mr Hendryk Flaegel via phone +61 2 6201 5220, Ms Maryanne Simpson via phone +61 2 6206 3916 or email humanethicscommittee@canberra.edu.au.

How did you obtain my email address?

We have obtained your email address with the permission of your university. Any information you provide will be de-identified and will only be used for research purposes.

Why am I being asked to participate?

You have been asked to participate because you are a current international student studying in your 1st or 2nd year of university in Australia.

What am I being invited to do?

You are being invited to participate in an online survey for international students.

What do I get for participating in the online survey?

If you complete the online survey, you will be entered in a weekly prize draw, over four weeks, for a chance to win one of several pre-paid Visa gift cards. The earlier the you complete the survey, the more chances you will have of winning a prize. The terms and conditions of the prize draw are available at http://survey.orcinternational.com/orc/img/AU3000546_TermsandConditions.pdf.

How much time will my involvement in the project take?

The online survey will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes, depending on your answers.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participating in this project.

What are the potential benefits of the research project?

Feedback from this project will be used to improve the pre-departure information available to international students before they arrive in Australia to commence their studies. The data will be used to identify key sources of pre-departure information, gaps in the provision of pre-departure information and key challenges faced by international students on arrival.

Can I withdraw from the project?

Participation in this project is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time by emailing customercare@orcinternational.com or by calling 1800 065 312. If you start but do not complete or submit the survey, your responses will not be used in the study.

What will happen to my information?

All information is confidential to the ORC International project team. Participant names are not used in the reporting of any data.

Until data analysis has been completed personal information will be stored securely on a password protected computer.

Your information will only be used as described in this participant information sheet and it will only be disclosed according to the consent provided, except as required by law.

Will the results of this survey be available to me?

The findings from this project will be reported to the relevant committees and advisory groups. A short summary of the results will be made available once the report has been finalised. You can request a copy of the summary results by emailing international@universitiesaustralia.edu.au.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

Dr. John Wellard
Policy Director – International, Universities Australia
+61 2 6285 8135
j.wellard@universitiesaustralia.edu.au

If I want to participate, what do I do?

To participate in the survey, click on the “Start Survey” button in the invitation email. If you experience any difficulty entering the survey, try to copy the entire survey link (also included in the invitation email) and paste it into your web browser. If you continue to have difficulty, please email

customercare@orcinternational.com (and include your phone number) or contact 1800 065 312.

Yours sincerely,

Sonia Whiteley

Head of Education & Training Research, Government & Social
ORC International

APPENDIX D - FINAL INSTRUMENT

Pre-departure information survey
AU3000546
1 April 2019
Universities Australia

Screener

Thank you for taking part in this survey on behalf of Universities Australia. The aim of this survey is to better understand the information needs of international students before they arrive in Australia to commence their study.

This survey has been approved by the University of Canberra Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number: 1702 – Pre-departure Information Project).

We have obtained your contact details with the permission of your university. The survey will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

This research is being conducted in keeping with the Australian Privacy Principles and the industry Privacy Code. Our privacy policy is available on our website (www.enginegroup.com/apac). Any information you provide will be de-identified and will only be used for research purposes.

<<HYPERLINK>> For more information on the survey, please click here to download the Participant Information FAQ sheet. <<END HYPERLINK>>

Firstly, some questions about you to ensure we get the views of a good cross-section of international undergraduate and postgraduate students who are in their first or second year of study in Australia.

ASK ALL

S1. Are you currently studying at <institution name>?

Yes	1	Continue
No	2	Thank & Close
Don't know/Can't remember	99	Thank & Close

ASK ALL

S2. Did your spouse, partner, children or other family member come with you to live in Australia?

MR. PROGRAMMER: MR CODES 1 - 5 ONLY

Yes, my spouse/partner	1	Continue
Yes, my partner	2	Continue
Yes, my child/children	3	Continue
Yes, my brother/sister	4	Continue
Yes, another family member	5	Continue
No	6	Continue

ASK FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

S3. Have you previously studied in Australia or visited Australia for a holiday?

MR

PROGRAMMER: MR CODES 1 AND 2 ONLY

Yes, studied in Australia	1	Continue
Yes, visited Australia for a holiday	2	Continue
No	3	Continue
Don't know/Can't remember	99	Continue

ASK IF S3 = Yes, studied in Australia (1), OTHERS GO TO S6

S4. And what type of educational institution did you study at previously in Australia?

MR

School or senior secondary college	1	Continue
Vocational Education and Training Provider	2	Continue
University	3	Continue
English Language Training Provider	4	Continue
Other (specify)	96	Continue
Don't know/Can't remember	99	Continue

ASK ALL

S5. What year of university are you currently studying in Australia?

SR

First year	1	Continue
Second year	2	Continue
Third year	3	Thank & Close
4 th year or higher	4	Thank & Close
Don't know/Can't remember	99	Thank & Close

ASK ALL

S6. Have any of your friends or family members from your home country ever studied in Australia?

MR

PROGRAMMER: MR CODES 1 AND 2 ONLY

Yes, friends	1	Continue
Yes, family members	2	Continue
No	3	Continue
Don't know/Can't remember	99	Continue

Module 1: Importance of pre-departure information

Now some questions about the importance of information received by international students before arriving in Australia.

Please answer these questions based on your personal experience.

PROGRAMMER: RANDOMISE ORDER OF QUESTIONS Q1 TO Q9 AND RECORD THE ORDER IN WHICH THE QUESTIONS WERE DISPLAYED.

ASK ALL

Q1. In your opinion, how important is it for international students to receive information about **accommodation** before they arrive in Australia?

Accommodation includes student accommodation, rental accommodation, temporary accommodation and homestay.

Not at all important	1
Somewhat important	2
Important	3
Very important	4
Extremely important	5

ASK ALL

Q2. In your opinion, how important is it for international students to receive information about **finances and banking** before they arrive in Australia?

Finances and banking includes the cost of living, budgeting, opening a bank account, credit cards/debit cards/travel cards, currency exchange and how much money to bring into Australia.

Not at all important	1
Somewhat important	2
Important	3
Very important	4
Extremely important	5

ASK ALL

Q3. In your opinion, how important is it for international students to receive information about **travel arrangements** before they arrive in Australia?

Travel arrangements include visas, passports, travel insurance, what to bring on the flight, entering Australia (clearing customs, immigration and quarantine), baggage claim and airport pickup.

Not at all important	1
Somewhat important	2
Important	3
Very important	4
Extremely important	5

ASK ALL

Q4. In your opinion, how important is it for international students to receive information about **the university** before they arrive in Australia?

Information about **the university** includes student services and support (student activities, student advocacy), career/employment services, teaching and learning environment, managing studies, assessment methods, university rules (plagiarism and complaints, important dates for students) information about campuses and emergency contacts.

Not at all important	1
Somewhat important	2
Important	3
Very important	4
Extremely important	5

ASK IF S2 = Yes, accompanying family (1, 2, 3, 4 OR 5), OTHERS GO TO NEXT QUESTION IN RANDOMISATION SEQUENCE

Q5. In your opinion, how important is it for international students to receive information about **accompanying family** before they arrive in Australia?

Accompanying family includes bringing family members to Australia, family visas, associated costs, requirements for children, pre-school, school, childcare and family recreation.

Not at all important	1
Somewhat important	2
Important	3
Very important	4
Extremely important	5

ASK ALL

Q6. In your opinion, how important is it for international students to receive information about **living in Australia** before they arrive in Australia?

Living in Australia includes Australian laws, culture and customs, sport and social activities, food, weather, public transport, driving, the internet, mobile phones and power voltage.

Not at all important	1
Somewhat important	2
Important	3
Very important	4
Extremely important	5

ASK ALL

Q7. In your opinion, how important is it for international students to receive information about **working in Australia** while studying before they arrive in Australia?

Working in Australia includes applying for a tax file number, workplace rights (minimum pay, superannuation, Fairwork Ombudsman) and employment options (working part-time or casual).

Not at all important	1
Somewhat important	2
Important	3
Very important	4
Extremely important	5

ASK ALL

Q8. In your opinion, how important is it for international students to receive information about **health concerns** before they arrive in Australia?

Health concerns include health insurance (Overseas Student Health Cover/OSHC), immunisations, prescription medication, sexual health and health care services/system.

Not at all important	1
Somewhat important	2
Important	3
Very important	4
Extremely important	5

ASK ALL

Q9. In your opinion, how important is it for international students to receive information about **personal concerns** before they arrive in Australia?

Personal concerns include preparing yourself emotionally for studying overseas, mental health, living independently, personal safety, contacting family, religion and worship and spiritual support.

Not at all important	1
Somewhat important	2
Important	3
Very important	4
Extremely important	5

ASK ALL

Q10. Is there any other information you think it is important for international students to receive before they arrive in Australia?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know / can't remember	99

ASK IF Q10 = Yes other information is important (1), OTHERS GO TO Q12

Q11. Please list the other information topics you think are important for international students to receive before they arrive in Australia. You can list up to 5 topics using a separate line for each topic.

OE. PROGRAMMER: TICK BOX FOR 'Don't Know'

1	<ENTER OE RESPONSE>
2	<ENTER OE RESPONSE>
3	<ENTER OE RESPONSE>
4	<ENTER OE RESPONSE>
5	<ENTER OE RESPONSE>

99. Don't know

Module 2: Information receipt & dissemination

Now some questions about the information you received or obtained before you arrived in Australia.

ASK ALL

Q12. Before you arrived in Australia, did you receive or obtain pre-arrival information on any of the following?

(Please click or hover mouse over each attribute to see definitions from earlier.)

PROGRAMMER: RANDOMISE CODES 1-9. INCLUDE CATEGORY DESCRIPTORS FROM MODULE 1 HERE AS MOVEOVERS

		Yes	No	Don't know / can't remember
1	Accommodation	1	2	99
2	Finances and banking	1	2	99

3	Travel arrangements	1	2	99
4	Your university	1	2	99
5	Accompanying family	1	2	99
6	Living in Australia	1	2	99
7	Working in Australia	1	2	99
8	Health concerns	1	2	99
9	Personal concerns	1	2	99

ASK ALL

Q13. Did you receive or obtain information on any other topics before you arrived in Australia?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know / can't remember	99

IF (NO/DK FOR ALL Q12 [1-9]) AND (Q13 = 2 OR 99) GO TO Q26, ELSE GO TO Q14.

ASK IF Q13 = Yes received/obtained other information (1), OTHERS GO TO Q15

Q14. Please list the other topics received/obtained information on before you arrived in Australia. You can list up to 5 topics using a separate line for each topic.

OE. PROGRAMMER: TICK BOX FOR 'Don't Know'

1	<ENTER OE RESPONSE>
2	<ENTER OE RESPONSE>
3	<ENTER OE RESPONSE>
4	<ENTER OE RESPONSE>
5	<ENTER OE RESPONSE>

99. Don't know

IF (NO/DK FOR ALL Q12 [1-9]) AND (Q13 = 1 AND Q14 = 99) GO TO Q26, ELSE CONTINUE.

PROGRAMMER: FOR QUESTIONS Q15 TO Q23:

- **RANDOMISE ORDER OF Q15 TO Q23 AND RECORD THE ORDER IN WHICH THE QUESTIONS WERE DISPLAYED.**
- **RANDOMISE ORDER OF CODE-FRAME IN THE FOLLOWING BLOCKS (CODES ALSO TO BE RANDOMISED WITHIN THESE BLOCKS): [1], [2-5], [6-7], [9-10], [11-12], [13]. CODES 8, 96, 99 TO BE ALWAYS KEPT AT THE END OF THE CODE-FRAME.**
- **USE SAME SEQUENCE OF RANDOMISED CODE-FRAME FOR Q15 TO Q23. RECORD THE ORDER IN WHICH THE CODE-FRAME WAS DISPLAYED.**

Now some questions about how you received or accessed the pre-arrival information.

ASK IF Q12 = Yes, received/obtained information about accommodation (1), OTHERS GO TO NEXT QUESTION IN RANDOMISATION SEQUENCE

Q15. Thinking about the pre-arrival information you received or obtained before arriving in Australia, HOW did you receive or obtain information about **accommodation?**

Accommodation includes student accommodation, rental accommodation, temporary accommodation and homestay.

Please select all that apply.

MR

Hardcopy brochures or documents	1
Websites or webpages	2
Webinars	3
YouTube/Vimeo/Youku	4
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Weibo, WeChat, etc.)	5
Education fair or exhibition in my home country	6
Pre-arrival briefing/seminar in my home country	7
Other events in my home country	8
Personal, face-to-face discussion with an agent	9
Personal, face-to-face discussion with a representative of the university visiting my home country (for example an academic or past or present student)	10
Email information from a representative of the university	11

Email information from an agent	12
Friends or family	13
Other (please type in)	96
Don't know/can't remember	99

ASK IF Q12 = Yes, received/obtained information about finances and banking (2),
OTHERS GO TO NEXT QUESTION IN RANDOMISATION SEQUENCE

Q16. Thinking about the pre-arrival information you received or obtained before arriving in Australia, HOW did you receive or obtain information about **finances and banking**?

Finances and banking includes the cost of living, budgeting, opening a bank account, credit cards/debit cards/travel cards, currency exchange and how much money to bring into Australia.

Please select all that apply.

MR

Hardcopy brochures or documents	1
Websites or webpages	2
Webinars	3
YouTube/Vimeo/Youku	4
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Weibo, WeChat, etc.)	5
Education fair or exhibition in my home country	6
Pre-arrival briefing/seminar in my home country	7
Other events in my home country	8
Personal, face-to-face discussion with an agent	9
Personal, face-to-face discussion with a representative of the university visiting my home country (for example an academic or past or present student)	10
Email information from a representative of the university	11
Email information from an agent	12
Friends or family	13
Other (please type in)	96
Don't know/can't remember	99

ASK IF Q12 = Yes, received/obtained information about travel arrangements (3),
OTHERS GO TO NEXT QUESTION IN RANDOMISATION SEQUENCE

Q17. Thinking about the pre-arrival information you received or obtained before arriving in Australia, HOW did you receive or obtain information about **travel arrangements**?

Travel arrangements include visas, passports, travel insurance, what to bring on the flight, entering Australia (clearing customs, immigration and quarantine), baggage claim and airport pickup.

Please select all that apply.

MR

Hardcopy brochures or documents	1
Websites or webpages	2
Webinars	3
YouTube/Vimeo/Youku	4
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Weibo, WeChat, etc.)	5
Education fair or exhibition in my home country	6
Pre-arrival briefing/seminar in my home country	7
Other events in my home country	8
Personal, face-to-face discussion with an agent	9
Personal, face-to-face discussion with a representative of the university visiting my home country (for example an academic or past or present student)	10
Email information from a representative of the university	11
Email information from an agent	12
Friends or family	13
Other (please type in)	96
Don't know/can't remember	99

ASK IF Q12 = Yes, received/obtained information about your university (4), OTHERS GO TO NEXT QUESTION IN RANDOMISATION SEQUENCE

Q18. Thinking about the pre-arrival information you received or obtained before arriving in Australia, HOW did you receive or obtain information about **your Australian university**?

Information about **the university** includes student services and support (student activities, student advocacy), career/employment services, teaching and learning environment, managing studies, assessment methods, university rules (plagiarism and complaints, important dates for students) information about campuses and emergency contacts.

Please select all that apply.

MR

Hardcopy brochures or documents	1
Websites or webpages	2
Webinars	3
YouTube/Vimeo/Youku	4
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Weibo, WeChat, etc.)	5
Education fair or exhibition in my home country	6
Pre-arrival briefing/seminar in my home country	7
Other events in my home country	8
Personal, face-to-face discussion with an agent	9
Personal, face-to-face discussion with a representative of the university visiting my home country (for example an academic or past or present student)	10
Email information from a representative of the university	11
Email information from an agent	12
Friends or family	13
Other (please type in)	96
Don't know/can't remember	99

ASK IF Q12 = Yes, received/obtained information about accompanying family (5),
OTHERS GO TO NEXT QUESTION IN RANDOMISATION SEQUENCE

Q19. Thinking about the pre-arrival information you received or obtained before arriving in Australia, HOW did you receive or obtain information about **accompanying family**?

Accompanying family include bringing family members to Australia, family visas, associated costs, requirements for children, pre-school, school, childcare and family recreation.

Please select all that apply.

MR

Hardcopy brochures or documents	1
Websites or webpages	2
Webinars	3
YouTube/Vimeo/Youku	4
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Weibo, WeChat, etc.)	5
Education fair or exhibition in my home country	6
Pre-arrival briefing/seminar in my home country	7
Other events in my home country	8
Personal, face-to-face discussion with an agent	9
Personal, face-to-face discussion with a representative of the university visiting my home country (for example an academic or past or present student)	10
Email information from a representative of the university	11
Email information from an agent	12
Friends or family	13
Other (please type in)	96
Don't know/can't remember	99

ASK IF Q12 = Yes, received/obtained information about living in Australia (6), OTHERS GO TO NEXT QUESTION IN RANDOMISATION SEQUENCE

Q20. Thinking about the pre-arrival information you received or obtained before arriving in Australia, HOW did you receive or obtain information about **living in Australia?**

Living in Australia includes Australian laws, culture and customs, sport and social activities, food, weather, public transport, driving, the internet, mobile phones and power voltage.

Please select all that apply.

MR

Hardcopy brochures or documents	1
Websites or webpages	2
Webinars	3
YouTube/Vimeo/Youku	4
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Weibo, WeChat, etc.)	5
Education fair or exhibition in my home country	6
Pre-arrival briefing/seminar in my home country	7
Other events in my home country	8
Personal, face-to-face discussion with an agent	9
Personal, face-to-face discussion with a representative of the university visiting my home country (for example an academic or past or present student)	10
Email information from a representative of the university	11
Email information from an agent	12
Friends or family	13
Other (please type in)	96
Don't know/can't remember	99

ASK IF Q12 = Yes, received/obtained information about working in Australia (7), OTHERS GO TO NEXT QUESTION IN RANDOMISATION SEQUENCE

Q21. Thinking about the pre-arrival information you received or obtained before arriving in Australia, HOW did you receive or obtain information about **working in Australia?**

Working in Australia includes applying for a tax file number, workplace rights (minimum pay, superannuation, Fairwork Ombudsman) and employment options (working part-time or casual).

Please select all that apply.

MR

Hardcopy brochures or documents	1
Websites or webpages	2

Webinars	3
YouTube/Vimeo/Youku	4
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Weibo, WeChat, etc.)	5
Education fair or exhibition in my home country	6
Pre-arrival briefing/seminar in my home country	7
Other events in my home country	8
Personal, face-to-face discussion with an agent	9
Personal, face-to-face discussion with a representative of the university visiting my home country (for example an academic or past or present student)	10
Email information from a representative of the university	11
Email information from an agent	12
Friends or family	13
Other (please type in)	96
Don't know/can't remember	99

ASK IF Q12 = Yes, received/obtained information about health concerns (8), OTHERS GO TO NEXT QUESTION IN RANDOMISATION SEQUENCE

Q22. Thinking about the pre-arrival information you received or obtained before arriving in Australia, HOW did you receive or obtain information about **health concerns**?

Health concerns include health insurance (Overseas Student Health Cover/OSHC), immunisations, prescription medication, sexual health and health care services/system.

Please select all that apply.

MR

Hardcopy brochures or documents	1
Websites or webpages	2
Webinars	3
YouTube/Vimeo/Youku	4
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Weibo, WeChat, etc.)	5

Education fair or exhibition in my home country	6
Pre-arrival briefing/seminar in my home country	7
Other events in my home country	8
Personal, face-to-face discussion with an agent	9
Personal, face-to-face discussion with a representative of the university visiting my home country (for example an academic or past or present student)	10
Email information from a representative of the university	11
Email information from an agent	12
Friends or family	13
Other (please type in)	96
Don't know/can't remember	99

ASK IF Q12 = Yes, received/obtained information about personal concerns (9), OTHERS GO TO NEXT QUESTION IN RANDOMISATION SEQUENCE

Q23. Thinking about the pre-arrival information you received or obtained before arriving in Australia, HOW did you receive or obtain information about **personal concerns**?

Personal concerns include preparing yourself emotionally for studying overseas, mental health, living independently, personal safety, contacting family, religion and worship and spiritual support.

Please select all that apply.

MR

Hardcopy brochures or documents	1
Websites or webpages	2
Webinars	3
YouTube/Vimeo/Youku	4
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Weibo, WeChat, etc.)	5
Education fair or exhibition in my home country	6
Pre-arrival briefing/seminar in my home country	7

Other events in my home country	8
Personal, face-to-face discussion with an agent	9
Personal, face-to-face discussion with a representative of the university visiting my home country (for example an academic or past or present student)	10
Email information from a representative of the university	11
Email information from an agent	12
Friends or family	13
Other (please type in)	96
Don't know/can't remember	99

Module 3: Usefulness & preparedness

Now some questions about the usefulness of pre-arrival information you received or obtained.

ASK ALL

Q24. How useful was the information you received or obtained before you arrived in Australia?

(Please click or hover mouse over each attribute to see definitions from earlier.)

PROGRAMMER: RANDOMISE CODES 1 – 9. SUPPRESS ANY CODES WHERE INFORMATION WAS NOT RECEIVED/ACCESSED (Q12 1 TO 9 ≠ 1). SUPPRESS CODE 5 IF NO ACCOMPANYING FAMILY (S6 = 6). INCLUDE CATEGORY DESCRIPTORS FROM MODULE 1 HERE AS MOVEOVERS

		Not at all useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful	Extremely useful
1	Accommodation	1	2	3	4	5
2	Finances and banking	1	2	3	4	5
3	Travel arrangements	1	2	3	4	5
4	Your university	1	2	3	4	5
5	Accompanying family	1	2	3	4	5
6	Living in Australia	1	2	3	4	5
7	Working in Australia	1	2	3	4	5
8	Health concerns	1	2	3	4	5
9	Personal concerns	1	2	3	4	5

ASK IF Q13 = Yes received other information (1), OTHERS GO TO Q26

Q25. You mentioned you received or obtained information on other topics before you arrived in Australia. How useful was this information?

PROGRAMMER: DISPLAY OE RESPONSES 1-5 FROM Q14

		Not at all useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful	Extremely useful

1	OE Q14[1]	1	2	3	4	5
2	OE Q14[2]	1	2	3	4	5
3	OE Q14[3]	1	2	3	4	5
4	OE Q14[4]	1	2	3	4	5
5	OE Q14[5]	1	2	3	4	5

ASK ALL

Q26. What is the MOST important piece of information that you would give to students from your home country who are considering studying and living in Australia?

OE. PROGRAMMER: TICK BOX FOR 'Don't Know'

<ENTER OE RESPONSE>

99. Don't know

ASK ALL

Q27. When you arrived in Australia, how prepared did you feel in relation to each of the following?

(Please click or hover mouse over each attribute to see definitions from earlier.)

PROGRAMMER: RANDOMISE CODES 1-9. SUPPRESS CODE 5 IF NO ACCOMPANYING FAMILY (S2 = 6). INCLUDE CATEGORY DESCRIPTORS FROM MODULE 1 HERE AS MOVEOVERS

		Not at all prepared	Somewhat prepared	Prepared	Well prepared	Very well prepared
1	Accommodation	1	2	3	4	5
2	Finances and banking	1	2	3	4	5
3	Travel arrangements	1	2	3	4	5
4	Your university	1	2	3	4	5
5	Accompanying family	1	2	3	4	5
6	Living in Australia	1	2	3	4	5
7	Working in Australia	1	2	3	4	5

8	Health concerns	1	2	3	4	5
9	Personal concerns	1	2	3	4	5

ASK ALL

Q28. Did you attend Orientation Week or Welcome Week at your university?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know/can't remember	99

ASK IF Q28 = No did not attend Orientation Week or Welcome Week (2)

Q29. And what was the MAIN REASON you didn't attend Orientation Week or Welcome Week?

SR

Wasn't mandatory	1
Wasn't important / relevant to me	2
Too much information / too overwhelming	3
Arrived in Australia too late to attend	4
Didn't want to go by myself	5
Didn't know that it was offered	6
Other (please specify)	96
Don't know/can't remember	99

Module 4: Recontact & Close

ASK IF PCDE = SYDNEY METRO, BRISBANE METRO, CANBERRA/QUEANBEYAN OR MELBOURNE METRO.

RECONTACT1 Universities Australia would like to speak with recently arrived international students about their experience before they came to Australia. Would you be interested in taking part in a focus group? Participation is voluntary.

Yes	1
-----	---

No	2
----	---

ASK IF RECONTACT1 = Yes (1), OTHERS GO TO RECONTACT3

RECONTACT2 Please confirm your name, phone number and email address so Universities Australia can contact you directly. We will provide this information to Universities Australia at the conclusion of this project. Your contact details will not be used for any other purpose.

First name	
Last name	
Email address	
Phone number	

RECONTACT3 So that we can notify prize draw winners, please confirm your contact details below.

(Click here to see the full Terms and Conditions of the prize draw.)

First name	[FIRST NAME FROM SAMPLE]
Last name	[LAST NAME FROM SAMPLE]
Email address	[EMAIL ADDRESS FROM SAMPLE]
Phone number	[PHONE NUMBER FROM SAMPLE]

Please tick this box if you do not wish to enter the prize draw

CLOSE Thank you for participating in this survey. This research is being conducted in keeping with the Australian Privacy Principles and the industry Privacy Code.

Our privacy policy is available on our website www.enginegroup.com/apac).

APPENDIX 4

Participant Information Form

The Human Research Ethics Committee has considered your application to conduct research with human subjects for the project "1702 - Predeparture Information Project".

The Committee made the following evaluation: **Approved**

The approval is valid until: 06/12/2019

The following general conditions apply to your approval. These requirements are determined by University policy and the ***National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*** (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2007).

Monitoring

You must assist the Committee to monitor the conduct of approved research by completing project review forms, and in the case of extended research, at least annually during the approval period.

Reporting Adverse Events

You must report any unexpected adverse events or complications that occur anytime during the conduct of the research study or during the follow up period after the research. Please refer these matters promptly to the HREC. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal of the Ethics approval.

Discontinuation of Research

You must inform the Committee, giving reasons, if the research is not conducted or is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

Extension of Approval

If your project will not be complete by the expiry date stated above, you must apply for extension of approval. This must be done before current approval expires.

Research Services

University of Canberra

26 March 2019

APPENDIX 5

Survey Managers' Guide

UNIVERSITIES AUSTRALIA

PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION SURVEY OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

INFORMATION FOR SURVEY MANAGERS

MARCH 2019

Prepared by Sonia Whiteley, Eric Skuja and Melina Cao

Phone: +61 2 8912 5600

Email: sonia.whiteley@enginegroup.com



UNIVERSITIES
AUSTRALIA

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Further inquiries should be made to the Chief Executive:

GPO Box 1142 Canberra ACT 2601
Ph: +61 (0)2 6285 8100
Fax: +61 (0)2 6285 8101
Email: contact@universitiesaustralia.edu.au

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ABN 53 008 502 930

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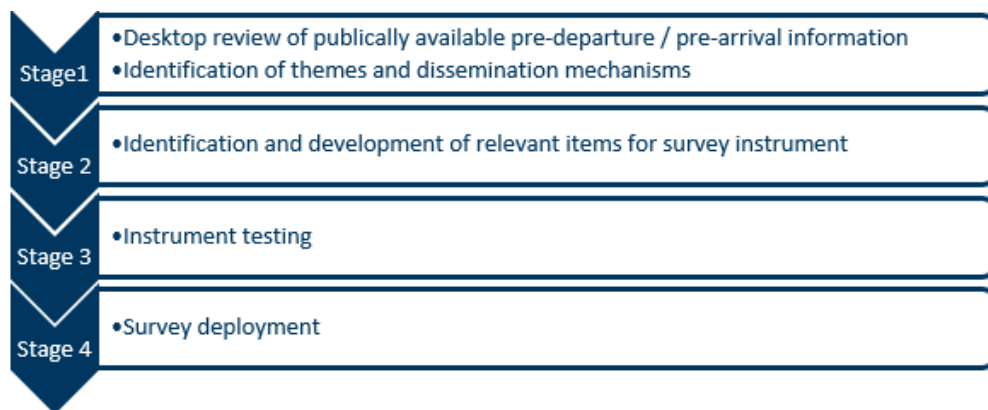
1. OVERVIEW

This document outlines key information and dates for institutions collecting data for Universities Australia's (UA) Pre-departure Information Project (PIP). The survey is an important component of a wider project on pre-departure information.

The project will be overseen by UA's Pre-departure Information Project Steering Group, with representatives from UA, the Council of International Students Australia, the International Education Association and other nominated experts. UA has engaged Engine, an independent market and social research organisation, to undertake the data collection for the quantitative survey.

Onshore, international undergraduate and postgraduate students who are in their first or second years of study in Australia are in-scope for the data collection.

The four stages of the survey process are outlined below.



UA will publish a report on the findings in late 2019/early 2020.

Unit level data received by UA **will not** identify individual institutions. Engine will retain identifiable data for verification purposes. A small number of students will be invited to participate in focus group discussions with UA. Contact information for these students will be provided to UA with the consent of the student.

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to gather current international student perspectives on the pre-departure information they received prior to their arrival in Australia.

2.2 SCOPE

All 39 Universities Australia member institutions are in-scope for the data collection. The reference year is 2019. The populations of interest are onshore international, undergraduate and postgraduate university students who are:

- commencing their first year of study, or
- undertaking their second year of study.

2.3 KEY DATES

The table below summarises key dates and activities relevant to the Pre-Departure Information Project.

Activity	Date
Operational webinar	26 March 2019
Deadline for sample file submission	15 April 2019
Summary of sample file extract returned to institutions	19 April 2019
Data collection period	29 April – 26 May 2019
UA report	Late 2019/early 2020

All enquiries about the data collection should be directed to Dr John Wellard at Universities Australia. John Wellard can be contacted via j.wellard@universitiesaustralia.edu.au and 02 6285 8135. Alternatively, please contact Sonia Whiteley via sonia.whiteley@enginegroup.com or 0419 744 693.

3. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

3.1 SURVEY INVITATION AND REMINDERS

Engine will manage all survey invitations and reminders (via email) to students. No action from survey managers is required.

Reminder emails to students will be sent over the four-week data collection period.

A dedicated survey helpline will be available throughout the survey period and is staffed during business hours. Respondents will be able to leave voice messages outside of business hours. Contact with the helpdesk can also be made via a dedicated support email address. We will aim to resolve more than 95 per cent of queries within 48 hours.

Potential respondents can opt out of the survey at any time via email reply or by contacting the Survey Helpline.

UA is offering a rolling prize draw throughout the data collection period that features a limited number of 'major' prizes, increasing chances within the prize draw for 'early' responders (four chances at a prize for those who respond in the first week, three for those who respond in week two, etc.). Prizes will be drawn weekly.

3.2 POST-SURVEY ENGAGEMENT

Facilitating respondents' access to the outcomes of a survey is regarded as good practice for any research program. At the conclusion of the survey, we will thank the respondent for their participation and ask if they would like to be notified when the final report is released.

4. SAMPLE FILE SPECIFICATIONS

4.1 SAMPLE FRAME AND DESIGN

The initial group of interest is onshore international students who commenced in Semester 1, 2019. This group can be identified in the Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS) where data element E358 (Citizen/resident indicator) is coded 4 and E534 (Course of study commencement date) is in the range 201901 to 201903.

The other in-scope group is onshore overseas students who commenced one year earlier in Semester 1, 2018 – specifically E358=4 and E534 is in the range 201801 to 201803. To exclude students who were enrolled in a different course at an earlier date, commencing students must have arrived in Australia (data element E347) in 2018-19 and second-year students in 2017-18.

We will monitor survey completions by commencement year, course level and institution to try to ensure that, as far as possible, response rates are tracking as expected.

4.2 SAMPLE LIST CREATION

We are aware that we will be requesting student information from institutions during the first teaching period of the year (for most universities), well before the 31 May submission date. Acknowledging that the data will be unvalidated and may be incomplete to some extent, we request a data extract for students enrolled in units of study with a census date between 1 January and 31 March 2019. In short, we need a preliminary data extract by 15 April 2019 for students who will be reported in your May submission.

The sample list creation process has been designed to try to minimise the amount of work required to complete the extract. The filters for the extract (below in SPSS format) are straightforward. If required, we are happy to work with institutions to develop the required code to enable an accurate extract from specific systems.

```
SELECT IF (E358 EQ 4 AND ((E534 GE 201901 AND E534 LE 201903 AND E347 GE 2018) OR  
(E534 GE 201801 AND E534 LE 201803 AND E347 GE 2017))).
```

We have elected a small set of data elements from HEIMS that will allow UA to consistently report and contextualise the data.

The proposed variable list is outlined on the following page.

Variable	Label	Required for fieldwork
E306*	Higher Education Provider code	Yes
E313*	Student identification code	Yes
E310	Course of study type code	Yes
E314	Date of birth	No
E315	Gender code	No
E320	Location code of home residence	Yes
E347*	Year of arrival in Australia	Yes
E358*	Citizen/resident indicator	Yes
E461	Field of education code	No
E462	Field of education supplementary code	No
E534*	Course of study commencement date	Yes
E559	Course campus postcode	No
SURNAME*	Student surname	Yes
FIRSTNAME*	Student given name - first	Yes
EMAIL1*	Primary email address (University account)	Yes
EMAIL2*	Secondary email address (Personal account)	Yes
EMAIL3*	Tertiary email address (Other account)	Yes

The extracts will be checked to ensure they are HEIMS compliant and that idiosyncratic transaction system data values are not present. We will provide each institution with a summary of its extract for confirmation, to ensure that the number of first- and second-year students we are surveying accords with your expectations.

If it is not possible or practicable to provide a sample list to Engine, please advise us immediately to make alternative arrangements.

4.3 SAMPLE LIST SUBMISSION

Data extracts should be submitted in Excel format with the 17 data elements appearing in columns A to Q in the same order listed in the table above. Once the sample list has been created, it will need to be uploaded to Engine's secure FTP (SFTP) site. **Sample lists must be uploaded to the SFTP site by Monday 15 April.**

The URL for Engine's SFTP site is: <https://sftp.orcinternational.com.au/>

Survey managers from each institution will be provided with a login account to the SFTP site. Note: institutions with more than one nominated contact will be provided with one login account, for the *confirmed survey manager*. Each institution will have a dedicated directory to upload their sample list. These directories will not be visible to or accessible by other institutions.

The login details (email username and password) for the SFTP site will be sent to survey managers the day after the operational webinar. Instructions for the SFTP site can be found below.



**UNIVERSITIES
AUSTRALIA**

Universities Australia
1 Geils Court, Deakin ACT 2600
P +61 2 6285 8100
E contact@universitiesaustralia.edu.au
universitiesaustralia.edu.au