



Friday, 8th September 2023

Support for students policy – Guidelines consultation paper
Department of Education
GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601

Email: HELP.Policy@education.gov.au

Dear Department of Education,

I write to make this public submission in relation to the Australian Government's support for students policy – guidelines consultation paper.

Australia currently attracts overseas or international students from over 200 countries, who bring their collective diversity and knowledge to our education institutions, workplaces and local urban, rural and regional communities.

This helps Australians to prepare for opportunities in an increasingly globalised world and contributes to an inclusive and prosperous Australia.

International education is a key contributor to the Australian economy. However, the importance of international education goes beyond its economic benefits.

It also encourages vital cross-cultural exchanges, creates influential alumni networks and provides residency pathways for highly skilled graduates.

Australia's strengths in international education – our world-class education system and institutions, liveable and clean cities, multicultural society, student protection mechanisms and strong graduate outcomes – remain strong incentives for students seeking an international education.

Australia consistently ranks among the most popular study destinations for international students and has done for many years now.

The global online e-learning market is predicted to grow from US\$200 billion to more than US\$370 billion by 2026 – so there are several key policy challenges for Australia to meet and overcome in this market.

Latin American and Caribbean countries share common global interests with Australia, particularly in upholding the rules-based order, trade, food and energy security.

Australia has provided home to a Latin American community that has made and continues to make significant contributions to our Australian society.

China currently has 149,000 students enrolled to study in Australia and India has around 118,000.

Brazil has about 24,500 students studying in Australia. The United States of America has just under 5,000 students here and Canada has about 3,500 students studying in Australia.

We already know that there is a strong correlation between an international student's positive experiences and the likelihood of recommending Australia as a place to study to friends and peers alike.

The sector should focus more on the social and cultural benefits of international education rather than just its role as one of Australia's largest exports.

Public dissemination of information and media campaigns should highlight the positive stories and achievements of former international students as well as the benefits of initiatives such as homestay to the local community.

Community awareness campaigns should highlight the role of international students in creating a more diverse community.

Education providers and government should look to build more community interaction between international students and local communities.

Fostering quality partnerships for research and collaboration

Research plays a clear role in driving new skills needs. When conducted in a safe and trusted way, international research collaboration reflects and enhances Australia's national interests and addresses global challenges.

International research collaborations also expand Australia's access to funding, facilities, and expertise, with research students also providing Australia with an important talent pipeline for our highly skilled workforces.

82 per cent of research projects funded through the Australian Research Council's National Competitive Grants Program in 2020-21 involved some form of international collaboration, highlighting the importance of providing global research leadership.

In relation to other reporting requirements that may need to be included to demonstrate compliance with the support for students policy requirements, I would encourage in addition to:

- the efficacy and effectiveness of the policy.
- identified opportunities for improvement of the policy and outcomes.
- the frequency of reporting, which could be expected to be periodically, after each census date, twice yearly, annually or at other determined intervals.
- providing in the report a link to the policy on the higher education provider's website.
- information on:
 - the numbers of students identified as requiring support, disaggregated by faculty.
 - the support provided for identified students.
 - the academic progression and outcomes of identified students.
 - the academic outcomes of the cohort generally.
 - HELP expenditure on failed units of study, per student and overall.

I would encourage the Australian Government to consider including in addition to that:

- A compliance report provides assurances to the Minister, the Australian community, industry, relevant government agencies and other stakeholders that regulatory obligations are being met annually.**
- A renewed focus on improving program effectiveness through compliance data analysis that drives positive change for identified and/or at-risk overseas students.**

Thank you very much for taking the time to read and consider this correspondence and our public submission.

I look forward to your reply.

Kind regards,

[Redacted signature block]