

# Australian strategy for international education – consultation response

19 May 2021

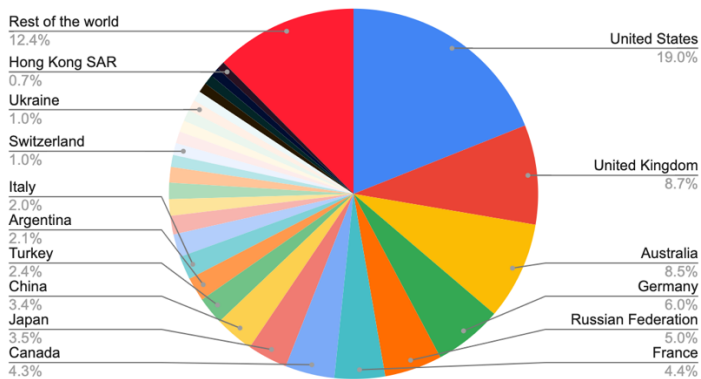
## INTRODUCTION

Monash University is pleased to provide a response to the Department of Education, Skills and Employment consultation paper *Connected, Creative, Caring: Australia Strategy for International Education 2021-2030*.

International education in the Australian university sector is a story of success that could not have been imagined in the 1960s and 1970s and has produced outcomes of benefit to Australia that have not been realised to the same extent in many comparable nations.

With the support of successive commonwealth governments, Australian universities responded to the call to become more self-sufficient and develop demand for Australian university education from countries in the Indo-Pacific region. Revenue from international education makes it Australia’s fourth largest export industry and in higher education it is in third position globally, after the United States and the United Kingdom (see table below).

Incoming international students by host country, 2018



Source: data.uis.unesco.org

Australian university education is sought by students from other nations to such an extent that Australia is more competitive than larger nations such as Canada, France, Germany, US and UK, despite a smaller sector.

This is an achievement to celebrate; and its potential contribution to the future of Australia should be evaluated with a clear understanding of the geo-political, social and economic benefits.

## The role of internationalism in Australian higher education

The quality and reputation of our universities has been substantially enhanced through the engagement of international students and academics in Australia. This has produced notable benefits for domestic students, as well as the broader economy and society of Australia and the Indo-Pacific.

Australian universities built the contemporary demand for international education, drawing on the regional reputation generated initially by the Colombo Plan. They did this through onshore and offshore investments with the result that universities, such as Monash, have alumni in prominent government and corporate roles around the world and particularly in Southeast Asia. These graduates make a significant contribution to economic development, innovation and society here and in their home countries. They contribute to the diplomatic and

trade understanding that support our links across the world and in our region, and they are also the ‘second track’ that supports business and community links between the nations in our region.

Universities in Australia were established for the purposes of access to knowledge and the scholars that create and transmit it, irrespective of the location of the knowledge. Global focus and engagement with the world are fundamental to the success, not only of our universities, but of our broader communities. Despite the pandemic we are living in a highly globalised world, where it is even more important for an internationalised education to prepare students to make a meaningful contribution to understanding and solving pressing world issues.

### Longstanding support from Australian governments.

The first National Strategy for International Education was launched in 2016 following a government-commissioned independent review led by Michael Chaney AO. It recognised international education as “one of the five super growth sectors contributing to Australia’s transition from a resources-based to a modern services economy” and highlighted the various benefits of a robust international sector, including economic strength, global workforce skills, the role in innovation. It stressed the importance of Australian universities remaining prominent against key international benchmarks to be attractive to domestic and international students.

In a speech to the Australian International Education Conference in 2014, Senator McKenzie, speaking on behalf of the Hon Christopher Pyne, Minister for Education, responded to the Chaney Review with an affirmation of the government’s commitment to Australia being a world leader in education with a reputation for quality.

She made a commitment that the government’s strategy for international education would

“ ... safeguard our position as a leader, strengthen our universities, offer more to students and... protect Australia’s strong, competitive research system. They will position our institutions to attract the best and brightest students and staff from around the world. There is much at stake, if we don’t do this.”

The intent of this strategy should remain the foundation of a new strategy today, in order to build a system that:

- stimulates growth across the domestic economy;
- produces globally relevant graduates;
- strengthens networks of government, industry and community around the world; and
- supports world class education and research in Australia.

### Financial model for core business of universities

Successive governments and education ministers from Dawkins onwards have sought to encourage universities to maximise their income from sources other than the federal government in order to fund education and research. Universities responded.

Domestic students contribute on average 48% of the cost of their university education (based on the latest changes to student and government contributions to higher education). The government contribution of 52% draws on revenue from taxation. International students pay higher student fees, in part, in recognition that they and their families have not contributed to Australia’s taxation revenue – unless and until they become residents or citizens of Australia.

Australian universities have used the fees paid by international students to:

- cover the cost of their education. These foreign students do not ‘take a place’ from a domestic students; they are additional to places funded by government. Domestic students gain benefits from the perspectives and connections of students from other nations in a world where the ability to ‘work globally’ is becoming essential.
- invest in university infrastructure (such as buildings, equipment and information technology) for education and research. Government does not provide recurrent funding for the maintenance and upgrade of existing infrastructure nor annual provisions for investment in new infrastructure.

- support research and innovation by funding operating costs, including energy and materials and meeting salaries of researchers or research support staff, and the costs of translation and commercialisation, such as proof of concept funding. These costs are not covered by National Competitive Grants, nor by Research Support Funding. In 2018, Australian universities spent \$12.2b on research, half of which was funded from their own discretionary income, and half of that discretionary income was derived from international student revenue<sup>1</sup>.

The results of this investment in education, infrastructure and research are clear – in the most reputable of international university metrics, 23 of Australia’s 39 universities rank in the world’s top 500 and seven are in the top 100 (see table below). Only the United States and the United Kingdom had more universities in the top 100 at 45 and 8 respectively. This global reputation is valued by students, governments and industries as a marker for international quality and innovation.

#### Australia’s position in Shanghai ARWU World University Rankings, 2020

Country	Universities in top 100	Universities in top 500	Top 500 universities per million people
United States	45	137	0.41
United Kingdom	8	36	0.53
<b>Australia</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0.92</b>
China (mainland)	6	71	0.05
France	5	17	0.25
Switzerland	5	8	0.92
Germany	4	30	0.36
Canada	4	19	0.50
Netherlands	4	12	0.71
Japan	3	14	0.11

Source: Shanghai ARWU Ranking, prepared by Professor Simon Marginson, May 2021

The reputation of a quality university sector is still overwhelmingly built around formal undergraduate and postgraduate awards underpinned by strong institution reputation via research driven international performance metrics.

International rankings drive international student demand and the resulting revenue is vital to undertaking high quality education, research and translation activities and provide essential infrastructure. Only a few decades ago Australian students needed to go to overseas for high quality postgraduate education, now universities such as Monash provide high quality postgraduate education to students from and in the Indo-Pacific region and across the world.

#### Continued appeal and emerging threats

The global community is experiencing instability from the unprecedented health and economic consequences of the pandemic, climate change, and geopolitical shifts and tensions.

While Australia had a very strong position in international education pre-pandemic, demand is volatile. Competitors, such as the US and the UK, have traditionally had strong international demand for their university education. Meanwhile competition is also growing from countries who view international education as a driver of innovation-led economic growth, such as China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and parts of the UAE.

<sup>1</sup> Research and Experimental Development, Higher Education Organisations, Australia 2018, released March 2020. ABS Cat. 8111  
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There is emerging evidence that future students are seeking destinations that are open and have vaccinated populations, despite generally positive perceptions of Australia's response to Covid<sup>2</sup>. And a recent survey of 6,000 potential international students found that more than one third of them would change their education destination in order to access on-campus learning sooner.<sup>3</sup> Australia has been seen as a desirable place to live and study which added to the attraction of Australian universities – this attractiveness cannot be replicated with a shift to online provision.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In this changing environment, there is opportunity for the government, education and industry sectors to collaborate on a recovery strategy based on:

- **Market access.** A strategy for opening borders and a favourable visa system to welcome international students
- **Market appeal.** Recognition that our international education system is based upon the high quality of our universities including the on-campus experience and on national features that cannot be reproduced online or offshore – climate, amenities, lifestyle, safety & security, and our tolerant multicultural environment.
- **Market diversity.** Consistent messaging from government departments and agencies, coordination of foreign relations and security oversight, support via financial incentives and a regulatory framework that encourages the development of new models and entry into new markets, without abandoning strong established links.
- **Student experience.** Build community support for international students onshore, enable domestic students to have outbound mobility experiences, and enrich all experiences with quality digital engagement.

The new international education strategy should accelerate Australia's participation in the global innovation system. It can grow sovereign capabilities and build economic resilience, by ensuring continued access to new knowledge, emerging innovations and the best educators and researchers in the world.

We recommend a whole of government approach to the policy settings that will maintain and enhance the sector's contribution to national priorities including the economy, jobs creation, innovation, and a secure and socially cohesive place in the Indo-Pacific region. It is a shared challenge for Australia to transition from the current pandemic.

Below is a two-stage plan based on the current environment, to assert Australian education as a world leader for quality and retaining a leading position among the education systems that attract international students.

### Stage 1 - 2021-2022 - Recovery

- **A timetable to open the borders**, based on clarity of treatment of arrivals who have been vaccinated. (A recent IDP survey found that fewer than one third of potential students were willing to pay the full cost of hotel quarantine.<sup>4</sup>)
- **Support package for international students** and domestic marketing campaign to encourage return and aid student-community integration, involving state and local governments. The package could include transport passes, wellbeing support, facilitated community/sporting participation, jobs for students.

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<sup>2</sup> QS International Survey 2021- UK education, and Navitas Agent Perception Report March 2021

<sup>3</sup> IDP Connect survey of aspiring international students, conducted in March/April 2021 and reported by Times Higher Education. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/mobile-students-not-prepared-pay-full-quarantine-costs>.

<sup>4</sup> IDP Connect survey of aspiring international students, conducted in March/April 2021 and reported by Times Higher Education. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/mobile-students-not-prepared-pay-full-quarantine-costs>.

- [Support to mitigate the pipeline effect of low commencements](#) in 2020, 2021, 2022 and potentially 2023.

## Stage 2 - 2021-2030 - A new model

- [Public campaign to articulate the full benefit of a healthy international education sector](#) to economy, innovation, and society, with sustained commitment to the sector
- [Strategic country-level negotiations](#) to develop and maintain markets, simplify recognition of qualifications and facilitate transnational education (TNE) and two-way mobility
- [Review current regulatory framework](#) to facilitate the development of new partnerships and education models, for example, flexible visa classes to recognise online enrolment or periodic residence offshore.
- [Invest in new market development](#) through DFAT and Austrade campaigns, government scholarships and flexible pricing/discounts, tax incentives for industry scholarships, updated skills list and streamlined PR pathways
- [Provide incentives for international work placements and graduate employment](#) to support future industry needs and improve student outcomes and workforce participation with
- [Focus on onshore delivery](#) as the offer returning the best value to students and Australia
- [Build online learning and digital engagement](#) to develop new offshore markets and enrich experience for all learners
- [Build infrastructure and incentives to expand opportunities for mobility](#) (for example, through Monash's unique network of campuses)

The next pages set out the contextual factors and drivers that have shaped our response.

## FACTORS INFLUENCING OUR POSITION

### The nature of Monash University

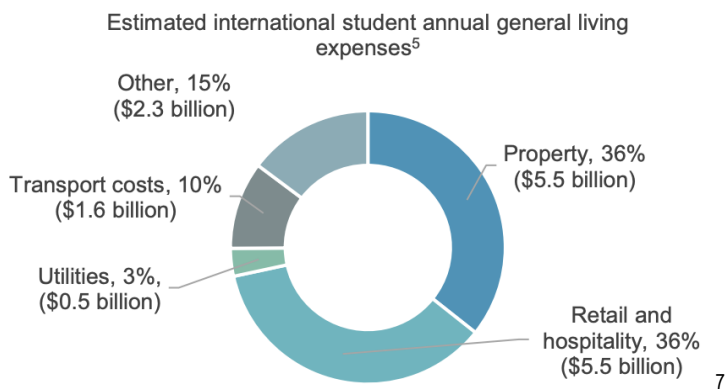
Monash is Australia’s most internationalised university, from the days of the first Colombo plan, through the establishment of offshore campuses in the 1980s, to the new campus in Indonesia opening this year (the first foreign university approved to establish in Indonesia). Monash provides a true network of education and research across all continents. Internationalism is explicit in our statement of purpose, “Through excellent research and education, Monash will discover, teach and collaborate with partners and industries to meet the challenges of the age in service of national and international communities”.

Monash has built offshore development in locations strategic for education, research and innovation. In 2019, offshore enrolments accounted for one quarter of all international enrolments, while onshore international enrolments accounted for about a third of all Monash enrolments.<sup>5</sup>

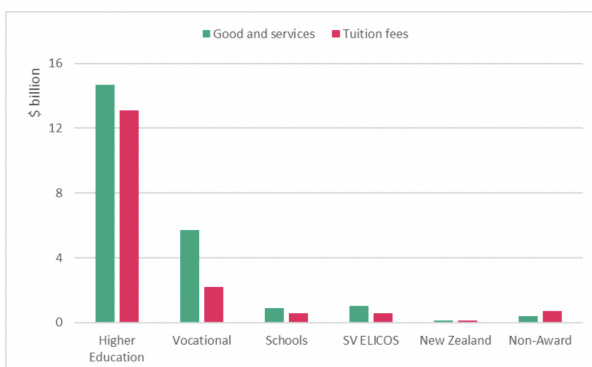
The Monash University network of campuses continues to be a significant strategic advantage, giving our students unique opportunities for collaboration on international projects and linking us to global innovation systems across campuses, physically and virtually.

### The value to Australia of a strong international education system

International students in all learning environments make a major financial contribution while they’re studying in Australia, contributing to both supply and demand, as presented by a 2015 Deloitte Access Economics report commissioned by the Department of Education and Training.<sup>6</sup>



The higher education sector accounts for about 70% of education export income:



Source: ABS 2019, *International Trade: Supplementary Information, Calendar Year, 2019*, cat. no. 5368.0.55.004, ABS, Canberra, Table 9.1.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.monash.edu/about/who/glance>

<sup>6</sup> <https://internationaleducation.gov.au/research/research-papers/Documents/ValueInternationalEd.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/200917-HE-Facts-and-Figures-2020.pdf>



Education is a key pillar of Australia’s prosperity. Our education institutions are “frontiers of nation building ... to cultivate Australian citizens of the future<sup>8</sup>.” All Australians benefit from the breakthroughs in science and health, jobs creation and the productivity improvements that drive prosperity. And international education drives this in many ways beyond the financial contribution:

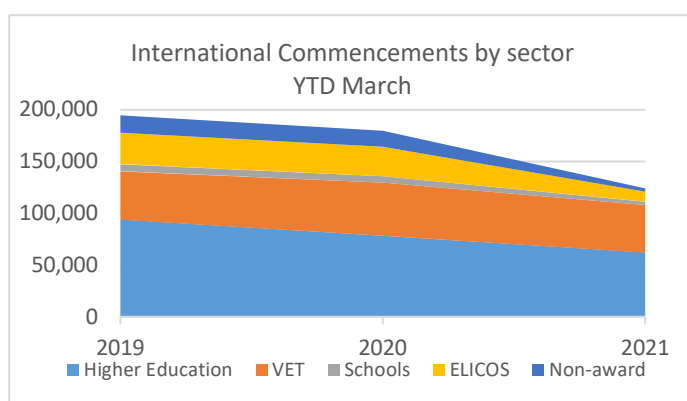
- Mobility opportunities build student capacity in intercultural engagement, teamwork and communication skills necessary to work in and leverage global networks as well as expanding employment pathways.<sup>9</sup>
- International students contribute to a diverse and future-focused workforce, which is vital as Australia cannot ensure workforce volume or required skills solely from domestic sources.
- The international education system builds Australian capacity to participate in global research networks and this helps to maintain relationships with countries in times of tension.
- Alumni in overseas-based organisations provide an essential connection for the continued engagement of these organisations in Australia. They enable access to ideas and global innovation and keep Australia visible in innovation systems.
- Scholarships and targeted programs continue Australia’s longstanding history of engagement and support in our region of the South Pacific and Southeast Asia

The benefit from international students does not only accrue to Australia, it forms areas of international influence that make a significant contribution to the geopolitical security of the region and to global innovation systems. A balanced and sustainable strategy must consider the comprehensive value of international education beyond the immediate financial benefits: international soft power, social and cultural enrichments, and the opportunities that arise from exposing Australian students and society to other cultures. In particular, we cannot underestimate the role of soft diplomacy in regional security, built from relationships and partnerships developed through international education experiences, both inbound and outbound.

### Market signalling in a changed environment

Amid the unprecedented turbulence of economic uncertainty, deepening geopolitical tensions, Covid in its various states around the world and the continued closure of national borders, Australia needs a strong repositioning of its international education system.

Since Covid we have seen a decline in commencements, assuming greater severity in 2021:



Source: [International Student Data 2021, pivot table](#) DESE

The Australian international education sector is suffering from the compounding effects of two years of lower annual commencements, down 8% in 2020 and 31% in 2021, resulting in a sustained reduction in the pipeline and cuts to university revenue. (“Pandemic” budgeting enabled universities to stay afloat in 2020, but the cuts to workforce, support services and capital works cannot be repeated in 2021, 2022 and 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Graham Parr and Tanya Davies, <https://lens.monash.edu/@education/2021/02/25/1382848/covid-shines-light-on-australians-fear-of-the-other>

<sup>9</sup> Career outcomes of learning abroad, based on 2019 survey of 4976 students, Davina Potts/IEAA 2020

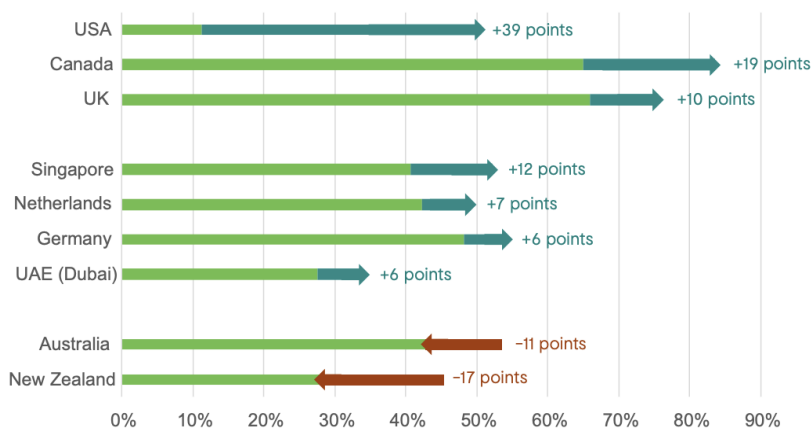
This has implications for diversification targets and strategies. Looking at the top 15 source countries for Australian universities, the drop in 2020 full year commencements has been greatest in India (-46%) and development markets such as Saudi Arabia (-43%), and Sri Lanka (-35%).<sup>10</sup>

Australia’s relative position in international education is being eroded by key English-speaking rivals who have open borders, superior visa arrangements and who have continued to welcome international students as part of their society. The UK is experiencing considerable growth in enrolments from students resident in India (+128%) and China (+20%) and in Canada, applications for new study visas have increased 35% on last year (Jan/Feb).<sup>11</sup>

Canada is offering a PR pathway for 40,000 international graduates and its narrative is clear about the contribution made by international students.<sup>12</sup> The UK is adopting a whole of government approach in its strategy, in which one of the key goals is to provide a welcoming environment for students.<sup>13</sup> Since Covid, the UK government has restated the ambitions of its 2020 international education strategy to increase the value of education exports and increase the number of onshore international students. It has adopted new strategies to diversify, targeting the Indo-Pacific, while not losing momentum in its existing markets. And significantly, it has eased visa conditions for short term study, removing the need for a student visa for studies of less than six months.<sup>14</sup>

A recent Navitas survey of 900 agents in 73 countries suggests students are more concerned about open borders than a Covid-free environment and are looking not just to the US, Canada and the UK but also to Germany, the Netherlands, the UAE and Singapore. The study also found that a quick recovery in perception is possible, but students don’t expect Australian and New Zealand borders to open before 2022. The chart below highlights the shifts in sentiment. Given this shift, we need to be more welcoming than the growing competition to reclaim our position as a destination of choice.<sup>15</sup>

**Fig E1: “Over the past two months, there has been more interest in this country as an education destination compared to other countries.” Change from Sept 2020 to Mar 2021 (agree/strongly agree)**



<sup>10</sup> Austrade Education data, pivot table commencements, <https://www.austrade.gov.au/australian/education/education-data/current-data/pivot-tables>, accessed May 2021

<sup>11</sup> Source: <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/9b34e712-513f-44e9-babf-9df4f7256550#wb-auto-6>, Applications Finalized for New Study Permit Applications (in Persons) by Month, retrieved 04 May 2021

<sup>12</sup> <https://thepienews.com/news/canada-to-offer-permanent-residence-to-40000-international-grads-in-2021/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-education-strategy-global-potential-global-growth/international-education-strategy-global-potential-global-growth#:~:text=Our%20ambition%20is%20to%20increase,by%202020%20%5Bfootnote%204%5D>

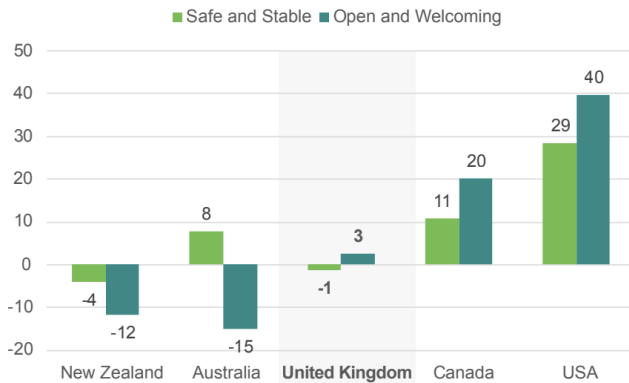
<sup>14</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-education-strategy-2021-update>

<sup>15</sup> Navitas Agent Perception Report, March 2021, [https://insights.navitas.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Navitas-Agent-Perception-Report-March-2021\\_Part-1.pdf](https://insights.navitas.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Navitas-Agent-Perception-Report-March-2021_Part-1.pdf)



The same survey found that international agents take a dimmer view of Australia being safe and welcoming.<sup>16</sup>

**Figure 2.2: Proportion that agree/strongly agree that the reputation of a country as 'safe and stable' and 'open and welcoming' has improved in the last two months – Change between Sept 2020 and March 2021 (percentage points)**



## The diplomatic benefit

Outbound domestic students build the Australian brand overseas, develop enduring relationships and bring back an understanding of how to work in global contexts. A national report by the International Education Association of Australia found that a mobility experience facilitated skills development and aided short and long term career prospects. Further, learning abroad expanded students' interest in current affairs and world events, as well as providing new perspectives on both their host and home countries.<sup>17</sup>

The New Colombo Plan has been an important initiative, enabling students to travel who otherwise would not even hold a passport, and encouraging other students to study in our region rather than the US or UK, providing strategic reach into the Indo-Pacific. We believe its long term impacts are still be fully felt.

Agreements for study abroad and student exchange are often the first step in building partner relations with international institutions that can then provide access for research collaboration and commercialisation.

## Diversification

Australian universities are not homogenous, nor are the countries from which students may come. Students enrol for different reasons and have different desired outcomes. Pathways to permanent residency help attract students from markets other than China, however on the whole students enrolling in Go8 institutions aren't necessarily seeking to migrate to Australia. They are seeking a high quality education, multicultural experience, global networks and accelerated career advancement in their home regions. They are invaluable to Australia's future trade networks and diplomacy.

There will always be undergraduate students, whose families seek an international qualification for prestige and a pathway to better jobs at home. Monash has grown its postgraduate cohorts in areas of strategic priority, however this group is more elastic in its demand because it is discretionary. This group has higher expectations of quality and prefers a largely face-to-face experience in order to build networks and develop enterprise skills of creativity, critical thinking and communication.

We support diversification to yield the benefits of a multicultural education experience This requires a clear strategy to diversify markets at a time when the education sector is under considerable stress and our international reputation has been weakened by closed borders. If the number of international students reduces as dramatically as the fall in commencing students in 2021 suggests this will have a cascading effect on research and development (unless there are offsets to lost revenue) with the potential for Australia to lose the ability to

<sup>16</sup> Navitas Agent Perception Report, March 2021, [https://insights.navitas.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Navitas-Agent-Perception-Report-March-2021\\_Part-1.pdf](https://insights.navitas.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Navitas-Agent-Perception-Report-March-2021_Part-1.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Career outcomes of learning abroad - National Report, Davina Potts 2020, for International Education Association of Australia.

support internationally high quality research and researchers. This in turn will make it harder to attract talent. We want to maintain a strong position to continue to attract the best educators and researchers.

There are two key issues that must be addressed to achieve diversification goals

1. Funding model. Diversification of country and courses requires universities to attract students from regions, such as Europe and South America for example. To create substantial shift in countries where Australia is not a traditional overseas study destinations needs short term and long term investment, such as scholarships, explorations of new relationships and understanding traditional paths to enable strategic development.
2. Regulatory framework. Current regulations and processes are prescriptive and channel providers down familiar and narrow paths. ESOS provides excellent protection for students but some associated rigidities stifle creativity and capacity in developing new education partnerships. It restricts online enrolments, which are also constrained by the Confirmation of Enrolment registration system and it does not provide flexibility for new partnership models, such as simultaneous enrolment offshore in a home country institution and units *and* onshore enrolment in an Australian institution and units.

A whole of government approach, removing regulatory rigidities, overlap and communication variations from across the agencies with a stake in international education is needed for a successful shift in international student enrolments. It should include:

- Open borders and a national strategy for entry of international students with clarity on vaccine passports
- Opening up the ESOS Act, to encourage new models of partnership and delivery
- Expedited study visas with improved work rights during study and partner work rights
- Post-study work rights and PR pathways that match our nearest competitors, Canada and the UK, as well as keeping an eye on emerging competition
- Updating the skills shortages and PR occupation lists to reflect future needs in the caring and innovation workforces
- Incentives for industry to take on international student internships, either individually or as part of a project

We support a sector-level market-led approach to diversification. Monash is strong in onshore delivery, is actively growing online and blended models, and has considerable strength in offshore delivery through our international network of campuses and partners.

Universities are affected by the major declines in international students occasioned by closed borders and are making changes to deal with these circumstances. Without other investment to support diversification, current circumstances mean universities will not have the funding to make major shifts.

## Digital offerings

Online education has advanced considerably in the last two years, not just because of Covid, to be a highly valued mode. Given the needs of future occupations and ways of working, we believe that every form of learning should have an integrated online component - for onshore and offshore students in every discipline. It's about choice and flexibility.

However, online courses have challenges from issues of quality and reputation in many countries, student preferences and taxation regimes in relation to digital services. Quality and reputation in this market requires investment in program development and student support via tutorials and feedback. Despite some concessions in the Covid environment, very few Asian countries will recognise an undergraduate degree studied online. Anecdotally, we hear that the families of younger students (aged 16-19) would prefer the students to be engaged face-to-face in learning communities rather than online in their bedrooms and students themselves have indicated a preference for on-campus learning.

Digital offerings provide access to markets that couldn't otherwise afford an Australian university education and provide pathways to an onshore component. Monash is making inroads here in both microcredentials and TNE, but as outlined, it is expensive to develop and deliver. To make inroads in this competitive and maturing market,

Australia would need to make a serious commitment to investment in digital infrastructure networks and building the capacity to provide a high-quality online education, sufficiently differentiated from market leaders in the US and UK. Online also is unlikely to generate student engagement with Australia in terms of cultural exchange and understanding.

Digital services provided to China, Vietnam and a number of other countries in the region attract taxation if provided by organisations outside those countries. So online education from Australian universities will attract taxation in many countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

### The innovation / workforce imperative

Building Australia's sovereign capabilities requires access to global pools of talent. The Covid pandemic has highlighted skills shortages of labour and also professional areas such as engineering, data science and health. Innovation culture requires a large population aged 16-34 which Australia cannot supply domestically. Additionally, we need the knowledge and diversity provided by international workers.

At a time when industries are struggling to fill specific roles, a national international education strategy can help Australia build its workforce in key areas for strategic development. Supporting onshore international education with express PR pathways is an efficient way to build supply in areas of need. The Canadian government's current strategy provides scholarships for targeted countries/courses, modernised immigration processes and an express entry stream for certain applicants, covering both study visas and PR.

We need policy settings that provide a clear pathway for international students to skilled migration. This should take in areas of supply/value chain growth and national priority. Additionally, we are hearing of a future skills shortage in the order of 250k people, in AI, cyber security and the digitising agenda - capabilities that are portable across many key industries.

### Student experience

We know from consultations with our own international student society that international students in Australia felt unsupported by the Australian government in 2020, compared with students in New Zealand, Canada and the UK. There are emerging concerns about increasing episodes of subtle racism in the community. The national narrative should be one of value, acceptance and recognition of students as people, with diverse cultures and skillsets valuable to Australia.

Within and beyond the classroom, the experience of international students is a factor of their familiarity with Australian culture, language and their capacity to find a community. The presence of family or friends can really aid their settlement here, and in the absence of that, governments at all levels can support, both practically and in building a culture that values diversity.

Conversely, domestic Australian students have historically been highly mobile and we need to think about their responses if there is reduced access to international experience in their degrees in Australian universities.

In terms of workforce, there is a barrier to international students gaining work experiences in their chosen field. Companies are more inclined to offer internships and placements to permanent residents with a pathway to graduate employment and do not always see the value in taking on an international student who may not remain after completing their studies. In some cases, non-residents are not eligible to apply for these internships. This is particularly problematic in fields such as engineering, where practical hours are required for graduation. Accepting students for study in Australia should come with an undertaking that they will be able to meet all the requirements of that study and associated professional accreditation obligations.

Access to internships and workforce participation could be improved with a reconsideration of the return on investment in international students and graduates, supported by government incentives for employers.

## A world class education in Australia

Australian universities rank highly in various international measures of both quality and impact. These results are propelled by international engagement and enable us to attract the brightest minds in education and research. Australia is among the most multicultural countries in the world, with long held values of internationalisation. We have a complete onshore ecosystem that encompasses ELICOS, secondary education, VET, higher education. Some universities have offshore campuses and centres and every public university has significant international partner arrangements.

Australia and its citizens deserve the best education and continued access to the best networks, ideas and innovations. A narrowly focused international education strategy will erode this enviable position and hamper our potential for continued growth in jobs and living standards.

We propose a globally positioned, distinctly Australian experience. As well as Australia's acknowledged lifestyle factors, the Australian experience involves a genuine environment of freedom of speech and intellectual enquiry, the best of research-led teaching from Australian and international academics and professionals, and relevant work-integrated-learning opportunities and mobility experiences for all students, in Australia, abroad and virtually. As an example, over the last year the Monash University Arts faculty has added to its acclaimed and funded [Global Immersion Guarantee](#) with Australian on-country programs, led by the Monash Indigenous Studies Centre. Whether overseas or across Australia, the goal is to provide all students with learning opportunities in new contexts, to prepare them for future work conditions.

## CONCLUSION

A new strategy for international education should consider the considerable direct and indirect impacts on key economic, social goals and key diplomatic relationships. It should integrate a whole of government approach in a two stage approach beginning with recovery and moving to a fully articulated national strategy. Policy levers and targeted financial support should be aimed at addressing:

- Market appeal
- Market access
- Market diversity
- Student experience

Consideration of the above, in partnership with the sector, will ensure Australia does not lose ground internationally, retains its diplomatic ties and indeed strengthens sovereign capabilities through access to global knowledge, talent and markets for future innovation and prosperity.