

Q20.

Australian Strategy for International Education consultation submission

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Q1. Name *

Q2. Organisation *

Q3. Occupation/role at the organisation (if applicable)

Q4. Contact email address *

Q5. Contact phone number

Q6. 1 - What do you see as the key priorities for a new Australian strategy for international education? [limit to 500 words]

Australia will lose considerable space if it assumes the market for international education is to pivot to online education. The experience of the past year has shown many international countries, particularly in relation to South Asia, the middle east and South East Asia that online is not always a great mode of learning. If we take this strategy, there will be a movement toward international skills providers, along the lines of Google, etc who will become the online educators and this will reduce the economic value and soft diplomacy value of international education to Australia. It will frankly be a disaster for our country. You cannot escape the fact that countries such as Canada and the UK, with comparable education systems, are succeeding where we are failing and it is often linked to work rights and extended stay. Students come to Australia as much for short term work opportunity as they do for study and we shouldn't kid ourselves about this. If we want to succeed as a leading international educator, we need to keep reinforcing benefit in this area. We need to continue to provide value, or reduce costs. Given Australia is a high cost country for delivery, courtesy of our economy, it is unlikely universities will succeed if we take the latter route. Finally, we need to lose our attitude about the quality of the product we deliver. Many nations see an increasing arrogance in the way we sell ourselves and as other nations continue to improve the gaps become smaller on where we fit. We provide astoundingly great soft diplomacy value for our government as educators but we seldom see appreciation of that perspective from government as we have managed to get into an ideology war between sector and government. We have to shed this and appreciate we are in this together.

Q7. 2 - Students should be at the centre of the new Strategy. How can Australian education providers deliver the best possible student experience both now and in the future? [limit to 500 words]

Courses which are very much focussed on job skills and future job readiness are critical. We already largely do this well but the competition from overseas providers is also to be able to provide skills that are transferrable once students return home. On this front, statistics tend to show we don't do as well and many students go home disappointed that they still struggle to find work. Universities are moving more and more to internships for courses as part of the education delivery. Combined with government support this is an area where Australia may well be able to create a new point of difference and shore up support for new levels of growth.

Q8. 3 - What changes are needed to make Australia more globally competitive over the next decade? [limit to 500 words]

As per question one. The international education market is not a particularly complicated one. Students want a good education but also want to be able to work to pay for it whilst here. That is one of the reasons why online doesn't work as well, unless there is a compelling price point. So far that hasn't worked well in our favour. Also, we often make the wrong assumptions about online. In countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and India, access to high quality Wifi is not readily available outside of major capitals still and so students can't find get a quality education unless they can tap into high bandwidth locations. It significantly limits the market. Additionally, if students have to work in home country, hours of work for pay is longer for smaller return and that often makes it very difficult to study. This is a major problem for growing an offshore market. In the event Australian borders are unlikely to open wide for a few years (which now seems likely), we need to think about expansion offshore. The government could assist there by encouraging foreign governments to accept Australian providers delivering offshore (and not just top 100 providers since QILT results tend to indicate other lower ranked universities do better in the delivery of quality learning than sandstone universities). We also need to remove the snobbishness that seems to sit inside government. We have seen first hand experience where we get less assistance in country than GO8s, who probably need less assistance because of their rankings. Australian universities all typically deliver a high quality education experience and the government needs to show greater pride in promoting our value offshore.

Q22. 3.1 - Policy and regulatory flexibility are important in enabling providers to innovate. How can we utilise these settings to pursue opportunities, and in what other ways can we work together to ensure Australia remains globally competitive? [limit to 500 words]

We would go a long way forward if we made our regulatory body more flexible and less rigid in terms of its approach to quality. As an almost self governing risk based model, TEQSA is inward focussed and doesn't necessarily do much to engender high quality contemporary education. The rules regarding online delivery and face to face teaching in Australia will also need to change if we are to encourage better access to high quality education. That rule alone, creates a situation where international students get exposed to lesser quality education because they are forced to such a high percentage of time in face to face environments. It prevents universities from making much of the learning journey more contemporary, flexible and relevant to the world we now find ourselves in. Finally, we have moved away from universities being self accrediting, other than in name only. Almost every professional body now exerts some quality control over university courses and these are becoming less about ensuring quality and more about promoting the status quo and protecting players in the industry. The great threat is if we do not fix this area, people who are more inclined to skills than qualification will move away from a qualifications network and stifle the pathway of growth and development for universities. There is a role for some accreditation groups, but it has moved so far to the next level that it is now creating a pause in education innovation and development in this nation.

Q21.

4 - How can providers, governments and stakeholders work together to achieve diversification opportunities (for example of disciplines, source countries, study destinations and delivery models)? [limit to 500 words]

Over the past decade, government has continued to impose more and more restriction on education providers. There is always room for greater collaboration, particularly offshore as education is a great soft diplomacy vehicle for government. However, as shown with the recent foreign interference bill, whilst there is value in some of which the government is doing, there is also very restrictive practice being put into place which will constrain universities from expanding their research growth and delivery. Lack of good communication to requests for clarity from the sector have left a chasm of distrust between the sector and government. Perhaps, when the government learns to trust the sector more there will be better collaboration in the future and joint opportunity that will benefit both the sector and the nation as a whole.

Q9.

5 - What are the necessary skills for the future that students should be prepared for? [limit to 500 words]

This is actually a very broad question and is not well served with a short 500 word answer. Some typical response, which need expansion, include, better ability to think, question, make decisions, communicate in a complex communication world, data evaluation etc. but skills differ by sector and by stream of expertise. Students need to be geared for futures which will change more rapidly than previous generations, and education has to provide the basis for students identifying the need and opportunity to pivot as skillsets change over time.

Q10.

5.1 - How can Australia improve employability outcomes for international students, ensuring students have the necessary the skills to compete in a globally competitive labour market? [limit to 500 words]

Better communication for a start. The government has lead a charge in pushing the view that universities are too focussed on international education as a cash cow, which is wrong. It has a perverse effect on demonstrating that students who come here are inferior in skill sets rather than very high quality performers and assets which can benefit companies. Getting the rhetoric correct from day one would help create greater work opportunity and internship opportunity for students who come to Australia to study. Where students get an opportunity to work in Australian companies they build skills which can be translated well when they return home, much like when we train high level professionals and government officials and they return to their home countries they take skills back which influence future student migration to Australia. We are in a very competitive global market, however, and we need to appreciate that it is a buyers market to which we have limited influence if we cannot offer work opportunity back in Australia that mirrors international competition.

Q11.

6 - How do we create a uniquely Australian education experience? [limit to 500 words]

Q12.

6.1 - What is our value proposition for both international and domestic students? [limit to 500 words]

Our value proposition is quality education, safety and security in our country and secure work opportunity. We need to be careful about over thinking this one because it is a narrow margin between what we provide as a value proposition to that of Canada, USA and UK, which are similar. Our relatively secure boundaries and location is a major virtue for students, as well as lifestyle (based on the feedback we regularly get in market with students). They are narrow propositions though that countries like Canada are beating simply by providing extended work visas and even permanent residency options.

Q13.

6.2 - How do we offer an Australian education experience while complementing the value of Australian offshore and online education? [limit to 500 words]

The value is in the education and less in the Aussie experience. If we are selling offshore we cannot genuinely sell an aussie experience, but we can sell an aussie education experience and a different perspective on learning. That can also be a challenge when selling into countries which have very different approaches to learning. The consequence is online may not always be as successful for markets which are not tuned to it and it is not a strong value proposition at this point. A note of caution who be urged here. The question itself tends to suggest a shallow understanding of international markets and that should provide some concern in the way we look to the value of education in offshore markets.

Q14.

7 - What else should the Council for International Education and the Australian Government consider in developing a new strategy? [limit to 500 words]

Q15.

8 - Do you have any additional comments or feedback to share?

A more detailed submission will be provided from ██████████ in due course. It should be noted the views of this submission are a personal submission based on my experience over the past decade across international markets.

Q19.

If you wish to upload a document to support your submission, including a document answering the discussion questions, please upload it here.

Q16.

Do you give the Department of Education, Skills and Employment permission to publish your submission on its website? *

- Yes – publish my submission with my name
- Yes – but keep my name anonymous
- No – don't publish my submission