



International Branch
Higher Education, Research and International
Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE)

via: education-ies@dese.gov.au

17 May 2021

Dear DESE,

Re: Australian Strategy for International Education 2021 - 2030

University of Canberra welcomes the Department's consultation on a new Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030. We refer to the consultation paper *Connected, Creative, Caring: Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030* and the webinars facilitated by the Department.

We are a member of Universities Australia and support the position set out in Universities Australia's submission on this matter. University of Canberra has participated in discussions through membership of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor International group within Universities Australia.

University of Canberra is also a member of the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA). The University has participated in the development of the IEAA submission and supports the position set out on this matter.

There is clearly the need to consider international education in two phases: first the initial COVID-19 recovery as we seek to re-establish the place of Australian education in the broader international education economy, and then the broader framework for the next decade in which we seek to further improve Australia's reputation as a global leader in international education while identifying opportunities for growth and sustainability.

In considering the first and immediate phase, we join others in calling on the Government to pursue the return of international students as soon as it is safe to do so. Further, we call on the Government to support international students currently in Australia who are unable to return to their home countries. Finally, we recognise the strategic reputation of the international education sector and the impact of both closed and open borders.

In considering the broader and ongoing international education framework, the University strongly supports discussion within the higher education sector around broad themes.



The **value proposition for international students in Australia** is a unique combination of:

- the in-country immersive 'Australian experience', providing students' exposure to new understandings of society, culture, and place;
- the strength of the relationships and networks they build while they are here, with their institutions, their peers, their employers and the with the broader Australian community;
- the high-quality teaching and learning environment and the currency of Australian qualifications globally;
- career readiness - including embedded work-integrated learning and industry experience as a core component of many university degrees; and
- post-study work rights.

There is an emerging need to recognise and strengthen **career readiness and graduate outcomes** as they relate to international students. There is a current focus on industry engagement and work-integrated learning for domestic higher education students in Australia and there is considerable scope to make this a more distinctive feature of the international student experience.

The University of Canberra suggests the need for a separate focus on 'career readiness' for international higher education students in Australia. This would take into account skills and professional accreditation as well as industry placements and work-integrated learning. Tracking performance such as graduate outcomes would be beneficial to both students and the sector.

The University of Canberra would like to see further support for universities in delivering embedded work-integrated learning opportunities for international students to further enhance their career outcomes post-study.

Australia could be known for quality career experience along with quality teaching and learning. This lends itself to further discussions around tax incentives for industry and alignment with exports and trade.

The University sees **mobility and cross-cultural exchange** as complementing international education. International education has long contributed to soft diplomacy in Australia and the benefits of exchange both within and without are enormous. Focusing on Australia's place within the broader Asia-Pacific also opens many opportunities to connect to education and research partner and industry beyond our borders. We welcome support from Government in expanding multilateral partnerships that connect international students in the broader region.

In keeping with this suggestion, the University of Canberra sees opportunity for the New Colombo plan to be reviewed and expanded to include other key regions, including closer alignment with TNE partners. The Erasmus+ programme is a best practice example.

The Australian Government should improve ways for international students to have genuine engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, including language and cultural exchange.



In addition to these themes, University of Canberra specifically recommends:

- 1. That the Australian Government takes a whole-of-government and enhanced leadership role in coordinating and supporting international education, recognises barriers for providers and students, and works with the sector on high level solutions.**

This includes high level vision and goal setting for the sector, monitoring and advising on the current and emerging geopolitical pressures on international education.

There is also the need for more comprehensive and practical advice and support around international education activities. This includes not only market research and analysis, but advice around international business arrangements and tax, infrastructure, and regulatory barriers. There is a need for shared provider activities and professional development in intercultural communication.

- 2. The establishment of a Centre of Excellence for International Education in Australia with specific remit to support digitisation of Australian education.**

The University recognises that the global education environment may shift radically as a result of COVID-19. Even as economic and social recovery occurs, it is important that education sectors and governments capitalise the innovation and change that has occurred in response to the crisis. In addition, there is a need to consider how we make international education more accessible and sustainable for populations in emerging economies and look for delivery methods that highlight the value add of Australian education.

One of the defining successes for many Australian universities was how quickly they were able to mobilise their resources to move to fully online delivery of their programs to ensure the continuation of students' studies. This meant that no students were left behind. This was critical to the continuation of universities' core business. Significant innovation occurred to expand upon the capabilities of virtual learning environments and to create immersive, stimulating, and authentic learning experiences that equalled those in the classroom.

Though fully digital education is not going to be a substitute for face-to-face instruction for many cohorts, there is significant opportunity in expanding mixed mode delivery or considering best practice in delivery of online education to international students who wish to remain offshore.

A Centre of Excellence focused on digital education to international students, which might form part of existing Austrade or university networks, is one such way that the Government may continue to support providers. The focus would also be on driving innovation in digital education to capitalise on Australia's excellence in this space, marketing this as a defining characteristic of an Australian education.



Please contact Ms Fiona Sutherland Fiona.Sutherland@canberra.edu.au if you have any questions regarding our submission.

Yours sincerely,

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