

## Australian Strategy for International Education 2021-2030

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### UWA response

The University of Western Australia (UWA) is pleased to see the development of a new national strategy for international education. In our response to the consultation paper we want to highlight the importance of looking beyond the current Coronavirus crisis, and also to encourage the Department to be mindful when writing the strategy of the practical limits of such a document.

A national strategy for international education needs to be more than a description of the current and future international education environment and what Australia's international education providers would routinely be doing without the existence of a strategy. Equally, measures of success for the strategy need to be measures of things which can reasonably be attributed to it.

A national strategy needs to recognise that the needs and goals of individual education providers are not necessarily the same as the needs and goals of the Australian Government, and to focus on what *additional actions* the Australian Government in particular will take to achieve strategic priorities. This primarily means policy settings and also the provision and location of offices with a remit to promote and assist with international education. It would be helpful if the strategy committed the Australian Government Departments and the State and Territory Governments to a coordinated approach to both these elements. Government also has a role to play in explaining to Australians the various benefits of international education, including the creation of jobs outside the sector.

### Research

The strategy should recognise that it is in the national interest to significantly align Australian research to the rapid increase in research and innovation productivity in Asia, and the importance in the period 2021-2030 of building networks and demonstrating Australian capability in anticipation of continued growth in Asian innovation and Asian economies beyond this timeframe.

This connects to the work of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet on Critical Technologies, i.e. those technologies which are fundamental to a prosperous and resilient Australia. The development and supply of these critical technologies is an international endeavour with national consequences, and Australia risks being left behind if it does not have deep and enduring research and innovation links with Asian countries.

The German Centres for Research and Innovation (DWIH) is a model that the Australian Government should consider. DWIH Centres in five major international cities link German industry and research institutes with their counterparts in the host countries, including funders and start-ups.

### Teaching

The consultation makes note of the widely predicted shift towards more online learning. Education providers will make their own market-based decisions on if and how to expand into this market.

A national strategy could look at what factors outside the powers of individual providers were instrumental in the growth of Australian international education since the early 1990s, and consider which of these factors can be repeated to drive growth in online provision.

Migration outcomes have been important, and the Australian Government could provide targeted migration outcomes for fully online learners. The Australian Government could also assist providers

by working to ensure home country and other country recognition of Australian qualifications earned online by overseas students.

### Mobility

The New Colombo Plan has been a great success in terms not only of mobility experiences for Australian students, but also as a demonstration that the wise investment by Government of public money can result in outcomes in the national interest, and outcomes that would not have been achieved without that government investment.

During the Coronavirus crisis, some NCP programs have continued as online programs. This is an area in which the Government could consider further investment. In addition to allowing the continuation of online NCP programs, the Government could fund pilot projects for universities and mobility consortia to explore technological and pedagogical methods to expand online mobility programs to more Australian students in the most cost-effective and pedagogically sound manner.

An additional benefit of online mobility programs is that they have a low environmental impact and reduced carbon footprint, compared to traditional mobility programs, thereby playing a small part in helping Australia meet its commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Professor Amit Chakma  
Vice-Chancellor

### Contact for further information

Tayyeb Shah  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Global Partnerships  
tayyeb.shah@uwa.edu.au