Q20.

Australian Strategy for International Education consultation submission

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Q1. Name *

Aleem Ali

Q2. Organisation *

Welcoming Australia

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

CEO

Q4. Contact email address *

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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]

Welcoming and inclusion is the most significant opportunity for Universities to revitalise international education in Australia. In January 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic, Scanlon Foundation Research Institute - https://scanloninstitute.org.au/ - published a narrative exploring the rapidly-shifting context in which students from the People's Republic of China (PRC) come to Australia (https://scanloninstitute.org.au/publication/australias-chinese-lesson-nations-urgent-need-engage-international-students-china). What emerges is a near-unanimous and increasingly urgent case that it is in Australia's political, economic and social interests to be better hosts to Chinese international students than it has been to date. Since the pandemic, the urgency 'to be better hosts' has only heightened. The upsurge of global Black Lives Matter protests and the subsequent saturation of antiracism activism on social media, along with new and repeated media reports of incidents of racial profiling and violence toward First Nations peoples by police, has invigorated Aboriginal Deaths in Custody activism and heightened the Australian public's concern about structural racism. The JobKeeper and JobSeeker support measures, implemented by the Federal Government to minimise the economic impact of COVID-19 excluded not only Universities but more than 1.1 million people in Australia, including international students, people seeking asylum, and workers on temporary visas. Consequently, State Government agencies, Local Councils, community organisations and universities have been scrambling to meet the overwhelming number of requests for emergency food and financial support to ensure that nobody is left behind. Beyond the immediate impact on people's lives, this also represents a significant risk to Australia's international reputation. Numerous Australian Universities are at the leading edge of research, debate and thought leadership in areas such as population; migration; social cohesion; economic participation; diversity; and, inclusion. However, as with any large and complex institution, Universities can lack the frameworks and resources to apply such knowledge and academic rigour to internal practice. What is required, is a resourced network to inspire and support universities to develop a culture and practice of welcome and inclusion within their institutions, in the community, and across the Australian higher education sector.

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]

QILT and the student experience survey offers significant data and insight into the how Universities are tracking in this space. However, what is also required is a comprehensive framework that enables a higher education institution to: • Increase the impact of cultural diversity and inclusion initiatives for the University and its community; • develop a positive and welcoming reputation; • provide a mechanism to plan for learning, improvement and change; and, • assess progress over time. Building on the success and learnings of Welcoming Cities Standard - https://welcomingcities.org.au/the-standard/ - and Welcoming Clubs - https://welcoming.org.au/initiatives/welcoming-clubs/ - Welcoming Australia is working with key University representatives, QILT and the broader sector to establish the Welcoming Universities Standard and network. Welcoming Universities will become providers of choice to both domestic and international students. This model brings rigour to cultural diversity and inclusion in a similar manner to already accredited areas of diversity, such as gender.

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

The Federal Government's response to international border closures and the slowed program of COVID-19 vaccine rollout will have a detrimental impact on international education and student numbers. It will be incumbent on cities such as Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, who have actively worked to attract and support international students/education, and their respective state governments to bridge this gap. Not only will Australian Universities need to be seen and promoted as desirable and leading options for international education so too will the communities in which they reside. Initiatives such as Welcoming Cities play a key role in ensuring that receiving communities are prepared and international students can develop a sense of belonging.

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]

In addition to setting the global standard for cultural diversity and inclusion policy and practice in higher education; shared learning and access to evidence-based research, resources, policies and case studies, will be vital.

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]

Q9.
5 - What are the necessary skills for the future that students should be prepared for? [limit to 500 words]

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]

The flagged lifting of a cap on working hours for international students will help to address some of the barriers. However, while it is much broader that the scope of international education, a national anti-racism strategy would begin to address some of the systemic issues in relation to 'employability'.

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]

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]

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?

It's our opinion and observation that the vitality of higher eduction in this country is under threat. Both from external events outside of our control but also policy ideas and intent. Our intent is that Welcoming Universities will diminish those threats by setting the standard and providing a clear approach to ensure the relevance and responsiveness of Universities, such that they can thrive.

Q19.
If you wish to upload a documentto support your submission, including a document answering the discussionquestions, 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
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