

Inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors

12 December 2022

The Australian Technology Network of Universities welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors. This submission will focus on Australia's international education sector.

ATN footprint

ATN currently teach nearly 90,000 of Australia's 490,000 international students. At the pre-pandemic peak (in 2019) ATN taught almost 100,000 of 522,000 students. Our largest source markets are China, Vietnam, India, Singapore and Malaysia and we have students from 176 other countries. All our international students are valuable members of our communities.

ATN is a leader in innovative international education through digital delivery and transnational education – 36 per cent of ATN international students study offshore (Curtin 59 per cent; Deakin 12 per cent; RMIT 52 per cent; Newcastle 26 per cent; UniSA 15 per cent and UTS 15 per cent).

Areas of consideration

Contribution of international students: It is important to state that international students are a vital contributor to Australia. They bridge cultures and countries, enrich the student experience for all through cultural exchange and deepen our understanding of our Asia-Pacific neighbours and their rich history. These people-to-people links have had an enduring impact on Australian communities since the advent of the original Colombo Plan.

Student experience: The experience international students have while in Australia will be a key element in driving our recovery, contributing to maintaining our reputation for high quality education. ATN universities place student experience and engagement with students at the centre of their activities.

Flexibility: COVID brought many challenges to Australia's universities, particularly in course delivery. ATN universities took the opportunity to think creatively and provide innovative solutions for delivery in both offshore and online modes. We encourage the Government to keep and embrace the flexibility of the regulatory settings that allowed innovation to flourish.

Student choice: International student choice should remain at the forefront of any changes to Australia's successful international education sector. We encourage flexibility of student choice to allow for online and offshore study options as appropriate. ATN Universities offer equivalent courses at many global campuses, including online campuses. With domestic students able to move between on-campus, online and offshore delivery, we should be offering international students the same variety of choices.

Pathway to migration: ATN has consistently advocated for an effective system that combines part-time work while studying, post-study work rights and permanent migration. We should alleviate the administrative and cost barriers for employers, simplify the sponsorship process and encourage greater use of work-integrated learning options. Creating an effective, tangible and realistic pathway from student visa, to graduate visa and then to permanent resident visa will help attract, build and retain talent and meet Australia's future skills needs.

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Australia's international education sector

Australian universities, through Australia's international education sector, provide a critical pillar that supports Australia's development, diplomatic, trade and investment effort.

COVID-19 has been the most significant disruptor to Australia's international education sector in recent memory. There has never been a more important time to build a resilient international education sector by incorporating opportunities to learn and grow through overseas experiences that build on Australia's social enterprise.

Australia has been so successful in international education because of its quality education offerings, and because students can study at globally-recognised universities, gain work experience while they study and live in a safe and multicultural society, enjoy a high standard of living, and have the opportunity to work or do further study in Australia after they graduate.

As technology develops and becomes more integrated in the way students learn, a greater acknowledgement of the opportunities that blended learning provides while balancing international students' needs for human interaction must be at the centre of what will make up a unique Australian experience.

The value proposition for Australian education is made up of two things:

- Teaching and learning – high quality, recognised qualifications; and
- Experience – the environment, culture and connections students make whilst they are studying.

This value proposition is offered to all students who come into contact with an Australian provider, whether that is face to face in Australia, in the online space offered by an Australian provider or in a transnational location offered by an Australian provider.

If we embrace the opportunity to diversify education delivery models and reach new markets around the world, we need to ensure the continued quality of these offerings and that these qualifications will be recognised around the world. This will require continued efforts from government to advocate for the recognition of qualifications delivered partially or wholly online.

Challenges

Competitor countries

UK and Canada gained a temporary advantage through their initial approach to the challenges the pandemic presented. Neither country closed their international borders for significant periods to the rest of the world. Canada offered international students access to financial assistance through the pandemic.

This starkly contrasts with the approach taken by the Morrison Government. Student sentiment on the challenges presented by the pandemic set out in IEAA paper *Student voices: international students' experiences during COVID-19* directly referenced the Prime Minister's message that temporary residents experiencing hardship should return home.

In addition, student financial hardship was not addressed by the Federal Government, with State and Territory Governments as well as universities addressing this shortfall through direct financial assistance. ATN universities spent over \$100m on support for students undergoing hardship over the last three years.

This was significant because:

- Two thirds of international students who had been working in Australia prior to the pandemic lost their jobs – compared with only 17 per cent of domestic students¹
- 28 per cent of international students had to change their accommodation due to financial pressures and the need to move into more affordable accommodation.²

Online innovations in education delivery

The entire global international education sector faced the unique challenge of its students not being able to learn the way they were used to by placing courses wholly online.

ATN Universities had already begun the transition of placing many materials online to meet the needs of international students from China who could not make it to Australia in early 2020. Our universities ramped up these efforts in response to the increasing restrictions as COVID-19 became more widespread within our community.

Whilst these steps were taken to ensure online course delivery, our universities also embraced their broader role as safe, secure and accessible places for all their students, keeping open libraries, computer labs, clinics and student services centres for as long as was feasible.

ATN examples of best practice in online innovations

Curtin University

Talk to Me – mental health MOOC

In April 2020, Curtin launched the Talk to Me: Improving mental health and suicide prevention in young adults course, developed by Curtin University in collaboration with the Klinikum Aschaffenburg-Alzenau in Germany. It was designed for students, parents, teachers, coaches and health professionals and provides learners with strategies to help improve the mental health of young persons in their life, enables them to recognise concerning behaviours and feel better prepared to have conversations about their mental health.

International enrolments (through Curtin international students) reached 39,411 in 2020 and now total over 53,000. 'Talk to Me' has been recognised as a program of excellence and was featured at the 2021 Royal College of Psychiatry (UK) conference. The content of the program was also picked up by several international universities, including Iceland University and Singapore National University. The program was recently highlighted at Curtin University Research Rumble, and the Festival of Learning, and has won a Universities Australia award. 'Talk to Me' continues to run and was also translated into German in October 2022.

¹ Student voices – International students experiences during COVID-19, IEAA, 2021

² Ibid

Deakin University

The End of Unit Assessment Project was established at Deakin University in 2022 to bring together various streams of assessment related work occurring Deakin over the previous few years. The project aimed to reimagine assessment practices to support our distinctive model of digital education offering students authentic, real-world learning and assessment experiences that prepare them for life and employment in a post-COVID world.

Specifically, the End of Unit Assessment (EoUA) Project sought to transform assessment design and delivery to support the transition away from exams to more authentic and inclusive digital assessments, while also establishing a scalable and sustainable process for delivering supervised exams online where necessary.

As a result of the project, there has been a significant shift in culture and understanding of authentic and inclusive online assessment design; with new forms of assessments developed that allow students access to resources that would be appropriate if the task were completed in the workplace, and the ability to choose when to start and finish their assessment within a set 24 hour period to fit around commitments outside of university study.

RMIT University

In response to border closures and COVID-19 barriers, RMIT designed hybrid models of learning and teaching consisting of a spurt of onshore delivery. To accommodate students who have had to stay or who remain offshore, RMIT provided flexible and innovative solutions of study. For example, two year Master programs adapted to be delivered with one year in-country with a partner institution and one year in Melbourne. This model features digital learning as a core part of the student experience, using a blended learning approach with a mix of face-to-face and online activities to bridge between onshore and offshore experiences. The model has been well-received by target countries such as China. While this innovation came about due to border closures, its proven value offers opportunities beyond that.

The University of Newcastle

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Newcastle's staff had a very personal engagement with students and had not embraced education technology like many others; the transformation which occurred in the early months of the pandemic was truly remarkable. The commitment to move delivery and interaction with students to a 'study from home' mode from Semester 1 2020 was absolute.

It was identified early in the transition to remote learning that there was a gap in communication of what was expected from students whilst studying in this mode. The Learning Design and Teaching Innovation team at the University were able to establish a Blackboard banner tool which developed into a weekly Study Planner within two weeks. The Study Planner allowed staff to enter the details of the content students needed to engage with, the tasks they were required to complete and any assessments due that week. The Study Planner was incredibly successful, both as a quality assurance tool and as an effective means of communicating course expectations to students.

The University's students appreciated the efforts of the staff and demonstrated a generous level of patience when things did not work perfectly. A pulse check survey of students in June (three months after students stopped coming to campus) produced a remarkably positive response from students, contrary to the worries of some staff colleagues, with a high number of students identifying the Study Planner as the best outcome of the University's COVID-19 response.

University of South Australia

Digital Engagement with prospective students

- While Australian borders were closed and international students were not able to physically arrive in Adelaide to commence their studies, UniSA created the Start Online, Transfer to On-Campus Later campaign, presenting clear and tangible solutions to help students keep their dream of studying overseas alive. The campaign was marketed in 13 countries through a variety of channels, to over 60,000 prospects, as a way to inform and attract international students through external offshore online studies. At the back end, the campaign involved detailed course-mapping with Academic Units, greater interrogation of market intelligence and data, the creation of bespoke study plans to be re-issued to thousands of offer-holders, and an expansion from two to four intakes per annum. The campaign was a success right from the start with high traffic to our campaign landing page (118,678 unique page views) and a high number of applications continuing to flow through despite border uncertainty.
- Tied in with the Start Online, Transfer to On-Campus Later campaign, and in response to the need for a virtual open day for prospective international students, UniSA International created and facilitated Hey UniSA in Sept 2020. What was planned to be a one-off event has turned into a continuously improving twice-yearly regular event due to demand and the benefits for both prospective students the University. Five Hey UniSA events have been held to date, ranging from 2-5 days, with 16,359 overall registrations, 55 live sessions run by UniSA staff and invited guests (with 12,415 students registered), and just under 4,000 students registered to participate in one-on-one counselling sessions.
- This virtual engagement with prospective students has resulted thousands of new applications and offers to students considering studying at UniSA. It also had the unforeseen benefit of facilitating our institution to become better collaborators during a time of crisis, showing growth in agility and flexibility, and becoming more student-oriented than ever, putting us in good stead for the years ahead.

Virtual student mobility

- During the COVID-19 pandemic and closed borders, UniSA maintained linkages with our international mobility partners and established new opportunities for our students to engage in virtual mobility.
- UniSA engaged in virtual mobility through 17 unique opportunities supporting 155 students, across 19 different countries, virtually: Malaysia, Thailand, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Fiji, USA, Brunei, India, Nepal, Vietnam, Indonesia, China, France, Germany, Italy, South Korea, Canada, Austria. These opportunities included short term exchanges, independent short-term study, and University as well as third-party lead Study Tours
- These opportunities provided a benefit of engaging those not normally about to participate in a physical student mobility program, for financial or physical limitations reasons. The virtually delivered programs have been a particularly good fit for UniSA Online students, who are already accustomed to online study.
- The University intends to continue to deliver and facilitate a small number of virtual mobility programs even after the return to in-country program delivery. Regardless of a predicted decline in Government funding to support virtually delivered programs, virtual programs will still be offered by a select number of exchange partners and Mobility Experience Providers.

University of Technology Sydney

Offshore Learning Centre

Many students who were unable to travel to Sydney have had to start or continue their studies online, while those in Sydney transitioned to online learning.

With the support of education partners, UTS established physical learning spaces to support online learning for our students based overseas in China.

The UTS Offshore Learning Centres provide:

- face-to-face contact with learning facilitators to help review Canvas teaching sessions and learning materials
- individual face-to-face consultations to support academic and learning needs
- study sessions with other students at the centre in the same discipline
- regular social activities with other students at the centre
- guidance on how to access UTS services and UTS clubs and societies online
- access to study spaces and modern facilities.

UTS also set up an online learning portal that houses go-to resources to support students with online study.

ATN examples of best practice in student experience

ATN advocates that an 'ideal' student experience achieves a balance between the needs and requirements of international students, which have typically targeted on-campus, face-to-face learning and engagement, with the needs of domestic students that have typically targeted a more blended model of online learning and face-to-face learning and engagement.

Curtin University

One of the most successful initiatives conducted at Curtin has been the International Arrivals Working Group. This team comprises colleagues from across the university to support offshore students delayed in returning to Australia. The cross-discipline team ensured a diverse program of support from home country to Curtin with activities and services available throughout the semester, irrespective of the location of the student.

In addition, during COVID-19 it was recognised that stronger partnerships were needed to ensure the sharing of programs, services and best practice between Curtin's Australian and Global campuses. Considerable effort has been undertaken to ensure the focus remains on building connections across Curtin's global campuses so that students have an exemplary experience no matter where they are studying.

Deakin University

Deakin offers specialist support for international students on every campus. The Student Central division can provide general support to international students during their studies, as well as offer advice on:

- adjusting to life in Australia and studying at Deakin
- getting a new CoE (Confirmation of Enrolment) or visa
- visa conditions relating to enrolment requirements
- work restrictions
- legal advice and support
- intermission
- leave of absence approval.

Specialist support is also available to under-18 students.

Students helping students

Deakin also has student mentors available to help international students with academic, practical and social matters as part of Deakin's Students Helping Students program. Plus, many student mentors are international students themselves!

RMIT University

RMIT has offered a range of initiatives to facilitate social connection and belonging (to RMIT, their cohort and to Melbourne) including participation in Melbourne International Student Week, swimming lessons, food festivals, welcome events, on-campus drop-in spaces.

Impact includes:

- 814 students attended engagement events
- 91 per cent satisfaction
- 78 per cent made a new connection
- 88 per cent feel a sense of belonging to RMIT
- 82 per cent feel more connected to Melbourne.

What worked particularly well was:

- The development of tailored workshops including navigating the Australian workplace culture, the Australian resume, exploitation in the workplace
- One-on-one career counselling for international students
- The co-delivery of skills-based sessions with our industry partners, many of who came along with tangible job opportunities
- Training for work-ready certifications e.g., Responsible Serving alcohol, Food Safety training, often piggy-backed with employer skills sessions and/or recruitment drives
- Site tours to industry partners with a focus on building social capital by connecting students to industry and cultural capital, by exposing students to the Aust workplace culture.
- International student careers fair and part-time/causal work fairs
- Working directly with our industry partners to advocate for these students and to create job opportunities. 'Converting' employers to consider INTON students when posting roles

The University of Newcastle

In 2021 the University of Newcastle proposed and established an Overseas Learning Centre (OLC) in partnership with Northeastern University (NEUQ) in the regional seaside city of Qinhuangdao, 300km east of Beijing, China. The University contracted Australian Education Management Group (AEMG) to provide management and operations services for the centre.

An Offshore Learning Centre (OLC) is a teaching arrangement in which students attend online classes provided by the University while physically present on the campus of a university in China and receiving in-person learning and pastoral care support from a contracted service provider. Students are admitted and enrolled with the University following the same procedures as any other student in online mode and all teaching and assessment is conducted by the University. The provider's services are limited to purely non-academic related services.

The OLC environment meant that students were able to study with a peer cohort and enjoy access to campus facilities typical of university-level students in China. In addition, students received learning support from PhD-qualified English-speaking staff (learning facilitators), typically contracted to deliver 4 hours of in-class contact per subject per week.

The opportunity to study at the OLC was widely welcomed by students in China with over 140 students attending an introductory webinar in mid-August 2021 and 40 students going on to submit applications. After screening for eligibility, 25 students were selected and arrived at the OLC site by early September.

The OLC model was replicated for intakes across 2021 and 2022 and was a great success in terms of providing an on-campus experience to students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

University of South Australia

Student Wellbeing Call Campaign

- In June 2020, as South Australia went into lockdown and the universities transitioned to online delivery, student support staff commenced a student wellbeing call campaign to check in with all students (domestic and international) and, where necessary, refer students on to relevant support services.
- As part of this campaign, International Student Advisors and International Student Ambassadors made calls to over 5,000 commencing and continuing international students. From these, 293 students (19 per cent) were referred to one or more support services, including financial assistance, counselling support, learning advice, job assistance, and academic assistance, with financial assistance being the most common assistance required (86 per cent of all assistance requested).
- From June 2020 to June 2022 this calling campaign continued for commencing international students on a cohort basis, with over 20,000 students contacted to end of year 2021. The peer-to-peer contact was the most well received element of this program.
- From Semester 2 2022 onwards, this wellbeing campaign will continue on an ongoing basis for all commencing international students, with appropriately trained current international students contacting new commencers initially and a referral process for support services.

Student Hardship Fund

- In March 2020, as Australian international borders closed and South Australian state borders closed, the University recognised the financial and emotional stress that this placed students under and established a \$10 million Student Hardship Fund.
- This was available for all international and domestic students to access to assist with challenges relating to job loss, studying from home, IT equipment issues, feelings of isolation or being overwhelmed by the global health pandemic, given the impact of COVID-19 closures around the country and the globe.
- During 2020, 99.96% of the \$10 million Student Hardship Fund was distributed to almost 4,500 students. An additional \$2 million in hardship funding from donations were provided to students in need during 2021 and 2022; funding is still available to students experiencing hardship.

University of Technology Sydney

UTS Buddy Program

UTS's HELPS buddy program matches international students with volunteers for conversation practice. The volunteers are UTS students and staff members. Most buddies get together for a chat once a week in English but some of them also exchange languages e.g. English/Mandarin. It's a great way to improve listening, conversation and pronunciation skills in an informal, Australian way!

The Buddy Program is available both online and on campus. An example of this is outlined below:

Ashley: "I really liked meeting with Philipp each week. At a time when COVID has limited students' ability to interact with the world, the buddy program made the world feel a little smaller and allowed us to get international exposure without even having to leave home! Each week I got an insight into life in Germany and have been able to learn all about the cultural differences that make our countries unique. We have really enjoyed laughing about our shared experiences and chatting about our hobbies and future aspirations. The thing that I have liked the most of all about this program is that I now have a new friend in Germany who I am sure that I can stay connected to in the future."

ATN examples of student support both academic support and wellbeing support

Curtin University

Student success supports students across the whole lifecycle from orientation to graduation and links students to volunteering activities, leadership programs and employment opportunities. This has been supplemented by the embedding of a career development learning framework across Curtin's curriculum to ensure all students are provided with career education tailored to their discipline area. This measure ensures that the whole international student cohort gains access to the development of important employability skills. Each faculty has a dedicated and tailored provision of support that also provides close links to work integrated learning.

Through the Earn While You Learn program, students are provided access to paid employment opportunities both during and post their time studying at Curtin.

Deakin University

Wellbeing Ambassadors

Wellbeing Ambassadors are actively involved in Deakin's health and wellbeing programs, including:

- promoting mental wellbeing, physical activity, healthy eating and sexual health
- helping students understand how and where to access Deakin's health and wellbeing programs and services
- co-creating, co-designing and helping to deliver health promotion programs and activities
- supporting student engagement in health promotion programs and activities.
- Wellbeing Ambassadors are empowered to influence what Deakin does with and for students, including the opportunity to lead and run programs.

Deakin's Wellbeing Ambassador program offers students valuable leadership and communication skills development. Student ambassadors promote Deakin's health and wellbeing initiatives, plan, design and deliver new health promotion activities. In return, Wellbeing Ambassadors benefit from professional development, training and on the job experience.

RMIT University

This year RMIT has developed and offered a range of new programs, specifically tailored to support international students' wellbeing. These programs have a key focus on providing pathways to connected care, and also on prevention. They take a proactive approach to reaching out to students to identify their specific needs and to connect them to what they need.

Outreach calls

These are made by international students to all of our international students to check in how they are going and connect them to relevant support across the university. Students have greatly appreciated the calls and post survey data indicates that 86 per cent have increased awareness of our services and know where to go to get help. 60 per cent of students' calls were connected to employability support (including finding a job, job applications and connecting to industry), 76 per cent wanted more opportunities to make friends and feel more connected and 18 per cent indicated they needed support with mental health.

Mental Health Peer Support Program

This program, in partnership with Orygen, has been developed in response to some of Orygen's research findings that international students are at increased risk of experiencing poor mental health and that there is often a stigma attached to seeking help. Our peer support team are international students who are trained to talk about a range of mental health and wellbeing topics in a relaxed and friendly peer-to-peer environment. So rather than a clinical setting, it may be over a visit to the zoo, or the national gallery or games nights, over a walk or coffee. Fundamental to the program, the peer workers have lived experience of being an international student and also of mental health recovery. The program aims to destigmatise mental health, to encourage students to seek help if needed and to not neglect their wellbeing. Impact includes: 228 students engaged in events, 392 in 1:1 engagement. 95 per cent satisfaction. 73 per cent of participants made a new connection, 81 per cent feel a sense of belonging to RMIT, 80 per cent feel more connected to Melbourne, 83 per cent helped to improve English skills, 88 per cent aware of RMIT's support services.

Strengths Coaching Program

This new program is based on the recognition that our international students arrive at uni with pre-existing skills and strengths to build on while they are studying (moving away from deficit perspective). The program helps students to develop their self-awareness of their personal strengths in order to reach their personal and professional goals. It's a combination of fun interactive workshops with personalised sessions with accredited coaches. Students join this program to develop their personal growth, to increase confidence, managed work-study-life balance, boost motivation, plan for their career. Pre and post program evaluation shows evidence of the impact of this program including greater awareness of strengths (61 per cent pre-program, 87 per cent post) and confidence in using them (59 per cent pre-program, 74 per cent post), improved confidence in navigating uni life (71 per cent pre-program, 88 per cent post).

The University of Newcastle

In late 2019, as the effects of the pandemic began to be felt, the University acknowledged the impact this would have on international students and formulated internal measures to support students who remained onshore.

COVID Hardship Support Fund

The university created a COVID Hardship Support Fund to provide emergency support for students who were unable to access government support, especially international students. A philanthropic campaign was launched to seek support from alumni and the local community. The fund received incredible support with more donors and more new donors than any other fundraising effort in the university's history. This support transformed the lives of those students at a time when they were most vulnerable and provided a new link between the local community and the university.

NUmates Summer Support Program

NUmates is a multi-faceted program, with key aims to mitigate isolation and provide consolidated information on internal and external support mechanisms and resources. Social isolation was mitigated by leveraging off an existing academic mentoring app, and repurposing that to create a platform for international students to connect with a 'buddy'. Buddies were recruited from the student body, University staff and members of the Newcastle community. Contact was by agreement of the student and their buddy. These interactions ranged from simple online check-ins and low-cost engagements (a walk at the beach, trip to a museum/gallery, free community events) through to more involved interactions such as Christmas lunch at the buddy's house or participation in large-group organised excursions.

The second component of the Summer Support Program was to provide a single source of easily accessible information on support resources. This included external resources, such as external foodbanks and emergency resources specific to international students, as well as 'Free and Fun' social opportunities in Newcastle, the Central Coast and Sydney (locations of our three onshore campuses). Internal resources included significant support from the University's Counselling & Psychological Services (CAPS).

University of South Australia

Support to students offshore

- While international borders were closed, the University assigned each individual student remaining offshore to a Campus Central staff member who performed regular check-ins, to cover both wellbeing and academic aspects. This were to ensure the students had access to support and were engaged appropriately in the university community. Catering to over 2300 students, student advisors made individual contact with each student twice per semester and were available every week for zoom drop-in sessions.
- From Semester 2 2020, the University provided online enrolment support sessions for students outside Australia and studying online. Every student was called, and assistance provided to ensure their enrolment was appropriate. This individual support was well received by the student population and will continue face to face on-campus for all students.

- The University provided a free 24/7 in-country counselling service in China and India to students restricted by international borders. The in-China service was available April to May 2020 in both Mandarin and English; the service in India was available May to July 2021 in both Hindi and English. Feedback from those students were that they saw this as good demonstration of support from the University.

Support for students transitioning to on-campus studies

- Given the length of time that students had to remain outside of Australia and possibly unable to utilise their English language skills, the University facilitated an English language transition program for commencing international students. This consisted of online modules to be completed while offshore, complemented by face-to-face sessions once the students arrived on-campus. This was well received by students with over 200 students registering for the program.
- Once students arrived back onshore, the University arranged a check-in meeting with their assigned Campus Central staff member, to ensure students were enrolled in internal classes, to check-in on their wellbeing and ensure they were prepared for on-campus study. In 2022 alone the University has had over 1600 students return to study onshore and utilise this service.

University of Technology Sydney

UTS Careers offers on-campus and online career support for students throughout their time at UTS, and for up to two years after course completion. Students are provided with a variety of tailored career support services, including events, resources, programs, and personalised career advice to help ensure students are equipped with the key employability skills and confidence they need to find career success.

While UTS encourage all students to visit UTS CareerHub, to discover the latest jobs, internships and graduate roles, both locally and overseas, there are also a range of other career platforms that are recommended to ensure international students are exposed to every opportunity available.

UTS use Going Global as a valuable resource with international students because it is the world's leading career resource for finding jobs and internships across town or around the world.

UTS also use Lockin U (previously known as LockIn China), which is the largest global job board and recruitment platform for talent in China and around the world. Lockin U has united the career centers of global universities, as well as thousands of Chinese Employers to provide career help to Chinese overseas students, as well as other international students and alumni.

Opportunities for international education to support strategic and foreign policy objectives

Pathway to skilled migration

Our current migration system is complex and inflexible, lacks a strategic rationale, and no longer meets our needs. As we transition away from the wide-ranging disruption generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a valuable opportunity to reconsider the purpose and operation of our migration system to ensure it is well-placed to address the challenges presented by our current and future environment.¹

As the Department of Home Affairs discussion paper so accurately describes above, there is a unique opportunity to overhaul Australia's migration system to ensure all parts operate effectively to their clearly articulated purpose.

¹ A migration system for Australia's future, Department of Home Affairs discussion paper, November 2022

ATN has consistently advocated for an effective system that combines part-time work while studying, post-study work rights and permanent migration. We should alleviate the administrative and cost barriers for employers and simplify the sponsorship process. Creating an effective, tangible and realistic pathway from student visa, to graduate visa and then to permanent visa will help attract, build and retain talent.

This will require a three-way partnership between universities, industry and government. This three-way partnership is a crucial part of the integration of international education, and delivering better outcomes for industry, students and the economy.

Universities and industry are ready to work in partnership with the Government to ensure the skilled migration pathways for students, graduates, and expert researchers are sustainable, adaptive and attuned to the needs of Australia's economy and society. This partnership can use existing and ready-made support structures that exist between universities and their students and graduates, and between employers and their staff. Together with the Government, we can balance the needs of Australian workers, migrants, businesses, regions and the workforce and create a system that is responsible, targeted, measured and responsive.

While studying in Australia, international students get an opportunity to practise and develop their skills in the workforce. We should encourage these students to blend part-time study and part-time employment (in a relevant occupation or industry) as a way of filling skills and labour shortages and helping students build a career and life in Australia.

Relevant part-time work should be linked to greater access to the Post-Study Work stream, which should then be linked with permanent visas through the Skill stream. There are several advantages to strengthening the links between student and graduate visas and permanent migration.

Graduates have:

- A qualification from a recognised and quality assured Australian provider that can be designed with Australia's skills needs in mind
- Developed primary, secondary and tertiary foundations and support networks which will aid their transition to permanent residency (e.g. links with their university, fellow graduates, alumni groups, internship employers)
- Deeper cultural understanding of Australia.

Graduates with a history of part-time work in a relevant occupation or industry are even more valuable to Australia. Graduates have a track record of education, employment and engagement with Australia and a strong understanding of the society and culture they are committing to when applying for permanent residency. This benefits both the graduate and Australia as the experience is more likely to be a productive and successful one.

International aid

ATN's submission to recent consultation on the development of Australia's international development policy recommended the link between international education and Australia's foreign policy be strengthened by:

1. Build a resilient international education sector by incorporating opportunities for students to learn and grow through overseas experiences that build on Australia's social enterprise throughout the region either through the New Colombo Plan or a re-established AsiaBound program
2. Embed entrepreneurialism capability throughout the Asia-Pacific region by harnessing the work Australian universities undertake with SME and industry partners
3. Incorporate a clearly articulated role for Australian universities into Australia's international development policy that caters to the lifelong learning needs and requirements of our Asia-Pacific neighbours including:
 - Enhance the academic quality and capability throughout the region by utilising networks of university partnerships through knowledge exchange
 - Improve academic capability through the Pacific by harnessing Australian consortia expertise in mentoring and leadership
4. Encourage continued progress of recognition of Australian qualifications throughout the Asia Pacific region and embark on recognising qualifications from countries within our region

Conclusion

Australia's international education sector has not rested on its laurels or high quality reputation despite dealing with the significant disruption caused by the pandemic. During this time significant work was undertaken by the sector to ensure that we built back this important sector, taking advantage of innovations that arose during this time. This success of this focus on quality and student experience is evident in the continued demand for an Australian education.

Further enquiries should be addressed to:

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