

Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH)

Draft National Strategy for International Education questionnaire

Please outline your (or your organisation's) interest in Australian international education. Add any other relevant content.

Response:

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) is the authoritative agency on research, teaching and learning for the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (ASSH) in Australian and New Zealand universities.

DASSH supports those within these institutions who have responsibility for the governance and management of research and teaching and learning in their universities. DASSH also supports those who aspire to these positions through a Network of Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) and a Network of Associate Deans (Research).

Australia has long been seen as a favoured destination for international students. The high quality of our education, and the appeal of the Australian lifestyle has attracted more than 2.5 million international students to our shores over the past half century.¹ As our largest services export, it is vital that Australia develops a strategy to not only protect this market against increasing competition from overseas markets, but to ensure we provide international students with a positive, enriching experience.

Australia has a vibrant and rich arts, social sciences and humanities (ASSH) teaching and research culture. In the most recent Times Higher Education World University Rankings, Australia had eight universities in the Top 100 universities for arts and humanities 2014-15², and seven universities in the Top 100 universities for social sciences 2014-15.³ The success of our programs has attracted a large number of international students to Australia to study our disciplines, making a significant part of our student intake.

In 2013, overseas enrolments in the Society and Culture and the Creative Arts fields of education made up 10.5% across undergraduate and postgraduate courses.⁴ Over the past few years, there has

¹ D Davis and B Mackintosh, *Making a difference: Australian international education*, Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2012, p. 92.

² Times Higher Education, Top 100 universities for arts and humanities 2014-15, <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2014-15/subject-ranking/subject/arts-and-humanities>. Accessed 19 May 2015.

³ Times Higher Education, Top 100 universities for social sciences 2014-15, <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2014-15/subject-ranking/subject/social-sciences>. Accessed 19 May 2015.

⁴ Society and Culture had 16,009 undergraduate and 10,687 postgraduate students enrolled in 2013. Creative Arts had 9,616 undergraduate and 2,381 postgraduate students enrolled in 2013. A total of 38,593 overseas students enrolled in Australian universities in these fields out of 367,481 total enrolments for 2013. Department of Education, Higher Education Statistics Data Cube (uCube), available from <https://highereducationstatistics.education.gov.au/>

been a steady decrease in the number of international students enrolled in our sector.⁵ The contribution international students to our sector is substantial, not just in terms of financial contributions, but also in regard to enhancing the learning experiences of all through their culture and lived experiences.

As the Asian continent becomes more “middle-class”, the demand for both services and culture/heritage will grow. There are significant opportunities here for Australian universities to capitalise on this demand. With our strong profile in the ASSH disciplines, we are in a prime position to not only attract students here, but to also build upon our soft diplomacy links in the region and contribute to this changing demand. For this reason it is important that members of the ASSH teaching and research community continue to be consulted throughout the development and implementation phases of the National Strategy.

The Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities (DASSH) strongly supports the Government’s decision to develop a National Strategy for International Education, and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on its development.

Does the vision statement in the draft strategy represent Australia’s aspirations for international education?

Response: While quite comprehensive, overall the draft strategy is more generic than Australia specific. Australia faces stiff competition from other English-speaking countries in North America, Europe and New Zealand for international students. In addition, a number of countries in Asia and the Middle East have started devoting resources to attracting foreign students.⁶ This has already had an impact on enrolment at Australian universities from Asia.

From 2009 to 2013, Australian exports to Asia decreased by nearly 20 percent.⁷ However, competitor countries have seen a marked increase in their number of international students. For example, in 2012-13, the international student population in the United States and Canada rose by 7.2⁸ and 6.7⁹ percent, respectively. A large proportion of the increase came from Asia.

In order for Australia to remain globally competitive, we need to cement our “brand awareness”. The Draft Strategy does not really accomplish this. It remains unclear how Australia’s specific brand is differentiated from that of Europe, New Zealand, North America and elsewhere.

⁵ Overseas enrolments made up 12.1% of total enrolments in Society and Culture and the Creative Arts in 2011, and 11.3% of total enrolments in 2012. Department of Education, Higher Education Statistics Data Cube (uCube), available from <https://highereducationstatistics.education.gov.au/>

⁶ *Draft National Strategy for International Education* (for consultation) April 2015, pp. 7-8.

⁷ Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne, Commissioned Dataset on Australia’s Services Trade, 2014.

⁸ Institute of International Education, United States (2014). *Open Doors Data*.

<http://www.iie.org/research-and-publications/open-doors/data>

⁹ Government of Canada (2014), *Preliminary Tables – Permanent and temporary residents 2013*.

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013-preliminary/07.asp>

Are any significant goals for international education not adequately covered?

Response: As stated in DASSH's comments on the draft strategy's vision statement, what is missing in the strategy is a clear vision for how Australia can differentiate itself from our competitors. Australia seems unable to match the financial investment for the sector that other countries have injected into their universities enabling international promotion and recruitment. We, therefore, have to look at more different and/or innovative engagements to compete. There is a need for Australia to establish some educational project/s collaborations that are totally different to those being offered elsewhere.

Australia also needs to be seen as having a desire to welcome international students and researchers for their intellectual and research capacity and drive, as opposed to their financial attributes. The Government needs to provide funding certainty for a quality higher education system. International students need to be reassured that they are not seen merely as a funding replacement for lack of Government support or from anticipated sector deregulation.

Can you identify the strategic actions which best support your goals for international education?

Response: There are three strategic actions outlined in the draft strategy that best support DASSH's goals for international education. The first is the strengthening of links between academic institutions and industry. These partnerships broaden scopes and opportunities for international students while studying in Australia. Through programs such as work-integrated learning, internships and industry placements, students are able to gain practical degree-specific work experience in Australia. Increasingly, this type of experience is influencing students' decision on where to study as it is seen as an "essential element of studying abroad", but is highly valued not only by students themselves, but also by employers both in Australia and internationally.¹⁰

The second strategic action is the aim to enhance student experience and satisfaction through support services and the quality of programs.

Making the Asia-Pacific region a priority in terms of marketing and students recruitment is the third strategic action. As the Asian middle class continues to expand, estimates place an increase from 500 million today to 3.2 billion by 2030,¹¹ Australian universities will be in a unique position, due to our global position, to tap into the growing demand for international educational experiences. With our top five source countries of international student enrolments in higher education all coming from Asia in 2014,¹² and enrolments from those markets dropping in recent years, Australia needs to maintain our position as the country of choice for Asian students.

¹⁰ *Draft National Strategy for International Education* (for consultation) April 2015, p. 41.

¹¹ PricewaterhouseCoopers (2014), *Passing Us By*, p. 10. <http://www.pwc.com/asia-practice/assets/Passing-us-by.pdf> Accessed 19 May 2015.

¹² See Figure H: Top five source countries international student enrolments by sector, 2014, *Draft National Strategy for International Education* (for consultation) April 2015, p. 60.

What are the best measures of success for international education?

Response: The best measures of success would be increased student enrolments from international students in Australian programs and increased research collaborations and partnerships between Australian researchers and their international counterparts.

While new inquiries and partnerships are welcomed and encouraged, it is the recommendations of Australian courses, programs, research partners via alumni, along with repeat “business” from governments and international organisations that best measures success. The repeat “business” is evidence of the quality of our programs, the value that the students, governments and international organisations place on the programs, the experience and the partnerships, and the ease of working with Australian universities.

What are some case studies that best illustrate Australia’s success? Please provide examples.

Response (Please include images where available):

The personal one-on-one accounts of a student or researcher’s experience of their time spent in Australian education and research should not be overlooked. The best way to illustrate Australia’s success is to use successful alumni for promotion and/or international engagement.

What would you like to see progressed as a priority for the strategy in the first year?

Response: In order for international education to succeed in Australia, strong partnerships and infrastructure have to be in place between Australia and our target overseas countries. A priority for DASSH in the first year would be useful grants and funding available to universities in order to create linkages with overseas institutions and to establish meaningful longstanding and mutually beneficial teaching and research alliances. Often the focus for international education is on students and student numbers. However, there is a lot of scope for increasing researching opportunities in the region and this should be explored further.

A barrier that many international students and researchers need to overcome is the complex admission processes and visa requirements to study and work in Australia. While DASSH fully supports that the Government needs to maintain immigration integrity and that we attract genuine students and researchers to our shores, the simplification and streamlining of the admission processes for international students and ensuring that Australia’s visa programme enables overseas researchers and academics to undertake research, teaching and professional development in Australian institutions is paramount.

Is there anything else you would like to raise that will help develop the final National Strategy for International Education?

Response: The National Strategy for International Education has far-reaching implications for stakeholders in the teaching, research, industry, and immigration sectors. To ensure a robust strategy and successful implementation, continued consultation with all parties is required at all stages of the strategy development and implementation.