

Appendix B

Submission template

Please note that the Department usually publishes and reserves the right to publish any written submission received and the names of persons making written submissions in the course of this consultation process.

If you consider that information in your submission should be treated as confidential, or if you wish to remain anonymous please clearly indicate this in your submission or in a cover note and provide reasons for your request.

The Australian Government reserves the right to accept or refuse a request to treat information as confidential and will use the criteria set out in the Department of Finance and Deregulation's Financial Management Guidance No. 3 on confidentiality in procurement, July 2007, as a guide when determining whether to accept a claim for confidentiality. Information relating to individuals will be protected under the *Privacy Act 1988*. Requests for access to such information will be dealt with under the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

The template reflects the terms of reference for the review and the issues identified in the issues paper. Please refer to the issues paper and terms of reference for more information.

A field for general comments has been included below for you to raise additional issues.

Written submissions are to be received by 30 October 2009 and sent by email to: esosreview@deewr.gov.au.

About you:

Institution / organisation

Name:

Sector:

Prepared by:

Contact details:

Student / individual

Name:

Institution / organisation:

Course / role:

Home Country:

Contact details:

Supporting the interests of students

- i. How can the quality and accessibility of reliable information be improved? What role can ESOS have in ensuring providers and their agents are held to account for supplying prospective and current international students with accurate and timely information?

Comments

This is a bit of a problem - although one I would say most universities struggle with on an international scale. When all a student has to go by are internet sites and the university's website, there will always be the risk that you end up at a university that doesn't live up to expectations.

Recommendation/s

Maybe there needs to be an independent body in Australia that gives out unaffiliated information and advice about Australian universities. That would also spur the unis themselves to be more competitive and forthcoming about what they offer.

- ii. How should the Australian Government and the international education sector protect international students if a provider closes? How should this be resourced?

Comments

Recommendation/s

- iii. Are different mechanisms needed to support international students to resolve complaints effectively? Are additional complaint mechanisms needed?

Comments

Not familiar with these processes.

Recommendation/s

- iv. Should an international student's ability to change their education provider be limited, if so in what way?

Comments

It shouldn't be! Particularly with the recognition that it's hard to know what you're getting yourself into from overseas, it's deterring to know that your option is "the Uni you pick from afar while never having been there in person" or deportation. It's a big decision and one that involves a huge financial commitment (in particular for international students) - there should be some amount of time where a proper assessment of what's really offered can happen and changes to study can be made without being penalized and losing money.

Recommendation/s

Delivering quality as the cornerstone of Australian education

- v. How can the intersection between ESOS and the underpinning education quality assurance frameworks be improved?

Comments

Quality, is, at least in my experience, a huge issue you should focus on. I was appalled to find out how many people in my masters classes are not prepared for it. And it's not just a few - there are significant numbers who should not, in my mind, have been admitted to a masters program at an English university. I am fully aware of the challenges of study in another language, but that doesn't negate the need for strict standards. Much time in my courses has been wasted going over things that should be learned in undergraduate programs; not only is this annoying for prepared students and the lecturer, but it significantly undermines the quality of the degree.

Further, I feel, and several European friends have also commented on the fact, that expectations here are lower than those at universities in the US and Europe. There seems to be a lot of hand-holding going on, and that's a shame because the potential here is great. In general professors are rightly held in high-regard, and the framework for an amazing experience exists. But the level needs to be significantly stepped up.

One really gets the feeling that international students are being over-admitted for the financial benefits they provide the school, and not because they are enhancing the academic program. It's somewhat standard that international students are charged more than local students, and get none of the government benefits and support that local students do; I could live with that. But then academic standards on offer must step up and match that financial burden. It's not fair to ask us to pay almost double the amount, with no support or benefits (we're even excluded from transport concessions - a major cost in a big city) and on top of that provide education which is not on par with what we'd get at home or elsewhere...

Recommendation/s

Enact more rigorous standards for admittance to (masters - I can't speak for bachelors) programs. Re-evaluate (as you've mentioned) the quality of English-language assessment. Perhaps even limit the numbers of international students from individual countries or in general, to ensure the "mix" that you are supposedly aiming for and to ensure that quality stays high.

- vi. Where do international students' needs differ to other students, such that additional or different regulation is required?

Comments

In all the ways that going abroad necessitates - we're learning an entirely new system - of housing, transport, perhaps education style, and have no support network close by.

The work allowance is comparatively generous in Australia, which is a life-saver, because of the cost of education and living (in Sydney anyway). Don't get rid of that.

Recommendation/s

Effective regulation

vii. Is ESOS compliance and enforcement adequate?

Comments

Recommendation/s

viii. Can risk be better addressed through strengthening registration requirements and/or better targeting of compliance and enforcement action? How else can risk be managed?

Comments

Recommendation/s

ix. What should be the balance between a focus on inputs and prescription versus outcomes?

Comments

I don't know what this is referring to... Some of these questions being clearer might result in better feedback.

Recommendation/s

x. How can ESOS better support Australia's student visa program?

Comments

Visas shouldn't be so dependent on school status. As you've pointed out - that can effect students on academic suspension.

What was more disturbing to me, however, was the information I recently got from the Faculty office at USyd. I wanted to enroll in an extra course this semester, purely out of interest in the subject. I was told it wasn't possible because my degree limited me to exactly 8 courses, and if I took 5 now I could only take 3 in the fall, which would be insufficient to maintain my full-time student visa. That's APPALLING. You are discouraging students from taking an active interest in learning, which is exactly the opposite of what should be happening at a university. I was so excited about all the courses on offer when I first arrived, until I realized I was severely limited in how much I would be allowed to take. I understand limiting the number to an extent - for workload and financial reasons - but wanting to take ONE extra course - during the year or over summer - should not put my visa in jeopardy.

Recommendation/s

Sustainability of the international education sector

- xi. What role should ESOS have in supporting the ongoing sustainability of the international education sector given the challenges it faces into the future?

Comments

High numbers of under-qualified international students may be sustaining the university now financially, but it will not be sustainable in the long run. Realize that you have dozens of students (already this year) that are going to go back to their home universities and home countries reporting that the standards were quite low and not equal to the costs of attending. That's going to hurt long-term.

Step up the academic quality by supporting the excellent professors and being more selective in your admissions, and while there may be an initial drop, you will eventually have higher quality students, higher expectations, and hopefully, in response, higher output and a better reputation internationally.

Recommendation/s

General Comments

This may sound largely negative; I just want to say that there are also many things I like about being in Sydney and about my courses - but those things I like are the reasons I am so frustrated with other aspects. Because the negatives detract in very real ways from the positives now, and in the potential that exists for the future.

And realize, I have a stake in the University's future as well, because it's where my degree is coming from. My degree isn't worth much if the reputation and quality of the university is seen negatively.

Thank you.