



# Australian TAFE Guide to Recruiting and Supporting International Students

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## Australian TAFE Guide to Recruiting and Supporting International Students

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TAFE Directors Australia acknowledges financial support from the Australian Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for the conducting of the ISB Survey and the development of this Guide.

# 1. Introduction

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This guide has been compiled using data from the TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) report titled 'Tracking the international student experience at Australian TAFE institutes.'

The report was commissioned by TDA in 2010 and supported by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to assess what international students at TAFE institutes think about their study and life experiences in Australia.

The electronic i-graduate survey (through the International Student Barometer ISB – Please see **Appendix A** for details) attracted 5,557 students or 30% of the sample.

Specifically the study sought to identify what international students viewed as 'important' and how satisfied they are with their experience. The study reviewed students' perceptions of four key experiences:

- > Arrival
- > Learning
- > Living
- > Student Support

Overall TAFE students were satisfied with their experience at Australian TAFE institutes with 84% of students expressing satisfaction. This is a high satisfaction rate of which TAFE institutes should be proud.

DEEWR conducted International Student Satisfaction Surveys in 2006 and 2007 and found an overall Vocational Education and Training (VET) satisfaction rate of 85%. While these scores are high, there is always room for improvement to ensure TAFE is the first choice for VET international students.

Australia enjoys an excellent reputation as a leading provider of quality education for international students in the VET sector. The aim of the research was to identify areas of good practice and those requiring further investment to ensure TAFE maintains and improves this global reputation in an increasingly competitive environment.

## 1.1 Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of this guide is to reflect on current TAFE best practice in recruiting and supporting international students.

It is intended for managers and teachers at institute level as an opportunity to reflect on the outcomes of the national report and to review practice at a local level to enhance established good practice.

Managers and teachers may not be able to change policy affecting international student satisfaction. They may however, be able to influence policy makers to make data driven decisions for continuous improvement.

The major challenge highlighted in the report is a case in point: there are relatively low levels of satisfaction for opportunities for work experience and paid employment but some institutes may not regard these services as core business.



The survey findings indicate students view these services as integral to their education experience. For some managers and teachers, only a policy or staffing change will allow them to better provide these services.

This guide is structured into three major sections:

1. Marketing TAFE
2. The Living and Working Experience
3. The Learning Experience

Each of the three sections has sub-sections where report data is analysed and implications and strategies for TAFE are suggested.

A checklist under each sub-section is provided for co-ordinators and managers to reflect on current practice and to identify any gaps.

## 2. Marketing TAFE

### Overview

This section covers marketing strategies for TAFE based on data from the 2010 International Student Barometer (ISB) report including:

- > marketing to student aspirations and expectations
- > pathways as focus for promotion
- > using the main influencing factors on students' decision (friends, parents, agents) as marketing targets
- > Implication and strategies for TAFE and a checklist for institutes to reflect on current practice and identify gaps are also included.

### 2.1 Aspirations and Expectations

Respondents to the ISB survey were asked to agree or disagree with statements about their prime reasons for studying at TAFE. The four statements that were agreed with most strongly by the 3,187 respondents to this question were:

- > I want to develop myself (98%)
- > Future job security is important to me (95%)
- > I like to be recognised for my achievements (94%)
- > I study so that I can get a good job (91%)

## 2.1.1 Implications and Strategies for TAFE

The aspiration 'I want to develop myself' is broad and implies that while 91% of respondents want to get a good job, a very large majority see personal development as more important. Further investigation is needed to identify exactly what students had in mind: it could mean a range of skill development including improved English language skills; study skills; academic or social skills. TAFE institutes need to unpack this statement with students to strengthen the areas identified and use key messages in promotional campaigns.

**Recognition** of achievement is achieved throughout TAFE from classroom level to state medal winners. Promotion of international students' success should be marketed strongly to capitalise on respondents' aspiration to be recognised for their achievement.

Respondents from the TAFE ISB are more likely to be studying to **get a good job** (91%) than those of the Australian University ISB (85%).

Employment outcomes are TAFE's core business and effective marketing campaigns to promote employment outcomes are used nationally. Institutes may want to consider emphasising the key words and phrases '**job security**' and '**get a good job**' in their marketing to international students given the strong response to these statements.

Developing profiles or good news stories of international alumni who are now gainfully employed would be useful to influence prospective students.

Best practice in promoting employment outcomes are detailed in Section 3.3.

### CHECKLIST: MARKETING TO STUDENT ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

STRATEGIES	Developed and in place	Under development	To be developed
Conduct Graduation ceremonies			
Promote TAFE's strong links with business and industry			
Offer job or work experience placement services			
Establish international student awards			
Profile international students in newsletters, ethnic papers or websites			
Develop good news stories about alumni who are now employed			

## 2.2 Promotion of Pathways

The ISB survey indicates students use a variety of pathways from other education and training institutions to TAFE. **Table 1** below shows where students were studying before they commenced their current course.

*Before commencing your course, where did you study previously (most recent)? (n= 4,849)*

Pathway	Total
Other	24%
Private (fee-paying) secondary education	22%
International School	20%
Another Institute	15%
Government funded (non-fee paying secondary education)	13%
Foundation program or preparatory course	7%

**Table 1: Pathways of Incoming Students**

### 2.2.1 Implications and Strategies for TAFE

The need for strong links with onshore and offshore feeder providers is clear from this data. Institutes can research feeder providers and develop promotional strategies for clarifying pathways.

Packaging total solutions for students offers a competitive advantage and reduces the uncertainty of future study options is removed when students can see pathways such as school to TAFE, ELICOS College to TAFE, and credit transfer from TAFE into Higher Education.

CHECKLIST: PROMOTION OF PATHWAYS			
STRATEGIES	Developed and in place	Under development	To be developed
Promote course packages or pathways to higher education			
Develop relationships with onshore and offshore feeder providers			
Promote success stories of students using pathways			
Develop and promote 'typical' pathway scenarios			

## 2.3 Factors Influencing Decision Making

Respondents were asked to nominate what helped them choose the TAFE institute in which they were studying. The highest category (44%) nominated was 'friends', the second (34%) 'parents' and the third (33%) 'agents'. This is not a surprising result when TAFE institutes regularly find 'word of mouth' is often the most common way for students to find information and to make the decision to study at TAFE.

Many international students return to their home countries and take up positions in government or industry and are able to influence others in making choices about their international study so friends in Australia and in students' home countries can be influence their decisions..

### 2.3.1 Implications and Strategies for TAFE

**Friends** clearly influence students making decisions about study options. Institutes could review their current promotional strategies to ensure **current students** are kept informed of new courses being delivered, of enhanced services and of new services available.

This encourages 'viral' marketing where current students have up-to-date information to spread among friends. In the same way, **past students** need current information and news of TAFE to continue to promote its services and products by word of mouth. Alumni networks can be encouraged by including news of awards, admission to university or job placements in promotional messaging and publications.

**Parents** are typically concerned about the safety of their children and the investment in their education. Parents need to be assured of the safety of Australia as a destination and to know that TAFE staff have strategies in place to provide the best duty of care possible.

The research showed 97% of TAFE respondents reported using family funds or their own funds to finance their studies. Just 3% were funded through scholarships. Parents understandably need assurance they receive the best value for money when paying for unsubsidised education and training.

**Table 2** below shows that 58% of TAFE respondents used agents to apply for their place at their institute.

*How did you apply to this Institute? (n=4,852)*

**Agents** are clearly the most often used channel for applying to study in TAFE and institutes need to acknowledge their importance by fostering strong relationships directly with agents or through TAFE central recruiting units.

Application Channel	Total
Via an education agent	58%
Direct paper application	16%
Direct online application	13%
Institute representative office overseas	6%
Other	5%
Via another institute	2%

**Table 2: Method of Application**



One of the common criticisms of agents made by students was that agents did not always have current information about the institute and the course in which they were interested. This may suggest a need for TAFE institutes to consider providing generic brochures to agents and maintaining current, accurate websites or other electronic means to resolve this issue.

Application other than through agents should not be ignored as there are benefits of greater quality control when students apply directly to the institute. The combination of direct application online and hard copy accounts for 29% of all applications. This is a large percentage and institutes may want to monitor the number of direct student applications and develop strategies to ensure a timely response to these applications.

Respondents complained about the length of time taken to process applications and visas and to be provided with arrival details. Many felt they were left waiting until the last possible moment to get to Australia and their institute.

The implication of this data for TAFE is that whatever the channel, application processes must be efficient and timely to allow for a smooth transition from point of application to study.

### CHECKLIST: MARKETIING TO THE INFLUENCING FACTORS

STRATEGIES	Developed and in place	Under development	To be developed
Keep current students informed of new courses and services			
Penetrate social media sites to influence decision making			
Use alumni to assist with marketing			
Promote the relative safety of Australia			
Promote TAFE support services often not found among competitors as 'value add', e.g. libraries, counselling services, disability consultants, careers advisors			
Strengthen relationships with agents			

## 3. The Living and Working Experience

### Overview

This section provides suggested strategies for:

- > effectively communicating with students from their first contact
- > assisting students with accommodation, work placement and employment opportunities
- > creating opportunities for developing social networks.

The challenge for education providers is to address a broad range of issues students rated as high importance, many of which may be outside the direct control of the institute. Examples of this include accommodation and employment.

### 3.1 First Impressions count

High level customer service underlies all aspects of the recruitment cycle of a student. This begins with the first inquiry to the arrival at the institute. Ideally each student should receive a seamless service.

To do this, institutes need to recognise the importance of managing effective communication between the time of application and offer, as well as other correspondence with students prior to arrival. Improving turnaround times and timely communication will improve conversion rates.

TAFE institutes offer support services for all international students but the level and range may be limited and inconsistent across institutes. There is also evidence that some of the services are not clearly promoted or understood. (See Section 4.2)

**No support for international students...very strict/phone always on voicemail/fail to understand emotional stress...**

Certificate IV student  
India

#### 3.1.1 Implications and Strategies for TAFE

While students expressed overall satisfaction with the arrival experience, providers can improve the scope of their offerings and communication with students about what to expect on arrival. Matching expectations to reality during arrival is critical.

<b>CHECKLIST: FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT</b>			
<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<b>Developed and in place</b>	<b>Under development</b>	<b>To be developed</b>
Ensure information regarding products, services and processes is easily accessible and up-to-date			
Translate information into other languages			
Provide a pre-departure checklist of what students should bring			
Develop efficient on-line application systems to ensure quick response times when processing applications and communicating with students			
Initiate a campaign to welcome international students (welcome desk at airport, distribute info packs, posters with welcome message on campus, reception, BBQ)			
Encourage community groups such as Rotary, Lions, Apex, other educational institutions, church groups, and police to work together to provide welcoming programs			

### 3.2 Accommodation

International students want assurance of a safe and convenient place to stay on arrival in Australia. Students indicated they experienced difficulties finding rental accommodation without a rental record, proof of financial stability, references, furniture and contacts within the local community.

On-campus accommodation is not available or limited at most TAFE institutes and Homestays were perceived as somewhat restrictive. Education providers need to take a more active role in assisting international students to find appropriate and affordable accommodation, especially in their first semester of study.

Important factors affecting satisfaction levels included quality, access and cost of accommodation with students asking for more assistance from institutes.

#### 3.2.1 Implications and Strategies for TAFE

Although some campuses have accommodation or housing officers, international students may not be accessing them or aware of their existence.

Institutes need to provide an improved service regarding accommodation options for students at the selection, purchase, and pre-departure stages of the consumer lifecycle. Regardless of whether this service is offered within the institute’s current suite of support services or whether it is outsourced to a service provider, this is an important consideration for satisfaction.

Students should be able to contact the international office long before arrival for information on housing options on or off campus, including links to accommodation boards on their website or within the community.

Websites such as [www.domain.com.au](http://www.domain.com.au) and [www.realestate.com.au](http://www.realestate.com.au) list accommodation for rent and can give students a guide to the type and cost of accommodation available.

## CHECKLIST: ACCOMMODATION

STRATEGIES	Developed and in place	Under development	To be developed
Provide better and more accessible information regarding options for accommodation including hostels, Homestay and rental properties			
Provide information about the private rental process and requirements			
Block book accommodation for students in their first semester			
Provide accessible and translated information for finding accommodation and tenancy rights and services			
Seek alliances with local real estate agents and accommodation providers to negotiate reasonable rates for international students			
Conduct a pro-active campaign to encourage college staff and other stakeholders to help students find accommodation when they arrive			
Encourage the local community to provide suitable housing and Homestay opportunities for international students			
Investigate alternative accommodation options such as dormitory style shared facilities			
Organise and advertise a one-stop accommodation register to be promoted to prospective international students in their home country			

### 3.3 Employment

Employment is often a necessary component of the international student experience. There are several advantages of undertaking work experience or employment, while studying in Australia. These include supplementing income to assist with living expenses and developing language skills and cultural understanding at the same time.

Employment can also give students an opportunity to interact with employers and the wider community and enhance future career goals.

Only 73% of students surveyed were satisfied with the level of advice and guidance received on long term job opportunities. The expectation of course-related work experience was a recurring theme with only 72% satisfied with opportunities offered.

**If college can offer work chance, that would be better.**

Certificate III student  
Hong Kong

Overall, students expressed the desire for more opportunities to gain work, particularly professional work experience, during their course and after graduation. A greater availability of careers advisory services to help students find employment relating to their course of study, here or in their home country, may also add to the appeal of studying in Australia.

There are several websites with relevant information for job seekers such as **[www.seek.com.au](http://www.seek.com.au)** or **[www.mycareer.com.au](http://www.mycareer.com.au)**.

Voluntary work can also help students integrate better into Australia, as well as giving valuable work experience. The Centre for Volunteering (**[www.volunteering.com.au](http://www.volunteering.com.au)**) can help arrange local experience and training with the not-for-profit sector to supplement skills.

#### 3.3.1 Implications and Strategies for TAFE

Managing and meeting the work expectations of international students will be a critical consideration for TAFE institutes into the future.

Engaging with the local community and businesses to create opportunities for international students is a necessity. Providers may choose to offer this service in-house or work with service providers on a fee-for-service basis.

Augmenting the services offered through careers centres and guidance officers and better promotion of these services to international students should be a priority.

Advice on job placement, work experience and general careers guidance must be included in TAFE institutes' core offerings to support international students.

Institutes may select either an in-house or outsourced model but it is clear that students value this as a service and will prefer providers on the basis of those who do this well. Careers advice includes advice and ideas from teaching staff, as well as any formal careers guidance.

## CHECKLIST: EMPLOYMENT

STRATEGIES	Developed and in place	Under development	To be developed
<p>Offer Job Placement services on campus including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Assistance with job applications</li> <li>&gt; Information via an online service or jobs board</li> <li>&gt; Career guidance</li> <li>&gt; Annual Careers Expo</li> <li>&gt; On-site recruitment</li> <li>&gt; Student staffing for special events/ functions</li> </ul>			
Establish an employment register for international students which will also provide information on industrial rights and responsibilities, and suggestions on how to secure stable work			
Profile international students as an option for local employers for part time work			
Encourage students to engage in volunteering programs			
Explore strategies to provide relief or support to employers to encourage them to provide work opportunities			
Engage with business partners to provide employment opportunities for students in their field of study			
Develop an industry placement program which would provide a combination of formal training and individual placement in organisations (internships)			
Include work placement as part of the curriculum			
Consider offering paid internships, work experience and other employment opportunities			
Build relationships with recruitment agencies to assist with job opportunities for both domestic and international students			

### 3.4 Friends count

TAFE respondents to the i-graduate survey rated the following factors regarding the social environment and friendships as important.

Factor	Importance	Satisfied
Making good contacts for the future	97%	81%
Making friends from this country	95%	77%
Making friends from other countries	92%	88%
The social facilities	89%	75%
The social activities (organised events)	86%	73%
Making friends from my home country	78%	87%

**Table 3: Difference between importance and satisfaction**

**Table 3** indicates satisfaction levels are lower than importance in five out of six factors. The biggest difference between levels of importance and satisfaction is the opportunity to make good contacts for the future as well as Australian friends.

Social inclusion is an important factor to assist international students to learn more about the Australian way of life.

#### 3.4.1 Implications and Strategies for TAFE

TAFE institutes should provide information about, and encourage participation in, social activities, sightseeing and volunteering.

A good example is 'Discover Melbourne: A Guide for International Students' ([www.melbourne.vic.gov.au](http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au)) which includes places to explore and visit, free things to do, a calendar of events and a city map. International students studying in Victoria can also register for a free Culture Card to help them better understand Australian culture, sport, food, zoos, and parks (See [www.culturecardvictoria.com.au](http://www.culturecardvictoria.com.au)).

Another good example of promotion of social inclusion is the Study Adelaide website ([www.studyadelaide.com/events](http://www.studyadelaide.com/events)) with information about free activities, competitions, volunteering and events distributed as an e-newsletter to registered students.

**You get the education and skills and knowledge that you require and help you in your life in Australia be it work or play or with friends and employers.**

Diploma student  
Nepal

## CHECKLIST: FRIENDS COUNT

STRATEGIES	Developed and in place	Under development	To be developed
Provide information about social activities, sightseeing and volunteering			
Use ice breakers at the orientation session as well as in class			
Promote recreational and sporting activities on-campus			
Make suggestions to increase social engagement with the broader community such as special events or through local government councils			
Organise a multicultural day or International Student Festival			
Promote concessions available via their Student Card to local attractions (movies, museums, etc)			
Provide a calendar of key dates for, and an invitation to join major community based events			
Seek funding/grants for the creation of social activities with specific aims of integration with community organisations			

A lack of support and organisation by the admin team... Some facilities are unacceptable, old student workbooks, having to argue about getting textbooks from the library. Bad points take over the good points of great teachers

Certificate III student  
United Kingdom

## 4. The Learning Experience

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### Overview

This section highlights:

- > the high level of student satisfaction with their classroom learning experience
- > strategies for TAFE to broaden classroom communication best practice to others who interface with international student
- > the relatively low level of awareness of student services the common theme of dissatisfaction with institute catering.

### 4.1 Key Success Factors: communication strategies

The ISB report concluded that:

***'The importance of the quality of the teaching and the role of teachers in student satisfaction cannot be understated.'***

Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate how important a range of factors were for them at this stage of their studies. The top three factors were identified as:

1. Content of the course
2. The subject expertise of the teacher
3. The teaching ability of the teachers

TAFE is clearly meeting student expectations. Of the 3,742 respondents, 85% stated they were either *very satisfied* (19%) or *satisfied* (66%) with their overall learning experience in a TAFE Institute.

This indicates TAFE teachers are well qualified and use up-to-date professional practice that is meeting student expectations.

#### 4.1.1 Implications and Strategies for TAFE

Students' high level of satisfaction with their learning experience implies the communication strategies teachers use in the classroom are effective.

These strategies could be used by co-ordinators, front line staff, support and senior staff when communicating with international students. Orientation sessions, information sharing and general communication with international students (and perhaps with all students) should be conducted with these strategies in mind.

**Professional development** is essential to ensure all staff dealing with international students adopt these strategies.

## CHECKLIST: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

STRATEGIES	Developed and in place	Under development	To be developed
Determine the name each student wants to be addressed by and clarify pronunciation			
Prepare handouts and guides with white space and in plain English			
Remind all students training approaches are culturally-based and will vary			
Provide summaries including key phrases and purpose of session			
Plan small groups for local and international students interaction			
Speak clearly and face students and speak only when they can see your face			
Explain colloquialisms and abbreviations			
Provide a plain English guide to FAQs			
Pose questions with no right or wrong answer to stimulate debate			
Negotiate with local students to become peer 'buddies' with international students			
Encourage language learning between students, e.g. Mandarin for English and vice versa			
Facilitate small group activities and assign roles e.g., leader, recorder, reporter, timer			
Research students' cultural and educational origins and refer to them appropriately			
Encourage students to contribute from their cultural background to provide a broader perspective			
Design activities that require cross-cultural inputs			
Consider all students' level of knowledge – will they understand the political or social context?			
Organise Cultural Awareness professional development programs			

## 4.2 Student Support Services

Overall respondents to the survey were satisfied with student support services with 83% of the 3,303 surveyed being either *very satisfied* (11%) or *satisfied* (72%). However, there is an 18% dissatisfaction rate which indicates there is scope to improve information about and access to student support services in TAFE institutes.

Just 62% of respondents were aware of student advisory services, 58% of counselling, 50% of the career advisory service and 46% of institute or college clubs or societies. This indicates there are significant numbers of students nationally who are not using these services that are so critical to their learning experience.

Overall analysis of this section of the survey shows that:

- > Catering services were by far the most common theme in the comments, with students not happy with the catering available. Students felt the food was of a low standard with very little choice, including for those with dietary requirements.
- > Many students used this section to communicate they did not know about the support services listed and therefore could not comment on them.
- > Those students who were aware of the range of support services were generally happy with their experience and made positive comments about their International Offices.



**We have a Student Support Officer for international students. At the international office, we get help and advice. There is information and suggestions to help us enjoy our time in Australia. We get individual attention from the support officer. She knows every international student as an individual.**

International student  
Zimbabwe

## 4.2.1 Implications and Strategies for TAFE

The moderate to low levels of awareness of student support services may stem from the fact that the services are not well communicated to international students or they may not exist at all institutes. This is of concern when student support services are often the key point of difference between TAFE and some of our competitors.

### CHECKLIST: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

STRATEGIES	Developed and in place	Under development	To be developed
Invite representatives of each of the support services provided by the institute to address students during induction and throughout the year			
Use multi-lingual communication strategies such as posters, noticeboards, websites and SMS for reminders, updates, events and benefits of student support services			
Encourage all staff to promote support services to students			
Conduct formal and informal surveys of international students to assess knowledge and use of student support services and act on gaps identified			
Identify international students' preferred food options and assist them to lobby for reasonable changes which may benefit all students			



## 5. Conclusion: Learning from Students

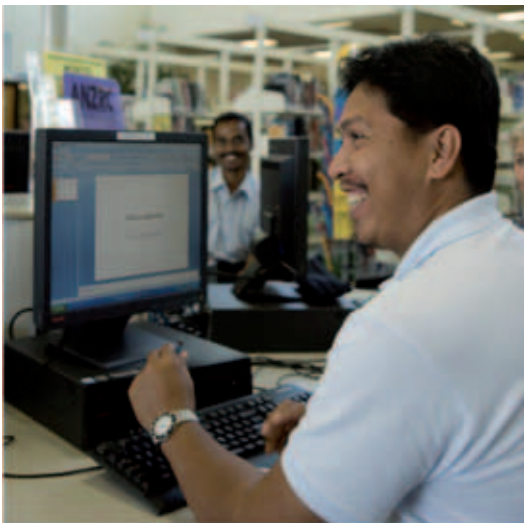
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The TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) report titled 'Tracking the international student experience at Australian TAFE institutes has provided an opportunity to gain valuable feedback from students. Although TAFE Institutes already have a range of excellent strategies in place, the challenge is to continuously review current practices and services to better understand and manage student expectations.

This guide is intended to assist TAFE to retain and improve its global reputation as a leading provider of quality education for international students. These practical strategies can improve the TAFE international student experience by identifying areas of good practice and those requiring further investment.

**Teachers are very friendly and knowledgeable. I had lots of fun and learned a lot.**

Short course student  
Iran



## 6: About TAFE Directors Australia

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) is the peak national body incorporated to represent Australia's 58 government owned TAFE Institutes and university TAFE divisions, and the Australia-Pacific Technical College (APTC).

Australia's TAFE Institute network is the largest and most diverse tertiary education sector in Australia with more than 1300 locations across Central Business Districts (CBD), suburban, regional and remote locations, with many Institutes offering further services through the Asia-Pacific and other offshore regions.

The core business of TDA is supporting our member Institutes and leading the advocacy for quality skills in Australia.

TAFE Directors Australia was established by TAFE Institute directors in 1998, and incorporated as a not-for-profit educational organisation.

Our purpose is to:

- > advance vocational education and training policy in Australia
- > support policy development for improved outcomes for students – domestic and international
- > lead the advocacy on funding
- > provide member services for Tuition Assurance to facilitate Institutes' Vocational Education and Training (VET) FEE-HELP registration
- > position TAFE Institutes as the major training brand delivering skills in Australia
- > develop and support international networks, partnerships and exchanges

### Vision

To drive quality in TAFE Vocational education and Training, and show leadership in sector policy and value-added member services.

### Mission

TDA will support TAFE institutes in the development, recognition and resourcing of those institutes as the recognised leaders in quality vocational education and training.



## Appendix A: About the International Student Barometer Survey

The TAFE Directors Australia International Student Barometer (TDA ISB) 2009 was commissioned by TDA and supported through funding from the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). It provides a snapshot view of what international students at TAFE institutes think about their study and life experiences in Australia.

The i-graduate ISB is an independent and confidential feedback mechanism used by education providers since 2005 to track the decision-making, perceptions, expectations and experiences of students studying outside their home country.

The TDA ISB has been benchmarked against the Australian University (AUS) International Student Barometer also conducted in 2009. The benchmarking has been possible only where the questions from both surveys matched.

Benchmarking is a necessary and vital component to ensure continuous improvement. Until now, Australia has had no widely acknowledged national benchmark of the TAFE sector student experience. This research provides a satisfaction and importance index that can be measured year by year.

The TDA ISB, allows the sector and participating institutes to:

1. Benchmark themselves against other TAFE providers in order to:
  - > Better manage their development
  - > Clearly differentiate themselves from other local, national and international providers
  - > Better understand and manage student and stakeholder expectations
2. Identify possible co-operative and collaborative sectoral and cross-sectoral actions to improve market penetration
3. Improve resource management within the individual institutes and across the sector.

The 2009 i-graduate TAFE ISB survey meets these needs through providing answers to such questions as:

- > Why do these students come and what do they expect?
- > How are their needs being met?
- > How do international students view their current course of study – is it an end in itself?
- > How many choose TAFE as a pathway to progression in Australia?
- > What proportion of students seek to progress to university in another country?
- > After completing their studies, do they seek to stay to study or work, to move to other countries or to return home to work?
- > How important are the key aspects of living and learning in Australia to the students?

## Research Methodology

Planning for the TAFE ISB commenced in 2008 as an initiative of TAFE Directors Australia on behalf of its members – 59 TAFE and technology institutes. In 2009 the concept was supported by DEEWR with funds from the Study in Australia 2010 initiative.

The ISB questionnaire includes the following elements:

- > Demographic identifiers – age, gender, subject area, level of study, nationality
- > Motivations for study
- > Other countries considered
- > Experience of application, visa process, arrival and orientation
- > Comparative importance of elements of the learning experience
- > Comparative importance of elements of the living experience
- > Satisfaction across all elements of the learning experience
- > Satisfaction across all elements of the living experience



- > Satisfaction with support and advice
- > Pathways – plans beyond current course of study
- > Reflections – to what extent would students recommend their university/college to others?

The attitudinal survey was developed by i-graduate in association with TDA and a Steering Committee of participating TAFE institutes.

The online survey was active from October-November 2009. TAFE institutes participated in the Barometer either on their own or as part of a consortium. Fifteen institutes participated and 20 institutes were part of five regional or state consortia.

The consortium approach managed to capture a range of regional institutes that individually were not in a position to participate (due to size of their cohort and investment required). The consortium initiative of i-graduate Australia which recognises the dispersed nature of the TAFE institutes enabled collation of data regarding international student experiences in both metropolitan and regional settings.

Participating TAFE institutes were provided with a hyperlink to the online survey. Students accessed the online survey by clicking the hyperlink which directed them to the questionnaire. Responses were collected, collated and analysed centrally by i-graduate's team of researchers.

Data from all participating institutes were aggregated to create the TAFE-ISB index. Each institute's data is benchmarked against the national aggregate on individual summary sheets.

Overall, 5,557 responses were received from 35 institutes across Australia. All states and territories, excluding the Northern Territory, were included in the study. At 2009, the NT had a minimal TAFE international student cohort. The survey was conducted only in English.

All participating institutes have received Institutional Summary Results which provide:

- > Institution specific information covering:
  - > Overall learning satisfaction
  - > Overall living satisfaction
  - > Overall support/advice satisfaction
  - > Reflections on experience
- > Sectoral responses to these categories
- > An overview of the variation.

Percentages are rounded up so some single choice tables may add up to 99% or 101%. Where there is a 0% this stands for <1%.

## Impact of the Actual Method of Data Collection

There are some limitations of the methodology which should be taken into account when looking at the findings. These limitations could not be controlled:

- > The timing for the study and launch of the research instrument was towards the end of the year. Over half of the respondents (53%) were in their first year.
- > The number of respondents varied from institution to institution, so the reliability of some individual institutional data may be problematic.
- > The survey was offered in the English language only.

## Appendix B: References and Key Websites

### Study in Australia

#### **[www.studyinaustralia.gov.au](http://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au)**

The Study in Australia website is a comprehensive website that covers information for international students on schools, TAFE and universities. It can be viewed in 12 different languages and offers information on English courses, scholarships, student visas, carries student stories and includes an interactive map of Australia.

Drop down menus are divided into the following topics:

- > Why study in Australia?
- > Study costs
- > Search for a course
- > After your studies
- > Living in Australia
- > During your stay
- > Study in your country
- > Help in your country

There is a Study Wizard which guides the user through all the steps to:

- > get information about study in Australia
- > search for courses and institutes
- > get a checklist and information kit.

### General information websites

ISANA: [www.isana.org.au](http://www.isana.org.au)

TAFE: <http://tafe-australia.org>

### Specific purpose websites

Accommodation: [www.domain.com.au](http://www.domain.com.au) and [www.realestate.com.au](http://www.realestate.com.au)

Volunteering: [www.volunteering.com.au](http://www.volunteering.com.au)

Employment: [www.seek.com.au](http://www.seek.com.au) or [www.mycareer.com.au](http://www.mycareer.com.au)

### State and Territory websites

#### NSW

[www.studyintafe.edu.au](http://www.studyintafe.edu.au)

[www.internationalstudents.nsw.gov.au](http://www.internationalstudents.nsw.gov.au)

[www.crc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au)

### Victoria

[www.melbourne.vic.gov.au](http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au)

[www.culturecardvictoria.com.au](http://www.culturecardvictoria.com.au)

### South Australia

[www.studyadelaide.com](http://www.studyadelaide.com)

[www.multicultural.sa.gov.au](http://www.multicultural.sa.gov.au)

### Queensland

[www.studyqueensland.qld.edu.au](http://www.studyqueensland.qld.edu.au)

[www.skillstech.tafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.skillstech.tafe.qld.gov.au)

### Western Australia

[www.eti.wa.edu.au](http://www.eti.wa.edu.au)

[www.ciswa.com](http://www.ciswa.com)

### Tasmania

[www.get-tasmania.edu.au](http://www.get-tasmania.edu.au)

[www.studyintasmania.tas.gov.au](http://www.studyintasmania.tas.gov.au)

### ACT

[www.det.act.gov.au](http://www.det.act.gov.au)

### Northern Territory

[www.det.nt.gov.au/students/international](http://www.det.nt.gov.au/students/international)

[www.theterritory.com.au](http://www.theterritory.com.au)

## Australian TAFE institutes

Australia-Pacific Technical College	<a href="http://www.aptc.edu.au">www.aptc.edu.au</a> (based in Fiji)
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### Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

Canberra Institute of Technology	<a href="http://www.cit.act.edu.au">www.cit.act.edu.au</a>
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### New South Wales (NSW)

TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute	<a href="http://www.hunter.tafensw.edu.au">www.hunter.tafensw.edu.au</a>
TAFE NSW – Illawarra Institute	<a href="http://www.illawarra.tafensw.edu.au">www.illawarra.tafensw.edu.au</a>
TAFE NSW – New England Institute	<a href="http://www.newengland.tafensw.edu.au">www.newengland.tafensw.edu.au</a>
TAFE NSW – North Coast Institute	<a href="http://www.nci.tafensw.edu.au">www.nci.tafensw.edu.au</a>
TAFE NSW – Northern Sydney Institute	<a href="http://www.nsi.tafensw.edu.au">www.nsi.tafensw.edu.au</a>
TAFE NSW – Riverina Institute	<a href="http://www.rit.tafensw.edu.au">www.rit.tafensw.edu.au</a>
TAFE NSW – South Western Sydney Institute	<a href="http://www.swsi.tafensw.edu.au">www.swsi.tafensw.edu.au</a>
TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute	<a href="http://www.sit.nsw.edu.au">www.sit.nsw.edu.au</a>
TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute	<a href="http://www.wsi.tafensw.edu.au">www.wsi.tafensw.edu.au</a>
TAFE NSW – Western Institute	<a href="http://www.wit.tafensw.edu.au">www.wit.tafensw.edu.au</a>

### Northern Territory

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education	<a href="http://www.batchelor.edu.au">www.batchelor.edu.au</a>
Charles Darwin University (TAFE Division)	<a href="http://www.cdu.edu.au">www.cdu.edu.au</a>

### Queensland

Barrier Reef Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.barrierreef.tafe.qld.gov.au">www.barrierreef.tafe.qld.gov.au</a>
Brisbane North Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.bn.tafe.qld.gov.au">www.bn.tafe.qld.gov.au</a>
Central Queensland TAFE	<a href="http://www.cq.tafe.qld.gov.au">www.cq.tafe.qld.gov.au</a>
Gold Coast Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.goldcoast.tafe.qld.gov.au">www.goldcoast.tafe.qld.gov.au</a>
Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.msit.tafe.qld.gov.au">www.msit.tafe.qld.gov.au</a>

SkillsTech Australia	<a href="http://www.skillstech.tafe.qld.gov.au">www.skillstech.tafe.qld.gov.au</a>
Southbank Institute of Technology	<a href="http://www.southbank.edu.au">www.southbank.edu.au</a>
Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.sqit.tafe.qld.gov.au">www.sqit.tafe.qld.gov.au</a>
Sunshine Coast TAFE	<a href="http://www.sunshinecoast.tafe.qld.gov.au">www.sunshinecoast.tafe.qld.gov.au</a>
The Bremer Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.bremer.tafe.qld.gov.au">www.bremer.tafe.qld.gov.au</a>
Tropical North Queensland TAFE	<a href="http://www.tnqit.tafe.qld.gov.au">www.tnqit.tafe.qld.gov.au</a>
Wide Bay Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.widebay.tafe.qld.gov.au">www.widebay.tafe.qld.gov.au</a>

## South Australia

TAFE SA – Adelaide North	<a href="http://www.tafe.sa.edu.au">www.tafe.sa.edu.au</a>
TAFE SA – Adelaide South	<a href="http://www.tafe.sa.edu.au">www.tafe.sa.edu.au</a>
TAFE SA – Regional	<a href="http://www.tafe.sa.edu.au">www.tafe.sa.edu.au</a>

## Victoria

Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.britafe.vic.edu.au">www.britafe.vic.edu.au</a>
Box Hill Institute	<a href="http://www.bhtafe.edu.au">www.bhtafe.edu.au</a>
Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.gippstafe.vic.edu.au">www.gippstafe.vic.edu.au</a>
Chisholm Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.chisholm.vic.edu.au">www.chisholm.vic.edu.au</a>
East Gippsland Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.egtafe.vic.edu.au">www.egtafe.vic.edu.au</a>
Gordon Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.gordontafe.edu.au">www.gordontafe.edu.au</a>
Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.gotafe.vic.edu.au">www.gotafe.vic.edu.au</a>
Holmesglen	<a href="http://www.holmesglen.vic.edu.au">www.holmesglen.vic.edu.au</a>
Kangan Institute	<a href="http://www.kangan.edu.au">www.kangan.edu.au</a>
North Melbourne Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.nmit.edu.au">www.nmit.edu.au</a>
RMIT University (TAFE Division)	<a href="http://www.rmit.edu.au">www.rmit.edu.au</a>
South West TAFE	<a href="http://www.swtafe.vic.edu.au">www.swtafe.vic.edu.au</a>
Sunraysia Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.sunitafe.edu.au">www.sunitafe.edu.au</a>
Swinburne University (TAFE Division)	<a href="http://www.tafe.swin.edu.au">www.tafe.swin.edu.au</a>
Victoria University (TAFE Division)	<a href="http://www.vu.edu.au/tafe">www.vu.edu.au/tafe</a>
University of Ballarat (TAFE Division)	<a href="http://www.ballarat.edu.au/tafe">www.ballarat.edu.au/tafe</a>
William Angliss Institute of TAFE	<a href="http://www.angliss.vic.edu.au">www.angliss.vic.edu.au</a>
Wodonga TAFE	<a href="http://www.wodonga.tafe.edu.au">www.wodonga.tafe.edu.au</a>

## Tasmania

Tasmanian Polytechnic	<a href="http://www.polytechnic.tas.edu.au">www.polytechnic.tas.edu.au</a>
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## Western Australia

Central Institute of Technology	<a href="http://www.central.wa.edu.au">www.central.wa.edu.au</a>
Challenger Institute of Technology	<a href="http://www.challengertafe.wa.edu.au">www.challengertafe.wa.edu.au</a>
Curtin University of Technology (VTEC)	<a href="http://www.curtin.edu.au">www.curtin.edu.au</a>
C.Y. O'Connor College of TAFE	<a href="http://www.cyoctafe.wa.edu.au">www.cyoctafe.wa.edu.au</a>
Durack Institute of Technology	<a href="http://www.durack.edu.au">www.durack.edu.au</a>
Great Southern TAFE	<a href="http://www.gstafe.wa.edu.au">www.gstafe.wa.edu.au</a>
Kimberley College of TAFE	<a href="http://www.kimberley.tafe.wa.edu.au">www.kimberley.tafe.wa.edu.au</a>
Pilbara TAFE	<a href="http://www.pilbaratafe.wa.edu.au">www.pilbaratafe.wa.edu.au</a>
Polytechnic West	<a href="http://www.polytechnic.wa.edu.au">www.polytechnic.wa.edu.au</a>
South West Regional College of TAFE	<a href="http://www.swrc.wa.edu.au">www.swrc.wa.edu.au</a>
West Coast Institute of Training	<a href="http://www.westcoast.wa.edu.au">www.westcoast.wa.edu.au</a>

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