

Perceptions, Experiences and Graduate Destinations of International Students at Victorian TAFE Institutes



BACKGROUND

Victorian TAFE International Inc.
(VTI)

Established by international managers of TAFE Institutes and Universities with TAFE Divisions in Victoria who provide education and training programs for international students

BACKGROUND cont.

VTI's ROLE

- Provide advice to the Minister for Education and training
- Provide a Victorian state view to national bodies
- Act as a lobby group
- Support TAFE Directors Australia through the Australian TAFE International Network (ATIN)
- Promote the TAFE Brand
- Support professional development
- Provide a forum for discussion and information exchange

BACKGROUND cont.

Research Objective

To undertake research into:

- source countries, enrolment patterns etc.
 - perceptions, expectations and experiences and
 - post graduation destinations
- of international students (excluding ELICOS) in Victorian TAFE, in order to inform TAFE International Managers and guide their student recruitment and support activities.

BACKGROUND cont.

Research Partner

The Victorian Department of Education and Training participated in the project by providing financial assistance and the involvement of a Research Officer to the Research Project Team

RESEARCH PHASES

Phase One	Baseline Analysis
Phase Two	Perceptions, Expectations & Experiences of International Students
Phase Three	Graduate Destinations

The results of Phases Two and Three will be presented

PHASE TWO:

Perceptions, Expectations and
Experiences of International
Students at Victorian TAFE Institutes

OVERVIEW

- Online survey of all international students enrolled in 2005 at 12 participating TAFE Institutes (*excluding ELICOS, Foundation & Offshore students*)
- 3839 students in total
- 622 students completed the survey
- Overall response rate of 16%

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

- 58% male and 42% female
- Almost 1/3 from just two countries: India and China
- Most enrolled at the Advanced Diploma and Diploma Levels
- More than 1/2 were enrolled in only 3 fields – Business Admin/Management, Hospitality /Tourism and Computer Science/Info Systems
- Profile of respondents very closely reflected the profile of Public VET Victoria international students for the same period

WHERE DID THEY WANT TO STUDY?

- 81% indicated that Australia was their preferred study destination
- 94% indicated Victoria was their preferred State
- 53% indicated TAFE was their first preference, with the remainder mainly preferring university

HOW DID THEY FIND OUT ABOUT TAFE VICTORIA?

- The internet (67%) was the most frequently used source of information, followed closely by Private Agents (54%)
- Friends/relatives, particularly those already studying at TAFE in Victoria (49%), were an equally important source

HOW DID THEY ENROL?

- Agents were the main source of supply (almost 2/3's of students), with the highest proportion sourced via private agents
- IDP was the main source of supply for students from Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Mauritius
- Vast majority of students recruited from their home country or within Victoria
- Chinese students mainly enrolled via pathway programs (including ELICOS) or directly
- European students mainly enrolled directly

WHY DID THEY CHOOSE TAFE VICTORIA?

- Location, safety, cost and recognition of qualification in home country were the most important factors in deciding where to study
- Friends and relatives were the greatest single influence (45%), followed by education agents (25%)
- Lower entry requirements appear to only be of great importance to students from Taiwan
- Australian migration bonus of particular importance to students from Singapore, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia and Mauritius

WHAT DO THEY THINK NOW?

- Over 2/3's were satisfied with their course
- Most would recommend TAFE to others (82%)
- Majority satisfied with Melbourne
- Almost 2/3's satisfied with their accommodation
- Over 80% have made friends with Australians
- Friendly/supportive staff and the quality of the TAFE environment are what students like best about TAFE Victoria
- A good match between pre-enrolment expectations and post-enrolment satisfaction

WHAT WOULD THEY CHANGE?

- Cost was the factor students were least satisfied with
- Some dissatisfaction with the level of help provided to find accommodation
- Some students would like more sporting and social activities
- A small proportion expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching and the teaching timetable

WHAT DO THEY INTEND TO DO AFTER TAFE?

- Almost 2/3's intend to undertake further study and the remainder to work on completion of their current TAFE course
- 76% intend to study or work in Melbourne/Victoria
- Almost 60% intend to apply for Australian Permanent Residency

WHAT ELSE DID WE LEARN?

- 58% working part-time while studying
- 66% believe it is easy to find part-time work
- 81% have made Australian friends
- 50% parents have visited or intend to visit Australia

PHASE TWO CONCLUSIONS

- There is high level of satisfaction with TAFE Victoria and with life in Melbourne/Victoria.
- "Word of Mouth" is by far the most important selling point
- Where possible involve alumni in marketing efforts
- Agents are a major source of students and need to be appropriately managed, supported and rewarded

PHASE TWO CONCLUSIONS *(cont.)*

- The internet is the single greatest source of information so websites must be dynamic, innovative, easily navigated with clear, up-to-date information, and registered with major search engines
- Given the importance of cost, accurate information on all costs must be given, with emphasis on any cost-saving benefits of studying
- The findings reinforce the importance of targeted relationship marketing strategies

Phase Three:

Graduate Destinations

PHASE THREE OVERVIEW

- Online survey of all international students who completed a TAFE award in 2005 at one of 12 participating Institutes
- Responses were received from international graduates of 8 TAFE Institutes in Victoria
- 100 responses
- Overall response rate cannot yet be determined (data required from 2 Institutes)
- If these 2 Institutes are excluded, there were 91 responses with an overall response rate of 8%

CONSEQUENTIAL ISSUES

- Identification of international graduates
- Contacting international graduates
- Reliability and validity of results

WHO RESPONDED?

- 56% male & 44% female
- Largest group of respondents were from Malaysia (13%)
- 60% of respondents completed their TAFE studies in December 2005
- 45% completed a Diploma, 28% an Advanced Diploma, 22% a Certificate and 5% other
- Over half completed courses in either Business Admin/Management(32%) or Computer Science/Information Systems (23%)

WHERE ARE THEY LIVING?

Melbourne/Victoria	74%
Other Australia	2%
Home Country	23%
Other Country	1%

Almost two thirds of Phase Two students indicated they intended to remain in Victoria on completion of their studies

WHAT ARE THEY DOING?

Working	32%
Studying	61%
Taking a Break	7%

Almost two thirds of Phase Two students indicated they intended to undertake further study on completion of their TAFE award and the remainder to work

WORKING WHERE?

Home country	59%
Melbourne/Victoria	38%
Other country	3%

NATURE OF WORK

- 85% are working full-time and 15% part-time
- 59% hold permanent jobs, 23% short-term contracts and 18% are casual

EASE OF FINDING WORK

The vast majority of graduates did not have difficulty finding employment

Neither Difficult nor Easy	38%
Easy	23%
Very Easy	18%
Difficult	18%
Very Difficult	3%

ASSISTANCE FINDING WORK

- Did your TAFE Institute help you to find work?

Yes **29%**

No **71%**

- Would you have liked help?

Yes **81%**

No **19%**

STUDYING WHERE?

Melbourne/Victoria 94%

Elsewhere in Australia 3%

Home country 3%

STUDYING AT WHAT LEVEL?

University	75%
TAFE/VET	23%
Other	2%

Of the two thirds of Phase Two students who intended to undertake further study on completion of their current TAFE award, around 80% indicated they intended to pursue university level studies

STUDYING WHAT TYPE OF QUALIFICATION?

Degree	75%
Certificate	10%
Diploma	8%
Advanced Diploma	5%
Associate Degree	2%

DID THEY ENTER THEIR CURRENT STUDIES VIA A PATHWAY PROGRAM?

Yes	75%
No	20%
Don't Know	5%

DID TAFE COURSE ADEQUATELY PREPARE THEM FOR CURRENT STUDIES?

Yes	77%
No	13%
Don't Know	10%

ASSISTANCE ARRANGING FURTHER STUDIES

- 61% indicated they received help from their TAFE Institute to arrange their current studies
- 80% indicated they would have appreciated such help

WOULD THEY RECOMMEND TAFE?

- 89% would recommend TAFE in Melbourne/Victoria
- 83% would recommend their particular TAFE institute

RESIDENCY

- 61% have or intend to apply for Australian permanent residency
- 23% don't
- 16% don't know

TENTATIVE KEY FINDINGS

- 74% of graduates are still in Melbourne/Victoria
- 61% are studying, 95% of whom are doing so in Victoria, with over three quarters at university
- 31% are working, over half of whom in their home country
- The majority of those working did not have difficulty finding employment, yet 81% indicated they would have appreciated help from their Institute to find work
- 89% would recommend TAFE Victoria – a strong endorsement of satisfaction
- 61% had or intended to apply for Australian permanent residency

PHASE THREE CONCLUSIONS

- Student/data management systems need reviewing to ensure that international TAFE graduates can be clearly identified and contacted
- Given the importance of word of mouth advertising (as found in Phase Two) TAFE Institutes should consider the development of alumni programs with supporting data management systems
- This phase of the research should be treated as a pilot for possible further tracer studies of international TAFE graduates

SUMMING UP

- Project a significant undertaking and experience for VTI and its members
- Mainly informal research at institutional level in the past
- Most VTI members involved in annual national TAFE Benchmarking process
- Involved in AEI research

SUMMING UP cont.

- Project signals a growing maturity and understanding within VTI and it's members that further growth and consolidation in the market must be research based and data driven
- Range of learning experiences from the project
- Project didn't deliver all the outcomes expected
- Project overall has provided sound outcomes for VTI members to use in their forward planning.