Providing best practice in student support services: identifying and facilitating for the future

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International education in Queensland...

- Well over 50,000 international students studying in Queensland
- From over 100 countries
- 90% of student enrolments in institutions in South East QLD
- 48% universities; 21% ELICOS, 12% VET, 9% Schools
- Over 300 CRICOS registered providers
Queensland Education & Training International

- Established in 2001 by the Premier
- The first of its kind at the State government level
- Has a strong Government commitment
- Reports to an advisory Board made up of senior industry representatives
- Four sectoral working parties: Ten regional clusters
- Five strategic directions: Mobilising Unity, Creating the image, Capturing markets, Removing barriers & Investing in the future
Why are student support services important?

- Word of mouth and personal referral critical
- Drivers of student satisfaction complex, multiple and differentiated by socio-economic, demographic and cultural characteristics
- Quality of teaching critical to student satisfaction, closely associated with provision of student services and learning facilities
Best Practice in the Provision of Student Support Services

- Survey international student services of institutions in overseas markets across the university sector
- Attempt to determine best practice in international student services in leading international institutions in markets that are strategically important to Queensland
  - 28 interviews with personnel responsible for, or involved in, the provision of international student support services
  - 9 interviews with professionals working at in-market international education facilitators
- Institutions represented in the survey were from the following countries: the US, the UK, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, France, Singapore, the Netherlands and Australia
<table>
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<th>What institutions aim to provide</th>
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<td>▪ Comprehensive pre and post arrival services delivered through multiple mediums</td>
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<td>▪ Significant on arrival support</td>
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<td>▪ Practical support to assist with issues including admissions process &amp; immigration/visas</td>
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<td>▪ Orientation</td>
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<td>▪ Facilitating contact between prospective &amp; new students with current/more tenured students</td>
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<td>▪ Academic support specifically in language/study methods</td>
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What institutions believed important to provide

- Access to support services in line with student needs
- Need for flexible staffing levels
- Ability to tailor services to cater to different students’ needs
- Increased integration, in various ways, between the wider community and students

“Planned for 2005 is more integration of domestic and international students. It does not happen naturally and is getting more and more difficult as the domestic students are on campus less and less – picking up lectures online, whereas the international students tend to be on campus full time – their lifestyles are very different as are their interests. So we have to think of ways to integrate.”

- Accommodation services
Effectiveness of services provided……

- Most participants believed that their services were effective
- Participants determined effectiveness by student surveys & feedback
- Many would have liked to offer more if they had additional resources
- Most participants rated their university’s support for international students reasonably high
- Only a third of participants defined or monitored KPIs: GPAs, turnaround times, retention rates, participation rates, program reviews
Nominated effective programs

- Orientation
- Student advisory services
- Social and integration programs
  - Buddy Programs
  - International Peer Programs
- Distribution of information by student organisations
- International student handbook
### Nominated Ineffective programs:

- Lack of adequate integration
  
  "…keeps coming up year after year about the sense of disappointment that students haven’t made more [local] friends…. If we truly want to be an international university, our student cohorts need to be really knitted. It’s work on our local students as much as …anybody."

- Better accommodation services and facilities

- Generic nature of international student support

- More emphasis on on-going support not just post-arrival
  
  "What we need to do more of …is rather than being the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff - trying to be at the top of the cliff. The prevention rather than the cure."
Areas for improvement

• Accommodation (mentioned by several participants)
• More staff including counselors
• More flexible office hours
• more integration and the development of programs to enhance the students’ experience “…reaching students when they have a small problem before it becomes a crisis, “we do this quite well but we could definitely do it better.”
• More integration of domestic students / local community
• Broadening pre-departure briefings
• an alumni program and “it is going to happen!”
### Best Practice in the Provision of Student Support Services: Conclusions

- Significant diversity in provision of student support services
- Appeared to be little formal evaluation of services
- Institutions agreed on the need to support students’ broader aims
- Integration a key component of student satisfaction
- Re-enforced the importance of language skills, study skill development
- Early intervention
- Role of student associations and local student support
- Provision of support to family members
- “as such, there appears to be no best practice in student services currently evident” (JWT Specialised Communications, 2005 pg 7).
Accommodation needs for international students

Research Aim

- To gain a qualitative and quantitative understanding of the international student accommodation sector, accommodation issues faced by this sector and relative importance of each of the issues

- identify appropriate communication strategies and channels to educate international students

- Brisbane, Toowoomba & Gold Coast – data collection October 2004 & May 2005
Accommodation needs for international students

On-campus accommodation

Home stay

Self contained house or apartment

Share accommodation rented on house basis

Share accommodation rented on room basis


Not included in this study

Included in this study
Accommodation needs for international students: Qualitative

- Students were generally satisfied with their accommodation choice
- Student sought information on accommodation through a variety of sources
- Students commented on the lack of information available prior to coming to Australia
- Factors taken into account when choosing accommodation included: cost, location & proximity to provider
- Most students found accommodation after coming to Australia
Accommodation needs for international students: Quantitative

- Over 600 international students completed the survey
- Asia 54%, America & Europe 19%, Africa 4%, LA 3%
- 74% aged 21 – 30 years old
- 98% were enrolled in higher education
- All nine universities participated
- 73% participating in a course more than 12 months
- 51% in QLD for more than 12 months: 31% less than 4 months
Accommodation patterns

- 4 in 10 students rented just one place: most likely to be European and America students
- 3 in 10 have rented three or more places: most likely to be Asian and Latin Americans
- North Americans more likely to stay on campus
- 1 out of 10 students arranged through university services
Accommodation issues

- Overall problems experienced: 45%
- Maintenance problems: 65%
- Rules problems: 73%
- Rent problems: 84%
- Bond problems: 85%
Accommodation issues

- Issues which caused greatest anxiety:
  - Landlord taking too long to make repairs,
  - had to pay to fix things,
  - increases in rent or lack of notice after signing contract,
  - cleaning fee deducted from bond,
  - invasion of privacy

- 47% who have experienced problems with their accommodation did nothing to fix the problem

- 4 out of 10 international students asked their landlord to fix the problem, 24% moved out from the accommodation as soon as they could.
Accommodation needs for international students: Raising awareness

- 54% were aware of the Residential Tenancy Authority; 60% had been made aware by landlord or real estate agent. Other sources were university orientation or accommodation services.

- 70% of students preferred dissemination of information through educational providers: promotional material at Orientation, links to website or through accommodation services.

- Critical time to educate when they are actively seeking when they first arrive.
Where to from here?

- Provides a forum for debate and discussion to identify issues of importance to sectoral stakeholders
- Research will continue
  - Help seeking behaviour of international students
  - Nature of the non-student visa activities
  - Do employers value an international experience in the graduate portfolio?
  - Student focus groups
- Development and distribution of resource materials
  - Queensland Police Service Crime Prevention resources
  - Homestay manual
- Professional Development