
Submission in response to the Trade Subcommittee's inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input regarding the Trade Subcommittee's inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors.

The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) is a member of the Australian Technology Network (ATN) and supports their submission which covers international education in broad terms with excellent case studies of best practice in online innovations.

UTS is the top-ranked young university in Australia. Our vision is to be a leading public university of technology recognised for our global impact. As a university of technology, it is our role to ensure our graduates shape the future professions and businesses that will be needed in Australia and overseas. Since our inception, an integral building block of our success has been our outward, global focus and ability to partner with industry. Our campus has no walls; it is deliberately designed to be porous and support connections, knowledge exchange and collaboration. This embodies our approach to engagement and permeates our teaching and research. Our student body is diverse, and we encourage our students and staff to look at the world from different perspectives.

Given the significance of international education to UTS, the focus of this submission is on the second part of the Terms of Reference, followed by a brief observation regarding the connection between Australia's tourism sector and international education.

International Education

Challenges associated with the loss of international student numbers as a result of the significant disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and effective measures to attract and retain students to Australia

UTS's international students are a vital part of the UTS community and we value the global outlook and experience they bring to the university and our domestic students. Our approach is to maintain the numbers of international students we have on campus at roughly 30% of our total students. We also aim to provide at least 30% of our domestic students with an international experience, given the many benefits this brings.

International education is also an extremely important export sector and a substantial sector in its own right. At its peak in 2019, international education was valued at \$40.3 billion a year and supported 250,000 jobs nationally. This educational offering is highly regarded – pre-COVID, nearly 90 per cent of international students were satisfied with their study experience at an Australian university, according to Government surveys.

Throughout the COVID19 pandemic UTS worked innovatively, with the cooperation of both the NSW and Federal Government, to teach students online, postpone subjects that required in person interactions, and provide student support in their home country where possible. However, Australia's reputation as a premier study destination was damaged because of our closed border policy and the Commonwealth Government's message to international students in April 2020 that urged them to return to their home country. In NSW international students were fortunate to have the strong support of the NSW Government which delivered a \$20 million package of aid and support for temporary accommodation, food hampers and emergency services. In addition, NSW led the way with its coordination of the *NSW International Student Arrivals Pilot Plan* which saw the reopening of pathways into Australia for international students on flights chartered by NSW/ACT universities and private providers.

UTS experienced a significant financial impact as a result of the inability of international students to travel to Australia during the pandemic. While our risk plans addressed a range of scenarios with the potential

to negatively impact international student participation, a black swan event like the pandemic meant that very few universities with any proportion of international students emerged completely unscathed.

Like any major industry, Australian higher education must balance the risks and benefits of exporting. There is a financial benefit to Australian universities which, for non-profit entities, is redirected to improving the experience of all students, domestic and international; supporting our research; and extending our connections throughout the world. It should be acknowledged that this benefits not only the university sector but the Australian community generally. In managing the exposure risks for a major Australian export sector, universities must be able to be, and are, agile in our responses, maintaining quality and our national reputation. In this regard, the support of the Commonwealth and NSW governments is critical.

As universities turn to rebuilding our international education offering, the Government should consider providing certain cohorts of international students with a pathway to permanent residency.

Pathway to Permanent Residency

The skills shortage currently being felt in Australia (and in many other Western countries with strong international education sectors) is well known. At present, the vast majority – around 84 per cent – of international students return overseas after their studies. Providing certain cohorts of international students with pathways to permanent residency would not only help revitalise the international education sector, but would also help address Australia's current skills shortage. This policy response would also send a strong signal that we are once again a premier study destination for the best and brightest students that the world can offer. At present, the vast majority – around 84 per cent – of international students return overseas after their studies.

At present, employers are less likely to employ an international student given it is likely they will have to leave the country after two years. Positively, in September 2022, the Australian Government committed to increasing the duration of post study work rights of international students (e.g. from two years to four years for select Bachelor degrees) to strengthen the pipeline of skilled labour. UTS strongly supports this change.

It is imperative that this approach – facilitating pathways to permanent residency for international students – is linked to Australia's broader skilled migration system. It should become a key pillar in how we as a country attract migrants who make, or who will make, a significant contribution to the Australian economy.

Opening pathways to permanent residency for international students qualified to fill vacancies could be achieved by:

- A coherent, joined up approach from how we assess applicants for student visas, through graduate work visas and then transiting from temporary to permanent residence.
- An approach that limits the pathway to professional disciplines in long-term high demand – engineering, IT, design and perhaps entrepreneurs, nursing and aged care, but excludes those jobs where unscrupulous education providers will rort the system – e.g. hospitality.
- A system that is limited to universities who have reputations to protect – the same reasoning as used in the Knight Review's original recommendations (Strategic Review of the Student Visa Program Report, 2011). Extending a scheme to cover trades, for example, has the potential to open the system to abuse and lead to its collapse without proper regulation and monitoring.
- A coherent, joined up approach from how we assess applicants for student visas, through graduate work visas and then transiting from temporary to permanent residence.

Ideas for consideration by Government:

- Replace the Genuine Temporary Entrant requirement with a Genuine Student requirement and make it clear that an international student's ambition to live and work in Australia is acceptable (at least for designated professions).
- Consider allowing different hours of work for students working in their area of specialisation (i.e. in IT or engineering, but not at restaurants or bars). This will go some way to protect students from exploitation.

- Allow only students who complete a qualification of at least the level at which they originally started with to qualify for the pathway. This prevents poaching by unscrupulous operators.
- Allocate a quota of permanent visas four years ahead – e.g. students starting in 2023 are guaranteed that there will be 5000 (say) permanent residency places available in 2027.
- Make the pathway from the graduate work visa to permanent residency clear and simple – this may include government nomination, employer nomination and points based, but the number of points needs to be substantial and guaranteed.
- Ensure that employers are part of the process, that they understand how the pathway works and will employ international students knowing they can retain them long term.
- Work with industry to make sure international students have access to work placement opportunities in relevant courses, in order to further strengthen the pathway. This is good for businesses, good for students and will help give any scheme a quality and compliance focus. For example, the NSW Government recently partnered with SEEK to pilot a new initiative to connect international students to employers. Employers now have the capacity to add a new #NSWJOBSCONNECT filter to job postings to allow international students to quickly identify which job opportunities are available to them.

Online innovations in education delivery and potential opportunities to strengthen the sector's resilience

UTS contends that the international education sector would be enhanced if the Government embraced innovation and new technologies to enhance existing and new modes of delivery for offshore international students, and this may warrant a review of the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* (Cth) to ensure it is current, fit-for-purpose and meets the needs of stakeholders. For example, migration policy may wish to contemplate more flexible visa options (short stay visas) for students engaging in particular activities where shorter periods of time in Australia are required to complete professional experience and capstones. This enables hybrid as well as online learning for offshore students.

Initiatives to ensure positive international student experience and support pathways to build their skills and contribute to Australia's prosperity

UTS is committed to providing students with a distinctive and personalised experience that engages learners activity in all elements of their academic and personal life, within an environment that facilitates positive, culturally aware and enriching engagement. This means preparing our students to be global citizens by building the skills and capabilities necessary to make important contributions to the global community.

UTS invites the Trade Subcommittee to explore our comprehensive list of initiatives designed to personalise and enrich the student experience at UTS (Attachment 1). Highlighted programs are outlined below:

- [Student Learning Hub](#) is part of the UTS Library and [Study Groups](#) are an excellent way to provide faculty-based connections for commencing students with a guide to advise and support them. This is particularly relevant for international students who do not have existing connections and translates to the online environment that was so important due to COVID restrictions. Also, the [Supporting Study](#) site commenced as Supporting Online Study Portal during COVID, but now provides a one stop location for all of the 'what's on' for students each session.
- UTS works with the City of Sydney to support the International Student Ambassador Program. This broadens the student experience out beyond UTS and provides excellent leadership and skills training. These are our recent [ISLA Ambassadors](#) with the new intake recruiting currently.
- [UTS Careers](#) work to connect with commencing students right from Orientation to get them to focus on their future career. That is why the Orientation team at UTS is located within the UTS Careers service and under the DVC Education and Students. In addition to the usual careers advice, resume writing, interview skills and internships, UTS Careers works with [GoinGlobal and Lockin U](#) in China to give international students the best career opportunities. There is also a major focus on internships and professional mentoring, which is particularly important for postgraduates.



- Other key programs include [HELPS](#), [UPASS](#), [UTS BUILD](#), [UTS SOUL](#). [AusLEAP](#) is another important program led by UTS, but is open to international students studying at other universities, who want to volunteer to work in the social enterprise sphere.

Opportunities for international education to support strategic and foreign policy objectives

International students add diversity to the student population and provide enduring cultural links between individuals, institutions, and countries. According to the Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), over the past 50 years more than 2.5 million international students have studied in Australia (more than 90,000 of these received Australian Government scholarships). This is an extremely valuable asset for Australia in terms of soft power diplomacy, and in 2016 DFAT developed a strategy in recognition of the lasting and powerful impact of our global alumni connections (Australia Global Alumni Engagement Strategy). However, the term of the strategy ended in 2020 and it is not clear where Government stands with respect to this policy objective. UTS is grateful for the support DFAT provides to international education and we urge Government to refresh the strategy in consultation with the sector.

Terms of Reference Part 1: Tourism

The connection between tourism and international education is clear. Pre COVID, international students accounted for over 38 per cent of the total tourism spend in Australia and one in four will have family visit the country – another 300,000 visitors spending over \$1 billion in Australia each year. The main challenge for the tourism sector is returning to pre-COVID19 visitor levels, post-COVID19.

ATTACHMENT 1: UTS STUDENT SERVICES AVAILABLE TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

STUDY ASSISTANCE

HELPS U Learn - English Language, academic literacy and assignment writing support

International students can:

- Meet with a Peer Advisor for a face to face or online chat about Academic writing and speaking especially relating to their assignment
- Have a 'one-to-one' face to face or online consultation to discuss an assignment draft with an Advisor
- Receive feedback on assignment drafts (24 hours)
- Join in daily online workshops (on campus or online) which focus on academic writing, speaking and study skills
- Access the online independent self-help resources

HELPS U Connect - informal speaking programs run by volunteers

This assists international students to:

- Learn more about UTS and Sydney
- Improve English fluency
- Develop more confidence
- Learn about other cultures
- Stay connected
- Make friends and have fun

Speaking Programs include:

'Buddy Program': (See examples of buddy matches at end of this document)

- International students improve speaking skills and confidence
- Some buddies take part in language exchange e.g. English/French; English/Mandarin
- Students who volunteer gain volunteer hours for UTS awards (eg BUILD, SOUL and Accomplish) and a Buddy Program Certificate
- Everyone has a chance to reach out, give back, make friends and stay connected

Conversations

- Mornings, afternoons and evenings small group discussions run by volunteers

TalkFest:

- a free, fun-filled event that connects international students and volunteers to promote cultural exchange and develop confidence in group conversations

HELPS U:PASS

Peer Assisted Study Sessions run by experienced students helping newer students with difficult subjects.

It is run in over 50 'challenging' UTS subjects with 170+ sessions delivered online per week.

This helps international students in the following ways

- Better grades
- Improved learning techniques
- Learning from other students -collaborative environment
- Having a chance to ask questions without feeling embarrassed
- Improved communication skills
- A better understanding of subject material
- Access to mock exam questions and other resources
- A chance to interact socially and form friendships
- More free time as one hour of U:PASS Learning is equivalent to a number of hours of individual study.

CAREERS

Note: international students have access to the same resources and/or offerings as domestic students however information listed on this page is targeted specifically towards international students or receives high engagement from international students

UTS Careers General Offerings

- Careers express appointment with a Peer Career Advisor, this includes access to:
 - Resume review
 - Cover letter review
 - Selection criteria review
 - LinkedIn profile review
 - Flash mock interview
- Careers consultation with a Careers Consultant (by referral only)
- Career and life design workshops using Stanford University's innovative approach, using design thinking to address the "wicked problem" of designing students career and life.
- UTS Careers general workshop series helping students to prepare for and navigate their job search and recruitment journeys
- 'Your career in' industry panel series allowing students to hear from alumni working within different industries who provide insights and tips on breaking into the industry
- Graduate and vacation program recruitment series to help students understand the requirements of these programs and prepare for and navigate the associated recruitment process
- In-curriculum Career Support aligned to degree learning, Career Consultants teach within a specific degree with focuses on career decision making and other career related learnings

UTS Careers General Resources

- International Student Career Guide aims to help students navigate the employment market in Sydney and overcome the challenges international students may face when searching for work in a new cultural environment
- Access to UTS Careers workbooks, guides and video playlists covering multiple topics such as resume and cover letters, interview skills, LinkedIn, job and internship search etc.
- Access to RateMyResume which allows students to have their resume reviewed instantly and processed in real time any day, any time (10 uploads per year)
- Access to a video interview practice tool powered by Vieple which allows students to practice their video interviewing skills and provides the option to submit an interview to be reviewed by UTS Careers staff.
- Access to the Professional Mentoring Platform an online space for students to connect with Alumni, Industry and UTS Staff to ask career-related questions

UTS Careers Led Initiatives:

- WIL to Work self-paced online modules to prepare international students for Work Integrated Learning such as internships
- Career tips for international students autumn and spring orientation workshop
- How can UTS careers help you international virtual open week workshop
- Career chats: International small group discussions on the topics such as job applications, job search etc.
- Adapting to Australian Workplace Culture workshop
- Navigating Visa Pathways after Graduation info session attended by a Migration Agent from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
- It's Who You Know networking event for international students with former international students
- University Study tours for international universities to get a feel for the campus.
- Network Café weekly casual networking session specifically for first year international students to meet others similar to themselves
- Industry engagement maintain relationships with companies that specifically target cohorts of international students e.g. LockIn China (career guidance specific for Chinese students), MyNavi (employment opportunities for Japanese students) etc

Collaborative Initiatives

- Humanitarian Scholarship Program deliver Networking Essentials. In collaboration with UTSI

- Career Discussion & Coaching for Law (International Students) informal discussion for international students who wish to enter the Australian workforce. In collaboration with the Faculty of Law
- Univariate a higher education consultancy competition. In collaboration with other Sydney-based universities
- AUPAC workshops and training to provide Pacific students networking and learning opportunities in collaboration with CSJI and ANU Department of Pacific Affairs
- TCS Sustainathon global initiative that invites students to work in teams to solve pressing issues in the sustainability space that align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In collaboration with Tata Consultancy
- AusLEAP Program workshops and training to provide international student exposure to local community services. In collaboration with Masy Consultants, and sponsored by Study NSW

HEALTH AND WELFARE

Note: international students have access to the same resources and/or offerings as domestic students however information listed on this page is targeted specifically towards international students or refers to those services which receive high engagement from international students

UTS Housing

- On campus accommodation
- One cost aside from bedding/personal items and food.
- Safe and secure with 24-hour staffing/security
- Strong residential life programme
- Communal spaces
- RN (residential networker) onsite support and networking.

UTS Health Service

UTS Health Service is a QPA accredited practice that has been supporting the community of UTS for many years. We aim to provide excellent healthcare in higher quality general practice setting to all UTS staff, students, alumni and their families. We offer face to face consultations as well as consultations via Telehealth (including video conferencing and telephone consultations).

Our computerised medical practice operates with doctors and registered nurses. Our caring and experienced staff offer a broad range of general practice services, including but not limited to:

- General health and wellbeing
- Women's health
- Men's health
- Sexual health
- Travel medicine
- Vaccinations (including those for University placement compliance)
- Influenza vaccination including government supplied vaccines for vulnerable groups.
- Childhood vaccinations

Advice for international students on how to access COVID-19 vaccinations (as general practices can only supply to Medicare card holders).

Douglass Hanly Moir Pathology provides pathology collection services on site.

UTS Counselling General Offerings

- Free, confidential individual counselling appointments with a registered psychologist or clinical psychologist to support onshore international students with mental health, emotional, personal, practical and administrative problems. Counselling appointments are offered via phone, Zoom, and in person. UTS counsellors can provide counselling in languages other than English, including in Mandarin, Cantonese, and Indonesian. This service is offered to UTS and UTS College students.
- Counsellors facilitate referrals to relevant supports within the university (e.g. Accessibility Service, HELPS, Health Service, Financial Assistance) and external mental health services. This can enable a coordinated approach across the different service within the unit.

- Facilitate access to evidence-based online e-therapy, and where possible those available in languages other than English, such as the Chinese language depression program at This Way Up Clinic.
- Group counselling workshops are offered regularly throughout the semester in person and on Zoom, including:
 - Procrastinate Less
 - Mindfulness for Academic Success
 - Managing Exam and Assessment Anxiety<https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/health-and-wellbeing/counselling-service-and-self-help/workshops-and-group-counselling-sessions>
- Multi-faith chaplaincy provides emotional and/or spiritual support for students. <https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/health-and-wellbeing/multi-faith-chaplaincy>

UTS Counselling General Resources

- Regularly updated online self-help resources that provide students with information on a range of mental health and study-related topics. For example (but not limited to):
 - Coping with COVID-19 challenges
 - Dealing with anxiety
 - Dealing with depression
 - Dealing with stress
 - Managing feelings of loneliness
 - Improving motivation
 - Managing procrastination
 - <https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/health-and-wellbeing/counselling-service-and-self-help/self-help-resources>
- Online information to facilitate students living in China to access mental health services. <https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/health-and-wellbeing/counselling-service-and-self-help/self-help-resources/resources-students-china>
- Access to free online e-therapy and apps, such as This Way Up and Mindspot. <https://thiswayup.org.au/> <https://www.mindspot.org.au/>
- Access to TalkCampus app, an online wellbeing and mental health peer support network available in multiple languages <https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/health-and-wellbeing/counselling-service-and-self-help/self-help-resources/talkcampus-app>

Collaborative Initiatives

- Offshore international students can access free individual counselling with a counsellor in their home country via phone, email or online through Workplace Options. https://www.advantageengagement.com/1006/login_company_sap.php
- Collaborations with Batyr to enhance help-seeking and stigmatisation regarding mental health, including workshops targeted at international students. <https://www.batyr.com.au/>

ACCESSIBILITY ASSISTANCE

Note: international students have access to the same resources and/or offerings as domestic students in the Accessibility Service, though offerings may differ in the Financial Assistance Service due to eligibility requirements. However, information listed on this page is targeted specifically towards international students or refers to those services which receive high engagement from international students

UTS Accessibility Service Offerings

- The University's central contact point for eligible students living with one or more disabilities, medical or mental health conditions (domestic, remote and international students), providing assistance and support to access services, and to make requests for assessment arrangements and reasonable adjustments.
- Free, confidential appointments via phone, Zoom and in person with an Accessibility Consultant to register with the service, consult on access requirements and develop an individualised Access Plan to enable participation in the learning environment.

- Guidance and assistance for prospective students with a disability or ongoing health condition throughout the application process. An Accessibility Consultant can discuss health condition considerations related to future study, course choice, Special Admission Schemes, accessibility on campus and transition planning into university study.
- During Covid disruption, the Accessibility Service adapted to the changes in teaching and learning to maintain online delivery crucial services and reasonable adjustments to students with disabilities and to meet legislative requirements. This benefitting international students remaining overseas, to access their learning and included internal consultation to implement individual support services e.g. Notetaking, Stenographer services and exams provisions in an online examination environment.
- Accessibility Consultants facilitate referrals to relevant supports within the university (e.g. Counselling Service, HELPS, Careers, Health Service, Financial Assistance) and external services. This can enable a coordinated approach across the different services within the unit.
- Registered students have access to an online resource library with a range of tools, resources and information to support students in the learning environment, including access to assistive technology e.g. Read & Write.

UTS Financial Assistance Service Offering

- Provides a support service for domestic and onshore international students seeking guidance and advice on finances while studying in Australia.
- In addition, the Financial Assistance Programs on offer also provide help to students experiencing current cash-flow shortfalls. Programs available for eligible international students include:
 - Financial Support Grant (FSG) up to \$500 to assist with essential living costs & education-related costs e.g. required texts, placement/internship or project costs, text-book assistance and extra-ordinary support costs
 - Interest free loans (up to \$3000) can be requested
 - Food vouchers
 - Equity Grants (extenuating circumstances considered for additional support)
- There are a range of tools and resources to help with money matters, including budgeting planners, money tracing apps, financial help, improving financial literacy. Also legal and professional help, debt and credit card tips, concessions and discounts. There is also external resources for international students.
- The majority of Financial Assistance programs have historically been available to Domestic students only. These programs were opened to support international students, including those incurring additional expenses in their efforts to return to Australia and recommence onshore study (in 2020).
- AFAS promoted UTS financial programs and linked students to additional community support and organisations. Application process moved online and increased outreach.
- Partnership with Medibank, the preferred Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) partner for International students studying at UTS.

HELPS Buddy Program International/Local matches

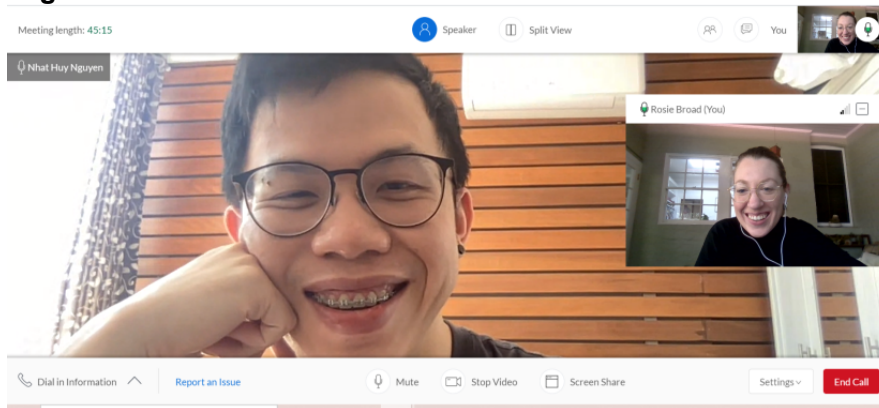
<https://www.uts.edu.au/current-students/support/helps/english-speaking/helps-buddy-program>

True Buddy



Rund and Kate feel like they are true buddies, not just language buddies. Rund had to move overseas to Jordan during COVID-19 and the buddy program allowed her to stay connected to Aussie life during her PhD at UTS. Kate had to move to Cairns from Sydney due to COVID-19 and this program has been one of the main reasons she's been able to maintain contact with Arabic speakers while not in Sydney. The platform UTS provided allowed Kate and Rund to find a buddy who was a good fit - both are interested in learning and practising each others' languages and also have other things in common, including their engineering-focused PhDs. The platform was perfect for COVID because it enabled virtual meetings. Rund and Kate have been buddies for a year even though they have never been able to meet in person.

Connection through coffee



I signed up to the UTS Buddy Program as a means to stay social during lockdown. I thought if it was difficult for me, no doubt it would be quite stressful for those who are far away from family & home. Connecting with Nhat, we chat weekly about our studies, lockdown woes and our shared interest in coffee. Last week Nhat sent me a variety of traditional Vietnamese coffee, and I returned the favour, sending him a blend from my local in Petersham. He was surprised at my recommendation to use a percolator, telling me *'it's the same way we drink coffee in my hometown'*.

Sharing Our Lives



Georgina: "It has been wonderful chatting with Thao about all sorts of things, including being a female professional in the workplace, how my program runs, and she even came along to watch us interviewing. I enjoy catching up with her each week and sharing our lives."

Thao: "When I joined the Buddy Program in June 2021, I was having one of the most lonely and isolated times in Australia away from my family and loved ones. However, after joining this program, I suddenly had someone to listen to, to talk to and to share our mutual, humane experiences. Gradually, I recognized a total shift in my mindset, I felt more confident to reach out more and connect with more people. Georgina's profile captivated me with her wide range of interests and her leadership role at UPASS. As I got to know Georgina more, I was even more captivated by her humour and her kindness towards students. I really cannot stress enough what an impact the Buddy Program has on creating a perfect environment where we, international students, feel free to connect and reach out to a wider