



The international student experience: A data-driven approach to enhancing student satisfaction at institutions of higher education

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International students

- Key at the national and institutional level for economic, political, cultural and academic reasons
- Important source of intercultural engagement
- Key indicator of campus internationalization efforts
- Enhance global and intercultural competence of all students, faculty and staff
- Strategic in incorporating international student perspectives at various levels of operations



International students

- Globally, international student enrollment increased more than three times, from 1.3 million in 1990 to nearly 5 million in 2015 (OECD, 2015)
- This number is expected to increase by another 2.3 million by 2030 (Choudaha & van Rest, 2018)
- The US, UK and Australia hold the largest market share



International student enrollment

- Mobility challenges despite surge in enrollment numbers
- Added pressure to recruit and meet goals
- More than numbers—important source of diversity and intercultural engagement
- Commitment to provide support services critical to enhance ISE



Purpose of study

- Supports argument that ISE is a driver for student recruitment, retention, success
- Evaluates the experience of over 45,000 degree-seeking, undergraduate international students
- 96 institutions in Australia, UK, US
- 4 dimensions: Arrival, Learning, Living, Support Services



Instrument

- ISB—online survey that tracks, compares and benchmarks decision-making, expectations, and satisfaction, from application to graduation
- Established in 2005; 1,400 institutions; 33 countries; over 3 million student feedback
- 4 main components of survey; 267 items
- 4-point Likert scale: (1=very dissatisfied, 2=dissatisfied, 3=satisfied, and 4=very satisfied)

Influence on overall satisfaction

Variables of Satisfaction	β	t	$Sig.(p)$
Arrival Experience	0.149	15.385	0.000
Learning Experience	0.302	30.601	0.000
Living Experience	0.14	14.686	0.000
Support Services	0.124	11.031	0.000

Influence on recommendation

Variables of Satisfaction	β	t	<i>Sig. (p)</i>
Overall Satisfaction	0.197	19.733	0.000
Satisfaction with Arrival	0.124	11.261	0.000
Satisfaction with Learning	0.233	20.281	0.000
Satisfaction with Living	0.109	10.039	0.000
Satisfaction with Support	0.126	9.941	0.000

Top predictors: Overall satisfaction

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Aspect</i>	β	<i>t</i>
Quality of lectures*	Learning	0.085	6.934
Expertise of lecturers*	Learning	0.074	5.847
Studying with people from other cultures*	Learning	0.053	4.978
Organisation of course*	Learning	0.055	4.878
Access to suitable accommodation*	Living	0.074	4.225
Academic content*	Learning	0.05	4.191
Leading to a good job*	Learning	0.046	4.001
Quality of external campus environment**	Living	0.066	3.352
Experience local culture**	Living	0.05	3.051
Cost of living**	Living	0.04	2.734

*Significant at $p < .001$. **Significant at $p < .05$.

Top predictors: Recommendation

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Aspect</i>	β	t
Making friends from this country*	Living	0.124	6.392
Studying with people across cultures*	Learning	0.068	4.812
Organisation of course*	Learning	0.069	4.627
Leading to a good job*	Learning	0.064	4.229
Networking*	Living	0.089	4.086
Opportunities for work experience*	Learning	0.052	4.037
Teaching ability of lecturers*	Learning	0.062	3.888
Academic content*	Learning	0.061	3.874
Quality of lectures*	Learning	0.061	3.7
Quality of the external campus environment*	Living	0.097	3.616

*Significant at $p < .001$.



11 variables impacting both DVs

Accommodation Office	Arrival
Academic content	Learning
Access to academic staff	Learning
Improve English language skills	Learning
Leading to a good job	Learning
Organization of course	Learning
Physical library facilities	Learning
Quality of lectures	Learning
Studying with people from other cultures	Learning
External campus environment	Living
Making friends from this country	Living



Implications

- First impressions matter—airport pick up, orientation, welcome messages
- Remain intentional at creating sense of belonging right from the beginning
- Course design and teaching methods across cultures and systems of education; academic relationship between international students and faculty
- Career guidance and development as a classroom experience
- Showcase academic experiences, achievements, stories to prospective students



Implications

- Develop opportunities for engagement and involvement between international and domestic students, in and out of the classroom
- Making friends—weekly coffee hours, leadership and volunteer programs, conversation partners, and buddy programs
- Inform students about accommodation; internationalize food options
- Changing nature of student expectations; adjust services to meet expectations and demands



Policy recommendations

1) Strategic reinvestment—incorporate or reinvest resources into the student experience at all levels of operations, such as the service mission, faculty engagement, organizational leadership structure, and assessment priorities, so that adequate services and resources can be implemented to support student initiatives.



Policy recommendations

2) Collaborative programming and outreach—implement culturally sensitive programming and interventions that support international students during times of high stress to help with academic, social and cultural adjustment during their time on campus.

3) Training and development—build intercultural competence among faculty, staff and students, aimed at understanding the experience of international students and improving views of campus services for that community.



Policy recommendations

4) Assessment and benchmarking—regularly assess the experience of international students, through assessment tools developed in-house or by external providers, to ensure quality in the assistance provided in both academic and non-academic settings.

5) Holistic communication—establish a strategic communications plan and promotional campaigns to effectively reach, liaise, and optimize engagement among international students.



Related publications

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Thank you!

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