THE AGENT OF QUALITY IN EDUCATION RECRUITMENT

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Agent QA Project

- **IEAA researched the scope for a national quality framework for Australia's international education agents**

    - **agent accreditation system**
    - **code of ethics**

- **Funded by Dept of Education**

- **January – June 2015. Stage 1**

- **Cross-industry Steering Committee**

- **Deliverable – research report with 24 recommendations**

Existing Quality Systems

Australia's existing globally-recognised international education quality system

Sector	Providers	Government	Students	Agents	Agent Associations
• Peak Bodies – Codes of Conduct and Compliance • ACPET (Domestic broker initiative) • English Australia – Partner Agency Program • NEAS – quality standards	• ESOS Act and National Code Standards compliance – written agreements, agents on websites • Agent info on PRISMS • Agent quality audits (internal, ad hoc) • Due diligence checks (internal, ad hoc) • Education delivery regulations, standards, compliance	• ESOS Act and National Code • PRISMS – Data collection • PIER EATC • Regulators – TEQSA, ASQA, Boards of Studies • Immigration – SVP, Post study work rights, e-visa holders • DFAT/Austrade • Govt to Govt in-country advocacy • MARA	• Access agent lists on provider websites • Student advocacy (CISA) • Overseas Student Ombudsman	• Self regulation? • Observance of ESOS and National Code expectations • Adherence to relevant Association, Peak Body and Provider policies and procedures	• Membership eg BELTA, AAERI (criteria?) • Codes of ethics • Monitor member conduct? Repercussions? • Training • Lacking holistic approach • What do they mean to us, the providers?

Any Education Agent Quality Framework would build upon this base

Scoping – Market Input

- **Stakeholders: agents (associations), education providers, government, industry**
- **Survey to all international education stakeholders**
  - **970 responses, + 500 qualitative comments**
- **Stakeholder consultation**
  - **India, China, Singapore, NZ and 5 cities onshore**
- **Focus groups: agents & providers / govt**
  - **gauge opinions from the various stakeholder groups across the industry on options, issues, challenges and best practice to help inform possible models for an Australian education agent quality framework**
- **Competitors – certify agents / codes of practice:**
  - **Canada (DFATD & ICEF course)**
  - **NZ (Education NZ course)**
  - **US (AIRC certification $10K+)**
  - **UK (guidelines, no laws. British Council course $850)**
  - **debates about the role of agents at all, and in immigration**
  - **no formal regulatory framework**

Market feedback

All said:

▪ there is a need for an Australian education agent quality system for both onshore and offshore agents that goes beyond the existing arrangements

▪ 62% of respondents want a (very) highly regulated agent quality framework

▪ no significant differences in opinion between different respondent types or sectors

▪ the current ethics code, the *London Statement 2012,* 53% aware

▪ agents don't get recognition nor is there a "black book"

Agents said:

▪ current training systems either out of date or expensive

▪ insufficient ongoing training and prompt communication on policy changes and sector activity

▪ agents don't have a voice in the sector

▪ no process/body to report concerns about inappropriate agent behaviour

Market feedback

▪ **issues that are not being adequately addressed through the current system – but that providers are legally bound to – include:**

1. **unethical agents and practices**
   - ▪ **poaching – encouraging students to leave one provider for another**
   - ▪ **fraudulent documentation**
   - ▪ **sharing commission with students**
   - ▪ **placing students into inappropriate courses in order to receive bonuses or higher commissions**
2. **lack of reliable information on agent performance**
3. **control (responsibility under ESOS)**
   - ▪ **offshore agents**
   - ▪ **sub-agents**
4. **education agents providing migration advice to students**

Address the issues

- **a system to address :**
  - **the quality of a whole of agency /organisation and**
  - **the quality of individual agents / counselors**

- **model??**
  - **build on the existing (globally regarded) quality systems**
  - **regulated by government? industry? third party? agents themselves?**
  - **do we need / want more regulation?**
  - **risk-based approach**

What are we trying to do here?
- **protect international students**
- **provide assurance to students and providers (latter responsible for agents!)**
- **ensure a quality industry with checks and balances**
- **avoid negative publicity such as the Four Corners report in May**

Framework? Stage 2

- report to government
    - 24 recommendations, including on governance, accreditation, branding, communication, training, funding
- elements of a proposed agent QA framework:
    - code of ethics
    - agent training and ongoing professional development
    - application for accreditation – fee?
    - listing on register
    - communication / portal
    - monitoring
- recognising
    - the strength of Australia's existing quality frameworks
    - the small percentage of bad agent practices in proportion to the success stories
    - Australia's achievements in working with education agents
    - need to limit red tape and bureaucracy to ensure Australia retains a competitive position
    - our existing quality agents

Thank you