17TH IDP AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE
securing the FUTURE for International Education:
Managing growth and Diversity
International Students in Australia –
Beyond the Marketing Hype

a presentation by the
national liaison committee
for international students in australia
at the 17th idp aiec
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Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs
Quality of Education

Academic Staff
When casual staff have to take on a teaching load, we lose continuity in our curriculum. Students have trouble finding casual staff, too (they’re not around). Plus casual staff usually aren’t engaged in research.

(Lecturer, Social and Behavioural Sciences)
Using casual staff degrades the quality of teaching - no commitment, no continuity. This is not the fault of the casual staff, most of who should be in permanent positions if the institutions actually funded enough academic positions. (Lecturer, Science)
Casual staff have no long term commitments. They are paid pathetically and thus appear to offer great savings to the university financially. All too often casuals do the work with as little effort as possible commensurate with their remuneration. More experienced staff become the casuals’ supervisors by default. Thus staff take on extra administrative work for which there appears no workload reward. In many cases academics choose to do the extra work themselves than to work with casuals. (Lecturer, Maths/IT)
Casual staff are cheaper to employ - are not around to do proper supervision - have little security for the future - and are not motivated to improve the course. (Lecturer, Creative Arts)
Many staff spend much of their time supervising casuals. Students complain that they are not available. Their extensive use is exploitation of casuals and a major threat to academic standards. (Professor, Education)
I am entirely dependent on sessional staff to manage almost all of the courses that I am listed against, including smaller courses as well as larger 220+. The conditions they work under are shocking. It is often a case of managing their discontent at levels of university support, deadend jobs, can’t get car parking, no access to a desk or phone, 30+ students in classes when they were tried to be capped at 25-28, websites that don’t work... On top of this the turnover from year to year is extremely high, thus requiring more meetings and administrative support from co-ordinators. Also there is insufficient admin support to carry them, thus as co-ordinator to ease the time they spend on preparation, etc. I supply additional materials eg. supply them with copies of all Reserve readings, advance lecture notes, etc. These are things that ought be done by admin support. When the going is tough, it is really very, very tough (am loathe to complain about it, because it is not a unique problem or issue, rather endemic at present). Sessional staff are calculating their workload (student numbers, hours of preparation, consultation, on-line, students email, running around, attending lectures) as a pay rate of $2.00 an hour - the veracity of this is not what concerns me, rather that they feel the urge to quantify it in these terms suggests that something is amiss. (Senior Lecturer, Humanities)
Quality of Education

Academic Standards
This issue is the most important in Australian Higher Education today. The dumbing-down over the past 15 years has been the equivalent of at least one entire level, ie today’s masters = the mid 80s bachelors. I don’t believe the allocations should be norm-referenced, but when you see 30% of students in a course getting High Distinctions, we KNOW something is wrong! (A/P Reader, Architecture)
We are lowering the TER scores. I have been forced to pass a number of students who should have failed - In fact I have failed them and my grades have been overridden! We are given a very clear message that students must pass, at all costs, and that we must maintain good retention rates - in fact we’re blamed if a student leaves the program. (Lecturer, Social and Behavioural Sciences)
A Credit these days is about the equivalent of a Pass in years gone by. Failures are generally earned by students who do not complete the course. (Professor, Social and Behavioural Sciences)
Quality of Education

Quality Assurance
The university has a well documented and laudable quality assurance process. The actual compliance with the process falls far short of what it should be. The University is good on documentation, but does not provide sufficient resources at the School level to support it. (Lecturer, Engineering)
The little prince said "People start out in express trains, but they no longer know what they are looking for. Then they get all excited and rush around in circles..." And he added, "It's not worth the trouble ..."

Antoin De Saint-Exupéry, The Little Prince (1945)
THANK YOU

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