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Tokyo City University Australia Program (TAP) at ECU

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Australia – Japan mobility focus

Australian and Japanese governments supports closer cooperation between Australian and Japanese Universities

- Australian government selected Japan as a key country in the Government’s flag-ship New Colombo Plan Pilot round
- Japanese government are strongly committed to student mobility with a target to double the number of Japanese students studying overseas, and international students studying in Japan, by 2020.
Australia – Japan mobility focus

A 2014 Japan - Australia symposium focused on strategies to increase student mobility and strengthen university partnerships.

Issues identified included:

- Traditional, 1:1 student exchanges no longer an adequate mechanism.
- New, innovative and flexible responses are required to enable significant levels of student mobility.
- Opportunities exist for a step-change in cooperation models.
ECU and TCU are ‘like-minded’ institutions sharing similar discipline areas and strong existing connections

- ECU has offered Japanese language as a major since 1991 and over the years developed strong relationships with a number of Japanese universities for student exchange
  but ….we were looking for a new partner to grow our inbound study abroad and support internationalisation
- Working together the development of an innovative study abroad model addressed some of the challenges identified in the 2014 symposium
- Partnership opens opportunities for deeper connections
The Australian component of TAP comprises:

- English language and academic program;
- Integrated living accommodation – no more than 2 Japanese per flat;
- Integration of ECU and TCU students wherever possible, with innovative strategies to achieve this goal
Maximising benefits for students?

The TCU/ECU partnership provides an opportunity to internationalise ECU students – *Nationally, 85-90% of university students will never ‘study overseas’*

- Partnership connections are built into the ECU curriculum with Japanese language students being required to ‘interview’ TCU students (captive audience)
Connecting students

TCU students have:

• varying English language abilities
• aged between 18 – 20 and for most, it is their first time away from home
• Academic classes that do not include other ECU students leading to reduced opportunity for integration and an

• We know that isolation and loneliness directly impacts on a students success and same-culture networks are not necessarily a ‘panacea’ and
• We wanted to come up with a comprehensive program to provide student–to–student connections
Developed:

- A comprehensive ‘Experiencing Australia’ program: including both on and off campus activities (13) throughout the 20 weeks
- The TAP Volunteer Buddy Program

• Recruited a specialist Project Officer to oversee development and manage the both aspects of the Program
• Sought input and advice from key stakeholders across the University including our ECU Careers and Leadership team and reviewed ‘best practice’ from other institutions and organisations
Buddy Program Design

• Buddies are recruited from all ECU Schools using a variety of mediums e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Email, Student Portal
• All volunteers attend a 3 hour compulsory training session that covers:
  – The Buddy Role,
  – Boundaries and Confidentiality,
  – Safety during on and off campus activities and
  – Culturally appropriate practices including a basic Japanese lesson
• Buddies are NOT expected to take on a counselling or teaching role and refer problems onto the Project Officer for triage to the appropriate ECU student support area
Matching is complex and a time consuming task

- Students and Buddies are then matched as follows:
  - Those students with lowest levels of English are matched with a Buddy that speaks Japanese
  - Those with higher levels of English proficiency are matched with non-speaking Japanese students

- Each group is assigned:
  - 2 buddies – one ‘leader’/experienced Buddy
  - Mixed groups are assigned one Buddy of each gender/same gender student groups have Buddies of the same
  - a TCU student with a higher level of English
Buddy Program – Experiencing Australia

• Buddies and students attend up to 13 ECU planned on and off campus social inclusion activities
• Many Buddies undertake additional independent activities with their students [guidelines are provided for these during training]
• Opportunity for Japanese students to visit Australian homes
What’s in it for the Buddies?

• Develops employability and professional skills
• Develops interpersonal communication skills, cross-cultural competencies
• Team work with other ECU Partner Buddies
• Making new friends
• Leadership opportunities (returning buddies teach new buddies the ropes)
• CV enhancement – further develop existing skills or acquire new skills
• Thank you ceremony, receive a certificate and letter from the Vice Chancellor
• New study learning opportunities – increased interest in Japanese language studies…
Evaluating the Buddy program – early learnings
Buddies and TCU students

- Surveys run at the conclusion of Cycle A, 2016 for both groups with questions on different elements of the program

- Overall results showed both Buddies and TCU students were satisfied with the TAP Buddy Program
Buddy Skill development / enhancement

Program helped develop or further enhance

- Employability
- Self-confidence
- Inter-cultural engagement skills
- Problem solving skills
- Leadership skills
- Communication skills

Percentage

N = 45
The Buddy Program

- My buddy contacted me regularly: 0%
- I was good friends with my buddy: 0%
- My buddy made it easy to be a student at ECU and to live in Perth: 0%

N = 26/121
Where to from here.....internationalisation

- Building a Buddy leadership program – returning buddies to be identified as ‘leaders’
- Surveys have been refined by having both Japanese and English versions for TCU students
- Investigating opportunities for partial credit for Buddies through a Work Integrated Learning Unit and other relevant Academic units
Where to from here.....internationalisation

- Student exchange agreement
- 3 TCU Students (Cycle A) stayed on are now on exchange for Semester 2 2016
- 10 NCP funded ECU students to visit Tokyo in November 2016 and
- A further 10 NCP funded students will attend a Developing Future Leaders in a Global Business Context program in Tokyo in 2017
- Joint PhD program being considered
Thank You