



Australian Government

Australian Education International

# International Student Survey 2012 **Overview Report**

April 2013



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## About this report

In 2012, Australian Education International (AEI) commissioned research into the overall satisfaction of international students studying in Australia. The research used the International Student Barometer survey instrument and was conducted in collaboration with Universities Australia, English Australia, TAFE Directors Australia (TDA), and the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET). The survey sought responses from international students studying on-shore in the Higher Education (HE), Vocational Education and Training (VET), and English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) sectors. A separate survey instrument was used to seek responses from international students aged 16 years or over studying in Australian secondary schools in years 11 and 12.

The 2012 International Student Survey (ISS) follows an equivalent survey conducted in 2010 (the 2010 ISS). Both surveys were conducted to fulfil a key responsibility of the Commonwealth under the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) International Student Strategy for Australia 2010-2014.

This 2012 overview report, which presents high level findings as well as more specific data on a range of selected measures, focuses on the satisfaction and importance levels reported by survey respondents against a number of key indicators. In addition, a number of high level comparisons between the data collected in the 2012 ISS, the 2010 ISS and 2012 international benchmarks obtained from the International Student Barometer (ISB) are presented.

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# Executive Summary

In 2012, Australian Education International, in collaboration with peak education bodies and state/territory government education departments, conducted a survey of current international students to obtain information about their living and learning experience in Australia. The survey instrument for Higher Education (HE), Vocational Education and Training (VET), and English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) sectors was the International Student Barometer (ISB) which enables Australia's results to be compared against benchmarks of the experience of international students in major study destinations throughout the world. A separate survey instrument was also developed for the Schools sector as no such international benchmarks was available for Schools.

The 2012 survey results confirmed that a high percentage of international students (87%) in Australia were satisfied or very satisfied with their living and learning experience. This result was on par with the international benchmark as measured through the ISB (88%), and the last international student survey conducted in Australia in 2010 (86%). Satisfaction with the level of support that international students received on arrival was also high (89%) and on par with the equivalent ISB international benchmark (85%).

The key findings of the survey included:

- 87% of international student respondents are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their overall experience in Australia (up from 86% in 2010);
- 86% of international student respondents are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their study experience in Australia (up from 84% in 2010); and
- 88% of international student respondents are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with living in Australia (up from 86% in 2010).

The top five factors that influenced international HE respondents' choice to study in Australia were found to be:

- *Quality of teaching* (with 96% of respondents identifying this factor as important or very important);
- *Reputation of a qualification from the institution* (94%);
- *Reputation of the institution* (93%);
- *Personal safety* (92%); and
- *Reputation of Australian education system* (92%).

At a national level, 74% of all respondents in the Schools sector (both Years 11 and 12) were satisfied with their overall school experience in Australia. Seventy-two per cent indicated that they were satisfied with their living experience while 69% considered the teaching at their school to be either good or very good. Sixty-eight per cent were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the support services provided to them. Survey findings in 2012 were similar to the survey conducted in 2010. For example, 75% of Year 12 respondents to the 2012 ISS reported that they were satisfied with their overall school experience which was slightly down on the 76% reported by students in 2010. The Schools survey conducted using a different survey instrument in which a large proportion of students chose the option 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'. The survey responses from the Schools sector are hence not directly comparable with survey responses from other education sectors.

Seventy-seven per cent of HE respondents to the 2012 ISS reported that they would encourage others to apply to their university. Eighty-one per cent of VET respondents, 78% of ELICOS respondents and 74% of School respondents indicated they would encourage others to study at their institution.

## Summary of 2012 International Student Survey Results

Percentage of respondents who were satisfied or very satisfied with their living and learning experiences, including comparisons with the 2010 survey

Satisfaction with studying	2012 survey	2010 survey	Change 2010-2012
Higher Education	85%	84%	+1%
VET (public and private combined)	87%	85%*	NA
ELICOS	91%	86%	+5%
<b>Total tertiary</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>+2%</b>
ISB index for Higher Education	86%	86%	0%

Satisfaction with living	2012 survey	2010 survey	Change 2010-2012
Higher Education	88%	86%	+2%
VET (public and private combined)	89%	88%*	NA
ELICOS	89%	86%	+3%
<b>Total tertiary</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>+2%</b>
ISB index for Higher Education	86%	86%	0%

Satisfaction with overall experience	2012 survey	2010 survey	Change 2010-2012
Higher Education	87%	86%	+1%
VET (public and private combined)	87%	84%*	NA
ELICOS	87%	81%	+6%
<b>Total tertiary</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>+1%</b>
ISB index for Higher Education	88%	88%	0%

\* The 2010 survey published the information collected from public VET respondents only.

## Background and Objectives

In October 2010, the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) published the International Student Strategy for Australia (ISSA). The Strategy set out the Governments' strategic framework and action plan to support a high-quality experience for international students.

To support implementation of the ISSA, Australian Education International (AEI), the international education, science and research arm of the Australian Government Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIICCSRTE), introduced a program of International Student Surveys (ISS). The surveys were designed to obtain a greater understanding of the experiences of international students studying in Australia.

One of the principal objectives of the ISS was to obtain information about the perceptions current international students have about their living and learning experience in Australia. This information provides government and the international education sector with valuable indicators of how well Australian education institutions are meeting the expectations of international students and how resources might best be directed to improve student satisfaction. In addition, the use of the International Student Barometer (ISB) survey instrument in the ISS allowed comparisons to be made against responses from international students studying in other countries. Furthermore, the use of the same basic questionnaires in 2010 and 2012 enabled reliable comparisons between the two time periods.

The findings of the 2010 and 2012 (and any future) surveys will assist in monitoring Australia's international education sector over the life of the Strategy and inform future policy making for international students in Australia.



# Scope, Coverage and Research Methodology

## Scope and coverage

The scope of the 2012 survey was all international students who were:

- on a student visa; and
- studying in Australia at a Commonwealth Register of Institution and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) registered provider in Higher Education (HE), Vocational Education and Training (VET), or in an English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) institution during late 2011 to mid-2012.

For the ELICOS sector survey, international students with tourist or working holidaymaker visas were also invited to participate in the survey. As the voluntary survey was conducted online, it was restricted to international students with email contacts.

The Higher Education sector survey received 37,115 student responses from 36 of Australia's 39 universities. Around 161,000 international students were studying at the participating universities during the survey period. This gave a 23% response rate of participants.

Twenty-eight of Australia's 59 TAFE institutes from all jurisdictions (excluding the Northern Territory) participated in the VET (public) sector survey. A total of 1,802 responses were received from participating TAFE international students. This gave an estimated response rate of 21%. Forty-five ACPET (which included NAVITAS) colleges took part in the VET (private) sector component of the 2012 ISS. Completed survey returns were received from 5,877 out of 15,225 international students who were attending these colleges. The response rate was 38%.

Some 8,772 students from 49 participating ELICOS institutions across Australia responded to the survey. Around 13,300 international students were studying at the participating ELICOS institutions during the survey period of October to November 2011. The response rate was estimated at 66%.

The Schools sector survey sought participation of international students aged 16 years or over, in Year 11 and 12, studying in Australian secondary schools on a student visa. All CRICOS registered government and non-government secondary schools with five or more international student enrolments were invited to participate in the survey. The survey received 2,262 student responses from 278 participating schools. This gave an approximate overall response rate of 39%.

## Research Methodology

The 2012 survey was conducted using the *International Student Barometer (ISB)*, developed by the United Kingdom based consultant International Graduate Insight Group (or 'i-graduate'). The ISB was designed specifically for international students and enables key satisfaction indicators to be benchmarked against equivalent indicators measured in other countries.

The 2012 survey sought respondents' views on a variety of issues relating to their stay in Australia including on how satisfied they were with various aspects of their living and learning experience. The degree of satisfaction was calculated on a four (4) point scale with the categories 'satisfied' and 'very satisfied' being combined to provide a percentage figure for 'satisfaction'. Similarly, for some indicators, 'important' and 'very important' were amalgamated to produce a measure for 'importance', and 'useful' and 'very useful' were combined to provide an overall indicator of 'usefulness'.

The Schools sector had a five (5) point 'satisfaction' scale which included the option 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'. For reasons such as this direct comparison between Schools with other sector data presented in this report cannot be made.

International students were invited to participate in the survey via e-mail alerts sent by their institutions to their university/college/centre and/or personal email address. They were able to complete the online survey questionnaire by following a hyperlink included in the invitation letter.

Responses were collected, collated and analysed by i-graduate. Students were offered incentives to respond, with a cash prize draw, as well as a range of options for charitable donations.

The HE and VET sector surveys were conducted in English while the ELICOS sector survey was conducted in 11 different languages and the Schools sector survey was conducted in 5 different languages.

The 2012 survey questionnaire for school students closely followed that used in the 2010 ISS for schools and was made available both online and in hardcopy.



# Key Findings

## Overall satisfaction

In the 2012 survey, 88% of all international student respondents were satisfied with their overall living experience in Australia and 86% were satisfied with their learning experience. This compares to figures of 86% (living) and 84% (learning) for international students who participated in the 2010 International Student Survey (ISS). The equivalent figures for international tertiary students around the world who participated in the 2012 International Student Barometer (ISB) were 86% (living) and 86% (learning).

## Higher Education (HE)

Around 88% of international students at Australian universities who responded to the 2012 survey were satisfied with their living experience (compared to 86% in 2010) and 85% with their learning experience (84% in 2010). These percentages compared to 86% (for both living and learning) for the ISB international benchmark.

## Vocational Education and Training (VET)

The satisfaction levels reported by 2012 ISS respondents in the VET sector (public and private sectors combined) were: living experience 89% and learning experience 87%.

## English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS)

Eighty-nine per cent of ELICOS respondents to the 2012 ISS indicated that they were satisfied with their living experience while 91% reported that they were satisfied with their learning experience. These figures represented a marginal increase on the 86% (for both living and learning satisfaction) recorded in the 2010 survey.

## Secondary Schools

Seventy-two per cent of Year 12 respondents to the Schools sector component of the 2012 ISS reported that they were satisfied with their living experience in Australia (down from 74% in 2010). Seventy-one per cent rated the teaching at their school as either good or very good (72% in 2010).

## Satisfaction with support on arrival

Student respondents from the HE sector recorded a satisfaction rating of nearly 89% with the information, advice and support provided to them on arrival (which compared to 85% recorded in the ISB). The VET respondents reported 91% satisfaction with the support they received on arrival.

*Only those students who had started their HE or VET course within the previous four months were asked to complete the questions relating to satisfaction with support on arrival.*

The overwhelming majority of the elements included under the general category 'Arrivals support satisfaction' recorded high levels of satisfaction in both the HE and VET sectors.

For HE respondents to the 2012 survey, support and advice regarding *Bank account* (93%), *University orientation* (88%), *Meeting staff* (89%), and *Formal welcome* (88%) scored the highest degree of satisfaction. These satisfaction ratings were within 1 to 3 percentage points of those recorded in 2010. Improvements were noted in the levels of satisfaction with the support received from the *Accommodation office* (86% - up from 79% in 2010) and in the area of *Host friends* (73% up from 69%). Conversely, there was a marked decrease in satisfaction with *Internet access* (77% - down from 86%).

The elements that scored highly in HE achieved similar satisfaction levels among respondents in the VET sector. Indeed, around 8 in 10 VET students who participated in the survey were satisfied with all elements of the 'Arrivals support satisfaction' category - *Accommodation office* (91%), *Welcome/pickup* (86%) and *Host friends* (79%).

A comparison of the results from the 2012 ISS with the global 2012 i-graduate study (ISB) reveals variations in relation to specific elements included under the 'Arrivals support' category. In the HE sector, the main areas were: *Setting up a bank account* (93% compared to 76% for the ISB), *Welcome/pickup* (84% and 73% respectively), and *Accommodation office* (86% and 80%). Satisfaction levels for support with *Health insurance* (82% compared to 88%), and *Internet access* (77% and 80%) were lower among international students in Australia than for their counterparts studying elsewhere in the world.

In the VET sector specific elements of Arrivals support also gained high levels of satisfactions. In particular, *Setting up a bank account* (90%), *Accommodation condition* (88%) and *Registration* (93%).

The overwhelming majority of respondents in the Schools sector who had used arrival support services found the services useful or very useful - including *Airport pick-up* (97% - up from 93% in 2010), and *Orientation program* (91% - up from 89% in 2010). It should be noted however that, as was the case in 2010, only around a third of respondents were aware of the *Airport pick-up* service and just over a half were aware of the *Orientation program*.

This mirrors a key finding from the 2010 survey that although students are generally very satisfied with the support services they receive, large proportions of students were not aware that such support services were available to them.

## Satisfaction with living in Australia

Eighty-eight per cent of international respondents across all sectors were satisfied or very satisfied with living in Australia. This level of satisfaction was up on the 86% satisfaction rating recorded in the 2010 ISS. High levels of satisfaction were reported by respondents to the 2012 survey in all sectors with HE (88%), VET (89%) and ELICOS (89%). These percentages compared to 86% for HE, 88% for VET (public VET only) and 86% for ELICOS reported in the 2010 ISS.

In the HE sector, the overall satisfaction levels closely aligned with those recorded by participants in the ISB (86%). Some variations between the 2012 ISS and 2012 ISB results were evident however, in respect of several of the individual elements included under the 'Living satisfaction' category. In particular, both *Living cost* and *Accommodation cost* recorded a satisfaction rating of just 51% in the 2012 ISS which was down from 61% and 60% respectively reported in 2010 and lower than the ISB ratings (64% and 59% respectively). This is likely to be a consequence of Australia's high currency exchange rate that was prevalent over the 2010-2012 periods.

*Earning money* was another element where some variation existed between the ISS and ISB participants with ISS respondents reporting a satisfaction level of 62%, which was up from 59% in 2010 for this element, compared to an ISB score of 51%. *Financial support* also recorded relatively low satisfaction ratings in the HE sector 65% (the same as in 2010) with the ISB 58%.

The VET sector satisfaction levels for *Financial support* was 77%, *Earning money* 75%, *Living cost* 63% and *Accommodation cost* 65%.

The ELICOS sector satisfaction ratings of around 50% for both *Living cost* and *Accommodation cost* were similar to 2010 while the 66% satisfaction for *Earning money* was a marked improvement on the 52% reported in 2010.

Other elements under the 'Living satisfaction' category that recorded relatively low levels of satisfaction included *Making friends (host country)* with the HE sector scoring 71%, which compared to 73% in the ISB, 79% for VET and 73% for ELICOS.

An analysis of the data element *Safety* revealed high levels of satisfaction among VET respondents (90% - up from 88% in 2010). It was a similar story for the ELICOS sector 87% (up from 80% in 2010). There was a slight decrease in the satisfaction rating reported in the HE sector 84% (compared to 86% in 2010).

Other elements included in the 'Living satisfaction' category where some improvement was noted in the HE sector included *Social facilities* and *Social activities*, both of which scored around 80%, which were the same as the equivalent international ISB benchmarks. These satisfaction levels were 5-6 percentage points higher than reported in the 2010 ISS.

In relation to *Internet access*, respondents from the VET sector recorded a satisfaction level of 83%, the same as in the ISB. The ELICOS sector recorded a satisfaction rating of 76% (higher than the 67% recorded in 2010) and the HE sector 77% compared to 75% in 2010.

Seventy-two per cent of all Schools sector respondents indicated that they were satisfied with living in Australia. Just over 69% were satisfied with *Safety*, while only about one third were satisfied with *Living cost* and less than half with *Ease of getting around*.

Eighty-six per cent of all Schools sector respondents indicated that they would like to have more Australian students as friends. While sixty-four per cent of all Schools sector respondents indicated that they had made an effort to make friends with Australian students, 40% felt that Australian students were not interested in interacting more with international students. Forty-six per cent thought that their English ability was a barrier to making friends with Australian students.

## Satisfaction with learning in Australia

In the 2012 ISS, 86% of international respondents indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their learning experience in Australia. This represents a slight improvement on that recorded from respondents in the 2010 ISS (84%). High levels of satisfaction were reported by respondents in all three sectors with 85% for HE (86% in the ISB), 87% for VET and 91% for ELICOS.

In line with the 2010 ISS results, there was little variation across the sectors in relation to elements associated with 'teaching' that were included under the broad 'Learning satisfaction' category. For example, survey respondents reported high satisfaction levels for *Course content*, and *Expert lecturers*, both of which recorded ratings in the high 80% to low 90% range across all sectors.

There was a similar finding for *Learning support* where the VET sector (91%) achieved the highest ratings for this element. HE (87%) and ELICOS (89%) also scored highly for this element.

Lower satisfaction levels were reported by survey respondents across all sectors in respect of items relating to study-related employment, in particular *Work experience and Careers advice*. The VET sector scored the highest ratings for both *Work experience* (78%) and *Careers advice* (80%) and the ELICOS sector recorded 73% for *Work experience*. The HE sector respondents reported 63% satisfaction with work experienced, compared with the ISB international benchmark of 67%. In respect to *Careers advice*, HE recorded 68%, the same as the ISB benchmark.

Another related item where there was some variation in satisfaction levels between the sectors was *Employability* which recorded 75% for HE against 85% for VET.

Other elements where there were some differences between the HE and VET sectors included *Marking criteria* 82% for HE compared to 90% for VET, and *Performance feedback* where once again the HE sector 82% did not score as highly as the VET sector 89%.

In respect to international PhD students, respondents reported high satisfaction levels for *Managing research* 90% and for *Topic selection* 88% which were similar to the ratings recorded in the ISB. However, for *Opportunities to teach*, respondents reported a satisfaction rating of only 67% compared to 73% for the equivalent ISB benchmark.

An examination of the responses provided by international students in relation to those elements associated with 'support services' grouped under the 'Learning satisfaction' category reveals high levels of satisfaction with these elements. Areas such as *Learning spaces*, *Learning support*, and *Physical Library* recorded ratings in the high 80% to low 90% across all sectors. *Language support* with HE 87%, VET 90%, and ELICOS 82% (which was up 6 percentage points on the 2010 result) was another element to score highly across all sectors.

In relation to *Technology*, satisfaction levels were once again consistent across the sectors with HE registering 87% (up from 81% in 2010), VET 86% (up from 82% in 2010) and ELICOS 86% (up from 81% in 2010).

Sixty-nine per cent of all respondents from the Schools sector indicated that the teaching they had received was either good or very good with a further 25% rating their experience as average.

Prior to coming to Australia and starting their studies, about one in five Schools sector respondents considered their spoken and written English to be either good or very good (23% and 21% respectively). The proportion of students reporting their spoken and written English to be good or very good at the time of the survey had increased to 56% and 48% respectively.

## Satisfaction with support services

Information about how satisfied students were with the various support services offered by education providers was sought from those respondents who had indicated they had used such services.

Eighty-eight per cent of HE international student respondents to the 2012 survey were satisfied or very satisfied with the support services provided by education institutions during their stay in Australia.

This rating was slightly higher than that recorded in 2010 (86%) and the same as the equivalent ISB international benchmark. The overall satisfaction rating for support services reported by respondents in the VET sector was 87%, while ELICOS students reported an overall satisfaction rating of 83%.

An analysis of the support service elements which were common to the HE, VET and ELICOS sectors revealed some variations, particularly in regard to the ELICOS sector. In respect to *Accommodation office*, HE recorded 84%, the VET sector 91% and ELICOS 79%. For *Careers services*, 85% of HE respondents reported that they were satisfied with the service provided as did 90% of VET respondents and 75% of ELICOS respondents. In the area of *Counselling*, HE recorded 91%, VET 95% and ELICOS 80% satisfaction.

An element that scored relatively low satisfaction ratings was *Catering* which recorded 76% for HE and 82% for VET. Other elements under the 'Support services satisfaction' category including *Disability support*, *Health centre*, *Students advisory*, *Finance office*, and *Faith provision*, which all recorded ratings in the high 80 to mid 90 per cent range in both HE and VET.

HE and VET students were also asked about how they would prefer to receive advice and information about available support services from their institution. More than 8 in 10 respondents from both sectors indicated that their preferred communication method was either via email or through the institution's website.

Only a tenth of HE respondents (up to 15% for information on course and department) favoured receiving their information through a virtual learning environment (e.g. Blackboard, Web CT, WebLearn) and only 4% to 5% favoured receiving information via Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube.

There was a similar finding for VET students, with only 5% to 8% of public VET respondents (depending on the nature of the information) favouring a virtual learning environment for receipt of information. Note that this option was not given to the private VET respondents. Only 4% (for course and department information) to 10% (for information relating to social events) of VET respondents (public and private combined) favoured receiving information via Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube.

Sixty-eight per cent of all Schools sector respondents reported that they were satisfied with the support services available at their schools (with a further 26% indicating that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied). *Library* (88%) and *English classes* (68%) were the two support services of which most students were aware of, followed by *Extra-curricular activities organised by the school* (58%). The services that were least well known were *Religious support services* (21%), *Airport pick-up service* (32%), and *Clubs/ societies* (33%). All other services had an awareness level of between 49% and 55%.

*Airport pick-up service* (96% of all Schools sector respondents), *Library*, *English classes*, and *International student coordinators* (all 94%) were considered the most useful services available with *Religious support services* (65%) considered the least useful. All other support services that were used scored a usefulness rating of between 85% and 93%.

## Factors influencing the choice of where to study

For respondents in the HE sector, the top factors that influenced the choice of where to study in Australia were:

- *Quality of teaching* (with 96% of respondents identifying this factor as important or very important);
- *Reputation of a qualification from the institution* (94%);
- *Reputation of the institution* (93%); and
- *Reputation of Australian education system* and *Personal Safety* (both 92%).

*Agents, Friends already in Australia, Institution website, and Parents* were identified as important in helping students decide where to study.

For the VET sector, a high percentage of respondents reported that *Quality of teaching* was a major factor in their choice of where to study. This was followed by *Quality of Research; Personal Safety; and Reputation of the qualification from the institution* with satisfaction ratings ranging all above 90%.

Forty per cent of ELICOS respondents indicated that *Personal recommendation* was a key factor influencing their choice of school or centre followed by *Reputation of the School* (31%). Fifty two per cent of respondents also indicated that *Education agents* played a pivotal role in students' final selection of courses and institution.

*[Only those students who had started their HE or VET course within the previous four months were asked to complete the questions relating to factors influencing, and helping with, their choice of where to study.]*

The 2012 results for both HE and VET sectors closely aligned to those reported in the 2012 ISB with the exception of *Safety* where 92% of HE ISS participants ranked it equal 4th compared to 86% of ISB respondents who ranked it equal 7th. This suggests that students who rank *Safety* as a high priority are more likely to favour Australia over other global destinations.

Key sources of information and advice that helped students choose their HE institution in the 2012 survey included *Agents* (where 44% of respondents indicated that they were a major influence), *Friends* (31%), the *Institution website* (28%) and *Parents* (26%). A comparison with the findings of the 2010 survey reveals some marked differences in the responses to this question between the sub groups of respondents who attended institutions that participated in both the 2010 and 2012 surveys. In particular, there was a considerable difference in the role played by *Agents* (45% in 2012 and 28% in 2010), *Friends* (31% and 44%) and *Parents* (35% and 24%).

Almost two-third of the VET respondents also identified that *Agents* helped to choose their institution followed by *Friends* (29%) and *Parents* (14%). Only 1 in 10 VET respondents reported that the *Institution website* and *Current students studying at the institution* helped their decision to choose the institution.

For ELICOS, the top four reasons respondents identified for choosing to study in Australia were: *English speaking country* (39%), *Opportunities for further study in Australia* (35%), *Safety* (27%) and *Opportunities to work during or after studies* (27%). The main reasons cited by ELICOS respondents for choosing to study an English language course at a particular school or centre were: *Personal recommendation* (with 40% of respondents indicating that

this was a key factor in their choice of school), followed by *Reputation of the school/centre* (selected by 31% of respondents) and *Entry into further study* (25%). Similar findings were identified in the 2010 survey.

Selection of the ELICOS school/centre was also influenced by recommendations received from *Education agents* (52%), *Friends* (25%) and from *Someone who had studied at the school previously* (21%). These percentages closely aligned to the 2010 experience (53%, 24% and 21% respectively) for these elements.

The five most important factors influencing decisions of all respondents in the Schools sector (both Years 11 and 12) in choosing to study overseas were to:

- improve English (72%);
- gain experience living and studying in another country and/or culture (71%);
- improve overall studies (56%);
- improve chances of entering a good university in Australia (50%); and
- obtain a better quality education than is available at home (50%).

Around 6 in 10 of all Schools sector respondents indicated that Australia was their first choice for overseas schooling. The top four factors that influenced the choice of country were: *High quality of education* (57%), *Beautiful, natural environment* (51%), *Safe place to live* (45%), and *Friends living in Australia* (43%).

About half of all Schools sector respondents were influenced in their choice of school by *Education agents* with a further 40% indicating that they had been influenced by the recommendation of a *Friend or relative*.



# Explanatory Notes

## Comparisons over time and between surveys

The focus of this consolidated report is on high level indicators. Where survey response rates, scope, and coverage considerations allow, some comparisons have been made with data collected in the 2010 ISS and the 2012 ISS. For HE only, 2012 international benchmarks were available from the International Student Barometer (ISB) conducted in other countries.

## Timeframe for the 2012 International Student Survey

Sector	Timeline
Higher Education	April to June 2012
VET (public)	July to August 2012
VET (private)	May to June 2012
ELICOS	October to November 2011
Schools	May to July 2012

## Response rate for the 2012 International Student Survey

Sector	Number of participating institutions	Number of student responses received	Estimated number of international students studying at the participating institutions in the survey period (2011-2012)	Response rate
Higher Education	36	37,115	160,999	23%
VET (public)	28	1,802	8,471	21%
VET (private)	45	5,877	15,225	38%
ELICOS	49	8,772	13,290	66%

The Schools sector survey received 2,262 (1,143 Year 11 and 1,119 Year 12) student responses from 278 participating schools. This survey response rate was 39% which is calculated by dividing the total number of completed returns received (2,336) by the total number of students for whom a survey ID had been created (5,926).

## List of Acronyms

ACPET	Australian Council for Private Education and Training
AEI	Australian Education International
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CRICOS	Commonwealth Register of Institution and Courses for Overseas Students
DIICCSRTE	Department of Industry, Innovation, Climate Change, Science, Research and Tertiary Education
ELICOS	English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
HE	Higher Education
ISB	International Student Barometer
ISS	International Student Survey
ISSA	International Student Strategy for Australia
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TDA	TAFE Directors Australia
VET	Vocational Education and Training



