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Submission on proposed changes to the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007

Overview

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / Do NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parts A, B and C of the 2007 National Code have been streamlined to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ provide an overview of the ESOS framework○ summarise the role of the National Code and its purpose○ outline the quality assurance arrangements and roles of other relevant Commonwealth agencies	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some part C and D requirements in the 2007 National Code have been moved to Standard 11 as requirements for providers.• The standards are now in part B.	Support	

Standard 1 – Marketing information and practices

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifies that providers must not engage in false or misleading marketing practices, consistent with Australian Consumer Law. 	Support	<p>Given recent provider closures and ACCC action against the providers, it may be appropriate to include a summary of Australian Consumer Law provisions including “unconscionable conduct” and sanctions etc. in the Code.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing material must accurately identify the provider’s association with any other providers, work-based or work-integrated learning opportunities, and prerequisites including English language. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific provisions prevent a provider from undertaking to or guaranteeing that it can secure a migration or successful education assessment outcome. 	Support	

Standard 2 – Enrolment of an overseas student

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifies that a provider must inform a student before they enrol about: course content, modes of study (including online and/or work related learning placements) and assessment requirements. 	Support	<p>The Tuition Fees Refunds may also need to be clarified before enrolment.</p> <p>Also, information should contain a disclosure of refund administration charges for refunds in case of visa refusals and other defaults.</p>

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires providers to give information about the policy and process for approving welfare and accommodation arrangements for students under 18 where relevant. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires registered providers to have and implement a documented policy and process for assessing English language proficiency, educational qualifications and work experience are sufficient to undertake the course. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporates the requirements relating to course credit, previously in standard 12. Adds that course credit or recognition of prior learning (RPL) must preserve the integrity of the award to which it applies. 	Support	

Standard 3 – Formalisation of enrolment and written agreements

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
Written agreements must include more detailed information about students' enrolment.	Support	
Providers must require students must keep their personal and contact information up to date.	Support	

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provider must retain records of the written agreement and receipts of payments by the student for at least 2 years after the person ceases to be an accepted student. 	Support	<p>The duration of record keeping under National Code may need to align with relevant taxation laws e.g. ATO requires the fee receipts to be kept for 5 years.</p>

Standard 4 – Education agents

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / Do NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifies that providers must ensure the agent has up to date and accurate information, does not engage in false or misleading conduct, declares in writing and takes reasonable steps to avoid conflicts of interest, observes appropriate levels of confidentiality and transparency in dealing with students, and acts honestly and in good faith. 	Support	<p>The provisions should also require the education provider to disclose the fact that the recruitment agent has received a commission from the provider in the student acceptance agreement so students will have informed decision about arrangement with provider and agent.</p> <p>Also, where the student has been recruited through an agent, information about agent must be mandatorily collected during the visa application process such as in ImmiAccount. This can strengthen data collection for monitoring of agent’s performance and behaviour.</p> <p>In addition, a cap on student recruitment fees should be considered to deter students jumping the courses or providers including unhealthy competition among providers</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifies the provider must ensure the agent has appropriate knowledge and understanding of the international education system in Australia, including the code of ethics. 	Support	<p>A process should be established to maintain a publicly searchable “ Register of Education Agents” at Australian High Commission and Embassies so as to manage and monitor the education agents. This process may be delegated to peak bodies such as ACPET/IEAA etc. A fee may be charged for inclusion on such register.</p>

Standard 5 – Younger students

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers enrolling students under 18 must meet any Australian, state or territory legislation or other regulatory requirements relating to child welfare and protection. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires providers to give information to students under 18 about who to contact in emergency situations. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires providers to give information on how a student under 18 can seek assistance and report any incident or allegation involving abuse. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers with responsibility for a student's welfare must check initially and least every six months thereafter that the student's accommodation is appropriate to the student's age and needs. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults involved in or providing accommodation must have any Working with Children clearances (or equivalent) as required in a state or territory. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires a policy and process for managing critical incidents, including in emergency situations and when welfare arrangements are disrupted. 	Support	

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where a provider is no longer able to approve welfare arrangements, all reasonable steps must be taken to notify the student's parent or legal guardian immediately. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers must have documented processes for selecting, screening and monitoring any third parties engaged by the provider to organise and assess welfare and accommodation arrangements. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a provider enrolls a student under 18 who has welfare arrangements approved by another provider, the receiving provider must negotiate the transfer date for welfare arrangements to ensure there is no gap. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provider must advise the student of their visa obligation to maintain their current welfare arrangements until the transfer date or have alternative welfare arrangements approved or return to their home country until the new arrangements take effect. 	Support	

Standard 6 – Student support services

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires providers to give information to students regarding a range of support services, including relating to English language, health, legal services, complaints and appeals avenues, and employment assistance (including resolving workplace issues). 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires the provider to facilitate access to learning support services, including for different modes of study such as online or distance. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifies that providers must have in place a documented policy and process to manage critical incidents that could affect a student undertaking or completing the course. (Note: standard 5 requires a critical incident policy and process more specific to the needs of students under 18.) 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers must take all reasonable steps to provide a safe environment on campus and give overseas students information about how to seek assistance for and report an incident that significantly impacts on their wellbeing. 	Support	

Standard 7 – Student transfers

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers must not knowingly enrol a student wishing to transfer from another provider’s course prior to the student completing six months of their principal course, or for the school sector, until after the first six months of the first registered school sector course. 	Support	<p>The notification of release letter by the original provider should be incorporated within PRISMS as often the students try to submit “bogus” letter of release and it’s not always possible to verify the documentation presented to the education provider.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer requests from the student must be in writing. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provider must have and implement a documented policy and process for assessing student transfer requests, which must outline circumstances in which the provider will grant a transfer because it is in the student’s best interests; and reasonable grounds for refusal of the request. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The standard contains additional guidance for providers about circumstances in which they should grant a transfer because it is in the student’s best interests. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a student requesting a transfer is under 18, written confirmation of agreement of a parent or legal guardian is required. 	Support	

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where a provider agrees to a student's release the date of effect and reason for release must be recorded in PRISMS and the provider must advise the student Immigration to seek advice on whether a new student visa is required. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If release is not to be granted, the provider must give to the student the reasons for refusal in writing. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The provider must maintain records of all requests for transfer, assessment and decision on the student's file for two years after the student ceases to be an accepted student. 	Support	

Standard 8 – Monitoring course progress and attendance

Providers must monitor student progress

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All providers must monitor students' progress, as satisfactory course progress is a student visa requirement. Some sectors require providers to also monitor attendance. 	Do Not Support	<p>The attendance monitoring must be made compulsory for VET, Schools and ELICOS sector. An overseas student on a visa must meet 20 scheduled contact hours under ESOS, implementation of attendance monitoring should not be an optional as it may cause confusions among providers and students. Waiving attendance monitoring has adverse consequences in learning in the VET and ELICOS students.</p>

<p align="center">PROPOSED AMENDMENTS</p>	<p align="center">SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT</p>	<p align="center">COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers must clearly outline and inform the student before they commence their course of the requirement to achieve satisfactory course progress in each study period. 	<p align="center">Support</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers must have documented policies and processes to identify, notify and assist a student at risk of not meeting course progress (or attendance requirements if applicable) where evidence from the student's assessment tasks, participation or other indicators of academic progress indicate the student is at risk of not meeting requirements. 	<p align="center">Support</p>	

Schools, ELICOS and foundation programs

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School, ELICOS and foundation programmes require both course progress and attendance monitoring. The requirement for attendance is 80% of the scheduled contact hours for the course, or higher if specified under state registration or approval frameworks. 	Support	<p>The attendance monitoring must be made compulsory for VET, Schools and ELICOS sector rather than leaving it to ESOS agency. An overseas student on a visa must meet 20 scheduled contact hours under ESOS, implementation of attendance monitoring should not be an optional as it may cause confusions among providers and students.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School, ELICOS and foundation program providers must have a documented policy and process for monitoring and recording students' attendance. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education providers must have and implement a documented policy and process for monitoring and recording course progress, specifying requirements for achieving satisfactory progress, the provider's processes and policies to uphold academic integrity, assessment of progress, identification of students at risk of not meeting requirements and details of the provider's intervention strategy. 	Support	

VET programs

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VET providers must have and implement a documented policy and process for assessing course progress, specifying requirements for achieving satisfactory process and policies to uphold academic integrity, assessment of progress, identification of students at risk of not meeting requirements and details of the provider's intervention strategy. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A VET provider must have and implement a documented policy and process for monitoring students' attendance if the ESOS agency requires that provider to monitor attendance as well as course progress. This requirement in the National Code replaces previous arrangements split between the National Code and Course Progress Guidelines that applied to VET. If the ESOS agency imposes attendance monitoring as a requirement for a VET provider, the minimum requirement for attendance is 80% of the scheduled contact hours for the course. If the VET provider is required to monitor attendance of students, the provider must have an intervention strategy for students at risk of not meeting attendance requirements. 	Do not Support	<p>The attendance monitoring must be made compulsory across VET, Schools and ELICOS sector rather than leaving it to ESOS agency.</p>

Course duration and allowable extensions

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers must continue to not extend the duration of a student’s enrolment if the student is unable to complete the course within the expected duration, unless: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ compassionate and compelling circumstances apply ○ the provider has implemented, or is implementing, an intervention strategy to assist the student to meet course progress (or attendance, if applicable) requirements ○ there is an approved deferral or suspension of the student’s enrolment under standard 9. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a student’s enrolment is extended, the provider must advise the student of any potential impacts on their visa. 	Support	

Reporting breaches of visa requirements

<p style="text-align: center;">PROPOSED AMENDMENTS</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers must continue to report students who do not meet course progress (attendance requirements if applicable) and notify the student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ that the provider intends to report them ○ inform the student of the reasons ○ advise the student they can appeal ○ report the breach in PRISMS in accordance with s19(2) of the ESOS Act 	<p style="text-align: center;">Support</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A provider may decide not to report a student for breaching attendance requirements if the student provides genuine evidence of compassionate or compelling circumstances, is still attending at least 70 per cent of course contact hours and appeals the decision successfully 	<p style="text-align: center;">Support</p>	

Online learning

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online and distance learning are defined in the standard. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2007 National Code requirement that providers must not enrol a student exclusively in distance or online learning in any compulsory study period has been removed. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education and VET providers must not deliver more than one-third of a student's course online. 	Do not support	<p>The limit of online delivery must not exceed one-fourth as international students choose to come to Australia to experience learning in the classroom and meeting people from various countries- why would anyone be willing to pay premium fees if the similar course is available online from the home country itself.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providers must take all reasonable steps to prevent students being disadvantaged by additional costs or requirements associated with online learning or by an inability to access the resources and community of the education institution, or opportunities to engage with other students. 	Support	

Standard 9 – Deferring, suspending or cancelling the student’s enrolment

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Standard 9 now relates to deferring, suspending or cancelling the student’s enrolment (previously standard 13). It clarifies the current requirements but makes no significant changes to policy from the 2007 version.	Support	

Standard 10 – Complaints and appeals

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assessment of an internal complaint or appeal must be finalised within 20 working days.	Support	

Standard 11 – Additional requirements

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Standard 11 creates new provisions for additional registration requirements, many of which were previously in Part C of the 2007 version of the National Code relating to ‘registration authorities’. Registration authorities are replaced by ESOS agencies by amendments to the ESOS Act passed in December 2015.	Support	

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS	SUPPORT / DO NOT SUPPORT	COMMENTS <i>Please provide a comment if you do not support a proposed amendment, and suggest alternative wording if appropriate.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers must seek approval from the ESOS agency, including through the relevant designated State authority if the provider is a school, for proposed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ course content and duration ○ number of overseas students enrolled within the limit approved by the ESOS agency ○ arrangements with other education providers (partnerships). • Providers must also seek approval from their ESOS agency for any proposed changes to the above during their period of registration under the ESOS Act. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers must advise their ESOS agency, including through the relevant designated State authority if the provider is a school, in writing of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ any other affiliated organisations registered on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) ○ any changes to high managerial agents or ownership of their organisation. 	Support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-accrediting providers must undertake an independent external audit during their period of registration, at least within 18 months prior to renewal of registration, allowing the outcomes to be used for registration renewal. 	Support	

Other comments

Please list any other comments here: