

city of villages



Sydney2030/**Green/Global/Connected**

CITY OF SYDNEY  

International Education Action Plan

August 2018

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01 Lord Mayor's message

Sydney is recognised as Australia's only global city and the leading knowledge-based economy in the nation. With world-class educational institutions, Sydney is the leading destination in Australia for international students.

We pride ourselves on offering a safe and rewarding study experience and fostering connections with our communities and business.

In 2016, more than 35,000 international students were studying on campuses in the City of Sydney and more than 10,000 were living locally.

The City of Sydney welcomes these students, who are part of the global talent at the heart of Australia's knowledge-based economy.

We recognise the significant contribution these students make to Sydney's prosperity and their vital role in enhancing our cultural diversity and global connections. We also understand that by providing a safe and rewarding experience for students, they will form a lifelong connection with our city.

International education enhances Sydney's reputation globally as a centre for learning, research and innovation. It also contributes to business and trade connections, which are crucial for a services economy.

We will focus on making international students feel welcome, enhancing their wellbeing and providing them with opportunities to gain transferable skills to meet the needs of the future workforce. The City's initiatives include our award-winning International Student Leadership and Ambassador program (ISLA), launched in 2013, which provides training, mentoring and practical work experience.

International education enhances Sydney's reputation globally as a centre for learning, research and innovation

We identified international education as a priority sector in our Economic Development Strategy 2013. This strategy delivers our vision for a dynamic, environmentally sustainable economy and a liveable city that works for residents, workers, visitors and students.

This International Education Action Plan draws on the findings of research, consultation and roundtables we held with education stakeholders, including strategic partners, education providers and international students' representative bodies.

I am pleased to release this plan and look forward to working with you to realise our shared vision for a global and connected city.



Clover Moore, Lord Mayor of Sydney

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Executive summary

International education in Sydney

Sydney's unmatched quality of life, global connections, and reputation for pioneering education and research opportunities, make it one of the world's most popular destinations for international students, attracting them in great numbers.¹

Many of the international students who come to Sydney are living away from home for the first time. During their stay, their families and communities rely on us – as their host city – to provide them with a safe and rewarding experience.

By partnering with the education sector and its key stakeholders, we enable international students and their families to form lifelong connections with Sydney that strengthen our global ties. Following graduation, these students will forge careers and become leaders who contribute to local and global communities. As such, they can play a vital role in promoting Sydney as an education destination, a place to do business and a place to enjoy visiting for years to come.

In 2016–2017, international students contributed \$28.6 billion to the Australian economy, making the sector the largest service-based export industry in Australia. Overall, it is the country's third-largest export earner.²



ISLA ambassadors enjoying a book

The quality of the international education sector enhances Sydney's position globally as a leading education and research destination. The sector also delivers direct and indirect benefits to local economies, creating jobs and contributing to the community. International students increase cultural diversity, enhance the vibrancy of the city and promote its reputation internationally. Today's student is tomorrow's ambassador abroad.



Our libraries offer study space and free wifi



Our Surry Hills Library pictured above spans four floors and is open seven days a week. It also houses a community centre and childcare centre.

Our role is to work with industry and government partners to create an investment climate that allows the international education sector to grow and diversify. Through research and collaboration, three key themes were identified for how the City can best support the sector. They are welcoming, wellbeing and work-integrated learning. International students' study experiences – specifically, what happens outside the classroom – are key to enabling Sydney to stand out as a globally favoured education destination, and the City is uniquely placed to support these experiences.

The study experience in our local area marks the start of a student's lifelong connection with our city. The international student community also plays a key role in growing and strengthening Sydney's global connections. International students enhance Sydney's vibrancy and liveability by contributing to our cultural diversity and improving our reputation as a global talent hub – whether they are working or volunteering during their studies, or staying on to work after graduation.

Through their talent and ideas, international students make significant contributions to our knowledge-based economy, as well as to our trade and business connections. The academic connections forged during students' time in Sydney open doors for future research collaboration, and offer the potential for innovation and productivity gains for the city through early access to technological advances. These students also highlight Sydney's creative and intellectual assets, enhancing our reputation internationally as a centre of learning, research and innovation – which attracts global talent.

By assisting the international education sector, we will enrich the diversity and cultural vitality of the city. International students provide diverse social and cultural perspectives that enrich the communities in which they settle. By increasing community understanding of a wide range of issues, languages and cultures, international students can contribute significantly to Sydney's society. All students, both domestic and international, also benefit from this diversity, which translates into a greater capacity to operate effectively in the global economy.

International students often have a different perspective, enabling them to deliver a fresh injection of culture and ideas. This encourages creativity and innovation, which can result in significant productivity gains and a dynamic economy. Geographically, areas of significant innovation in Australia are the same areas where there are large numbers of visitors and residents from overseas. Notably, more than 80 per cent of Australia's patents are recorded in the nation's major cities, where three quarters of national economic growth takes place.



Volunteers helping at the Redfern Community Centre Christmas Party

Globally, the international student market is one of the fastest growing industries in the world, and national and international competition is intensifying. This means we can't be complacent, and we can't work alone. We need to partner with StudyNSW, the NSW Police Force, Redfern Legal Centre and Sydney's educational establishments to maintain our status as a premier education destination.

We recognise that Sydney lacks a coordinated approach to initiatives for international students, which has been challenging for us when working with multiple partners in the past. This plan focuses on actions within our control; however, where we identify issues that we can't control, we will advocate for change and support the lead agency.

This action plan sets out a framework for supporting the sector over the next 10 years. It is based on the findings of extensive research, as well as consultations with key partners in the sector.

The actions outlined in this plan encourage a flourishing international education sector. We understand that other factors are also at play, such as global economic conditions, Australia's macro-economic policies, technological trends, and the actions of individual students and education providers. Yet, it is important to understand and monitor trends in the sector and use this information to review and influence priorities and actions. We will also use quantitative and qualitative indicators to track the success of the actions in this plan.

Areas of action

In this plan, we outline a range of actions to support the international students and the international education sector. These are grouped under three themes:

Welcoming

We will work with Sydney's communities to welcome newly arrived international students. We are committed to developing and delivering initiatives to embrace these students, no matter what time of year they arrive. Our program will include face-to-face initiatives and online resources.

We will promote Sydney's position as a leading education destination in Australia and globally. In addition, we want to sustain our connections with international graduates, whether they stay in Australia or return home.



Chinese New Year 2018 festivities include events run by ISLA ambassadors for international students

Wellbeing

We measure wellbeing using indicators such as physical and mental health, and social connection. Problems such as homesickness, mental illness, exam-related stress and workplace exploitation all affect wellbeing. It is our plan to assist students to overcome these problems by helping them connect with government agencies and participate in the community. Our initiatives recognise factors that contribute to a sense of safety, including language, culture, work and social connection.

We recognise that international students may struggle to find affordable housing and may need special support to understand customs, and cultural and lifestyle differences as they settle into our community. We will work hard to tackle these issues, supporting students so that they have a safe and rewarding study experience. Where possible, we will aid students with advice on choosing safe housing options. We will also give advice on personal safety and access to relevant support networks.

Work-integrated learning

An important consideration when choosing a study destination is the opportunity to gain professional experience while studying, termed 'work-integrated learning'. To help with this, we will develop opportunities for students to gain meaningful work experience with an industry or community partner.

We will work with stakeholders to generate vocational placements, internships, industry- and community-based learning, and volunteering. This will help strengthen connections between students and their local communities. We will increase awareness among businesses of the contribution international students can make to their enterprises. This will increase the employability of graduates, support Sydney's global talent pool and strengthen our international connections.

03

Introduction

About this International Education Action Plan

The City of Sydney's International Education Action Plan is our commitment to enhancing the capacity of the international tertiary education sector.

The international education sector is one of the fastest growing industries worldwide. Its global growth rate is 3.9 per cent; however, in Australia it has a growth rate of 8 per cent and our local area is the epicentre. It is NSW's number one services export – worth \$2 billion a year more than tourism.

International students make significant contributions to Sydney's prosperity, and play a crucial role in enhancing our cultural diversity and global reputation as a centre for learning, research and innovation. The flow-on effects of international education are far greater than that of tourism, due to the duration of students' stays, their local spend, and the jobs and enduring global ties created.

The sector has a reputation for providing high-quality education, and the potential to create more jobs. We identified international education as a key area for development in our Economic Development Strategy 2013.³ The strategy built on the broad economic themes contained in Sustainable Sydney 2030⁴, and guides the City's economic development initiatives, aspirations, role, priorities and approach.

Australia's education sector is so globalised that one in five students is from abroad⁵, with students from Asia making up more than two-thirds of their number.⁶ In Sydney, most of our international students are from Asia, putting the city in a strong position to benefit from these growing economies.⁷ In addition to benefiting employers who hire international students, the sector can help local businesses, workers and residents build productive social, cultural and business relationships in Asia.



The library network offers access to a huge number of books, CDs and DVDs

This plan outlines actions for increasing the City's engagement and collaboration with government agencies and education providers, as well as improving support for international students.

By partnering with the education sector and its key stakeholders, we can help the sector to deliver direct and indirect benefits to local economies while furthering Sydney's global academic, business and trade connections.

Analysis from our research helped us define the role the City should play in supporting the sector. It also revealed several thematic areas that require further action by the City and its partners to provide this support. These themes are welcoming, wellbeing and work-integrated-learning.

These actions contained within this plan aim to foster a positive experience for international students in Sydney, ensuring the sector remains competitive. They will also help the sector to attract global talent, and strengthen Sydney's national and international reputation as a great place to visit, live, work, invest and study.

Ultimately, the academic connections forged during international study experiences can help attract investment and make Sydney's economy more competitive internationally, leading to greater resilience. This supports the structural adjustment of the economy towards the valuable knowledge sector, which will help secure the living standards of our residents into the 21st century.



International students can attend community events, such as the one above held at Glebe Library featuring The Glebe Strings Ensemble

Based on evidence

This plan is based on the findings of research and consultation with local residents, workers, students, visitors and the business community.

Researchers compared Sydney's international education sector with that of other capital and global cities; identified major trends and issues affecting the sector; and established baselines for indicators that will be used to monitor changes over time.

We commissioned Access Economics to determine the economic contribution of international students studying at tertiary institutions within or bordering our local area.

We engaged the Institute of Public Policy and Governance at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) to investigate how international students living in the local area perceive their wellbeing and the factors contributing to their wellbeing.

The economic contribution of international students on holiday in Sydney while studying outside our local area is not included.

A dynamic plan

This is a dynamic plan, which we will update to meet the changing needs and priorities of the sector.

We will regularly report on our progress, including providing annual updates on achieving our targets and identifying trends. We will undertake a review of the plan at the midpoint, and a full review in 10 years.



Our Customs House Library offers guided tours for international students to introduce them to general library services and English language learning resources

Our partnership approach

The City of Sydney can't deliver this action plan alone. We will seek to strengthen partnerships and networks with industry, government, community and other stakeholders, to achieve more and support the whole sector.

We recognise the excellent work of our strategic partners, and we will support them in further developing this crucial economic sector.

In 2012, the NSW Government released its response to the International Education and Research Industry Action Plan, an industry task force report that outlines what NSW can offer international students⁸. In 2016, StudyNSW, a division of NSW Trade and Investment, released its International Education Strategy.⁹ Wherever possible, we will align our actions with the NSW Government's response.

We will work with stakeholder groups such as Austrade, StudyNSW, the NSW Police Force, NSW Fair Trading and Redfern Legal Centre to develop and share information important to international students, ensuring coordination of resources across the different levels of government.

We have established memorandums of understanding with the major universities in our local area, and meet university staff to advance areas of mutual interest.

We are also collaborating on research and projects that enhance the reputation of Sydney's education sector.

To help meet the changing needs of international students, we will meet representatives such as of the ISLA program, the Council of International Students Australia (CISA) and other international student groups, to discuss how we can better support the sector.

Defining international education

Three groups form the focus of the international education sector: international students, education providers and business.

International students

In 2016, more than 35,000 international students were studying at City of Sydney campuses, and more than 10,000 were living within the local area.¹⁰

In addition, international students who study or live outside our boundaries are likely to spend time in our local area when they first arrive, and at night and weekends, enjoying our world-class attractions, shopping, restaurants and bars.

Education providers

Education providers can be divided into four major categories: universities; vocational education and training (VET); English language intensive courses for overseas students (ELICOS); and schools.

More than 150 tertiary education providers have campuses in our local area that are attended by international students.¹¹

Across NSW, universities cater to more than 40 per cent of all international students, most of whom are at publicly funded universities. This is followed by mostly-private VET providers, which cater to 32.9 per cent of students. Nineteen per cent of students study at ELICOS providers, most of which are private, and schools account for another 2.8 per cent.



Group discussion at the Education Provider Forum on international student wellbeing

Businesses

A variety of businesses provide services for the international education sector. For example, education agents help international students find institutions that suit their needs; accommodation providers host international students; employers hire students, either during or after they complete their studies; and tourism businesses cater to students and their visiting families.

Our focus

Our local area is one of the world's leading education destinations, offering first-class educational institutions and renowned research facilities.

Given an increasingly competitive environment, our ability to attract and nurture the best candidates from around the globe is an investment in our city's future.

We focus on the tertiary education sector, including higher education, VET and ELICOS.

We are uniquely placed to support international students to have a safe and rewarding experience, which is one of Sydney's key strengths as an education destination.

We will focus on three core areas: welcoming students, enhancing their wellbeing and promoting work-integrated learning.

Welcoming students

We will work to make all newly arrived international students feel welcomed. This will enhance our position as a leading education destination in Australia and globally.

We understand that first impressions count, so the City is committed to developing and delivering initiatives to welcome these students.

Our program will include face-to-face initiatives and online resources.

Enhancing wellbeing

We will aim to create a safe and rewarding experience, providing information about safe housing options, advice on personal safety and access to relevant support networks. The term 'wellbeing' covers issues such as homesickness, mental illness, exam-related stress and workplace exploitation. We will help international students to connect with local communities and government agencies, foster a positive study experience and build their capacity to fully participate in the community. Our initiatives recognise factors that contribute to a sense of safety, including language, culture, work, social connection, community participation and access to support services.

Learning through practical experience

In a highly competitive global market, students consider several factors when deciding where to study. Important among them is the opportunity to gain professional experience while studying, termed 'work-integrated learning'. We will work with stakeholders to develop these opportunities, including vocational placements, internships, community-based learning and volunteering.

International students also value the right to work after graduation. Direct employment of international students contributed more than 3,800 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs locally in 2009, providing an important talent pool for our business community.

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International education in Sydney

Economic contribution

National and NSW

Whether international students are paying for tuition fees, accommodation, travel, or goods and services, they are major contributors to Australia's economy.

In 2016–2017, international students spent \$28.6 billion. Of this total, \$19.1 billion was export income (money paid from overseas sources).¹²

Furthermore, international students paid \$12.1 billion in direct tuition fees, and for goods and services. In addition, they spent \$5 billion indirectly. Their total spending represented 1 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product (GDP).¹³

Australia's share of the international student market is large, considering our small population. In 2014, we were the leading destination worldwide for international students.¹⁴

The international education sector is the country's largest service-based export industry and the third-largest export earner, only surpassed by coal and iron ore.¹⁵

NSW has more international students than any other state or territory. In 2016–2017, it received about \$10.2 billion of export income generated by international students, who also contributed nearly \$2.8 billion in direct spending in the state.¹⁶

Our local area was a major beneficiary, with international students contributing more than \$1.6 billion to our local economy and supporting around 10,000 FTE jobs.¹⁷

In addition, international students, and their families and friends, spend huge sums on travel. Students also pay about \$3 billion in direct taxes and through goods and services taxes.¹⁸

The City of Sydney local area is the epicentre of the international student market in Sydney and NSW, with more than 150 education establishments in our boundaries

Higher education institutions are significant beneficiaries. The Group of Eight estimated that in the period 2009–14, international students paid \$19.1 billion to Australian universities, representing around 16 per cent of total university revenues.¹⁹

In 2014–15, it is estimated that international education contributed to 130,744 FTE jobs in Australia.²⁰ This amounts to one FTE job for every four students.

In addition, more than \$1 in every \$3 spent by an international visitor in Australia was spent by an international student.²¹ On average, in 2015–16, international students spent \$19,570, which was much higher than the average spending of \$4,261 per international visitor.²²

Added to this, students draw in foreign travellers. In 2009, for every six international students studying in Australia, a friend or relative visited from abroad.²³

Metropolitan Sydney

Sydney offers pioneering education and research, unmatched quality of life and global connections.

When international students visit Sydney, they stay for much longer than other visitors, paying for accommodation, meals, transport, entertainment and sightseeing.

Our local area

The City of Sydney local area is the epicentre of the international student market in Sydney and NSW, with more than 150 education establishments in our boundaries.

The University of Sydney, UTS, University of New South Wales (UNSW) and TAFE Sydney Institute all fall within or near our borders. We are also home to campuses for many more private and public universities, and vocational training and English language courses.



International students are welcome to join the City's network of libraries and access our extensive collections, including IELTS, online resources, and free wifi and study spaces

International openness

With their presence, international students reinforce longstanding cultural ties, especially in the inner city.

In total, 27.5 per cent of our residents have Asian ancestry and more than 20 per cent speak an Asian language. Of these, about one in five holds a bachelor or higher degree, making our residents a valuable resource for employers requiring well-educated, multilingual employees.

All Sydneysiders benefit from these diverse social and cultural perspectives, which encourage greater engagement in a globalising world.

International connections

When international students choose to study in our local area, they are also improving economic engagement and diversity, making Sydney less dependent on specific regional economies.

The academic connections forged during students' time in Sydney open doors for future research collaboration, and offer the potential for innovation and productivity gains for the city through early access to technological advances.

They also help highlight Sydney's creative and intellectual assets, improving our reputation internationally as a centre of learning, research and innovation, which in the long term attracts skilled global talent.

More prosaically, but importantly, doing business across national boundaries is easier when dealing with people who are familiar with Sydney.

Aiding economic transformation

Ultimately, these international connections can help attract investment and make Sydney's economy more competitive internationally, leading to greater resilience.

This will support the structural adjustment of the economy towards the valuable knowledge sector, which can help secure the living standards of Sydney residents well into the 21st century.



Lawn Library activation at the Sydney Writers Festival held at Walsh Bay

05

Contemporary challenges

Global competition

Globally, transnational student education (studying in a different country) is one of the fastest-growing industries, with student numbers more than doubling in the period 2001–15 to more than 4.5 million. This is projected to reach 8 million by 2025.²⁴

International students make up around 21 per cent of the higher education student population in Australia, with only the UK having a higher proportion of international students.²⁵

Sydney has traditionally attracted the largest share of international students in the country; however, other Australian and global destinations are aggressively competing to increase their share of the market. This means that we must encourage international students to not only choose Australia, but also to choose Sydney.

Sydney cannot afford to be complacent if it wishes to maximise its advantages, given the prospective growth of the transnational education market.

Attracting global talent to increase productivity

With several international studies pointing to a scarcity of skilled global workers as the post–World War II ‘baby boom’ cohort reaches retirement age, the global competition for young skilled migration is intensifying.

In addition, a recent study found that a 10 per cent increase in the number of people completing a tertiary qualification in Australia would improve labour productivity (measured as GDP per capita) by 1.5 to 2 percentage points.²⁶ This same analysis estimated that tertiary-educated workers added around \$200 million, or 12 per cent of GDP, to the productive capacity of Australia in 2014.²⁷

We must encourage international students to not only choose Australia, but also to choose Sydney

Sydney has a globalised and highly educated workforce, with 40 per cent of employees holding a tertiary qualification, and 32 per cent speaking a language other than English.

Many international students have gone on to become highly successful permanent migrants, broadening our skills and knowledge base, strengthening international links and diversifying our social mix.

The sector also helps attract global talent by strengthening national and international recognition of Sydney as a great place to visit, live, work, invest and study.

Between 2006 and 2011, 290,000 international graduates who studied under a student visa (just under one-third) were granted a permanent or provisional visa, allowing them to live and work in Australia²⁸, adding to our global talent pool.

Around 624,001 international students studying in Australia are currently on student visas. Based on historic averages, this means that around 130,000 extra tertiary-educated people will be available to the Australian workforce over the coming years.

It is believed that recent changes to post-study work entitlements may have only a slight effect on this retention rate.²⁹

International students account for about half of enrolments in IT, and management and commerce, and about one-third in commercial engineering.³⁰

Sydney is attractive to foreign companies. More than 600 multinationals have regional headquarters here, providing significant economic benefits and job opportunities for our residents.

Australia’s network of free trade agreements, particularly in North Asia and South East Asia, provide the opportunity to strengthen trade and investment with the region, acting as a multiplier for economic wellbeing and job creation



Prince Alfred Park offers 7.5 hectares of green space, basketball courts, tennis courts, fitness stations as well as benches to sit and relax, barbecue facilities and picnic areas

Strengthening social cohesion

We must embrace diversity and maintain social cohesion if we are to honour the environmental, social and economic principles that underpin Sustainable Sydney 2030. By assisting the international education sector, we will enrich the diversity and cultural vitality of the city and improve lifestyles.

International students provide diverse social and cultural perspectives that enrich the communities in which they settle. All students, both domestic and international, also benefit from exposure to this diversity, which translates into a greater capacity to operate effectively in the global economy.

International students often have a different perspective, enabling them to deliver a fresh injection of culture and ideas. This encourages creativity and innovation, which can result in significant productivity gains and a dynamic economy. Geographically, areas of significant innovation in Australia are the same areas where there are large numbers of visitors and residents from overseas. Notably, more than 80 per cent of Australian patents are recorded in the nation's major cities, where three-quarters of national economic growth takes place.

Aligning the education sector

By promoting our local area as an education destination, we will be underpinning the personal, professional and institutional ties that are formed through international study. In this way, we will help sustain Sydney's global status and engagement, enhance goodwill and our image, and increase cross-cultural communication. International students become excellent ambassadors for our city.

If international students have a positive study experience, this can have important implications for future investment and trade flows.

Promoting a positive study experience

Enhancing the wellbeing of students and providing a positive study experience are vital for sustaining the sector. International students benefit greatly from their time in Sydney, experiencing personal and professional growth, a quality education and valuable work experience, ultimately increasing their employability in their home country.

By increasing community understanding of a wide range of issues, languages and cultures, international students also contribute significantly to Sydney's society.

However, we have identified issues that may affect the wellbeing of international students in Sydney. These include language barriers, and difficulty making friends and integrating into the local community, leading to social isolation, which can undermine their study experience.

Enhancing orientation

Extending a welcome to newly arrived international students is important. Their arrival marks the start of their educational journey in Sydney and their lifelong connection with our city. Making them feel welcome also promotes Sydney's strengths as an education destination.

Making safe accommodation choices

High rents in our local area are driving students on limited incomes to seek cheaper forms of shared accommodation. It is acknowledged that in extreme cases, international students are more vulnerable to ending up in overcrowded and unsafe accommodation. We can act to reduce such unauthorised and unsafe accommodation.



Visit one of the City of Sydney library branches to relax and enjoy reading a book, or to do your homework with friends

Promoting personal safety

It is recognised that international students are more vulnerable to becoming victims of crime and may be less likely to report the crime due to various factors. We can work to engender trust, promote cross-cultural understanding and raise awareness of how to stay safe.

Accessing resources and assistance

It can be challenging for international students to navigate their life and work while studying in Sydney and trying to make the most of their stay. We provide access to a range of resources that enhance the study experience and encourage students to participate more fully in the community. We also encourage students to use our community facilities, which can help improve wellbeing.

Gaining work-integrated learning

Opportunities to gain professional experience and work part time are key reasons for choosing to study in Australia. However, it can be difficult for international students to gain these experiences. Equally, businesses and community partners may not be aware of the benefits of hiring international students.

We know that international students take many factors into account when deciding where to study. We can't influence all these factors but, by working with strategic partners, we can help ensure that Sydney remains Australia's premier education destination, and a global leader.



Group participating in a workshop at Sydney City Farm, an urban agriculture project in Sydney Park

06

Focus and outcomes

Role of the City

Our role is to work with industry and government to create a climate that allows the international education sector to diversify and grow.

However, Sydney lacks a centralised approach to tackling the difficulties faced by international students. In the past, this has been challenging for us when working on initiatives involving multiple partners.

Many of the initiatives we are proposing call for greater cooperation among stakeholders. However, this action plan focuses on projects within our control. Where we identify issues we can't control – for example, problems with immigration and visa processing – we will advocate for change and, where appropriate, support the lead agency or organisation.

Focus for action

The International Education Action Plan sets out three areas we will focus on, in addition to providing overall support for the sector. Our projects tackle the challenges and promote the opportunities we identified during our research and consultation.

Sydney ... offers a positive study experience, fostering future trade and business connections



Cycling to work at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital

The three areas are:

–**Welcoming:** We will work to ensure that our communities embrace newly arrived international students. This will enhance Sydney's position as a leading education destination.

–**Wellbeing:** We will support a safe and rewarding study experience, which includes raising awareness of safe housing options, safety initiatives and access to wellbeing resources.

–**Work-integrated learning:** We will develop opportunities for international students to gain meaningful professional work experience and strengthen their connections with the local community, as well as facilitate opportunities to improve employability.

The following sections set out more detail about these three areas and the major projects we will deliver. Appendix 1 provides a breakdown of actions and details about partnerships and time frames.

Outcomes

Our support will ensure we sustain Sydney as a globally favoured education destination that offers a positive study experience, fostering future trade and business connections. Our support will link the international education sector and Sydney's global business community. We will support the sector's participation in leading research and development, and ensure students have lifelong connections to the city. Such connections will create opportunities for marketing to new and emerging markets.

We aim to facilitate an education sector that is sustainable and innovative, contributing to Sydney's reputation as a desirable place to study, live and visit, as well as to work and do business.

07

Welcoming

Why we need to act

Sydney is currently the first choice for students wanting to study in Australia. However, competition from other major international education markets has grown significantly. The stronger Australian dollar has also increased the cost of studying and living here.

These factors make it important that international students have a positive experience while they are here. They are a major source of referrals and we want these students to be our ambassadors when they return home.

First impressions count and the City of Sydney is seen as the 'host', so it's our job to make students feel welcome when they arrive and to help them orient themselves. We are committed to delivering an extensive program of initiatives throughout the year to achieve this.

What we will do

We will work to ensure Sydney's communities and international students both benefit from the opportunities transnational education provides. This will enhance the city's position as a leading education destination.

Welcoming and orienting newly arrived students

International students do not commence study in Sydney at one particular time in the year. They enrol and start courses throughout the year.

The City's welcoming program seeks to greet and welcome students on an ongoing basis, using in-person initiatives, and print and online resources. We aim to make international students feel welcome and enable them to better orient themselves as they settle in and start studying.

The City of Sydney is seen as the 'host', so it's our job to make students feel welcome

Promoting Sydney's strengths as a study destination

Sydney is Asia's gateway to Australia, giving us a significant advantage over other Australian cities when targeting growth markets such as China, India and South Korea.

While our main focus is Asia, we have also begun targeting emerging markets such as Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, where students are also attracted to the Australian education experience.

We will collaborate with stakeholders, such as Austrade and StudyNSW, to make Sydney stand out.

Also, by increasing engagement with institutions, we can help them build reciprocal arrangements with academic organisations abroad. This will benefit students in Sydney and overseas, and strengthen the sector.

By collaborating in the promotion of our international education sector, we will deliver more effective programs individually and collectively, as well as promote Sydney where appropriate through, for example, trade missions.

Strengthening alumni networks and connections

We recognise that international alumni returning to their home country often assume leadership positions in government or industry. If their international study experience has been positive, this can have important implications for future potential investment and trade flows. Alumni also become respected sources of advice for prospective students.

We are keen to promote awareness of Asia, given its rate of growth and proximity to Australia. We will engage with the New Colombo Plan students to draw on their experiences of placements and study in Asia.

We will support an alumni program to retain and access the global talent pool of individuals educated in Sydney. This will strengthen their formal and informal networks and connections to our city. Such a program will supplement the alumni networks managed by individual institutions.



Official Welcome to Sydney for international students at Sydney Town Hall

Major projects

We have many major initiatives to welcome students to the city, which include:

- Hosting the official welcome to international students at Sydney Town Hall. In 2017, more than 1,000 newly arrived students attended
- Producing the *International Student Guide*, which contains information to assist students with their transition to studying and living in Sydney
- Working with StudyNSW to support the Sydney Airport welcome desk, which is a valuable resource for students when they land.

Details of all our projects and programs can be found in Appendix 1.

Case study 1 Official welcome

For more than a decade, the City has hosted the annual official welcome for newly arrived international students. In 2017, more than 1,000 students from different institutions and disciplines attended the event, marking the start of their lifelong link with Sydney.

In addition to the Lord Mayor's message, the local Aboriginal community delivers a Welcome to Country and service providers, including Surf Life Saving NSW, Fire and Rescue NSW and Redfern Legal Centre, host a stall offering information on wellbeing and safety. The University of Sydney, UNSW, UTS, TAFE Sydney Institute and StudyNSW sponsor the welcome, strengthening our engagement with the sector.

Case study 2 International student guide to Sydney

Arriving in a new country can be daunting, particularly if it's your first time away from home. In recognition of this, we

collaborated with the publisher Insider Foundry to develop a guide to assist students with their transition to life in Sydney. It covers broad cultural norms, city orientation, cultural events, dining, leisure activities and wellbeing. StudyNSW now also collaborates on this initiative, increasing its reach among students.

The guide is written by students for students and is available online and in print. More than 40,000 hard copies are distributed each year, including at the Sydney Airport welcome desk, and through education providers.

Case study 3 Sector collaboration: graduate and global engagement

Across the sector, we facilitate reciprocal agreements between Australian and international institutions. For example, representatives from Chengdu, China, attended the City's Chinese New Year Festival in 2011, and the Mayor of Chengdu visited Sydney in 2017. The Chengdu City Government then developed a program that helps Sydney-based students study in Chengdu.

We are piloting farewell ceremonies for our international graduates. We collaborate with institutions to strengthen relationships with former students, whether they return home, or choose to remain in Australia on post-study visas and contribute to our global talent hub.

In consultation with the sector, we have piloted our international friendship ceremony, where the Lord Mayor presents new graduates with an 'international friendship certificate', thanking them for choosing Sydney as their education destination.

In 2015, during our sister city celebrations with Guangzhou, we brought together Sydney's six leading universities to host a special alumni reception. Government agencies that collaborated to run the reception include the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and Austrade.

08 Wellbeing

Why we need to act

Studying in a foreign language in a new country without a social support network and limited financial resources can be daunting.

Our research has shown that international students often face many challenges while living and studying in Sydney. These can include culture shock, limited community participation and language barriers. In addition to these factors, the high cost of living in Sydney and the lack of affordable housing can also undermine their experience.

International students have a dropout rate of 9 per cent nationally.³¹ So, it is important that our students are aware of services that support their wellbeing and help them make the most of their study experience.

What we will do

We will work to support a safe and rewarding study experience. We will provide programs to raise awareness of safe housing options, introduce safety initiatives and assist sector stakeholders to improve their capacity to support international students. We will also continue researching international student wellbeing.

Raising awareness of safe accommodation choices

We recognise that students may struggle to find affordable housing. Where appropriate, we will promote and facilitate the development of affordable student housing.



Outdoor fitness class with a view at Observatory Hill

The City is working hard to ensure that international students are better informed about their housing and tenancy rights. We have also launched education campaigns to encourage them to accept that they may have to share accommodation. The City's Housing Policy will directly respond to the need for diverse and accessible housing options for all communities.

Engaging on personal safety matters

Our key objective is to increase actual and perceived safety, to strengthen communities and increase social inclusion.

The City recognises that international students are vulnerable to becoming victims of crime. In addition, they may be less likely to report a crime due to factors including mistrust or fear of the police in their home country, or simply because they do not know how to report crime.

We attend events at educational institutions to distribute crime prevention resources among international students. These resources are available in 11 languages.

We also facilitate safety information sessions, along with the seven police commands in our local area, for diverse community groups. These sessions promote positive interaction between members of the NSW Police Force and international students, to engender trust and increase cross-cultural understanding.

We will work to support a safe and rewarding study experience



The City offers courses on cycling, bike care and maintenance at the Sydney Park Cycling Centre

Providing access to wellbeing resources

Adequately supporting students is at the heart of the sector's sustainability. We will work to support students so that they have a safe and rewarding study experience. The City will raise awareness of safe housing options, safety initiatives and wellbeing resources.

We will enhance students ability to access to information and services relating to accommodation, safety, health, counselling, employment, transport, recreation and social connections. Our website has resources and links to useful information and organisations that can assist international students with various issues. It is very important that students from smaller education providers can access such resources as their colleges often do not have the same facilities as the larger institutions.

International students living in our local area will also be able to enjoy using our library, recreational and sporting facilities. In addition to being an education resource, our library network is a meeting space and online resource. We can ensure international students are aware of these facilities.

Stakeholders in the sector recognise the need to cooperate to best support international students in Sydney. We work with StudyNSW and the NSW Police Force to produce an annual international education provider forum, which is open to all stakeholders interested in improving the experience of these students.

Building a dialogue with international students

International students are a culturally diverse, transient population and it's important we consult with them about their needs.

In 2013, we held two round tables in partnership with StudyNSW, bringing together key sector stakeholders to discuss issues that are important to the international education sector. The meetings identified the need to better communicate the range of information and services available to support students, which we have done. We will continue to work with our strategic partners, in particular StudyNSW, the NSW Police Force and international student representatives.

In 2016, we engaged the Institute of Public Policy and Governance at UTS to investigate how international students living in the local area perceive their wellbeing and the factors contributing to their wellbeing. The institute conducted the first international student wellbeing survey in Australia.

All survey participants lived and/or studied in our local area. The questions focused on settling down in a new and foreign context, housing, safety and security, financial difficulties, discrimination and exploitation, and social integration.

The survey found that international students face several wellbeing and health challenges soon after arriving. It found that locating an area to settle in and being able to rent adequate accommodation, connecting with other international and local students, and feeling safe all increased physical and emotional health.

Encouraging student participation in city life

We will promote the facilities and programs offered in our community venues, libraries and sports facilities to encourage international students to make the most of Sydney's cultural and recreational life.



A cooperative housing complex in Newtown providing affordable housing for students

Major projects

We have launched several major initiatives for international students, which include:

- Establishing the Unauthorised Accommodation Investigation Team, making us the first council in NSW to set up such a specialist unit. As part of our multi-agency approach, the team investigated reports of illegal use of property and took action to shut down illegal accommodation providers. This team operated for two years
- Advocating for the appropriate development of affordable student housing
- Introducing a wellbeing and safety forum to aid information sharing by connecting stakeholders, services and experts. We co-host the forum with the NSW Police Force and StudyNSW
- Researching indicators of international students' wellbeing to better inform our long-term role.

Details of all our projects and programs can be found in Appendix 1.

Case study 1 Unauthorised Accommodation Investigation Team

Living in suitable accommodation is important to the wellbeing of international students and contributes to a safe and rewarding study experience. Because these students are vulnerable to finding themselves living in overcrowded and unsafe accommodation, we established a specialist team to investigate reports of illegal use of property, becoming the first council in NSW to do so. The dedicated specialist team was in operation for two years, and now any complaints received by the City regarding unauthorised accommodation are forwarded for investigation.

We are using a multi-agency approach to shut down illegal accommodation providers. In addition, we have launched an educational campaign to encourage universities and tertiary institutions to tell students about safe rental choices.

Case study 2 Wellbeing and safety forum for education providers

The City of Sydney, StudyNSW and the NSW Police Force established this forum to improve communication between international education partners so that they can improve resources for students.

It is open to any stakeholder interested in approaches and initiatives to support a safe and rewarding study experience. Each year, a different theme, such as safety, accommodation or sexual health, is explored.

Case study 3 International Student Wellbeing Research Project

In 2016, we collaborated with UTS in this research project, which is the first of its kind.

Researchers focused on international students living and working in our local area and explored key aspects of wellbeing, such as housing and housing exploitation; safety and security; financial resources and exploitation in the workplace; discrimination; and social integration.

We found that soon after arriving in Sydney, international students face several challenges to their health and wellbeing. We have prioritised these areas and our findings have informed this action plan.

09

Work-integrated learning

Why we need to act

In a highly competitive global market, students evaluate several factors when considering where to study. Important among them is the opportunity to gain professional experience with an industry or community partner while studying, termed 'work-integrated learning'.

This includes vocational placements, internships, industry- or community-based learning, and volunteering. The right to work after graduation is also highly valued.

International students, whose skill sets are an asset to the local labour market, are eligible to work up to 40 hours per fortnight. In addition, their work hours are unrestricted during semester breaks.

These factors make Australia an attractive destination for students needing to supplement their savings while they study. Many of these students study an English language course and then undertake VET or higher education. Yet many employers are unaware of the benefits of employing international students.

It is important to take advantage of existing resources and networks, and identify gaps in supporting international students to participate in work-integrated learning programs. It isn't possible to place all students, and domestic students also face challenges finding work-integrated learning. However, international students face unique challenges such as language barriers, issues with their visa status and discrimination. Some of these students are highly qualified and would be a great asset to Australian companies, particularly those expanding into global markets.

Students value opportunities to contribute to their local community

Another barrier to finding work-integrated learning is the onerous requirements for employers, which include taking out insurance cover, developing a work plan and providing supervision. Employers may think the investment isn't worthwhile unless the student learns quickly, is highly motivated and can work for several months.

Students value opportunities to contribute to their local community, which helps them meet new people and practise their English.

What we will do

We will develop opportunities for international students to gain meaningful professional work experience and strengthen their connections with the local community.

Enhancing employability

We will work with the sector to promote and leverage opportunities for students wishing to stay on after graduation and gain employment in accordance with their visas.

We aim to increase knowledge exchange and innovation by creating opportunities for students to gain professional experience, improving their employability.

We are leading by example, offering work experience through our international student internship program, which we developed as an acknowledgement of today's competitive job market. The program enables students to use their academic knowledge in a professional environment.



ISLA ambassadors hosting an information stall at an orientation event

Developing leadership opportunities

Our ISLA program includes skills development and mentoring, volunteer work experience, and graduation and induction as an ambassador.

In addition to encouraging social cohesion, the program provides opportunities for international students to obtain practical and meaningful professional work experience and opens networks for future employment.

We launched work-integrated learning opportunities such as ISLA and the internship program to create opportunities that would help students integrate and learn about local culture, easing the effect of language barriers and social isolation, and combating negative perceptions of safety.

Participating in the local community

Volunteer programs in local communities provide opportunities for international students to contribute while also meeting new people, practising English conversation, and building and strengthening skills. Often, they are a stepping stone to employment.

Major projects

Our major projects that focus on work-integrated learning for international students include:

- Creating opportunities for students to gain professional work experience through the City of Sydney's international student internship program. The program has been running since 2011 and allows four international students to gain paid work experience with the City of Sydney, one day a week, for 12 consecutive weeks
 - Providing students with work experience and community connectedness through ISLA. It is designed to improve engagement between the City and the international education sector, and build the capacity of international student organisations to deliver community events. Students work with us to promote our events and programs to international students and develop initiatives to meet community needs
 - Facilitating volunteering opportunities that connect students to the local community. The City of Sydney is collaborating with key partners to offer opportunities for international students to engage with large-scale sporting events such as the 2015 Cricket World Cup and the AFC Asian Cup.
- Details of all our projects and programs can be found in Appendix 1.



Group enjoying a workshop at Pine Street Creative Community Arts Centre

Case study 1 **International student internships**

We are leading by example with our internship program, which gives students an opportunity to gain paid work experience at the City of Sydney, allowing them to use their academic knowledge in a professional environment.

The program has been running since 2011, enabling four international students to work one day a week for 12 consecutive weeks. The interns complete a discrete project related to their chosen area of study.

Case study 2 **International Student Leadership and Ambassador Program**

ISLA is an award-winning program that provides training, mentoring and practical experience to leaders in the international student community. It is designed to improve engagement between students, the City of Sydney and the international education sector.

The program also assists international student organisations to deliver community events.

In addition to encouraging social cohesion, the program provides opportunities for international students to obtain practical and meaningful professional work experience and creates networks for improving future employability.

Case study 3 **Volunteering programs**

We promote opportunities for international students to contribute to their local communities.

Volunteering also helps international students meet new people, practise speaking English, and build and strengthen new skills, and can be a stepping stone to employment.

We also collaborate with key partners to give international students opportunities to engage with large-scale sporting events. In 2015, we collaborated with organisers of the Cricket World Cup and the Asian Cup, and will continue to do so in the future.

10

Measuring success

Overview

The actions set out in this plan are intended to encourage a flourishing international education sector.

We understand that other factors are also at play, such as global economic conditions, Australia's macro-economic policies, technological trends, and the actions of individual students and education providers.

Nevertheless, it is important to understand and monitor trends in the sector and use this information to review and influence priorities and actions.

Indicator framework

We have developed a community indicator framework to measure wellbeing. It covers social, economic, environmental, cultural and governance conditions in our local area.

The indicators we have devised to monitor changes in the international education sector will be linked with the City's broader community indicators for dynamic, resilient local economies; and healthy, safe and inclusive communities.

Performance measures

We will examine quantitative and qualitative indicators to track the success of the actions in this plan. Our indicators will not be absolute measures of performance, but rather signal trends in the sector. We may be able to compare the results we generate with Australian and NSW statistics on the education sector. However, we will not be able to tell whether the local sector is outperforming or underperforming against state or national trends.



Our libraries offer a quiet place to study

Memorandums of understanding

To measure the success of the memorandums of understanding we have drawn up with major universities, we will focus on the annual program of projects put forward. We will produce an annual report summarising the projects and their outcomes. Generally, the number of projects completed will indicate the effectiveness of the memorandums of understanding. The success of each individual project will be tracked using project-specific indicators, as well as qualitatively analysed when completed.

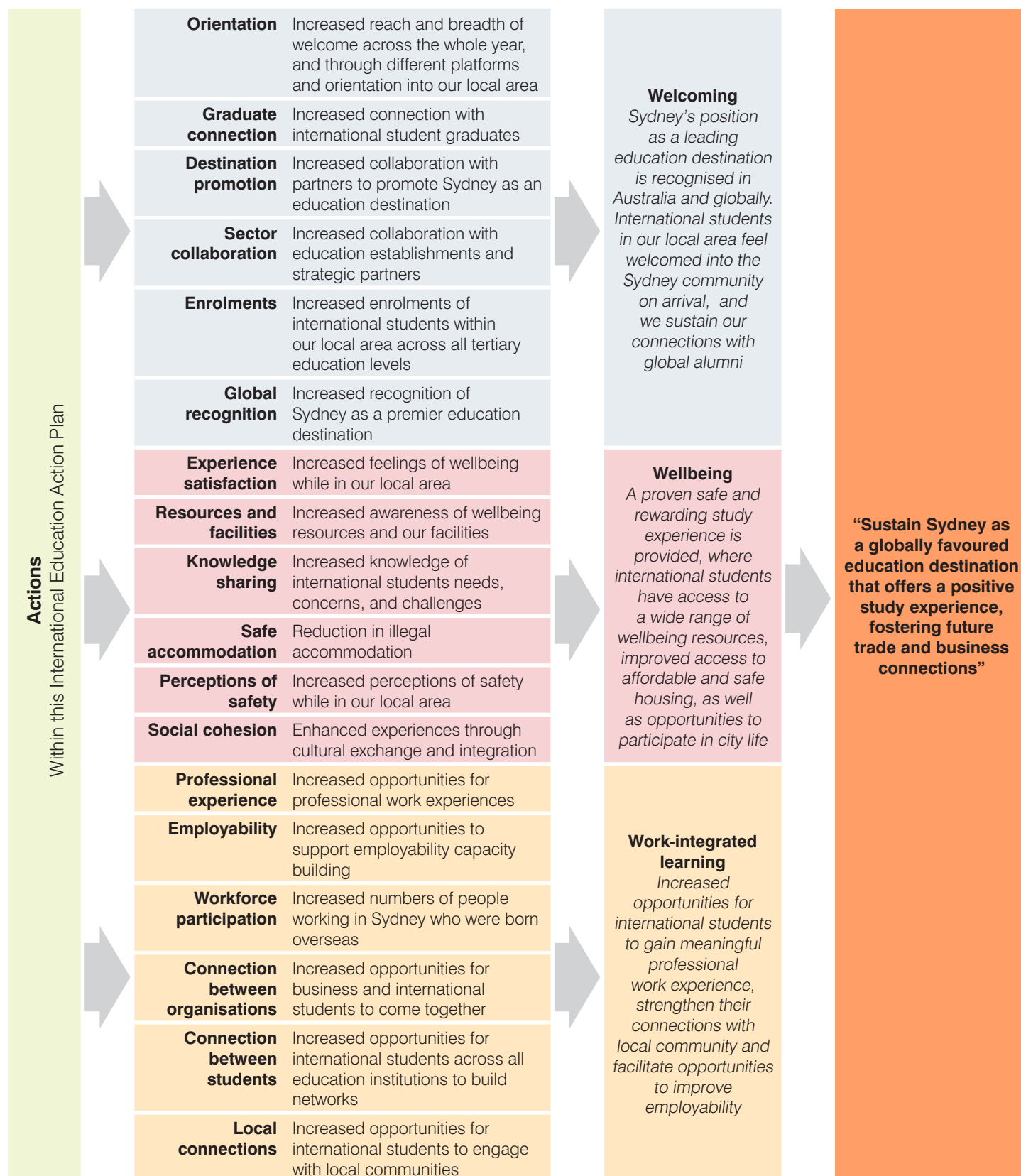
International student support

We will use quantitative and qualitative indicators to track the effectiveness of our support and services for international students. We will track the number of initiatives delivered to support international students each year. We will use specific indicators to track the success of each initiative, and qualitatively analyse them as they are completed. To measure student safety, we will work with stakeholders such as the NSW Police Force to track incidents involving international students each year.

International education research data

The number of international students enrolled nationally can be estimated by looking at the number of student visas granted. Tracking enrolments at a local area level is difficult; however, we can track numbers through individual educational institutions. Tracking the country of origin of international students who choose Sydney will allow us to measure the effectiveness of our targeted promotional campaigns.

The indicators below are based on the areas of welcoming, wellbeing and work-integrated learning, and assist us in contributing to measurable, positive change in the international education sector.



11

Implementation and monitoring

Implementation

The projects identified under Actions (in Appendix 1) in this plan are high level, requiring more refinement and resources.

We are aware that while immediate action and results are desired (and needed), we must balance our resources, capacity and competing priorities.

The projects set out in this action plan have been prioritised according to current circumstances and indicative time frames. Activation has been broken down into three categories:

- Now – projects and programs underway or starting soon
- Next – projects and programs beginning in the medium term
- Later – projects and programs beginning in the medium to longer term.

Start dates for projects led by the City will be confirmed annually, as they are developed further and as budgets and resources are allocated for their delivery.

Review and monitoring

The international education environment is dynamic, and projects and priorities will change. Some projects we have identified may not be needed and new priorities may emerge.

We will report annually on progress towards achieving targets, and identifying trends and projects, although some data will not be refreshed as frequently.

The City will assess priorities annually, based on results and as new information on the needs of the sector becomes available.

At the end of the first five years of the action plan, we will launch a major review.



Prince Alfred Park pool is open year round is the City's first heated outdoor pool that is fully accessible. Adult learn to swim classes are available at pools in our local area.

12

Appendix 1: Actions

1. Welcoming

What will we do?		How will we do it?	Partners	Ongoing	Now	Next	Later
Welcome and orientate newly arrived international students	1.1	Develop a 'welcome program', which will include: –Greeting international students on arrival; for example, StudyNSW coordinating the running of the welcome desk at Sydney Airport –Hosting the official welcome for international students –Informing international students about the city and participating in student orientation events hosted by education providers –Promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture to international students to deepen their understanding of Sydney; for example, through the official welcome	StudyNSW Education providers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community	✓			
Strengthen alumni networks and connections	1.2	Explore opportunities to provide alumni programs for international graduates			✓		

What will we do?		How will we do it?	Partners	Ongoing	Now	Next	Later
Promote Sydney's strengths as a leading education destination	1.3	Attract students through increasing awareness of Sydney as a leading education destination by: –Participating in trade missions coordinated by stakeholders –Leveraging our sister city relationships –Reaching international delegates visiting the city for conferences through Business Events Sydney –Using our marketing channels such as our website and marketing campaigns	StudyNSW NSW Govt Sister cities Business Events Sydney		✓		
	1.4	Develop opportunities for international students by raising awareness in our residential and business communities of the international education sector's contribution to the local economy and community; for example, raising awareness of StudyNSW's NSW International Student Charter	StudyNSW		✓		
Enhance Sydney's strengths as a leading education destination	1.5	Work with education providers on research and other projects of mutual benefit, such as using memorandums of understanding	UTS USYD UNSW Education providers	✓			
	1.6	Work with Business Events Sydney to attract education-related conferences, which develop and showcase local knowledge and expertise	Business Events Sydney		✓		

2. Wellbeing

What will we do?		How will we do it?	Partners	Ongoing	Now	Next	Later
Raise awareness of safe accommodation choices	2.1	Coordinate a whole-of-sector approach to addressing illegal accommodation within the local area	Education providers NSW Police Force Accommodation providers Redfern Legal Centre	✓			
	2.2	Inform international students of their rights and responsibilities when accessing housing	Redfern Legal Centre	✓			
Engage on personal safety matters	2.3	Develop international student safety campaigns to increase actual and perceived safety, such as by: –Publishing crime prevention resources in community languages –Attending events hosted by education providers to share these resources –Facilitating safety information sessions with the police local area commands	Education providers NSW Police Force	✓			
Provide access to health and wellbeing resources	2.4	Develop and share information and services for students related to accommodation, safety, health (e.g. mental, sexual and reproductive health) counselling, employment, transport, recreation and social connections by: –Using our communication channels including the international student pages on our website –Enhancing our welcome program and other events that enable service providers to showcase their services –Using channels provided by education and accommodation providers, and services frequented by international students –Provide more culturally sensitive and multi-language information resources	Service providers Education providers Redfern Legal Centre	✓			

What will we do?		How will we do it?	Partners	Ongoing	Now	Next	Later
	2.5	Explore the creation of a one-stop shop of information and services for the wellbeing of international students, in partnership with stakeholders	StudyNSW Redfern Legal Centre			✓	
	2.6	Support education providers and other stakeholders to collaborate, share information and offer wellbeing resources to students; for example, through the annual international education provider forum	Education providers StudyNSW NSW Police Force	✓			
Build a dialogue with international students	2.7	Conduct research into international student wellbeing –for example, through the International Student Wellbeing Survey – to measure the perceived wellbeing of international students in our local area and incorporate this feedback into decisions about how to support them	UTS	✓			
Encourage student participation in city life	2.8	Promote the facilities and programs offered in our community venues, libraries and sports facilities to encourage international students to make the most of Sydney's cultural and recreational life			✓		
	2.9	Explore opportunities to enhance the experience of students living in our area to promote cultural exchange and integration			✓		
	2.10	Explore opportunities to communicate environmental sustainability to international students			✓		

3. Work-integrated learning

What will we do?		How will we do it?	Partners	Ongoing	Now	Next	Later
Enhance employability of international students and graduates	3.1	Raise awareness of our internship program; for example, through our communication channels such as our international student web pages			✓		
	3.2	Advocate for international students on important issues relating to wellbeing, such as work opportunities and workplace conditions	Redfern Legal Centre	✓			
	3.3	Raise awareness among businesses of international student work experience opportunities; for example, by promoting existing campaigns and resources				✓	
	3.4	Encourage students to gain work experience and jobs by promoting existing programs that improve their employability during and after their study		✓			
Develop leadership opportunities	3.5	Leverage our International Student Leadership and Ambassador program to allow students to develop their professional skills and connections with our community					✓
Participate in the local community	3.6	Facilitate volunteering opportunities for international students in community events and programs produced by the City and other organisations; for example, New Year's Eve and Chinese New Year celebrations, the Tourism Ambassador Program and major sporting events			✓		
	3.7	Review opportunities to extend the official welcome to include a campaign that acknowledges the talent international students bring, raising awareness of the direct and indirect benefits to the community and business					✓

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