



Inquiry into the Welfare of International Students

(a) the roles and responsibilities of education providers, migration and education agents, state and federal governments, and relevant departments and embassies, in ensuring the quality and adequacy in information, advice, service delivery and support, with particular reference to:

i) Student safety:

No relevant concerns specific to our cohort

ii) adequate and affordable accommodation:

Affordable student housing is required with special consideration of the needs of international students who lack the intrinsic social supports enjoyed by domestic students. Subsidy targeted at landlords housing international students may be beneficial to help our costs and offset tuition as well as currency conversion rates.

iii) social inclusion:

No relevant concerns specific to our cohort

iv) student visa requirements:

As international medical students although we are entering our program upon completion of an undergraduate degree, we are deemed as undergraduates by the universities as reported to immigration. The major concern that we have with student visas centers around working hours limitations. We believe strongly that professional programs (i.e. Medicine, Dentistry, all post-graduate undergraduate programs) should be situated on the same footing as graduate and post-doctoral studies which place no limitation on the working hours of the spouse or partner. This would greatly facilitate the transition as a family to Australia. In addition to the social support that their presence would have, the financial contributions would greatly ease the feasibility of family structure integrity. Lastly, employers are reticent to hire a qualified individual for the current 20 hours as this creates staffing difficulties for them.

v) adequate international student supports and advocacy:

Here at the University of Queensland there is a fantastic support program for medicine as well as international students enrolled in other programs.

vi) employment rights and protections from exploitation:

Even though we are competitive with domestic students within the medical program we are not afforded equal opportunities based on merit, due to international status.

TELEPHONE: (07) 3365 5261

FACSIMILE: (07) 3365 5595

WEB: www.uqms.org



vi) International medical students in Australia are relegated to a significantly lower tier of selection for further training upon graduation. In addition, the current practice of escalating over-enrollment not only jeopardizes international students but also domestic student opportunities to practice medicine. This situation was not fully disclosed to many of us when we were recruited to study in Australia as international medical students. We face increasing barriers to our opportunities to study with equal treatment to domestics.

vii) appropriate pathways to permanency:

We feel it is adequate for now, however we are concerned with developments to future employment opportunities upon graduation, without having residency status, to a significantly lower priority. International students who are trained in the Australian medical system are still given lower priority than the recruitment of doctors trained elsewhere, where they are more needed in their country of origin.

(b) the identification of quality benchmarks and controls for service, advice and support for international students studying at an Australian education institution:

The International office and financial aid office at the University of Queensland have done a tremendous job in keeping open communication between us and the banks, agencies, and government institutions that provided financial support that I believe they have set a benchmark for efficiency. They have one knowledgeable person in charge of this who is available to answer questions when needed. This person can give advice to attend sessions put on by the university in order to all the smoothest transition into Australia.

(c) any other related matters:

No relevant concerns specific to our cohort

It is with great interest that I write to you on behalf of my fellow international students in that we, as international medical students, would like be provided with the same opportunity that domestic Australians have upon commencing and completion of a medical degree (or any degree for that matter). If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

John Michael (Mike) Nicholson
First Year International Representative, UQMS
7 / 38 Brougham St, Fairfield,
Brisbane, QLD, 4103
+61 430 027 904
mike.nicholson@uqconnect.edu.au

TELEPHONE: (07) 3365 5261
FACSIMILE: (07) 3365 5595
WEB: www.uqms.org