Home and Away
A Melbourne case study of international students' education experiences – Insights for change

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Themes:

- pedagogical and cultural divergence

- commonalities and differences

- recommendations for improvement suggested by the students

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CQUniversity Melbourne


- 2nd largest metropolitan campus
- contemporary lecturing facilities
- electronic research materials
- foundation, diploma, bachelor, masters, doctorate
- focus on programs leading to a career

Student support services

- support for all students, at every level of study
- enrolment, teaching, academic support, social support, pastoral care
- customised orientation
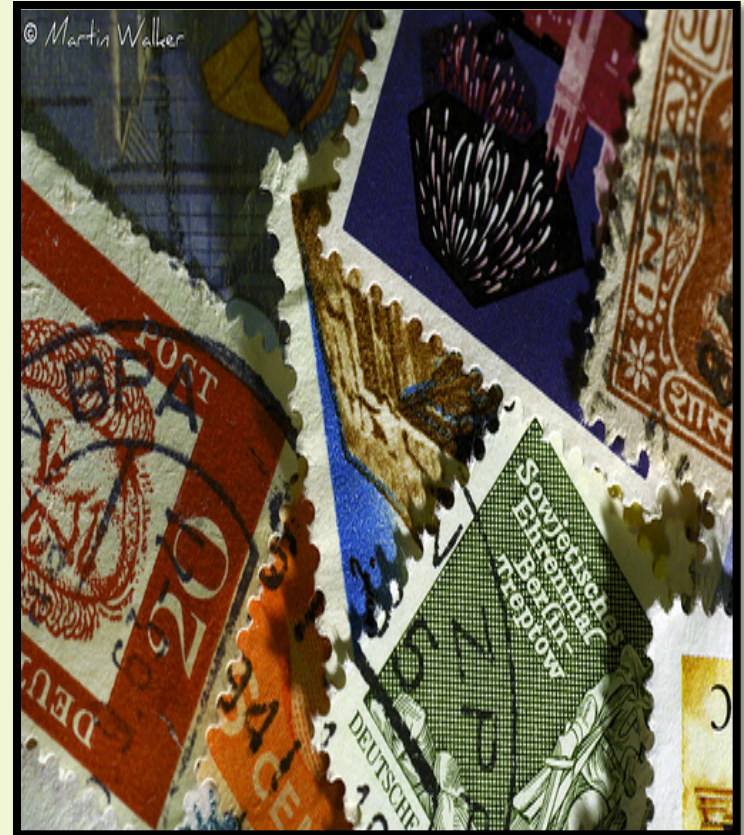- student engagement and well-being is paramount
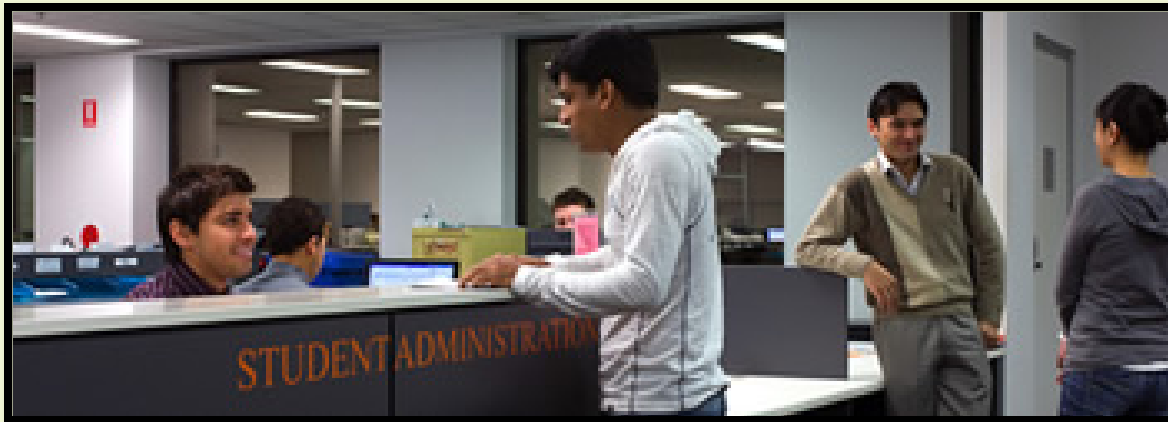
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Student composition at Melbourne campus

- distinct cultural and social divergence

- life experience, social skills

- first time away from home

- differences problematised by the media

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Support services:

- student services
- Learning Skills Unit (LSU)
- Training and Career Coaching (TECC)
- cultural & social activities

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Multicultural perspectives:

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- Chinese dragon dances
- Diwali, festival of lights
- end of Ramadan, Eid-al-Fitr
- Spring festivals
- Dragon boat festivals
- Lunar festivals

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Academic support:

- teaching aimed at success for the student

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- the journey is often the reward

This study examines:

- student thoughts on reasons for academic failure and success

- what can the university do to improve success and negate problems?

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Qualitative survey

- anonymous online survey instrument (Obsurvey)
- optional personal interview
- mapped the educational systems of respondents
- considered age and life-experience
- time spent away from home

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What did the students think was the …

- best and worst thing in their home education system?

- best and worst thing at CQUniversity Melbourne?

- what would they like to take home with them?

- what would they like to import into Melbourne experience?
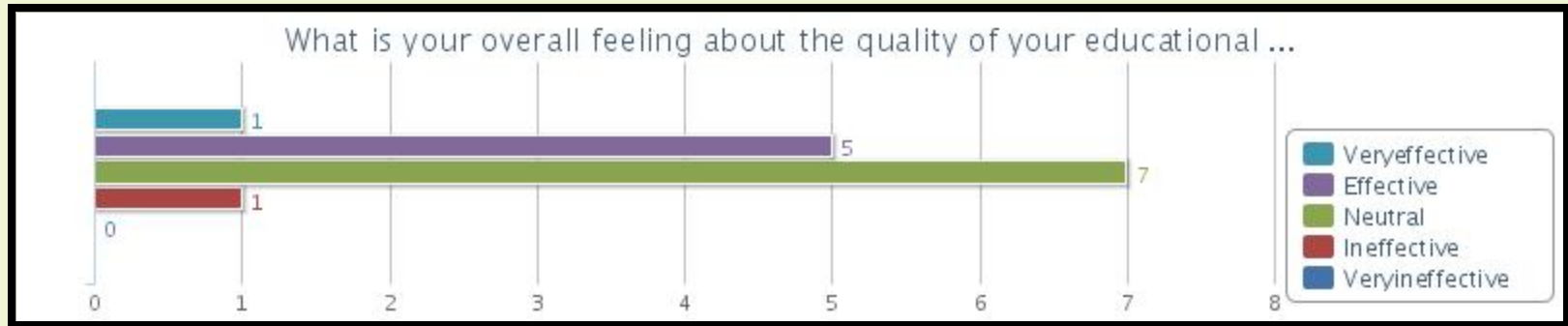
Looking for the 'gaps'

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- was there anything missing between home and away?

Responses about university experience at home:

Things liked	Things disliked
"they lower the level of difficulty by providing more hints before the exam"	"study extremely hard only before the exams"
"Teacher always monitor us, not just in study but also normal life"	"very theoretical knowledge and bookish not relevant to practical world"
"the teaching method is spoon feed, and then we get the required percentage to get the good job"	"lecturers who will give the high percentage to the students who will talk with them nicely"
"everyone understands the rules so no need for discussion"	"most teachers expect agreement"

Overall feeling of educational experience at home:

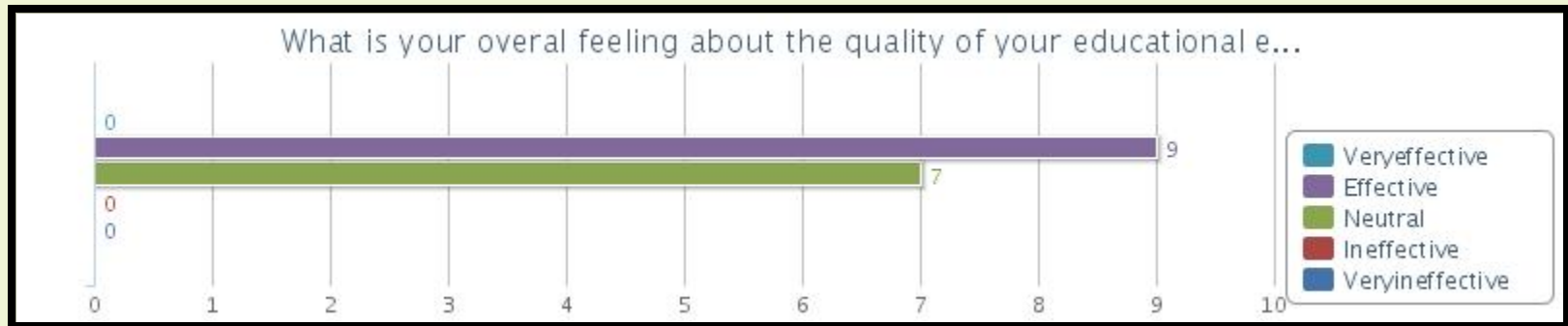
What is your overall feeling about the quality of your educational ...

	Value
Very effective	1
Effective	5
Neutral	7
Ineffective	1
Very ineffective	0

- majority response neutral

Responses about university experience at Melbourne:

Things liked	Things disliked
"strong emphasise[sic]in plagiarism forces students to research thoroughly therefore improves their research capabilities"	"teacher must be trained to teach at university level and they must have keep this thing in mind that english is not our mother tongue."
"requiring student to ask and discussion of questions."	"compulsion of attendance."
"interactive class and knowledge provided is related to outside world"	"too many assignments"
"deep explanation about the topic with the help of live examples."	"teachers talk too fast"

Overall feeling of educational experience at Melbourne:

What is your overal feeling about the quality of your educational e...

- Veryeffective
- Effective
- Neutral
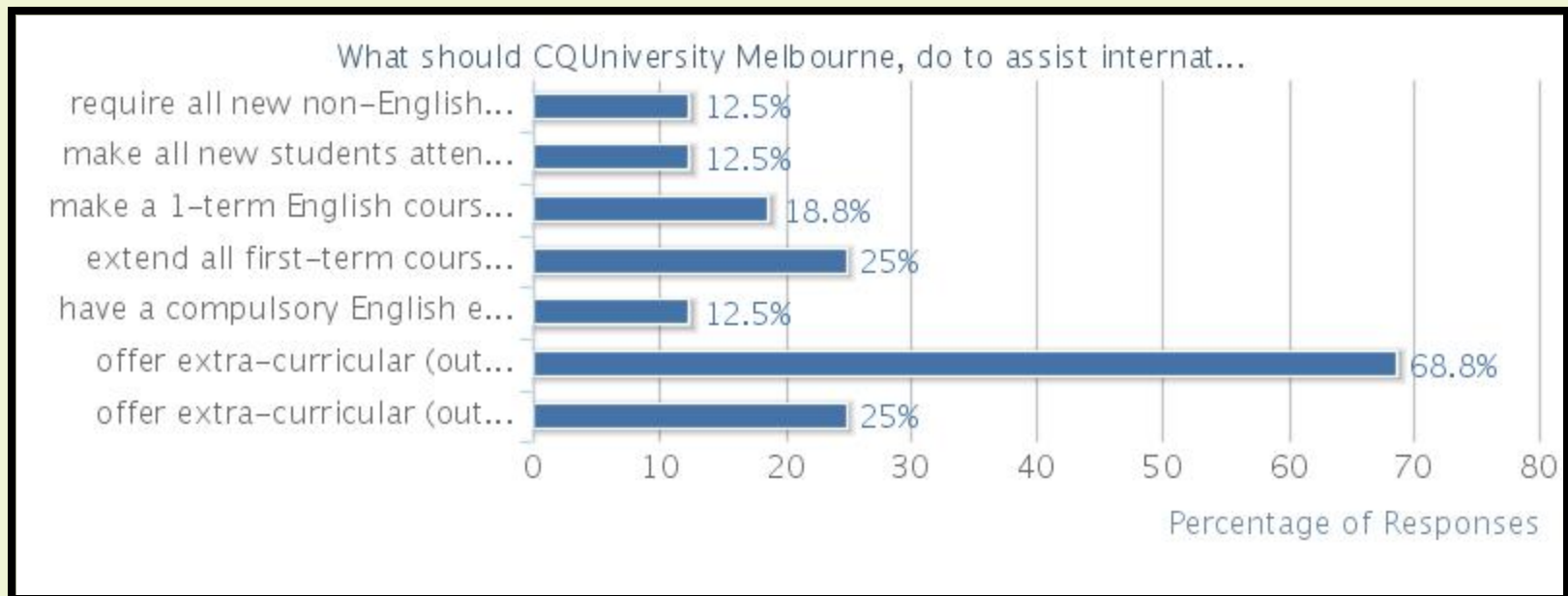- Ineffective
- Veryineffective

- majority response effective

Demand for improved communication?

- 68.8% of respondents suggested further English coaching (not classes) to aid communication

What should CQUniversity Melbourne, do to assist internat...

Category	Percentage
require all new non-English...	12.5%
make all new students atten...	12.5%
make a 1-term English cours...	18.8%
extend all first-term cours...	25%
have a compulsory English e...	12.5%
offer extra-curricular (out...	68.8%
offer extra-curricular (out...	25%

Percentage of Responses

Primacy of communications:

- Recurring theme of desired communication:
  - improved English language skills
  - more interaction with local (English speaking) students
  - ability to communicate more frequently with friends and family
  - learning equated with ability to communicate

Recommendations for Communication agora:

- Computer-aided communications
- Expanded use of computer supported social networks (CSSNs)
- Synchronous & Asynchronous
- CSSN be opened to friends/family overseas
- Encourage communication via agora with direct links to all services

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