

# Engaging international students

This AUSSE Enhancement Guide makes suggestions about how international students and universities can enhance their engagement.



## How can universities advance international student engagement?

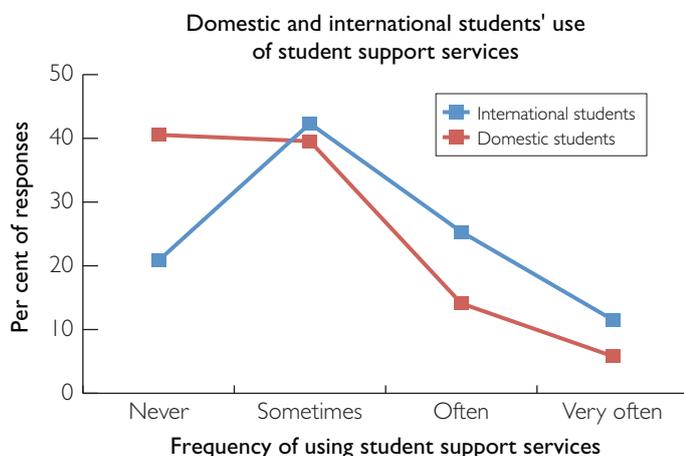
All staff who work with international students can help them engage in study. There is a strong positive relationship between international students' engagement and outcomes like achievement, graduate skills and satisfaction.

International students' overall perceptions of their university experience are closely linked to engagement in learning activities that are supportive, active, enriching, work-focused and academically challenging.

## Accessing the university's supportive learning environment

One broad area of challenge for international students is the value they place on access to learning and lifestyle support. International students value their contact with academic and professional staff. This may be because their previous learning cultures and patterns are different from those they experience in Australia. Students may lack the confidence or self-efficacy to manage in their new learning environment. They value staff contact as a contribution to their learning journey, and in the form of career advice. Support that extends beyond formal learning environments plays a particularly important role in shaping learning and development.

This graph uses data from the 2008 AUSSE to show the frequency with which international and domestic students report using student support services.



International students can access learning support in a number of ways, including:

- seeking out university services that provide support for students to succeed academically, such as the library which will provide help with research and referencing;
- attending classes at learning centres to gain familiarity and confidence with using computing and information technologies, and to develop communication skills such as writing effectively, working in teams, and speaking clearly and effectively;
- being prepared to seek out academic staff to discuss academic performance; and
- talking about career plans with career counsellors or academic staff.

## Stimulating active learning

Setting well-targeted learning expectations and creating conditions that foster active learning are important. They support each other because a stimulating environment will encourage students to engage. International students can build their sense of challenge, and their mastery of active learning, through:

- spending significant time on academic work;
- actively trying to learn what it means to apply theories or concepts, analyse, synthesise ideas and make judgements in their chosen discipline;
- asking questions; and
- seeking advice from academic staff.

## International students value cultural exchange

Institutions can enhance all students' engagement by incorporating international or multicultural perspectives into course and assessment design, and by creating opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds to interact.

Evidence shows that international students benefit greatly from enriching educational experiences, particularly in the area of cultural diversity. Having conversations and contact with students from diverse backgrounds and ethnic groups are important to international students. Students benefit from interactions which encourage mixing with other people from diverse backgrounds.

International students can enrich their learning experiences in many ways, such as:

- choosing to work with students from different ethnic backgrounds; and
- having conversations with people from different backgrounds, whether they occur before or after tutorials, at social events run by clubs and societies, or in study groups.

## About this guide

This AUSSE Enhancement Guide forms part of the suite of resources developed by ACER and the broader AUSSE community to enhance students' engagement in effective educational practices. This guide has been written by academic staff of the Learning and Teaching Support Unit, University of Southern Queensland: Megan Kek, Sara Hammer, Henk Huijser, Lynne Hunt & Lindy Kimmins. Visit [www.acer.edu.au/ausse](http://www.acer.edu.au/ausse) for further information about the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement.