

About ABDC

The Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) is the authoritative and collective voice of pro vice-chancellors, executive deans and heads of all university business faculties and schools in Australia. ABDC's mission is to advance and promote excellence in business education and research through engagement across universities, industry, government and the community.

In 2013, ABDC member schools graduated one-in-three university students in Australia (corresponding to over 100,000 graduates).¹ Australian business schools also contribute significantly to the fourth largest export industry (and largest export service industry) in Australia.² In 2013, Australian business schools graduated three-in-five international university students in Australia.³ These Australian business school students contribute an estimated \$5.3 billion in export earnings to the Australian economy per annum – equal to Australia's eleventh largest export.⁴

ABDC welcomes the opportunity to provide input into The Productivity Commission's Issues Paper on 'Barriers to Services Export' and being involved in further consultation on this subject.

Our Position

ABDC commends the Federal Government on its commitment to look at policy to remove barriers to service exports. Enhancing service exports is of vital importance to Australia's competitiveness, productivity and long-term sustainability. In particular, ABDC wholly supports policies and initiatives that both recognise how important international education is to the Australian economy and that also support a sustainable, globally competitive and quality international education sector in Australia.

In an increasingly complex international education market, Australia needs to be even more competitive to sustainably grow our position as an attractive destination for international students. We also need to be even more strategic in the long-term to ensure we remove barriers to attracting the best international students and academics while maintaining a quality higher education sector.

Recommendations from the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC)

ABDC recommends a whole-of-Government approach to consistent policy that supports Australia to sustainably grow and continue to be a global leader in quality international education. As Australian business schools graduate two-thirds of international university students (and one-third of all university students) in Australia, we recommend consistent policies that:

- Support a quality higher education system that is attractive to international business students and academics by investing in excellence in business learning and teaching and research. For example, include business as a strategic research priority to maintain credibility and the international reputation of business education in Australia.

¹ Calculated from Department of Education and Training, 'Management & Commerce Completion Count', *Higher Education Statistics (uCube)* plus Economics data provided on request, 2013.

² Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), 'Australia's top 25 exports, goods and services, 2013-14.' In 2013-14 education-related travel services were Australia's fourth largest export at \$15.7 billion and included secondary, VET, ELICOS and pathways.

³ Department of Education and Training, 2013.

⁴ Calculated from Department of Education and Training, 'Management and Commerce International Student Load Count (EFTSL)', *Higher Education Statistics Data (uCube)* plus Economics EFTSL data provided on request, 2013; and Boston Consulting Group (BCG), 'Australia's International Education Industry - Analysis of Strategic Trends,' 2013, p. 14, (Each international higher education student contributes an estimated US\$44,000 per year to the Australian economy (including fees and living expenses) - exchange rate from xe.com 29 Aug 2013).

- Provide funding certainty for a quality higher education system. This ensures fees from international business students are not seen as a replacement for funding from Government or from anticipated sector deregulation. Australia has one of the highest concentrations of international students, with one-in-five students enrolled in higher education being from overseas. It is important that investment continues into the additional support services required for international students to ensure high quality levels and good student outcomes.
- Encourage industry to provide relevant industry-based-learning for international university students during and after their study. Increasingly international students are choosing their course and study destination based on perceived return on investment and relevance. Lack of work experience opportunities and reluctance to hire international students are significant barriers for developing a sustainable international education market in Australia. Some examples of Government mechanisms that would assist include offering industry tax incentives and establishing an online portal to assist employers in understanding visa requirements and providing industry-based-learning opportunities.
- Ensure Australian business schools are included in further consultation on service export development strategy, policy or regulation. As ABDC members schools are a key contributor to the largest service export and alone represent Australia's eleventh largest export, we play a significant role in adding to Australia's cultural diversity and trading relationships. However gathering timely competitive intelligence and ensuring cultural diversity in student education is a difficult and expensive exercise. Government could assist in development of a more globally competitive international education sector by: including business schools in overseas trade missions; and providing relevant and timely data on the global international education market, international business student enrolments and graduate destinations.

Summary

If Australia wants to remain an attractive destination for international students, we need to provide learning experiences that respond to students' expectations and that our broader immigration and education policy settings also support this objective. ABDC welcomes the opportunity to provide specific advice, information and critical feedback on further consultation or policy development on removing export barriers. In particular, we welcome the opportunity to offer our assistance in developing policy or regulation that would enhance a globally competitive, sustainable and quality international education sector in Australia.

Submitted by:

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