

focus

# Australian Tafes

Offering a range of vocational-based courses, Tafes play a vital role in attracting overseas students to study in Australia.

Australian Tafes, or Technical and Further Education institutions, provide post-secondary education and training in a wide range of vocational fields, such as hospitality, nursing, construction and tourism, as well as English language. Most academic courses are delivered at a lower level than those offered in universities and provide students with a direct path to the work place or, alternatively, on to further university education.

According to Rosie Demant, from Chisholm Institute of Tafe in Moorabbin, VIC, this makes the Tafe option attractive for international students. "Tafe is a desirable option for two types of students," she says. "Those who already have a degree but need training to become work-ready or students who haven't got high enough grades for university but still have a chance to get there by using Tafe as a pathway."

Omar Amjah from Illawarra Institute in Wollongong, NSW, points out that Tafe courses closely linked to industry are a popular route for international students wanting to emigrate to Australia. "Tafe NSW provides training targeted at employability therefore [there is a] much better chance [to get] a skilled migration visa," he says. "Courses that achieve

skilled migration [are the most popular with international students]."

The lower IELTS score required by most Tafes, compared to universities, is also an important draw for students, as well as the fact that many Tafe courses offer credits towards university qualifications. "Students successful in completing a diploma can obtain up to one-and-a-half years' credit towards an undergraduate degree," says Jack Adams from Brisbane North Institute in Brisbane, QLD. Ian Heap from North Melbourne Institute in Collingwood, VIC, adds that Tafes often offer better value for money.

In terms of marketing their courses overseas, many Tafe international officers appear focused on the Asian markets, although this seems likely to change amid reports that enrolments from this area have been falling. "We are noticing a recent downturn in [English] applications from Korea, Japan and Thailand which we believe to be caused by an increasingly competitive market from other countries, as well as providers of Elicos in Australia," says Heap.

Pauline Ng from Box Hill Institute in Box Hill, VIC, has also noticed a downturn in Korean and Japanese student numbers and puts this down to "the Australian dollar rising".