

Australia feedback



The results of this issue's Feedback survey of students studying in Australia reveal that over three quarters of respondents had booked their language course through an agent, while average class sizes remain fairly large.

Australia feedback at a glance

Total number of students	229 - female 117, male 109, no reply 3
Average age	24.4 years
Top nationalities	1 Swiss (18%), 2 Japanese (14%) 3 Korean (13%) 4 Thai (6%) 4 Chinese (6%) 5 Colombian (5%)
Average length of programme	17.4 weeks
Average number of students per class	13
Average no. of hours of language tuition per week	24.7
% of students who found their course through an agent or adviser	56%
% of students who booked through an agent	76%
% of students who had been on another language programme	20%
% of students who would recommend their school	90%

Respondents by world region of origin

Africa (3%)
Asia (48%)
Central & Eastern Europe (9%)
Western Europe (29%)
Latin America (10%)
Unknown (1%)

In my class there are...

Too many students (18%)
Too many students who speak my language (23%)
Too many students from one other country (9%)
None of these (48%)
Unknown (2%)

How will you use your English in the future?

For college study in Australia (25%)
For college study in another English-speaking country (6%)
For college study in my home country (11%)
For current or future work (52%)
For pleasure only (5%)
Unknown (1%)

Standard of your social programme

Excellent (13%)
Good (47%)
Satisfactory (26%)
Poor (7%)
Unsatisfactory (1%)
Unknown (6%)

Of the 229 students at Australian language schools who took part in this issue's Feedback survey, 76 per cent had booked their course through an agent or consultant, which is a significant increase of 18 percentage points on last year's result (see *Language Travel Magazine*, February 2001, pages 20-21). Moreover, this is the fourth consecutive year in which agent usage in the Australian market has increased, and represents overall growth of 29 percentage points since our 1998 survey, when agent usage stood at 47 per cent (see *Language Travel Magazine*, December 1998, pages 18-19).

Although 56 per cent of students sought the advice of an agent prior to booking their course, this figure is 20 percentage points lower than the total number who actually booked through an agency and highlights the fact that students who found out about their school in other ways still relied on an agent to make the final booking.

Word-of-mouth recommendation from a friend or relative was the second most important recruiting method for Australian schools this year, accounting for the decision of 28 per cent of respondents, while a further nine per cent indicated that they had found out about their school on the Internet (two points more than last year). Only six per cent of students had chosen their school because of an advertisement. When we asked students to give more specific reasons about why they had chosen their school, factors they mentioned included the quality of a school's website, the close proximity of student accommodation to the school and a school's established reputation. Some students also mentioned that it was the only school they knew of in the area.

Overall, 81 per cent of students had a clear idea about the country they wanted to study in before they started looking for a course, while 64 per cent indicated that they had already decided on a town or city. In contrast, only 36 per cent said they already knew which language school they wanted to attend.

Overall satisfaction levels among students were relatively high, with 90 per cent of students indicating that they would recommend their school while seven per cent said they would not (three per cent did not answer this question). The teachers were rated highly by our respondents with 92 per cent saying the standard of their teachers was excellent or good, while 68 per cent said the same of their academic programme. The social programmes at language schools were considered excellent or good by a lower 60 per cent of respondents.

The number of Asian students at Australian schools fell for the fourth successive year in 2001. Asia accounted for 48 per cent of international students at participating schools, 16 percentage points lower than last year's result. Latin America, represented by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru, accounted for 10 per cent of respondents, an increase of two percentage points on last year's result, while at nine per cent, the proportion of Eastern European students remained much the same. The most dramatic leap in terms of student intake was among Western Europeans, who accounted for 29 per cent of students this year, 13 points more than in our 2001 survey.

This year, Swiss students took first place in terms of the largest single nationality, accounting for 18 per cent of students. This is the first time a non-Asian nationality has appeared at the top of the nationality league table in our Australia Feedback surveys. Korean students, who represented the top student nationality last year, were



relegated to third place this year, while Japanese students remained in second place. Thai and Chinese students were in joint-fourth place, just ahead of Colombian students, who were absent from the top five last year. Students from Hong Kong, who accounted for just two per cent of respondents this time, failed to make it into the top five this year.

Class sizes ranged from one to 20 students, averaging out at 13. A relatively high average class size meant that 18 per cent of students thought there were too many students in their class, while 23 per cent indicated that there were too many students of their own nationality in their class, including 38 per cent of Swiss students and 36 per cent of Thai students. Interestingly, only 16 per cent of Japanese students and 26 per cent of Korean students shared this opinion, despite the fact that they made up the second- and third-largest nationality groups respectively. Overall, 48 per cent of our respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the size and nationality mix of their classes, which is similar to last year's result of 47 per cent.

At 17.4 weeks, the average length of stay increased slightly this year, up from 16.5 weeks. Over half of our respondents were enrolled on courses of between seven and 18 weeks, with the majority enrolled on courses of 12 weeks. In terms of length of stay according to nationality, the majority of Swiss students were enrolled on courses of between six and 12 weeks, while Japanese students were enrolled on courses that ranged from four to 48 weeks in length.

In contrast to previous Feedback surveys, when the main motivating factor for taking a language travel course has been academic, just over half of this year's respondents were learning English for their current or future work and five per cent were learning the language for pleasure. The combined number of students learning English for further study either in Australia, at home, or in another English-speaking country, fell by 15 percentage points this year.

The student age range was similar to last year and spanned 16 to 51 years. However, at 24.4 years, the average age fell sharply. Nevertheless, last year's average age, 31.5 years, was dependent on a large proportion of students aged over 26. This year, business clients accounted for 21 per cent of student intake, while high school, university and college students made up 48 per cent and three per cent said they were teachers (27 per cent did not specify their occupation and one per cent was retired).

When we asked students if they had heard of any Australian language school associations, 35 per cent said they were familiar with English Australia, while Acpet was recognised by just two per cent of respondents.

Thank you to the following schools for participating in our survey:

Access Language School, Sydney, NSW; ACTH Management, Melbourne, VIC; Australian Centre for Languages, Sydney, NSW; Billy Blue English School, Sydney, NSW; East Coast College of English, Brisbane, QLD; Embassy CES, various; International House Sydney, Manly, NSW; Language Studies International, Brisbane, QLD; OISE Sydney International School of English, Sydney, NSW; Queensland College of English, Brisbane, QLD; Shafston International College, Brisbane, QLD; St Marks International College, Perth, WA; Tafe International Education Centre, Liverpool, NSW; University of Queensland ICTE, Brisbane, QLD; University of Tasmania English Language Centre, Hobart, TAS; Wide Bay Tafe, Maryborough, QLD; Wollongong University College, Wollongong, NSW; World English, Perth, WA

What do you like most about Australia?

1	Countryside	5	Food
2	People	6	Nightlife
3	Language	7	Sport
4	Culture	8	Shopping

Standard of the teaching

Excellent (46%)
Good (46%)
Satisfactory (7%)
Unknown (1%)

How easy was it to practise English with native speakers?

Very easy (39%)
Quite easy (28%)
Quite hard (33%)

Before looking for your course, did you know where you wanted to study?

Country	Yes (81%)	No (15%)	Unknown (4%)
City/town	Yes (64%)	No (32%)	Unknown (4%)
School	Yes (36%)	No (59%)	Unknown (5%)

Did you book your course through an agent?

Yes (76%)	No (24%)
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How did you choose your programme?

I saw it advertised (6%)
I found it on the Internet (9%)
It was recommended by an agent (56%)
It was recommended by a friend/relative (28%)
Unknown (1%)

PHOTOGRAPH: AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR LANGUAGES

Standard of your academic programme

Excellent (15%)
Good (53%)
Satisfactory (25%)
Poor (1%)
Unsatisfactory (1%)
Unknown (5%)

Standard of your accommodation

Excellent (22%)
Good (44%)
Satisfactory (23%)
Poor (4%)
Unsatisfactory (1%)
Unknown (6%)