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High schools in Australia

High school programmes in Australia are a popular choice for international students of varying ages and the range of courses being offered is increasing. We find out why such programmes are of interest to the youth market.

For high school age students, studying overseas for any period of time is a major undertaking and schools in Australia believe that they are particularly appealing to the international high school market due to the country's reputation for safety.

Micheale Craymer from Nudgee International College in Virginia, QLD, which prepares international students for entry into a number of private high schools in Brisbane, says, "The interest in our unique environment is a major draw, the opportunity to visit a country that is English speaking but with a very different outlook on life, open, free in spirit, safe and with wonderful education, arts and sporting opportunities."

The range of courses on offer for international students in Australian high schools varies from high school preparation courses, which cover both English and academic subjects for up to one year, to short-term semester courses and final-year graduation courses. Kate Kelleher from Gosford Christian College

in Gosford, NSW, says that the motivation of each student depends largely on their age and nationality. "For example," she explains, "Students from Korea tend to come

when they are younger and have a pattern of returning after a few years. Chinese [students] come from year 10 onwards. European and South American students tend to want to come for a three-, six-, or 12-month period."

Sarah Gray from John Paul International College in Daisy Hill, QLD, agrees that demand tends to be split between students with long-term study goals in mind to those more focussed on having an international study experience. "High school programmes have broad appeal at two levels," she says. "Students either choose to enter at the start of high school – year eight – or just in senior year 11. In particular, students from mainland China and South Korea enrol on our courses but for six-month study abroad courses the main source countries are Brazil and Germany."

Many international students studying at Australian high schools are attracted by further education opportunities within the country and Graeme Plummer from Guildford Grammar School in Guildford, WA, which has accepted international students for 60 years, says that he has noticed this as a growing trend. "More students are seeking matriculation for study in Australian or Commonwealth universities," he says.

Gray agrees that demand for a university education in Australia is high among students and adds that John Paul International College has developed a pathway to university course "for students who have completed year 11 and who wish to study our university entry programme". However, another student trend for Australian high schools is an increase in enrolments from younger aged students. "Of recent years, demand for our school has been coming from younger students," says Gray. "As a result, we have developed a tailor-made primary preparation programme catering for students entering our primary years four, five and six."

Michael Bartlett from All Saints Anglican School in Merrimac, QLD, also highlights a trend towards sending younger aged students to high school overseas – particularly from the Asian markets – and says that this has helped their high school preparation course remain popular, despite increased competition from other providers in the English language teaching sector. "In general, I think parents prefer their children to learn English in a school setting," he says.

For high schools accepting international students on to their mainstream school programmes, offering preparation programmes that focus on improving specialist English skills to enable students to succeed in the mainstream school are a natural progression. Bartlett says that they have offered preparation courses for international students for nine years. "The course was set up in response to demand," he says. "As a school we had a good insight into the language and study skills required by an overseas student to cope in the Australian school setting. I don't think the average English college has the facilities or access to high school curriculum to deliver such a specialised course as effectively."

Updating and increasing the range of international programmes on offer is a key consideration for schools wanting to continue to attract international students. Michelle Davies from St Paul's International School in Bald Hills, QLD, says that the school has become more popular with overseas students as its reputation grows. She adds, "The course content continues to change as our academic programmes are reviewed annually from student feedback. We now not only offer a purely academic programme but are also able to assist students who wish to combine a high school education with specific sports programmes, ie, swimming, golf, tennis and athletics," she concludes. ●

Selection of programmes available

School location	Name of school	Min. length of stay	EFL tuition?	Age range		Entry requirements
				Min	Max	
Aitkenvale, QLD	The Cathedral School	6 months	yes	14	17	r,t
Armidale, NSW	New England Girls' School	3 weeks	yes	–	–	i,r
Bald Hills, QLD	St Paul's International College	2 weeks	yes	12	17	r,t
Corio, VIC	Geelong Grammar School	10 weeks	yes	12	17	i,r,t
Daisy Hill, QLD	John Paul International College	10 weeks	yes	9	18	e,i,r,t
Donvale, VIC	Whitefriars College	1 year	no	13	18	r,t
Gosford, NSW	Gosford Christian College	–	yes	–	19	e,i,r,t
Mentone, VIC	Mentone Grammar School	1 year	yes	6	19	i,r,t
Merrimac, QLD	All Saints Anglican School	1 term	yes	13	17	i,r,t
Virginia, QLD	St Joseph's Nudgee School	10 weeks	yes	12	18	i,r,t

e entrance exam i interview r school reports t English test – info not supplied