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English and Sport in Australia



English plus sport in Australia

English plus sports programmes are growing as a sector among Australian language course providers, with local amenities directing growth and development in this area.

The percentage of students choosing to study on a combined English and sports programme in Australia is relatively low when compared with those studying on more popular courses such as academic preparation or general English courses. But by offering such programmes, individual schools can add a unique selling point making the effort worthwhile.

Richard Brown, from Browns English Language School in the Gold Coast, QLD, notes that "English plus courses are popular because [students] cannot experience these sports in their home country. Often these sports are unique to Australia," he adds.

Australia's warm climate and outdoor culture gives it many advantages over other English language destinations and those wanting to learn to scuba dive, surf or play golf, while also learning English, will not have to look very far. Some schools, however, have gone one step further when it comes to catering for this particular student market.

Jenny Byatt, Director of Studies at West Coast International College of English in Bunbury, WA, says that they have offered an English and dolphins course – where students undertake part-time research of wild dolphins at Bunbury Dolphin Discovery Centre – and a retiree leisure learning programme since the college opened in September 2006. Their first study and scuba diving course started in January this year and Byatt has plans for an English and flying course to start in the winter as well as surfing and adventure sports courses starting in 2008. "We plan to continue offering new adventure courses for as long as our imagination holds out," relates Byatt.

Another school to recently enter the English plus sports sector is the Central Queensland University Language Centre in Rockhampton, QLD, which has been offering English plus golf and football programmes for the last three years.

"Our most recent venture was to develop the [English plus] leadership course and offer it to a group of primary- and secondary-aged Japanese students," says Helen Stewart at the centre.

As well as catering to the junior or sports

leisure market, some language providers in Australia have turned their attentions towards the professional sports sector. Diana Pilling, from Australian Internships, based in Brisbane, QLD, says that they have offered internships within the sporting field since the company began in 1998. "[We've] seen a massive increase in the popularity of sporting internships in recent years," says Pilling, "with events such as the Sydney 2000 Olympics, Melbourne Commonwealth Games and the Australian Open [tennis championships]."

Budding professional footballers between the ages of 14 and 16 years can also train at an AC Milan junior camp, while learning English at the English Language Company in Sydney, NSW, after the school recently signed a collaboration with AC Milan football club. David Scott, Managing Director of the school, says "It's quite a unique partnership and the combination of an English programme delivered in Australia, combined with a soccer programme delivered by AC Milan, is attracting a lot of interest."

For many schools offering language plus sports programmes, courses develop naturally as a result of the activities available in the local area. Burleigh Heads Language Centre is fortunate in its location near "one of the world's most famous surfing beaches," according to Patsy McLachlan, Managing Director at the school. The school has offered English plus surfing as well as English plus scuba diving courses since it first opened seven-and-a-half years ago.

For Hills International College in Brisbane, QLD, developing language plus sports programmes was a natural progression from their existing general English and high school preparation courses. "We have our own golf course surrounding our campus," says Paul Warfield at the college, "and students have complete access to all our golf activities seven days a week in conjunction with their normal studies."

Selection of programmes available

| School location | Name of school | Courses offered | No. of start dates p/Y | Min. length of course in wks | Min. age of student |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Adelaide, SA | SA Adelaide Language Centre | c,f,g,sq,t | req | req | 12 |
| Adelaide, SA | South Australian College of English | t | yr | 4 | 16 |
| Airlie Beach, QLD | SACE Whitsundays College of English | sc | yr | 5 | 16 |
| Bald Hills, QLD | St Paul's International School | g | yr | 2 | 12 |
| Brisbane, QLD | Australian Internships | sp | yr | – | 18 |
| Brisbane, QLD | Hills International College | f,g,h,s,sc,o | req | 1 | 10 |
| Bunbury, WA | West Coast Int. College of English | o,s,sc | v | 2 | 18 |
| Byron Bay, NSW | Byron Bay English Language School | g,s,sc | 12 | 2 | 14 |
| Cairns, QLD | International House Queensland | sc | yr | 2 | 15 |
| Gold Coast, QLD | Browns English Language School | g,s,sc,t | yr | 2 | 16 |
| Gold Coast, QLD | Burleigh Heads Language Centre | s,sc | yr | v | 18 |
| Noosa Beach, QLD | Global Village Noosa | g,h,s,sc | yr | 1 | 13 |
| North Rockhampton, QLD | CQU Language Centre | f,g,o | yr | 3d | – |
| Port Douglas, QLD | Regent Australia English Lang.Centre | g,h,sc,w | yr | 2 | 18 |
| Surfers Paradise, QLD | Human Int. Academy Gold Coast | g,h,s,sc,t,o | yr | 1 | 15 |
| Sydney, NSW | English Language Company | f | 2 | 2 | 14 |
| Sydney, NSW | Global Village Sydney | s,sc | yr | v | 17 |
| Sydney, NSW | MBM International | h,s,w,o | yr | 5d | 15 |
| Toowoomba, QLD | University of Southern Queensland | g,h | req | 10d | 16 |
| various | Australian College of English | s,sc | v | 2 | 18 |

PHOTOGRAPH: SACE WHITSUNDAYS COLLEGE OF ENGLISH

c cricket d days f football g golf h horse riding o other req on request s surfing sc scuba diving sp sports sq squash t tennis v varies w watersports yr year round – info not supplied