

HOW TO KEEP YOUR DUCKS IN A ROW – MAKING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS PART OF THE FAMILY

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International education serves as a vital bridge connecting Australia with the world, extending far beyond its economic benefits. Attracting students from over 190 countries, Flinders University benefits from their diverse perspectives and expertise, enriching our educational institutions, workplaces, and communities through cross-cultural exchanges, influential alumni networks, and residency pathways for highly skilled graduates. This not only prepares Australians for opportunities in an increasingly globalized world but also promotes a more inclusive and prosperous society.

As the international education landscape continues to evolve, the Australian Government has proposed four key priorities: diversification, meeting Australia's skills needs, placing students at the center, and fostering growth and global competitiveness. These priorities aim to strengthen Australia's position as a world leader in international education. (Department of Education, Australian Government, *Australian Strategy for International Education 2021 - 2030*).

One of the keys for students to succeed at university is to know what to do, to know how to do it and to know where to go for help. While this is challenging for all students entering the tertiary education sector, it is especially difficult for international students (Oduwaye et al., 2023). In addition to adjusting to a new environment, adapting to a new country, including a new language, they often have to learn how to learn at an Australian university, how to write in a language different to their mother tongue, follow instructions that might be worded differently to what they are used to (Khanal & Gaulee, 2019).

We have designed a course that is core to the study plans of every international student in science and information technology degrees at Flinders University. The course is purpose designed to address challenges that international students face when starting at an Australian University. It is co-designed with academics from academics teaching in the various degrees and co-delivered with university student support services. There is a strong emphasis on academic skill development, including reading, writing, critical thinking, teamwork, etc.

We have surveyed the students, before and after the course, about their study habits, reading- and writing skills as well as their perception of their capabilities. Initial results show a significant increase in student's awareness of their skills as well as areas for improvement. There is also clear evidence that the purpose-designed course did its job in giving students necessary support to succeed in their studies.

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