



Media Release

14 June 2024

IRU response to draft *International Education and Skills Strategic Framework*

The Innovative Research Universities (IRU) warns that measures proposed in the consultation draft of the Australian Government's new *International Education and Skills Strategic Framework* would fundamentally change the way Australia's international education system works.

In its submission on the draft Framework, the seven-member group emphasises its support for a focus on quality and integrity, a planned approach for sustainable growth and partnership between universities and government to expand innovative models of international education and strengthen key international relationships through education and research.

But IRU Executive Director Paul Harris said that any further changes to international education must be implemented carefully.

"International education is an Australian success story," he said. "It has delivered significant social, economic and cultural benefits to students and to the nation over decades."

"We support a continued focus on quality and integrity, but further changes to policy and legislation must be targeted, evidence-based and carefully communicated. The draft Framework as written risks damaging Australia's global reputation for quality and innovation."

IRU member universities are high-quality, low-risk providers of international education, with diverse student cohorts and above-average rates of international student satisfaction. Our universities also have valuable experience in running successful offshore campuses and other innovative models of transnational education (TNE).

However the IRU has been disproportionately and unfairly impacted by changes to student visa processing since December 2023. This has entrenched inequity across the sector, undermined diversification and reduced enrolments in courses relevant to Australia's skills shortages. This highlights the risk of rushing changes to the international education system.

"The IRU supports the principle of 'managed growth', with each university negotiating sustainable growth targets – for domestic and international students – with the new Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC)," Mr Harris said.

"We will work constructively with government on a system that can deliver increased quality, diversity and innovation. The transition to the new system must prioritise equity and fixing the damage done by changes to visa processing."

The IRU's full submission is available [here](#).

iru.edu.au

Key points of IRU feedback:

- The IRU supports measures to improve quality and integrity – these must be targeted, evidence-based, proportionate to risk and more clearly communicated.
- The IRU supports the principle of “managed growth” with each university negotiating sustainable future growth targets (for both domestic and international students) with the new Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC).
- The IRU does not agree that the Minister should be given additional powers to cancel individual courses offered by universities, or to set enrolment limits at the level of university courses.
- The IRU will engage constructively on planning for new purpose-built student accommodation – this should be evidence-based and avoid entrenching concentration and inequity across the sector.
- Priority groups of students – including postgraduate research students and students in exchange, study abroad and TNE programs – should be excluded from any limits.
- Government should work with universities on new models for supporting the strengthening of key partnerships in the Indo-Pacific through higher education and research.

About the IRU

The IRU is a network of seven universities committed to collaboration for a more equitable and innovative Australia. The IRU strategy has a focus on three shared priorities: inclusive education to increase participation and equity; research that delivers impact for our communities; and strengthening partnerships in the Indo-Pacific through education and research. IRU members are Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Murdoch University, University of Canberra, and Western Sydney University.

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