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# Guidelines for the Operation of International Secondary Student Exchange Program in New South Wales

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Observation of Guidelines

The *Guidelines for the Operation of International Secondary Student Exchange Programs in New South Wales August 2015* must be read in conjunction with the [National Guidelines for the Operation of International Secondary Student Exchange Programs in Australia \(Revised – October 2018\)](#). The National Guidelines provide detail of stakeholder operations and the NSW Guidelines describe NSW specific conditions.

## 1.2 Rationale for Exchange Programs

Student exchange programs provide a broad educational experience for students and increase international and cultural understanding among young people.

## 1.3 Objectives of Exchange Programs

- To provide educational enrichment for exchange students by introducing them to a different educational philosophy, environment and curriculum, including developing their linguistic skills;
- To develop cultural awareness and understanding among students in the school environment;
- To promote international understanding and cooperation.

## 1.4 Student Exchange Programs Summary

In NSW, a secondary student exchange program is a reciprocal program whereby NSW students attend high school full-time in another country for a period ranging from ten weeks to one year. Students from other countries attend high school in NSW for a period of three months (or one school term) to one year. All student exchange programs must be conducted through registered, non-profit exchange organisations. Government and non-government schools may apply for registration as an exchange organisation. Students participating in a secondary student exchange program are issued a student visa (subclass 500) as they are enrolled as a full-time secondary student in a recognised course of study.

Short-term cultural programs that do not have school study as the major focus are regarded as 'visits' and are not covered by these Guidelines. To be eligible for enrolment in a NSW school, a visitor visa holder must be accompanied by their parents or staying with direct relatives (grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers or sisters) who are residents of Australia and over 21 years of age. Students may undertake a maximum of three months informal study as a condition of a visitor visa and if agreed to by the school Principal, they may be enrolled in a NSW school. Fees are payable for enrolment on a visitor visa at a NSW government school and the decision to charge fees for a student attending a non-government school on a visitor visa is at the discretion of the school.

## 2 POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

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The Commonwealth Government and state/territory governments fund places for exchange students. The NSW government accepts reciprocity in lieu of fees for exchange students in government schools. Schools enrolling exchange students are entitled to include such students in the census return so that Commonwealth and State per capita grants are provided. A non-government school that chooses to charge fees must take these grants into account as a reduction from full costs.

Reciprocity is calculated across the entire program run by an exchange organisation over a two year period. When determining reciprocity, the length of exchange is taken into account, rather than the number of exchanges.

State/territory registration committees must approve organisations seeking to operate secondary student exchange programs. The organisations must conduct their operations according to the [National Guidelines for the Operation of International Secondary Student Exchange Programs in Australia \(Revised – October 2018\)](#) and according to state/territory Guidelines.

Documentation required by students seeking entry to Australia as an exchange student includes an Acceptance Advice of Secondary Exchange Student (AASES) form. State/territory registration committees only issue this form to approved exchange organisations.

Payment of Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) is a precondition for a student visa. The OSHC ensures that overseas students, including exchange students, receive health cover at a moderate cost while ensuring that Australian tax-payers do not incur health-related costs for overseas students.

Exchange organisations operating in NSW must comply with NSW child protection legislation and submit evidence annually to the NSW Registration Committee.  
(See **Appendix A**)

### **3 NSW REGISTRATION COMMITTEE FOR INTERNATIONAL SECONDARY STUDENT EXCHANGE**

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The NSW Registration Committee for International Secondary Student Exchange is composed of:

- a representative of the NSW Department of Education who is Chairperson of the Committee;
- a representative of the NSW Department of Education who is Executive Officer and acts as contact officer for the Committee;
- a representative of the Association of Independent Schools of NSW;
- a representative of the NSW Catholic Education Commission;
- a representative of the NSW Secondary Principals' Council.

The NSW Registration Committee meets on an annual basis with additional meetings scheduled as required. Operation of the Secondary Student Exchange program is managed by the Department of Education International (DE International).

The NSW Registration Committee is represented on the National Coordinating Committee for International Secondary Student Exchange (NCCISSE) which comprises members of each state or territory's registration committee.

### **4 AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

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#### **4.1 The Commonwealth Government is responsible for:**

- advising on immigration and health regulations and overseas travel safety issues;
- issuing designated student visas for in-bound exchange students through the AASES form process.

#### **4.2 The NRCISSE and DE International are responsible for:**

- issuing guidelines to organisations seeking registration;
- considering written applications from organisations seeking registration;
- registering and approving exchange organisations, including private organisations, government and non-government schools;
- providing guidelines for organisations on incoming student enrolment procedures and advice to schools;
- issuing AASES forms to registered exchange organisations for incoming exchange students;
- monitoring reciprocity of hosting and sending programs for all approved secondary exchange programs in their state/territory;
- maintaining the contact details of student exchange organisations and providing advice to them;
- monitoring exchange organisations to ensure compliance with national and state

guidelines.

#### **4.3 Exchange Organisations are responsible for:**

- maintaining necessary systems to carry out their duty of care requirements in a responsible and effective manner;
- providing orientation and counselling services for students and overseeing students' health and welfare;
- conducting their operations according to the national and state guidelines;
- complying with state child protection legislation in relation to paid and unpaid employees and in the screening and selection of host families;
- ensuring that Overseas Students' Health Cover (OSHC) has been paid and that normal day-to-day living expenses are covered for the duration of the exchange;
- notifying the registration committee if students do not take up placements, leave the country sooner than expected, or do not leave the country when the program is completed;
- ensuring the return of fully completed AASES forms to the executive officer following the enrolment of exchange students;
- ensuring that a zero or positive reciprocity balance is maintained within each state/territory in which the organisation is registered.

#### **4.4 Exchange Students are responsible for:**

- fulfilling the requirements of their student visa;
- attending the appointed school full-time and not undertaking any other significant studies;
- behaving in an appropriate manner as agreed under the terms of the relevant exchange program, and complying with school codes of conduct, regulations and conditions of enrolment;
- not undertaking paid employment beyond a maximum of twenty hours per week, providing this employment does not interfere with or otherwise affect the student's studies and school performance;
- leaving Australia on completion of the exchange program or earlier if circumstances develop that lead the exchange organisation, at its discretion, to believe that the student's further participation in the program is not appropriate.

## **5 REGISTRATION OF EXCHANGE ORGANISATIONS IN NSW**

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- 5.1** The NSW Registration Committee will consider applications for registration within the *Criteria for Registration of Secondary Student Exchange Organisations*. (See **Section 11**)
- 5.2** Applications for registration should address all the registration criteria. Information provided by organisations will be treated as confidential.
- 5.3** The registration committee may undertake reviews:
- when there is concern about performance;
  - when there is significant growth in an exchange organisation's operations;
  - when there is a fundamental change in the nature of the programs being offered.
- 5.4** The NSW Registration Committee maintains a list of organisations registered in NSW. A list of organisations registered in other states is available from the contact officer of the state or territory's registration committee.
- 5.5** Registered organisations should not have periods of inactivity of longer than three years. Where a registered organisation is inactive for a period of three years or more the NSW Registration Committee will commence the process of deregistration.

## **6 ACCEPTANCE ADVICE OF SECONDARY EXCHANGE STUDENT (AASES) FORMS**

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To obtain a student exchange visa for Australia, overseas exchange students require an Acceptance Advice of Secondary Exchange Student (AASES) form. Exchange organisations need to apply to the Executive Officer of the NSW Registration Committee for AASES forms using the official NSW AASES request form. The Executive Officer will issue AASES forms provided that the organisation's reciprocity balance is satisfactory.

## **7 VISA PROCESSING TIME**

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- 7.1** The Commonwealth Government advises that for exchange students starting school at the beginning of Term 1, the Australian Diplomatic Post needs not less than eight weeks over the Christmas period from the time it receives the AASES forms and visa applications, to the date of the student's arrival in Australia.
- 7.2** For students arriving at other times during the year, the Australian Diplomatic Mission needs not less than six weeks from the time it receives the AASES forms to the date of arrival in Australia.

## **8 OUTGOING EXCHANGE STUDENTS**

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- 8.1** Exchange organisations wishing to promote programs in schools must first approach the principal. Access to secondary students at school is at the discretion of the principal.
- 8.2** Any arrangements for students to join an overseas exchange program is strictly a matter between students, their parents and the exchange organisation. Neither the school (unless it is the registered exchange organisation) nor the NSW Registration Committee accepts any responsibility for students while overseas on exchange.
- 8.3** The NSW Registration Committee does not attest to the quality of the service provided by the exchange organisations. Students and their families participating in an exchange program should choose the organisation best suited to their needs and ascertain exactly what the organisation is offering as part of their services.

## **9 ENROLMENT OF INCOMING SECONDARY EXCHANGE STUDENTS**

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- 9.1** The exchange organisation should negotiate directly with a school and obtain written permission from the principal to enrol an exchange student.
- 9.2** Exchange organisations will provide the host school with a copy of current Guidelines.
- 9.3** The exchange organisation must provide the school with information about the host family, the organisation's contact person, and the student, including copies of school reports.
- 9.4** Enrolment of an exchange student is at the discretion of the principal who will determine the most appropriate year for the exchange student. It is not usual for an exchange student to be enrolled in Year 12. If the principal considers that the student is not eligible, enrolment should be refused. Cases where doubt exists or where problems arise should be discussed with the Executive Officer or another relevant committee member.
- 9.5** The school should check that the exchange organisation is approved to operate in NSW by contacting the Executive Officer of the NSW Registration Committee or by checking the website: <https://www.deinternational.nsw.edu.au/study-options/study-programs/secondary-student-exchange>.
- 9.6** Exchange students are currently not eligible for Commonwealth funded programs such as ESL support.
- 9.7** Exchange students are required to be full-time school students. Subject selection should be done in consultation with the host school.
- 9.8** Exchange students must comply with attendance, conditions of enrolment and other rules as required by the host school.



**9.9** Exchange students are entitled to free student travel passes if they meet the requirements applicable to NSW school students.

**9.10** Once the exchange student commences school the exchange organisation should ensure that the principal has a copy of the AASES form. The principal should then complete Part D of the AASES form and return a completed copy directly to the exchange organisation.

## **10 ANNUAL TIMETABLE OF KEY DATES**

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### **10.1 By start of September**

NSW Registration Committee to dispatch NSW Annual Monitoring forms to exchange organisations and schools registered as exchange organisations. (See **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**)

### **10.2 By start of October**

Exchange organisations to have returned *NSW Annual Monitoring* forms to the Executive Officer, NSW Registration Committee.

### **10.3 By end of November**

For incoming students commencing at the start of the next school year, exchange organisations must:

- confirm details of students' placement with schools
- dispatch completed AASES forms overseas for presentation to the relevant Australian Diplomatic Post to process the application for student visas.

## **11 CRITERIA FOR THE REGISTRATION OF INTERNATIONAL SECONDARY STUDENT EXCHANGE ORGANISATIONS IN NSW**

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### **11.1 Purpose of Exchange Programs**

Exchange organisations must demonstrate that the prime purpose of their programs is to provide a broad educational experience for students and to further international and intercultural understanding.

### **11.2 Reciprocity**

Exchange students must attend school for a minimum of three months (or ten weeks for outgoing students) or one school term, whichever is shorter, to be included in any exchange reciprocity calculations.

Exchange organisations must maintain reciprocity between incoming and outgoing programs over a two year period. Exchange organisations should maintain a balance of hosting and sending exchange students between government and non-government schools.

Reciprocity is calculated using the total number of months that students are on exchange. It is based on the allocation of one point for each month of exchange, or part thereof, from and including the month of enrolment at school to and including the month of cessation of enrolment. For instance, a student enrolling on 29 June and departing on 3 October earns five reciprocity points. The maximum number of points per exchange student is 12.

Exchange organisations must submit statistics and other information requested regarding all incoming and outgoing students to the NSW Registration Committee for International Secondary Exchange Students.

Exchange organisations need to record enrolment and cessation of enrolment dates when completing monitoring forms.

The registration committee will compare the total points for hosting and sending programs without particular concern for the mix of short and long term programs.

### **11.3 Administrative Support**

Exchange organisations must demonstrate that they have:

- effective procedures for communication with parents, schools, students and officers of appropriate government agencies;
- effective and appropriate structures overseas to facilitate the exchange process for inbound and outbound students.

### **11.4 Non-Profit Status and Financial Viability**

Exchange organisations are required to submit appropriate evidence of non-profit status and financial viability to the registration committee. Documentation should demonstrate that students' costs are reasonable and that revenue is expended entirely on the objectives of the exchange organisation. Exchange organisations must clarify items included in participation fees and optional extra items.

The registration committee may request ongoing evidence from organisations that they are continuing to be registered as a non-profit organisation.

### **11.5 Support for Students and Host Families**

Exchange organisations must demonstrate that incoming and outgoing exchange students and host families have local support. Such support will cover appropriate reception, orientation, accommodation and transport arrangements, as well as providing ongoing support and counselling networks for exchange students.

Host schools are not expected to provide more support and pastoral care for exchange students than that normally provided to NSW students. They are not expected to provide crisis management networks for exchange students except where they are the registered exchange organisation for the student. Responsibility for exchange students ultimately rests with the exchange organisation.

The registration committee would expect notification from principals regarding concerns with an exchange organisation about any of the above, either before a student exchange commences or during the placement.

## **11.6 Selection of Students**

Exchange organisations must demonstrate that they have a screening process for selecting incoming and outgoing students and that they select only students with the potential to benefit from the experience. Exchange students attending NSW schools must be mature enough to meet the requirements of exchange programs.

Organisations should also ensure that their programs operate on the basis of equal opportunity for all students and demonstrate that their selection criteria/processes are socially and culturally inclusive.

## **11.7 Selection of Host Families and Child Protection**

Exchange organisations must demonstrate that they have an appropriate screening process for selecting host families for both incoming and outgoing students. Detailed information regarding screening and selection procedures must be provided.

The screening process of host families for incoming students must comply with NSW child protection legislation as described in guidelines set by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, set out in the Working with Children Check.

Selection of host families must not involve payment of board or a subsidy to the host family, or to any other party, as a condition of the student's placement.

Exchange organisations must arrange host families for the duration of the stay before issuing Acceptance Advice for Secondary Exchange Student (AASES) forms to incoming students.

Any issues relating to the welfare of an exchange student must be reported immediately to the NSW Registration Committee.

## **11.8 Resolution of Problems**

Exchange organisations must outline processes through which problems will be resolved. There must be documented procedures in place to resolve problems, including the complaints procedure, conflict resolution procedures and procedures in emergency situations.

Students may be moved to another school if the original school placement is not satisfactory. When the school is the registered exchange organisation for the student, an unsuccessful placement would normally be resolved by the student returning home early.

Exchange organisations may transfer students interstate only in exceptional circumstances. Exchange organisations must apply to the receiving state/territory registration authority for a new AASES form and not assume automatic approval. Reciprocity is to be calculated for the time the student spent in each state/territory and the relevant duration to be included in each respective state/territory's annual reciprocity report.

## **11.9 Orientation for Students and Host Families**

Exchange organisations must outline provision for an orientation and preparation program, both before departure from the home country and after arrival in the host country. This program must be for both incoming and outgoing exchange students. Exchange organisations must provide a corresponding program for host families.

The orientation process for exchange students both in NSW and overseas must ensure that every student is aware of the name and contact details of a 24 hour emergency contact person provided for them by the exchange organisation.

## **11.10 School Liaison**

Exchange organisations must follow the procedures for enrolling exchange students in NSW secondary schools as outlined in Section 9. They must demonstrate that they can provide effective liaison with schools. For incoming exchange students, this includes providing the host school with host family and exchange organisation contact details; and providing information about the student, including copies of school and other reports as requested.

Organisations should outline procedures for ensuring that students are fulfilling agreements and meeting visa requirements.

## **11.11 Travel**

Exchange organisations must demonstrate that they provide appropriate support for incoming and outgoing students en route between their natural and host families. Where a school is the exchange organisation, it will need to comply with any rules and regulations concerning the travel of students overseas.

## **11.12 Evaluation**

Student exchange organisations must ensure that all exchange students complete an appropriate evaluation form.

## **11.13 Health Insurance**

Exchange organisations must satisfy the NSW Registration Committee that health cover provisions are adequate for incoming and outgoing exchange students. In addition to travel/health insurance, incoming students must have Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) to comply with the Commonwealth's requirements.

## **11.14 Documentation**

Exchange organisations must provide the NSW Registration Committee with current information used in promoting their programs and in advising students, host families and program representatives of their operations. Confidential information is treated as such by the registration committee.

Where a school is applying for registration as an exchange organisation there is a requirement to submit relevant documentation outlining sister-school or other agreements with the overseas school.