

FOUNDATION PROGRAMS WORKING GROUP

3rd March 2005

Definition of Foundation Programs *for international students*

Foundation Programs are nationally recognized courses that equip international students with skills and capabilities with which to succeed in higher education programs. They provide an academic entry pathway to 1st year undergraduate study or its equivalent.

Proposed Core Criteria of a Foundation Program To Achieve Registration

1. Must be based on a curriculum which prepares students for further study in higher education programs;
2. Must contain a number of discipline based subjects and relevant learning methodologies;
3. Must contain dedicated English studies to develop English language proficiency;
4. Must offer pedagogies and learning opportunities that maximize student engagement and provide opportunities for regular feedback on student progress;
5. Must reflect minimum entry requirements:
 - ☐ Successful completion of Australian Year 11 or a comparable educational level;
 - ☐ Attainment of English language proficiency equivalent to an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 5.5 overall (minimum of 5 in each macro skill);
6. Must require students to progress through the program based on an assessment system which provides a basis for higher education selection decisions;
7. Must articulate a minimum contact time of 720 hours of structured learning over not less than 26 weeks approved by a higher education provider.; and
8. Must offer students one or more higher education pathways.

FP Focus/Content Requirements

- ☐ Academic skills and proficiency which prepare students for higher education studies
- ☐ English language proficiency
- ☐ Discipline specific study (e.g. Arts/Communications; Mathematics/Commerce; Science/Engineering)
- ☐ A bridge/pathway to further HE study but not advanced standing.

Good Practice Guidelines

The working group highlighted the value of an agreed definition, core criteria and registration mechanism for FPs, but also acknowledged the need to support implementation with good practice guidelines for providers around which competitive bids can be developed/assessed. These may include information about:

- Breadth of pedagogy
- Curriculum architecture
- Reporting of student achievement
- Collaborative relationships with higher education providers
- Minimum qualifications for teachers of FPs
- A good practice data base

Issues for Consideration Around Foundation Programs (FPs) for international students

- There is no single accreditation mechanism or peak body which guarantees rigor and scrutiny. Need to identify appropriate accreditation arrangements/body(ies).
- Need a **sensible and consistent national framework** and agreed **nomenclature** which facilitates recognition/portability
- Need to clarify **outputs and outcome** sought from any registration/accreditation process
- Need some flexibility around the question of duration – i.e. **720 hours** over a minimum of 26 weeks of study **for a standard FP** but providers have discretion in relation to accelerated/extended programs
- **Year 11 versus Year 12** as a minimum entry requirement - generates concerns within the school sector about market impact
 - Foundation Programs are not equivalent to Year 12 but they do offer an alternative pathway to higher education.
 - FPs reflect a strong focus on language and academic proficiency in preparation for higher education
 - FPs do not result in an award/recognition whereas Year 12 can be promoted as generating a formal award
 - Important to check data about student outcomes
- Extent to which **State/Territory QA regime** can be utilized - requirement for ongoing quality assurance (via existing inspection/audit channels?)
- Registration and QA for delivery off shore

Issues for the Working Group

- Manage **communication and consultation** of working group members with their stakeholder cohort to ensure their constituencies' views are appropriately represented
- Flag **need for inclusion** of any additional stakeholder group on the Working Group
- Maintain **continuity** of industry/stakeholder representatives (through a single presence or a comprehensive briefing) to:
 - Minimize the familiarization time (learning curve) at the commencement of each meeting
 - Facilitate the productivity of each working group meeting
- Acknowledge the **function and critical role of this working group** and its potential to positively impact Australia's profile in the international education market i.e. the outcomes will provide a useful platform for:
 - Enhancing quality and consistency in delivery and hence benefit overseas FP students; and
 - Promotion of Australian Foundation Programs to overseas students - a tool to benefit all areas of the provider market.
- Clarify the extent to which the Working Group's deliberations extend beyond '**standard**' to '**accelerated**' or **extended FPs**
- Clarify **reporting lines** i.e. to AESOC and MCEETYA