



Inner City Network

Report of International Students Forum, 15 November 2016

What is it that we could do to ensure international students feel unwelcome and isolated?
Which of these are actually happening? – marked in bold

- **Expectations:**
 - **Assumption on what is needed, without input from (or just token) consultation with students**
 - Lack of pre-departure information
 - E.g. financial/bank account, housing/accommodation: costs, standards
 - **Unrealistic/overpromised/false expectations**
 - Lack of/poor arrival information, or misinformation:
 - Lack of emergency contacts, poor airport pickup
 - **No welcome signs**
 - 'No' accommodation
 - **Cold, boring weather**
 - European/NZ/Western food only
 - Lack of entertainment
 - **Transport** unfriendly, **expensive**/lack of infrastructure
 - Unfriendly utilities contacts
 - **Lack of resilience by students not understood or acknowledged**
 - **'We are deliberately marketing to students who are by nature introverted, risk-averse, dependent, no discernible life-skills**

- **Discrimination**
 - Pretending International Students don't exist
 - **Treatment as inferior, temporary, transient**
 - **Cultural insensitivity (e.g. while delivering information)**
 - **(Negative) stereotyping**
 - Lack of cultural events
 - Lack of empathy
 - **Not promote awareness of different cultures**
 - **Don't smile, don't remember names**
 - **Don't try to understand them**
 - Staring at them, laughing at their English
 - Speak loudly/broken English at them
 - **Negative issues in the community**
 - **You just have to fit in with us**
 - Segregation
 - Developing ghettos/pockets/silos

- **Don't teach them NZ 'norms'**
 - **Unaccessible information-English only**
 - **Don't provide cultural signage**
 - **Accommodation**
 - **Offered sub-standard accommodation**
 - **Employment**
 - **Poor/not giving job opportunities**
 - **Immigration/visas**
 - Harsh laws
 - Deportation without employment-time limits
 - **Low status**
 - Can't own land
 - **Racism (2 way)**
- **Exclusion:**
 - Little/no access to services or hours are limited
 - **Lack of/preventing access to information**
 - **Lack of a Hub**
 - **Sometimes the opposite: information overload (esp. at arrival)**
 - **Preventing access to opportunities to experience NZ culture and way of living**
 - **Don't connect them with Kiwis**
 - **Avoid sharing experiences**
 - **Don't tell them about Maori culture**
 - **Don't interact with local students**
 - **Poor pastoral care**
 - **Not listening to them/not communicating with them**
 - Don't provide events for youth
 - Don't provide sports/recreation facilities in inner city
 - **Lack of cultural opportunities**
 - Not promoting activities
 - Feeling unsafe
 - No Wifi, no power plug

How can we change or modify our behaviour to begin to mitigate some of these barriers?

- **Expectations:**
 - Don't assume what is needed without input from students
 - Encourage resilience
 - Encourage communication with host family prior to departure
- **Discrimination:**
 - Promote multi-culturalism
- **Exclusion:**
 - Encourage opportunities for community-based engagement

- More interaction with local students
 - Shared lunches
 - Buddy system- local student volunteers
- Provide a Hub or enclave (pool halls, karaoke bars)
- Create a website/digital strategy for international students to make local information accessible, /share information:
 - Events
 - Accommodation
 - Jobs
 - Support:
 - Homestay/standard of living/rules and regulations
 - Regular cultural support
 - Employment support
 - Networking
 - Social
 - Sports
 - Peers/mentors
 - Pastoral care
- More regular international welcomes
- Create Ambassadors: real student stories and success stories
- Link students to community groups where they can volunteer to help on a range of projects
- Include students in forums such as this by the Inner City Network

Summary:

Overall, there is a need to listen much more actively to international students and take time to understand their concerns, needs and wants.

Better communication is the key: we in the older age groups, often the ones in positions of authority, need to realise that young people have different ways of communicating, particularly their digital experience. This should not be dismissed or marginalised but be used as a way to both listen to and communicate with International students.

With better communication, issues or challenges can be addressed as they arise. We can then begin to deal with the three challenges of expectations, discrimination and exclusion. Clearer communications and stronger relationships contribute towards a better experience for international students by reducing the ways these three themes impact on their experience in the time they spend with us.